



Edited by Iain Walker | Manuel João Ramos | Preben Kaarsholm

## Fluid Networks and Hegemonic Powers in the Western Indian Ocean

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**Editors**

Iain Walker

Manuel João Ramos

Preben Kaarsholm

**Contributors**

Aleksi Ylönen

Ana Roque

Denis Venter

Elena Brugioni

Iain Walker

Manuel João Ramos

Meghna Singh

Preben Kaarsholm

Rafael Thiebaut

**Cover**

*Jaali* (marble screen) of Sidi Sayyed's Mosque, Ahemadabad (Gujarat, India)

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CEI-IUL (ISCTE-IUL), Sala 2W06

Av.<sup>a</sup> das Forças Armadas

1649-026 Lisboa PORTUGAL

+351 210 464 029

<http://cei.iscte-iul.pt>

[cei@iscte.pt](mailto:cei@iscte.pt)



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## AFFILIATIONS

**Aleksi Ylönen** is Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Centre of International Studies, University Institute of Lisbon, and Associate Researcher of the African Studies Group, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain. He specializes in armed conflicts, security issues and separatism in the Sudans and the greater Horn of Africa.

**Ana Roque** is Faculty Member of the Faculty of Arts, University of Lisbon, and Senior Researcher of its Centre of History, and vice-coordinator of the research line Science and Empire. Her research focusses mainly on modern history of Africa and the Indian Ocean, especially Mozambique and Southern Africa, on topics relating to scientific expeditions, indigenous traditional knowledge, biodiversity and environmental problems in the colonial context.

**Denis Venter** is Senior Research Fellow in Politics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg; Research Associate in Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Formerly he was Nelson Mandela Chair Professor (2010-11), and Researcher of the Centre for African Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Elena Brugioni** is Professor of African Literatures and Postcolonial Studies at the Department of Literary Theory of the University of Campinas, Unicamp. She specializes in African Lusophone cultural studies in the post-colonial period.

**Iain Walker** is Research Officer at Martin Luther University Halle Wittenberg and Research Associate at Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle. His research interests include the Hadrami and Comorian communities in the western Indian Ocean. His current project is looking at memories, histories and identities on the island of Mayotte.



**Manuel João Ramos** is Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology and Senior Researcher at the Centre of International Studies of ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon. He studies Europe-Ethiopia relations and his current research deals with political conflicts, urbanization and migration trends in the Horn of Africa.

**Meghna Singh** is presently affiliated to the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town as PhD Candidate, and is a Research Associate at the African Centre for Migration and Society at WITS University Johannesburg with a research project on the theme of oceanic migrations in South Africa.

**Preben Kaarsholm** is Professor of Global and International Development Studies at Roskilde University. His current research is focused on transitions from slavery to indentured and migrant labour in the Western Indian Ocean, and on Islamic networks along the African Indian Ocean coast.

**Rafael Thiebaut** is PhD candidate in African History at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne under joint supervision with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is preparing a thesis on French and Dutch slave trade in Madagascar from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. His research interests are in maritime and colonial history in the Indian Ocean world during the Early Modern Age.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**Iain Walker**  
**Manuel João Ramos**  
**Preben Kaarsholm**

The Indian Ocean, with its extensive trade and circulation networks, has been characterized as a major inter-regional arena within broader studies of processes of globalisation. These maritime networks are some of the oldest in the world, and through the centuries persistent and resilient forms of transnational and transcultural communication have developed in the regions touched by it, linking the Horn of Africa, the African Indian Ocean islands and Eastern and Southern Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and even meaningful parts of Southeast and Eastern Asia. It is also a particularly sensitive area in security terms, presently harbouring major naval and aerial surveillance capabilities of both intra- and extra-regional military and economic powers.

The western Indian Ocean has thus been both a fluid space of intense exchanges between various local communities and a much-coveted setting for successive projects of hegemonic appropriations of human and material resources. The substantial flow of goods and people across it has, from time immemorial, attracted predatory and clandestine activities, which are today the pretext for member countries of NATO to maintain an impressive security presence and for emerging powers such as India and China to display their military and naval capacities.

A comprehensive understanding of the conditions and implications of this multiple presence requires a multidisciplinary effort that has to take into account the underlying, and generally silent, reality of the existence of family-based networks (African, Arab, Indian, Armenian, Iranian and South-east Asian) which, assuming an ancient heritage, have ensured the continuity of flows between the different countries connected by the Western Indian Ocean by resiliently adapting themselves to ever-changing balances of power, to the impositions of external agents, and to the bargaining strategies of local and regional predators.

The present volume sets forth to analyse illustrative aspects of the deep-rooted immersion of the populations of the eastern coasts of Africa in the vast network of commercial, cultural and religious interactions that extend to the Middle-East and the Indian subcontinent, as well as the long-time involvement of various exogenous military, administrative and economic powers (Ottoman, Omani, Portuguese, Dutch, British, French and, more recently, European-Americans).

On the side-lines of an inward-looking vision of Africa shared by most African Union member countries, which have only recently begun to develop a fledgling security policy and a strategy of development of the African coastline, various agents from East African countries have sought to manage and develop existing networks in a transnational logic supported by historical ties that come from the

old triangular trade facilitated by the monsoon regime, linking these coastal regions to the Arabian Peninsula and South-east Asia.

As the overall process of globalization of human affairs assumes local and regional dimensions, rather than excluding them, it realigns and remodels them. It co-occurs and co-relates with various other competing forces seeking to reclaim and reactivate areas of social activity and identity, in the broadest sense. Against such a complex contemporary background, an important challenge for students and researchers of regional studies is not only to incorporate a understanding of the input of globalizing trends in the reshaping of major regional contexts but specifically to question their very limits and boundaries. This tendency is illustrated by a growing and deepening interest in interregional borders and border-crossings, and in acknowledging their importance in the very fact of the (re)formation and (re)invention of regional areas.

In the particular case of the long-established African regional studies area, this has implied interrogating the validity of distinguishing sub-Saharan (former “black”) Africa from the Maghreb, traditionally subsumed within Southwest Asian (“Near” or “Middle Eastern”) studies; revising the role of the Mediterranean both as frontier and bridge with Europe; refocusing on Africa’s Atlantic ties to the Americas; and of course recognising the Indian Ocean as a major pathway for Eastern Africa. It was in this spirit that in 2012 AEGIS – the African-Europe Group of Interdisciplinary Studies network – established the Collaborative Research Group (CRG) on Africa in the Indian Ocean, whose aim is to “promote and facilitate discussion, exchange of information, and collaboration between scholars in Europe, Africa and Asia” studying this topic from different disciplinary perspectives. This CRG exists to exchange information on research projects, events and activities, to enhance the visibility of the connection between Africa and the Indian Ocean world within the general African studies landscape, with the final goal of developing new knowledge on African ties to the Indian Ocean, and to debate theoretical and methodological insights across disciplinary and area or regional studies boundaries.

The African in the Indian Ocean CRG has organised international conferences and conference panels and facilitated the organisation of workshops, post-graduate summer schools and researcher training courses. The present volume is the product of one of the main activities of this CRG: organizing AEGIS international thematic conferences on African in the Indian Ocean. The second such conference took place in Lisbon, at ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, on April 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015, convened by the Centre of International Studies, and organized by

Iain Walker (Max Plank Institute), Manuel João Ramos (CEI-IUL), and Preben Kaarsholm (Roskilde University).

The chapters in this book are a selection of reviewed and revised contributions to that Conference. Edited books are conceived to carry forth the ideas and discussions that have their starting point in academic conferences, offering a set of arguments based on illustration. The theme of the conference is presented here both from different disciplinary perspectives (social and political history, anthropology, political science and cultural studies) and regarding different contextual case studies (Horn region, North-eastern and South-eastern coastal regions) and their connections to the Arabian Peninsula and Western India. Although the contributions are heterogeneous, chosen to depict the rich variety of the theme, a number of common threads may be distinguished. The first is the notion that, as central as Africa's Eastern coastal areas have been in the history of the region's relationship with the Indian Ocean trading networks, the involvement of the neighbouring hinterland is not to be taken as a mere complementary footnote to it but rather as an integral element in diachronic and synchronic analytical efforts to understand both processes and situations. Another relevant aspect that some of the chapters draw attention to is the varied nature of the encroachments dealing with the Western presence and impact in the region since the 16th century, urging for a more sustained look at factors such as adaptation, conflation and appropriation. A third thread worth noting is the implicit recognition in most chapters that disciplinary constraints and contextual boundaries are worth transcending given the overlapping characteristics of the topic.

The chapters are presented chronologically, from the 16th century to the present day, and are contextually paired (Eastern Africa and Madagascar, the Horn, and South Africa). The first chapter, by Ana Roque, addresses the local and regional impact of the establishment of Portuguese settlers in Sofala (Mozambique) in the 16th century, the specificities of their interaction with the local communities, the importance of the "non-official" strategies they adopted in order to be accepted by the chieftaincies, the impact of their integration in the local and regional networks and how their attitude framed new geographies of power in an area marked by political, economic, social, cultural and religious dichotomies. Her analysis of the Sofala region during the 16th century highlights its role in the African-Indian Ocean trading networks and how the economic and political integration of the Portuguese settlers occurred beyond the limits of the official control of the Portuguese crown.

Rafael Thiebaut's chapter draws on Dutch East India Company (VOC) sources to analyse the importance of linguistic and cultural brokering skills of European

and Malagasy intermediaries between the Dutch and the Sakalava in the slave trade of western Madagascar during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter traces the shifts in attitudes towards these brokers as their roles were formalised and came to be occupied by a single individual, often for many years. These brokers were often high-status individuals who exercised a degree of independence from the slave sellers, and particularly the king, to maintain the trust of the Dutch, often walking a fine between the two parties. Unlike their West African counterparts, these brokers neither traded slaves themselves, nor received a commission on sales, but were rewarded for their services with gifts rather than a commission. They were, particularly in later years, individuals who had spent sufficient time in Europe to become quite familiar with European practice, and some also would have been of mixed European and Malagasy parentage: they were cultural brokers as much as financial ones.

In her chapter, Elena Brugioni addresses the rhetoric *topos* of the Indian Ocean as a critical framework to read literary and visual narratives originating in modern Mozambican novelists and poets. Her stance is that of the need to critically intersect between two research contexts: the Indian Ocean regional studies and the more topical Portuguese-speaking cultural and literary studies. By offering to create a counterpoint between literary and visual representations, and thereby addressing the Indian Ocean as an aesthetic and epistemological paradigm, Brugioni (re)situates the Mozambican cultural imaginary within the field of Indian Ocean studies.

African-Arab connections comes under scrutiny in Manuel João Ramos's chapter on the female migratory flows from the Horn of Africa and the particular kind of relationship that they entail. As happens with their Asian counterparts, girls and women temporarily migrating from the Horn work mainly as housemaids in affluent Arab countries, where they tend to be denied free and fair labour rights, under a harsh interpretation of the *kafala*, or sponsorship system, prevalent in the Gulf. Ramos details the system in place, and the culture that supports it, whereby the lack of state institutional protection subjects maids to a reality of everyday "structural violence" and employers end up bearing an unwonted responsibility. Although the high psychological, social and economic costs of this migration are well documented, two less known facts are here given consideration: that of the female workers' agency and resilience in the face of the hardships encountered, and that of the ways this situation is understood and managed from the employers' perspective.

The stereotyped clash between "the African" and "the Arab" also comes under analysis in Aleksis Ylönen's chapter on the entangled history of North-South



relations in the Sudan. He explains how, for centuries, the greater Horn of Africa has been exposed to influences from across the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean more generally. Over time, this continued exposure has shaped the contemporary societies and states in the sub-region. The case of contemporary Sudan illustrates how the extension of Islam and the elite-led emphasis on Arab identity has led to a non-Arab society embracing Arab and Muslim culture, subsequently translated into the formation of a nationalist governing elite supporting a vision of national Sudanese identity based upon the rhetoric pillars of an appropriated Arab culture and an interpretation of Sunni Islam, this despite the heterogeneity of its cultures and peoples. Following decolonization, the Northern political elite's nation- and state-building project sought to homogenize the country through forced linguistic, cultural and religious assimilation, leading to varying degrees of direct confrontation with the Southern peoples. Ylönen considers the root causes of the armed conflict in Southern Sudan (part of the Sudanese state until 2011), identifying local perceptions and interpretations of the legacy of slavery and of forced cultural assimilation imposed through a state project of extending Islam and Arab culture, but also stressing that religion must not be dismissed as a central factor for the rebellion. He also observes that the overall situation during the wars was complex and changing, and that cynical interpretations of the legacy of slavery and religion were often used to justify armed opposition against the "Arab north". The chapter correlates these interpretations with the Orientalist image of Sudan and the aspirations of Southern Sudan's self-determination, independence, and drift towards an East African socio-cultural and Western Indian Ocean economic space.

The construction of such an economic space has long implied military and naval control. In his chapter on India's maritime strategic and security interests, Denis Venter deals with the recent expansion of India's naval capabilities and maritime security throughout the region, particularly through what he defines as highly asymmetrical developing relationships with small states (Mauritius, Seychelles and Oman) at, or near, the key points of entry into the Western Indian Ocean. Some of these states have traditionally seen India as a rather benign security provider with the capacity to act effectively as a security guarantor (the case with Mauritius and the Maldives). But the recent needs of further strengthening India's strategic posture in coastal Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula, matched with African littoral states' hopes to become regional power centres, sets the stage for a stronger role of Indian naval forces to assist in maintaining maritime order and addressing security challenges, in a delicate multilateral effort with South Africa, Australia and the US. The chapter argues that an important challenge for

New Delhi is to maintain public perceptions of India as a benign and non-hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean region just as it moves towards achieving great power status.

The book concludes with a chapter by Megna Singh on the symbolic paradox of “suspended mobility” within the maritime world, by drawing on the case of the arrested supply ship WBI Trinity at the port of Cape Town, in South Africa, as she travelled from Nigeria to Dubai, and the effect this has had on the lives of the men caught in the ensuing judicial process (the foreclosing of the mortgaged vessel). The case serves as an apt illustration of the overlapping complexities of maritime law as it intertwines with the economy and movement of international labour. By addressing the dialectical tropes of suspension, stillness and waiting affecting peoples’ lives, Singh reminds how they may help put in broader perspective the hyper-valorisation of the construction of flows of trade that dominate today’s global cultural discourses.

The contributions to this volume are a representative selection of case studies from a variety of disciplinary perspectives that highlight the interconnectivity of the Indian Ocean region, from the first European entry into the ocean through to contemporary geopolitical strategies, and demonstrate quite effectively that Africa and the Indian Ocean constitute a political, economic and cultural unit whose constituent parts cannot be dissociated from one another.

This is certainly not a comprehensive and final book on the intertwining relationship between African participation in the regional trading and cultural networks of the Indian Ocean and the hegemonic presence of world powers in the area. Its purpose is rather to contribute, with a few meaningful exemplary case-studies, to assert the need for further and more inclusive investigation. It touches upon questions that have been independently addressed by different regional and inter-regional research networks (African studies, Gulf studies, Indian Ocean studies, Southwest Asian studies, etc.). The role of the Indian Ocean in global security, the increasing involvement of India and China in the economies of contemporary African states and the cultural links that bind eastern Africa to the Indian Ocean littoral are both intricate and temporally deep. The editors of this book hope that it may serve as a useful tool to bridge the different social sciences and regional studies areas, and create a clearer awareness of the deep-rooted, and evolving, ties between Africa and the Indian Ocean.



**THE SOFALA COAST (MOZAMBIQUE) IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY:  
BETWEEN THE AFRICAN TRADE ROUTES AND INDIAN  
OCEAN TRADE**

**Ana Cristina Roque**

Centre of History, Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon  
Portugal

*This article addresses the local and regional impact of the settlement of the Portuguese in Sofala, Mozambique, in the 16th century. Using the documental archive sources on the Sofala coast we highlight the specificity of the interaction between the Portuguese and the local communities, the importance of the “non-official” strategies used by the Portuguese in order to be accepted by the local chieftaincies, the impact of their integration into the local and regional networks and how their attitude formed new geographies of power in the area, while exposing political, economic, social, cultural and religious dichotomies. Focusing our attention on these aspects we make new contributions to the analysis of the Sofala region in the 16th century for a better understanding of its role in the African and Indian Ocean trading networks in the Portuguese empire, mostly based in informal economic and political control and thus pretty close to the concept of “shadow empire”.*

keywords: Portuguese Expansion, “Shadow empire”, Intercontinental trading networks, Sofala, Mozambique, Indian Ocean

When arriving in the Indian Ocean in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were confronted with an important intercontinental trade network dominated by Muslim merchants. This network involved the East African coastal ports, India and the Far East as well as inland African kingdoms and was part of a much larger, ancient Muslim network of trade, kinship and port-state complexes (Tibbetts, 1981; Abu-Lughod, 1989; Chaudhuri, 1990) connecting Africa, Asia and Europe (Fig. 1).

Regional African trade routes played a very important role in this system because of the coastal ports from the Bazaruto Islands up to the North of Mozambique. African trade goods, including gold, were exported from these ports to the northern Swahili towns and through them to the Indian Ocean where they exchanged for cotton, beads, spices and other Indian goods (Beach, 1980; Smith, 1983). A huge trade network covering the Middle East and the Far Eastern countries, dominated mainly though not exclusively by Muslim merchants (Sicard, 1968).

As early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century, archaeological evidence of this long-distance trade confirms the existence and importance of these coastal ports (Sinclair; 1982, Sinclair, 1987; Sinclair et al, 2012; Wood et al, 2012), particularly around the Save delta (Sicard, 1968).<sup>1</sup> This suggests that this trade was of primary importance to the prosperity of the northern towns and some smaller southern African ports, such as Sofala or Mozambique Island, long before the Portuguese arrived in the region (Newitt, 1995) and that it was the reason for the first Portuguese settlements on the East African coast.

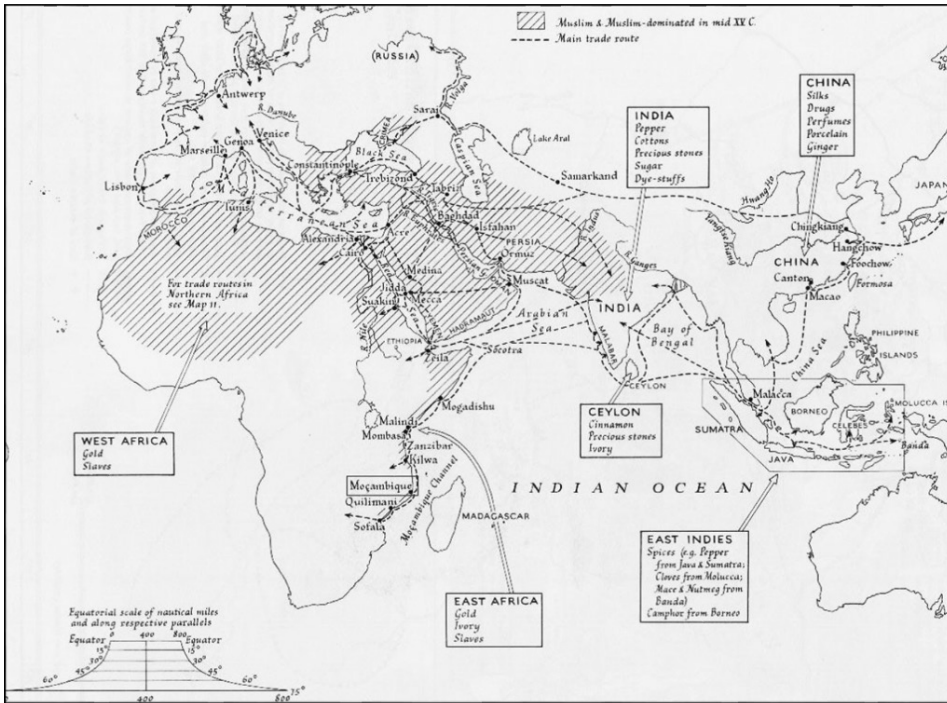
After building a fortified trading post in Sofala in 1505, Portugal expected to control the gold trade and thus guarantee the gold it needed to purchase Indian spices. At the same time, transforming Mozambique Island into a Portuguese port of call would guarantee both the possibility of provisioning ships on their way to India and providing sailors and travellers with facilities for rest and recovery (Boxer, 1961).

However, expectations and reality were two very different things and in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese were finding it very difficult to replace the well established Muslim networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Sicard states that, before the Muslim traders, merchants from Asian origin would have used the port of Singó or Nshawa in the Save Delta for gold trading. This port, which the author identifies as the island of Wasika reported by Ibn-Madjid, would have been the key point in the Indian Ocean trade routes and also the inland African trade route, since going up the Save River, it was possible to reach Butua where the gold was mined. Based on Blake-Thompson's works he also states that the Save was navigable in small boats all the way through Mozambique at least as far as the confluence with the Lundi, where traces of a port with evidence of marine and estuarine fauna have been found.

Fig. 1. Trade between Africa, Asia and Europe on the eve of the Portuguese expansion



In: Fage, 1978, p. 27

## Portugal, Sofala and the Indian Ocean trade network in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

At the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of the Portuguese on the East African coast and the Indian Ocean foreshadowed the advent of deep changes in the existing trans-regional social and commercial networks and that these changes were viewed differently by those involved.

For the Muslim networks it was the beginning of the end of a long period of indisputable supremacy in the Indian Ocean and they reacted immediately by appealing for armed resistance against the newcomers, intruders and violent Portuguese (al-Malibari, cit. in Ho, 2004, p.222). For the Portuguese, it was the beginning of a process of contacts and exchanges essential for the consolidation of the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean and the construction of the Portuguese Empire. They believed that, whatever the circumstances, their right to control the ocean was unquestionable. Violence was therefore to be used

if necessary, and the Indian Ocean soon turned into “an arena of military and commercial geo-strategy” (Ho, 2004, p.217).

In this context the establishment of the Sofala trading post in 1505 was the main basis for the structure of this presence in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The information from Vasco da Gama’s first voyage (1497-98) had shown how essential it was to the success of the Portuguese plan to control Indian Ocean trade to set up a trading post on the East African coast. Accordingly, based on the assumption that it would not be difficult to replace the “Moors” (the Muslim merchants dominating Indian Ocean trading and social networks) Sancho de Tovar was sent with Pedro Álvares Cabral’s fleet, in 1500, with specific instructions to set up a Portuguese trading post in Sofala. The launch of this initiative was considered so important and urgent that a new *Feitor* (administrator)<sup>2</sup> was appointed for Sofala even before the return of Cabral’s fleet and in the absence of any information confirming the establishment of the post. In fact, this new *Feitor* sailed with João da Nova’s fleet in 1502. The only reason why he did not stay in Sofala was because, during a stopover at Aguada de S. Braz (present day Mossel Bay in South Africa), they were informed that the trading post had not yet been built (Correia, 1858).

This setback did have the benefit of giving King Manuel time to set put the guidelines of his policy towards the region, stressing the need to set up trading posts in Sofala and Kilwa to ensure control of the pivotal African points in trade with the African hinterland (Sofala/gold) and the East Indian Ocean countries (Kilwa/cloth and beads).

The model that was drawn up – a trading fortress (*Fortaleza-feitoria*)<sup>3</sup> – was very revealing of the idea the Portuguese had of the region and the possible hostility of its inhabitants. It also highlighted the urgency of taking appropriate measures to support the Portuguese project, even in the absence of any survey of the region and ignorance of the market structure, involving both East Africa and the Eastern countries on the Indian Ocean. However, this shortcoming was largely overcome by a conviction of the importance of trade, especially in gold, which in itself seemed to justify the investment .

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<sup>2</sup> *Feitor* – Royal official responsible for the economic and financial management of the trading post and the collection of taxes on behalf of the king

<sup>3</sup> The setting up of a trading fortress in the presence of a fairly hostile environment from a political point of view requires the pre-existence of trade in one or more sufficiently valuable products to justify such a large investment as the construction of a fort and the maintenance of its garrison of soldiers and royal officials (M. E. M. Santos & V. Rodrigues, 1989, p. 237).



The Sofala trading post embodied the Portuguese dream of mastering the African gold trade to provide the necessary capital for purchasing pepper (Newitt, 1995) and was therefore the first step towards building what would be the Portuguese Empire in the East.

Furthermore, Sofala was the reason for Kilwa's prosperity. As a port for the export of gold from the hinterland, the Portuguese regarded Sofala as the focal point of this trade and conquering it would automatically ensure control of the gold trade. Therefore, the availability of military resources to support this decision and caution in drawing up strategies for the occupation or establishment of a network of local alliances became crucial to facilitating successful completion of the project.

Once the guidelines of the Portuguese policy for the region had been defined, it was necessary to implement a plan that took account of possible scenarios and ways to overcome potential difficulties.<sup>4</sup> In fact, depending on the specificity of each situation, the occupation of the coast followed four different models, namely, the conquest of positions by force of arms (Kilwa), the submission to Portuguese sovereignty expressed in payment of a tribute (Zanzibar), the alliance with important partners in the region (Malindi) or the deployment negotiated with the local chieftains, involving the availability of a physical space and the grant of exclusive trading rights (Sofala) (Roque, 2012, pp. 209-236).

The implementation of this policy assumed that trade on this coast thereafter would be the monopoly of the Portuguese Crown, the local indigenous people would be respected and the "Moors" would be subdued by the Portuguese and would agree to pay taxes, fees and licences, if necessary, by force of arms. The latter was the position that prevailed in the early years<sup>5</sup> when the Portuguese had to face the opposition of the Muslim communities there and throughout the Indian Ocean, where they were strongly deployed.

However, even after the establishment of fortresses, trading posts and alliances or the imposition of a system of trade licences – *cartazes* – (Villiers, 1986; Mathew, 1986) on behalf of the Portuguese Crown, the system proved to be ineffective.

The absence of prior, accurate, credible information on the political, social and economic structure of the local communities or the size and characteristics of

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<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the *Regimento do Capitão-mór, D. Francisco de Almeida* (1505) is a key document in understanding the main lines of Portuguese policies both for this region and the Indian Ocean in general.

<sup>5</sup> Among the most significant examples of the use of force, we have the conquest of Kilwa and the sacking of Mombasa in 1505 under the orders of Francisco de Almeida, the Tristan da Cunha campaigns on Madagascar's northwest coast in 1506 and the sack of Oge also in 1506 performed by Tristan da Cunha, Afonso de Albuquerque and João da Nova. Anonymous, 1521(?), Caps. 70 and 71

the Muslim diaspora in the Indian Ocean or its importance in East Africa meant the Portuguese had no idea on how to act effectively. Only after settling did they realise the urgent need to change the basis on which the whole plan to control the African Indian area was centred.

Indeed, the need for this adjustment became clear shortly after the negotiations between Pedro de Anhaia and Yusuf, King of Sofala, on the establishment of the trading post. They showed that to achieve its objectives, the Portuguese Crown had to find a different policy. On the one hand, the importance of the Muslim community in the region could clearly not be ignored and that the Portuguese should be able to cooperate, at least until they were able to replace these “Moors” and their networks. On the other hand, it became equally obvious that if the Portuguese wanted to master the Indian Ocean trade routes between East Africa and the East, they also had to adapt their usual range of commodities to African preferences and requirements, especially with respect to the gold trade.

The months following the opening of Sofala trading post were crucial for the Portuguese to realise the importance and the role of these “Moors” and, especially, to learn how to handle the situation and take advantage of it for their own benefit.

Before the arrival of the Portuguese, trade in the Indian Ocean was free of impositions and restrictions on the movement of people and goods (Mathew, 1986; Pouwels, 2002; Ho, 2004). It operated on the basis of commercial networks built on inter-personal relationships linking the communities of the northern Swahili towns with the southern African ports and the hinterland fairs. This enabled the “Moors” to dominate coastal traffic and most of the trade between the coast and inland kingdoms and chieftaincies (Roque, 2013, pp. 189-193).

Together with their local agents they were not only in control of the trade routes for African gold and Indian cloths and beads, which were the breadwinners of the coastal establishments, but also of essential food supplies for local residents and many other African products with high demand in the Eastern markets, such as ivory, precious woods, pearls, seed pearls, tortoiseshell, animal skins, amber, elephant oil, teeth of “fish-woman”, medicinal plants, slaves and even raw cotton (Anonymous, 1497, pp. 98-21). Cotton was a regional product exclusively intended for the manufacture of textiles (Barbosa, 1516, p.18; Monclaro, 1569, p. 547) that were so special they could only be worn by the local ruling elite (Barros, 1552, p. 377).

This network also encompassed other key economic sectors, such as ship-building and boat charters to carry passengers and goods along the coast. In both cases, the communities involved benefited from a secular background, providing

know-how and expertise over many generations, which made them highly mobile and able to adapt to changes or new situations (Roque, 2013).

The influence of the “Moors” had clearly been underestimated by the Portuguese Crown and it would not be easy to remove or replace them within the rights enshrined by the papal bulls (*Rex Rerum*, 1436; *Dum Diversas*, 1452; *Romanus Pontifex*, 1455 and *Inter Caetera*, 1456) or the guidelines of the *Regimentos* and provisions of the first royal instructions, which clearly revealed the king’s priorities for Portuguese actions in overseas territories (Russell-Wood, 2007, p.16).

As pointed out by Mathews (1986, p. 73), Portuguese “aspirations to appropriate trade in the Indian Ocean were based on certain assumptions which did not stand the test of actual encounter with the existing systems in East Africa”. It was therefore necessary to show some flexibility and adaptability to gain gradual but undisputable control.

As early as November 1506, the first results of this readjustment were reported by Manuel Fernandes, the local *Feitor*. Hoping to reduce business that the trading post was unable to control and benefit from the local influence of the Muslim community, Fernandes, strongly committed himself to forming a group of “friendly Moors and subjects of the King” – *Mouros amigos e servidores d’el-Rei* – (Fernandes, 1506, p. 692). They would act as intermediaries between the trading post and the hinterland kingdoms in favour of Portuguese interests. The initiative had little success but his successors were still keen on preserving and even strengthening this link. They asked the “Moors” to serve officially as mediators in negotiations (Sobrinho, 1515, pp. 240-246; Soares, 1513, p. 466) and included them in Portuguese embassies sent to local kingdoms and chieftaincies (Anhaia, 1506, pp. 508-519; *Rol do pagamento de soldos ... 1518*, p. 429).

Far from meaning they were giving up on their goals, the attitude of the Portuguese was in line with common practice among local chiefs. It showed an awareness of a situation that required changes and adjustments with immediate impact on the trading post and the survival of the people living and working there. In this context, the availability of suitable goods in demand in the local and regional African markets was as important as ensuring the regular supply of food to the trading post (Roque, 2012).

When it came to alliances, the difficulty of keeping local indigenous people and “Moors” apart combined with impossibility of considering them separately in business. This latter aspect was particularly important in the purchase of provisions. Although royal instructions demanded that the fortress should always have enough supplies to maintain staff and residents for about six months (*Regimento do Capitão-mór D. Francisco de Almeida*, 1505, p. 234; *Regimento*

de Sofala, 1530, p. 348), in practice they were all at the mercy of what could be bought locally (Regimento de Sofala, 1530, p. 348 and 368). And if, theoretically, available goods were conditioned by market supplies, in fact the main constraint was access to regional production and distribution networks, mostly dominated by “Moors”, who acted in collusion with Sofala chiefs.

In the diplomatic approach to the local chieftaincies and kingdoms, the Portuguese carefully thought through the system of alliances so as not to jeopardise the provisioning of the trading post. In turn, this strategy also allowed them to develop personal relationships with the most important chiefs in the Sofala region and to join regional and local trade networks. This resulted in partnerships and associations especially at an individual level, and the subsequent acceptance of many Portuguese into the local communities (Roque, 2004; Roque, 2012).

This relationship highlights how quickly the Portuguese in Sofala realised the *modus operandi* of the local structures and began to use similar models to ensure their own acceptance. As a result, in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many Portuguese were already living in the inland regions.

Some of them, who engaged in diplomatic or commercial activities, even went to live in the courts of the local chiefdoms such as the Kingdom of Quiteve.<sup>6</sup> Others, such as criminals banished from Portuguese settlements, invested at their own risk in backcountry trade (Roque, 2012). Some of these convicts eventually achieved prestigious positions in local and regional trade networks, where they earned a living, and, later, the status of official intermediaries in trade with the same Portuguese who exiled them (Naufrágio da Nao São Thomé ... 1589, p. 29).

One of the most interesting characteristics of the Portuguese Sofala fortified trading post was its people’s ability to survive by blending in socially and culturally with the local communities (Roque, 2013). This process was particularly important from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. This was when the gold trade in the Zambezi Valley began to polarize attention and resources and Sofala experienced a progressive disengagement from the Portuguese Crown in favour of Mozambique Island. The island was further north and nearer to the Zambezi Delta, where a new trading post and port of call were under development to support the Carreira da Índia and assist the Portuguese in East Africa and Africa Indian ocean trade (Boxer, 1961).

Even though the reasons for this loss of interest are not analysed here, we should note that this position stemmed from a clear marginalisation of Sofala.

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<sup>6</sup> See the case of Rodrigo Lobo, in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, who was granted by the King of Quiteve with more than a half of Maroupe Island in Sofala’s River and awarded with the title of “king’s wife”. Santos, 1609, p. 139.

The main consequences were the growing power of the captains, the progressive involvement of residents and their acceptance among the local communities and, no less important, a new status for the region. The emergence of Mozambique Island as the new Portuguese trading station would transform Sofala into a place of exile, where criminals and convicts were sent and outlaws could easily escape from the Portuguese administration's control and offer their services to the local chiefs (Roque, 2013, p. 201).

It is known that in about 1520 Sachiteve Ynhamunda had the support of Portuguese outlaws (Silveira, 1518, p. 70), that one of his daughters was married to a Portuguese (Anónimo, 1530, p. 298) and that António Fernandes was representative of the King of Portugal in his court between April 1517 and March 1518 (Rol do pagamento de soldos... 1518, p. 429) along with Francisco da Cunha and João Escudeiro, a ward of Manuel Goes, in Sofala since 1505 (Almada, 1516, p. 283).<sup>7</sup> It is also known that some Sofala Portuguese in Sofala married indigenous women and chose to live elsewhere on the coast (Monclaro, 1569, p. 504) and that convicts sentenced to exile, often ran away from the trading post and went to live among the local indigenous population (Lopes, 1515, p.88).

This "marginalisation" contributed to the progressive weakening of their ties to the Portuguese Crown's authorities, giving them space to expand their influence and act on their own.

All these men were responsible for most of the diplomatic activities and a preliminary survey of the backcountry and its people and potential resources. In fact, the importance of these deportees and renegades cannot be overemphasised in the way that it affected immediate perception of the region and its inhabitants and the image of them that was passed on to the European world. Irrespective of the offence leading to their exile, these men were good explorers, adventurers, interpreters and diplomats. Acting on their own or as representatives of the Portuguese authorities, they were mainly responsible for the first reconnaissance of the African hinterland: They were able to map the locations of the region's

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<sup>7</sup> Like Escudeiro, Fernandes arrived in Sofala with Captain Pedro de Anhaia in 1505 but unlike him he was a deportee, listed at the fortress as a carpenter. They both became familiar with the local language and Fernandes was often enrolled as an interpreter or Portuguese representative to the local chiefdoms. He spent time more than once at the Mwenemotapa's court and had the opportunity to travel the region where he was given much credit and was always welcome. Almada, 1516, p. 283.

population, natural resources and trade routes<sup>8</sup> and spread Portuguese influence and interests further into the backcountry.

In line with similar situations occurring in the Far East areas of the Empire (Winius, 2001, Andaya, 2010), it seems quite clear that in East Africa a "shadow empire" was acting in parallel with the official representatives of the Portuguese crown. The Portuguese in this informal empire, operating outside areas under formal Portuguese administrative control, took on the dual roles of actor/individual and actor/vehicle for Portugal's political and economic interests. Either role might be prevalent at any one time.

The policy followed by the first Sofala captains had the merit of bringing the Portuguese trading post to local chiefdoms while also offering opportunities for fruitful trade on the sidelines of the monopoly the Portuguese Crown wanted. And, while the imposition of that monopoly became difficult because it clashed with the interests of those who had no intention of giving up their rights to seek personal profit by engaging in business (Newitt, 2005), it provided a business opportunity to all those who, with capital, ambition and few preconceptions, were willing to try their luck in the intricacies of the regional market.

In this scenario, the captains did not lack the means to invest, while most people at the trading post did not waste the opportunity when, for lack of money, the administration paid them their salary in cloth.<sup>9</sup> Trade and profit seemed to be within everyone's reach and soon many others joined these first group of potential traders, who were regarded as smugglers by the Portuguese administration. Thus, by necessity, imposition or will, many Portuguese explored the backcountry and tried their luck, looking for personal wellbeing but helping to give Sofala a peculiar status among Portuguese settlements in East Africa.

We do not intend to expand on the reasons for the decay of Sofala, the consequences of payments in cloth or measures to improve the situation. However, we must point out that this decadence and the Portuguese diaspora across the African continent and the coastal islands resulted either from a policy inappropriate to the African reality and the lack of means to implement it (Roque, 2012),

<sup>8</sup> The history of the Portuguese expansion is littered with examples of exiles who were used in the first reconnaissance of unknown regions. On the East African coast, the best known example was António Fernandes who reconnoitred the Sofala hinterland between 1511 and 1515 before being appointed Portuguese "ambassador" to the Quiteve's court. The results of his travels were known at the time through Gaspar Veloso (1512) and João Vaz de Almada (1516) and were later studied by Tracey (1940), Godlonton (1940 and 1945), Lobato (1954-1960) Dickinson (1971) and Roque (2012). However, 16th century documents report on many other situations where convicts had an important role. See e.g., Quaresma, 1506, p. 624-626, Regimento de Cid Barbudo, 1505 (?) or Fogaça, 1507, p. 26-28.

<sup>9</sup> Referring to the possible drawbacks of this situation, in 1510 Afonso de Albuquerque stated that people should not be allowed to buy provisions at the local market in Sofala in exchange for cloths as this contributed to a decrease in the gold trade. Pato, 1903, (I) p. 434.

or from political changes in the African kingdoms and chieftaincies prior to the Portuguese presence in the region and not resulting from their possible influence (Mudenge, 1988; Pikirayi, 2001). Both factors hampered the implementation of Portuguese plans and facilitated the proliferation of marginal cores where trade was controlled not by the Portuguese Crown but by a few Portuguese on their own account.

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the hinterland and islands of the Sofala coast to Lourenço Marques Bay was full of Portuguese living among the *Kaffirs* (Arab name for black indigenous non-Muslim people) and trading freely in ivory and other goods. The initial core of Portuguese married to indigenous women, renegades, fugitives, convicts and outlaws was supplemented by survivors of shipwrecks who chose to live in the backcountry and often, though acting on their own, became the main mediators of Portuguese trade in the region.

In this context, the actions of some Afro-Portuguese families were quite meaningful, particularly the first generation of children, known as “local born people”. As for the renegades or exiles, marrying indigenous women often meant leaving the trading post and settling elsewhere. In all cases, the Save river basin and the islands south Sofala Bay were some of the preferred areas owing to their natural characteristics and resources and the proximity of the Portuguese settlement. Once they had settled in and benefitted either from family relationships and inclusion in local communities or their knowledge of the region and the *modus operandi* of both Muslim and Portuguese traders, most of these Afro-Portuguese were able to take over leadership and control of the main sectors of economic life of the region.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, António Rodrigues, an exiled native of Sofala, settled in the south with homes in both the Bazaruto islands and on the mainland near the “rivers of Monemone”. From these two places he controlled the production, distribution and marketing of goods and foodstuffs and the shipbuilding and boat charter business. He was also the only locally recognised authority for issuing travel permits for people and goods in the area. Although he had been expelled from Sofala as an outlaw, the trading post’s authorities regularly found themselves in need of his services and apparently no one could travel safely in the region without his permission or assistance (Naufrágio da Nau São Thomé..., 1589, p. 29).

Testifying to the importance of these families, António Rodrigues was just one of the many Afro-Portuguese who would continue to play a decisive role in the

economy of the region and diplomatic relations with the local chiefdoms in the following century.<sup>10</sup>

When addressing this issue, the main focus is usually on businesses operating beyond the control of the Portuguese administration, particularly the captains of Mozambique and Sofala, and the increasing smuggling trade. However, this diaspora is no less relevant from the point of view of the impact of the Portuguese presence or influence in the region. Anonymous or not, these Portuguese moved in areas where Portugal had no official deployment and where, on being accepted by local chiefdoms, they came to hold privileged positions that would be crucial in connecting these chiefdoms with the Portuguese administration.

This diaspora was primarily responsible for the expansion of Portuguese influence in marginal areas to the ones directly frequented or formally occupied by representatives of the Portuguese Crown, as witnessed in 1589 by Captain Estevão da Veiga, survivor of the shipwreck of the *Nau S. Thomé*.

In his long journey from the Terra dos Fumos to Sofala, the only help he was able to find came from some villagers who had Portuguese names and spoke Portuguese because there, as he noted, “sometimes, though not very often, Portuguese traders came to buy ivory” (*Naufrágio da Nau São Thomé...*, 1589). Most of these merchants acted on their own in the areas where they had previously settled, as the captain could see later when arriving in Inhambane, Monemone, Bazaruto or Funbaze.

Thus, despite the fact most of the Portuguese trading vessels took on board Moors and Kaffirs as interpreters and many Portuguese had learned to speak the local languages, this diaspora also resulted in the dissemination of the Portuguese language in these same areas. This meant that it helped to make Portuguese a sort of *língua franca* for trading purposes in the 16th century. In other words, the language of commerce in all those areas with a Portuguese presence or influence was indeed significant.

## Final considerations

More than the King’s official guidelines to be implemented by his representatives in the Portuguese settlements in East Africa, it was this diasporic movement and the actions of these Portuguese that constituted the main basis for establishing contacts and trading relations with local chiefdoms and kingdoms, and their progressive knowledge of the territory and potential regional resources that otherwise would have been very difficult to obtain. In fact, these men were truly

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance the case of António Álvares Teixeira. Coelho, 1698, fl.47



responsible for the beginning of an epistemic cultural exchange process based on mutual learning of know-how and practices that enabled the Portuguese to settle in this region.

As in the case of the Far Eastern areas of the Empire, behind the Regimentos and royal instructions this diaspora played a decisive role in structuring a “shadow empire” working to strengthen relationships with local authorities, which were essential to the existence of the few Portuguese settlements and integration into regional networks. A comparative study of the different areas of the Portuguese Eastern Empire, focusing on the Portuguese diaspora and using the concept of “shadow empire”, would certainly allow a new insight into the modus operandi of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.

In East Africa, as the Portuguese Crown was focusing its attention on the Zambezi Valley, in an almost parallel process, the Portuguese from Sofala were moving into the hinterland, gaining prestige and respect among the local chiefs and becoming owners of most of the islands. Little by little, they managed to control regional trade and showed considerable capacity to understand and fit into the local structures, families and businesses, which enabled them to build new, powerful trade networks. This huge potential only much later came to be recognised by the Portuguese central administration.

In fact, even if “the Sofala business” fell short of the Portuguese Crown’s expectations, this same business, with easy, guaranteed profit, very soon fell into the hands of the Portuguese and, albeit under the brand name of exile and marginality, it came to take on a prominent role that eventually benefited the interests of the Portuguese Crown.

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# **THE ROLE OF “BROKERS” IN THE DUTCH SLAVE TRADE IN MADAGASCAR IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>**

**Rafael Thiebaut**

Institut des Mondes Africains  
Université Paris 1 - Panthéon-Sorbonne  
France

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*The European slave trade in Madagascar in the eighteenth century was the theatre of an important clash of cultures where Malagasy brokers played an important role in overseeing the commercial exchanges between the two parties. In this unpredictable environment, both Dutch merchants and Malagasy sovereigns relied on these intermediaries who not only served as interpreters, but also as mediators in any conflicts that might arise during their stay. Over the years their position, though strongly linked to the political power of the Sakalava sovereign, proved to be one of independence and personal benefit, while trying to satisfy both parties.*

keywords: Madagascar, Slave Trade, Dutch East India Company (VOC), intermediaries/brokers, Sakavala

Summer 1694: The Dutch East India Company<sup>2</sup> ships *Standvastigheid* and *Tamboer* are anchored on the northwest coast of Madagascar, trading slaves. The Dutch merchants are complaining about a certain English-speaking deputy of the Malagasy king named “Lou Lou” who is defined as “the king’s snitch and a rascal [...] he is full of gossip and cunning subterfuges [but] His Majesty had a high esteem for him and for this reason we stayed friends.”<sup>3</sup> They meet him again two years later on the ship *Soldaat* and he is qualified as “a small, very agitated little man, not the most ignorant, and very irritable.”<sup>4</sup> In 1699, on the ship *Peter & Paul*, the Dutch encounter the same intermediary and they fear difficult communications with this “little guy with a big mouth.” However, upon promising him gifts, Lou Lou ensures the friendship of the king’s entourage. At the end of their stay, the VOC merchants qualify him as “a useful trading tool, which we can influence [...], without his aid it would not have been possible to secure this many slaves.”<sup>5</sup>

The previous paragraph illustrates the important role of intermediaries in the slave trade, as both the Malagasy sovereign and the VOC officers tried to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers that they had to face in trade in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, at a time when they already had to cope with the ever-changing political and economic situation in Madagascar. In this paper, we argue that the Malagasy intermediaries were instrumental in the success of these commercial operations. In addition, although loyal subjects of their king, these intermediaries were far from tools in the hands of the sovereign. Instead, they worked independently of both the Malagasy sovereign and the Dutch merchants, trying to exploit their unique position.

As a framework for this research, we chose the Sakalava<sup>6</sup> Kingdom of Boina, as it was the most important slave-exporting Malagasy community for most of the period and one for which there is relatively abundant source material, dozens of VOC ship’s logs of slaving expeditions.<sup>7</sup> Although these mostly cover the period between 1672 and 1779, we have limited ourselves roughly from 1730 to 1770, for practical reasons concerning the availability of sources from different

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to as VOC (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*). This commercial multinational was founded in 1602 and it held the monopoly on all Dutch trade east of the Cape of Good Hope until its dissolution in 1799.

<sup>3</sup> Brons, *Een kort berigt wegens den quaden uijtslag den slavenhandeling aen’t Eijlant Madagascar*, 14 Jan 1695. Nationaal Archief [NA], VOC 1560, without folio.

<sup>4</sup> Chalumeau, 2004, pp. 8–9.

<sup>5</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Peter & Paul*, 1699. NA, VOC 4043, f. 1106.

<sup>6</sup> At the end of the seventeenth century, the Sakalava community was split into two different branches: The Kingdom of Menabe and the Kingdom of Boina. In this article, the term “Sakalava” always refers to the latter.

<sup>7</sup> Conserved at the *Nationaal Archief* in The Hague (Netherlands) and the Western Cape Archives in Cape Town (South Africa)



archival institutions, and the opportunity to consider the continuity of the brokers’ presence. We have concentrated primarily on Dutch VOC sources, though we have also studied French and English documents, in particular for specific comparisons with other Malagasy slave-exporting regions.

The VOC sources on Madagascar have only been partially exploited, mainly by scholars investigating one specific region (such as the Dutch Cape Colony),<sup>8</sup> or by researchers studying the Indian Ocean region in a larger context.<sup>9</sup> Following James C. Armstrong’s article about the European slave trade in Madagascar, things came to a standstill and the island has been virtually ignored by VOC historians, as the slave trade within its empire has only recently been reassessed.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, although some ship’s logs have been the subject of detailed publication, they fail to fully explain the difficulties surrounding trade, which really was a clash of different cultures and interests.<sup>11</sup> Only Andrew Alexander has studied Dutch-Malagasy trading in greater detail, but his research is limited to one slaving expedition in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, no previous scientific work on the slave trade in Madagascar has studied the role of Malagasy intermediaries in detail. Despite the fact that we only know as much about these intermediaries as the European traders were willing to write down, Dutch sources are surprisingly detailed, whereas the French and the English often omitted their existence.

Accordingly, the VOC ship’s logs are practically the only useful source and one might be sceptical as to whether these documents provide enough detail for us to analyse the role the intermediaries played in the slave trade.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, we think that they offer sufficient information to explain the role of a broker between Dutch traders and the Sakalava sovereign. Further, by studying the sources carefully and cross referencing them, we will not only be able to understand the dynamics of the slave trade, but also the motivations of these intermediaries.

The Dutch ship’s logs are reliable contemporary sources of information about trade and have been used by other specialists in eighteenth-century Madagascar, such as Stephen Ellis. For this period, we often possess multiple reports of the same voyage, as it was essential for the VOC to provide the next expedition with

<sup>8</sup> Worden, 1985; Shell, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Barendse, 2002, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Armstrong, 1983. On the slave trade and slavery in the VOC: Vink, 2003; Van Rossum, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Chamuleau, 2004; Westra & Armstrong, 2006. Sleight and Westra (2013, pp. 30–31) indicate the importance of brokers trade.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Using only English and French sources, Jane Hooper (2010, p. 114) confirms in her thesis that we know very little about these intermediaries, especially about their role in coastal communities, and that we only know they worked for the local sovereign.

valuable information about the political and economic situation in Boeny Bay and Bombetoka Bay. This is further emphasized by the fact that we often have different testimonies about the same intermediaries. Of course, by limiting ourselves exclusively to European sources, we will only have one side of the story. We should, however, emphasise the complete absence of Malagasy sources for the early modern age, especially about the intermediaries we want to study, as they are not mentioned in the *sorabes*, or any oral traditions.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, we have no other choice but to rely on VOC sources if we want to learn more about this period.

The use of temporary local intermediaries was relatively rare in the VOC world, and we find only a few comparisons with other parts of its empire, for example with the Chinese, who were brokers in Batavia and large parts of Southeast Asia.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, local “ethnic headmen” served as middlemen and interpreters in the event of the arrival of foreign Dutch dignitaries in the capital of the VOC Empire, when gifts were exchanged and gun and cannon shots were fired as they entered the castle.<sup>16</sup> The Dutch presence in Madagascar, however, bore more resemblance to their first encounters in the Indian Ocean region at the beginning of the seventeenth century. At that time, Blussé notes, the Dutch had to play by the local rules, as they were still “transitory foreign traders” before becoming colonial rulers. On the island of Java for instance, they had to pay regular tributes to the Sultan of Banten for decades, which only ended in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup> In this light, the Dutch trading in Madagascar can be seen as unique in VOC history, and can best be compared with the transatlantic slave trade at the independent African ports. We will make frequent use of the West African example in our research, while taking into account some fundamental differences, such as a permanent European presence protected by fortresses and often with interpreters. This was not the case in Madagascar.<sup>18</sup>

A final remark has to be made regarding the choice of the words “broker” and “intermediary” in this article. In the original documents, the intermediaries that the Dutch had to deal with were named in different ways: *tolk*, *geleijdsman*,

<sup>14</sup> *Sorabe* are texts of a religious nature from the southwest region written in Arabic script. Oral traditions surrounding the Sakalava of Boina monarchy were collected by Frenchmen Vincent Noël and Charles Guillain in the 1840s.

<sup>15</sup> Blussé, 1986, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Blussé, 2000, pp. 29–30.

<sup>17</sup> Blussé, 2000, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Crété, 1989, p. 90.

*makelaar*, *strandwachter*, or even *lieveling*.<sup>19</sup> The differences between the meanings of these titles, given by the Dutch, seem to be very subtle, and it is difficult to know their exact place in Malagasy society. The descriptions given by historians such as Kuitenbrouwer, who identifies the presence of middlemen in Dutch Java in the nineteenth century, also do not cover their Malagasy counterparts.<sup>20</sup> For the sake of consistency, we do not consider the intermediary or broker as a third party who offers intermediation services between two parties (as he is formally part of one) nor the middleman we encounter in the transatlantic slave trade (as he does not provide slaves).<sup>21</sup> Although verbal communication is important, they cannot be considered interpreters, but more as mediators in trade as they linked up different worlds and, in the words of Philip Havik and Toby Green, “made connections where there had been none” together with “having a foot in both worlds.”<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, historians have focused less on brokers in the pre-colonial era, which explains the difficulties surrounding the term, especially regarding the phenomenon in a region where research on the subject is practically nonexistent.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, this article cannot be placed either in the discovery phase when the first contacts were made or in a colonial context as was the case with most European possessions on the Indian subcontinent, in Insulinidia, and even in West Africa where the need for interpreters also existed. This study must instead be considered a first attempt to unravel the role that these crucial mediators played in the slave trade. Before we discuss their position in greater detail, we will consider the context of our research.

## VOC in the Indian Ocean region and the slave trade

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch presence in the Indian Ocean region was mostly concentrated in the Indonesian archipelago and the Indian subcontinent. On the route to these commercially important regions, the VOC decided to establish “refreshment stations” for her Indiamen going from and to Europe. In 1639, the company occupied the inhabited island of Mauritius, and Cape Town was founded in 1652. Labour-intensive agriculture was the

<sup>19</sup> In general we can attest that until the 1740s, the Dutch always speak of *tolken* (interpreters), when describing the Malagasy intermediaries. However, from the 1750s onwards, the term *makelaars* (brokers), is more and more used in order to refer to these people, that is to say, the officials that oversee trading activities in the vicinity of the shore. It is not clear what exactly triggered this change, because their role appears unchanged over time.

<sup>20</sup> Kuitenbrouwer, 1982, pp. 99–101.

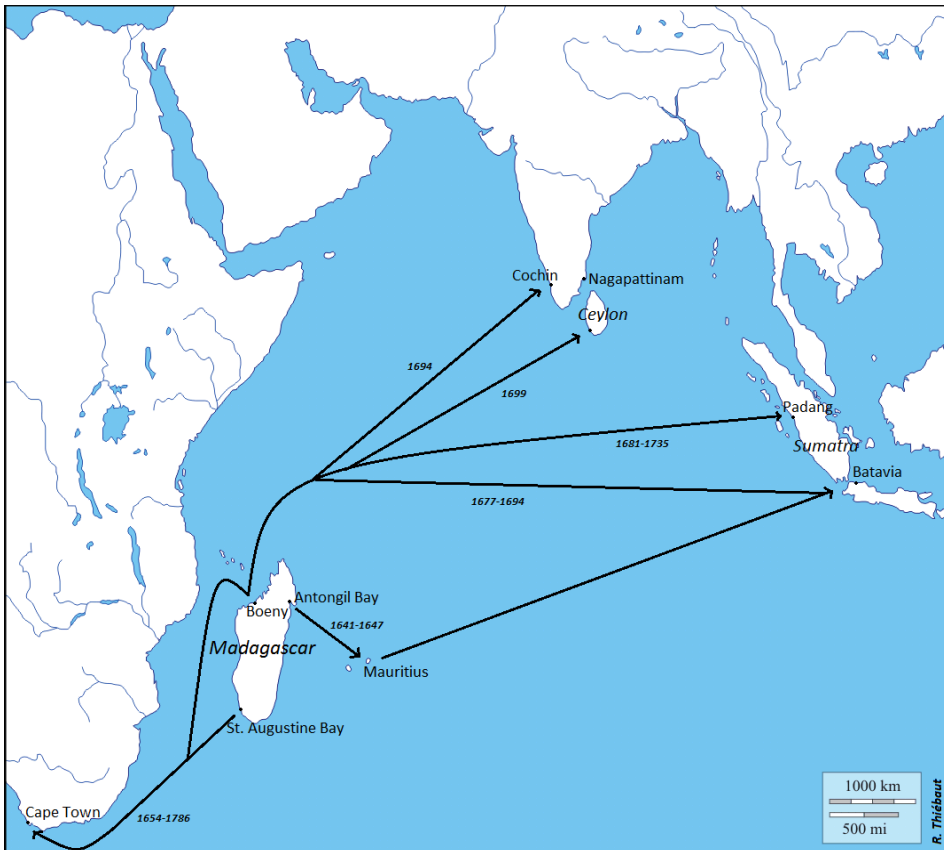
<sup>21</sup> Klein, 1999, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> Havik & Green, 2012, pp. 2–3, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Havik & Green, 2012, pp. 5–6.

most important economic development in these colonies. In order to respond to workforce demands, construct fortresses and undertake other heavy work, the Dutch relied mostly on slave labour.<sup>24</sup> This demand, combined with the low birth rate and frequent epidemics, meant that the Dutch were continuously forced to launch new slaving expeditions.<sup>25</sup> The proximity of Madagascar, and its reputation of being the “slaving grounds” for Arab and Swahili merchants, meant that it formed the most important slaving reserve for the VOC during this period.<sup>26</sup> Between 1642 and 1786, about ninety slaving expeditions were organised to the island of Madagascar, while other European nations, including the English and the French, also traded Malagasy captives to their Indian Ocean possessions and beyond.<sup>27</sup>

*Map of the known VOC Madagascar slaving routes*



<sup>24</sup> One might even talk about true “slave societies,” Vink, 2003, p. 135.

<sup>25</sup> Allen, 2015, pp. 12–13.

<sup>26</sup> Vernet, 2009, pp. 39–41.

<sup>27</sup> Shell, n.d.; Allen, 2015.

Because of its centuries-old link with the Arab and Swahili worlds, the north-west coast of Madagascar had several commercially active ports.<sup>28</sup> From the middle of the seventeenth century, Boeny Bay took prominence over the other bays. When the first Dutch slaving ship arrived there in 1672, they found the slave trade already firmly established by the Antalaotra community.<sup>29</sup> Upon arrival, the Dutch made use of existing slave trading networks, as happened on the West African coast.<sup>30</sup> This practice continued when a Sakalava community from the south conquered these ports and founded the powerful and centralized kingdom of Boina in the 1680s.<sup>31</sup> The Dutch trade remained relatively regular until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the presence of pirates halted further expeditions for nearly thirty years. From 1732 to 1779, slaving expeditions resumed, but often with intervals of several years, and almost always concentrated on the northwest coast.<sup>32</sup> The fierce competition from other slave traders and the declining political power of the Sakalava in the 1750s resulted in the VOC starting to concentrate on other Malagasy regions in order to get their hands on slaves. Even the East African coast began to attract their attention, with low prices and a great abundance of captives.<sup>33</sup> The last Dutch expedition to the Malagasy coast took place in 1786.

*Madagascar with some commercially active ports in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*



<sup>28</sup> Campbell, 2005, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> A Swahilised merchant community permanently established in the northwestern ports of Madagascar. They had important trade links with the Comoros, Swahili coast and Arabian Peninsula. Rantoandro, 1983, pp. 199–200.

<sup>30</sup> Klein, 1999, pp. 105–106.

<sup>31</sup> Kneitz, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Sanchez, 2013, p. 172, 178.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, 1986.

## The first contacts and Dutch interpreters

During trade between the Europeans and the Malagasy, there was a practical need to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers in the months they had to interact with each other. When the first Dutch arrived in Madagascar in 1596, they landed at Antongil Bay and St. Augustine Bay. In these commercially peripheral regions, the peaceful exchange of hostages was a careful precaution to ensure the safety of Dutch and Malagasy alike, a practice that continued until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>34</sup> In their communications with local inhabitants, they were primarily dependent on sign language.<sup>35</sup> After kidnapping two boys on the west coast, the Dutch were able to communicate with the local inhabitants when they arrived at the other side of the island.<sup>36</sup> It is unclear if these Malagasy served as interpreters on subsequent voyages. On their second expedition in 1598, the Dutch were accompanied by a certain Abdul “who understands something of this [Malagasy] language.”<sup>37</sup>

As Madagascar only played a secondary role in the VOC commercial network, there was little incentive to overcome the existing language barrier.<sup>38</sup> As early as 1603, Frederik de Houtman had created a Malagasy-Dutch dictionary,<sup>39</sup> although no trace of its use by the VOC can be found. In fact, ship’s captains considered themselves lucky when they encountered shipwrecked Europeans such as Dutchman Peter in 1618, who lived among the Malagasy and could act as an interpreter during their sporadic contacts.<sup>40</sup> These accidental castaways were the first intermediaries. It was only with the establishment of regular trading contacts in the middle of the seventeenth century that translation became an issue that the Cape authorities wanted to overcome, as they saw that all the slaving expeditions in the 1660s ended in failure.<sup>41</sup> It was therefore decided to take an interpreter, a female slave called Anna, on the first Dutch slaving voyage to the northwest coast in 1672.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Ship’s journal of the *Voorhout*, 1677. NA, VOC 4013, f. 974. In certain regions, this continued well into the eighteenth century: Ship’s journal of the *Elisabeth*, 1742. AN, 4JJ/74, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Mollema, 1935, p. 137, 191.

<sup>36</sup> Mollema, 1935, pp. 173–174.

<sup>37</sup> Keuning, 1942, pp. 28–31. Abdul seems to have been a slave from Banten who was taken from the first voyage back to Holland. He served as a translator who “speaks good Portuguese, good Javanese and good Malay.” Bertrand, 2011, pp. 226–227.

<sup>38</sup> They “borrowed” the slave trade regulations from the WIC (Dutch West India Company) active in West Africa in the same period, as this trade resembled the transatlantic slave trade: Van Dam, 1930, 1.2, pp. 668–670.

<sup>39</sup> *Spraek ende woordboeck inde Maleysche ende Madagaskarsche talen, met vele Arabische ende Turcsche woorden*.

<sup>40</sup> Flacourt, 2007 [1661], pp. 149–150.

<sup>41</sup> Five ships were sent to Madagascar in the 1660s, to return with only about a dozen captives.

<sup>42</sup> Instructions [of the *Pijl*], 7 Oct 1672. NA, VOC 4008, f. 667-668. Anna was most probably a Malagasy taken on a previous slaving expedition. Her role was to act as a translator and to help Dutch merchants with local customs.

One year later, the Dutch captured the English slave vessel *Joanna Catherina*, which came from Madagascar with a certain Simon d’Arabier on board, who served as a translator for the Arab and Malagasy languages.<sup>43</sup> He was subsequently employed on the *Voorhout* in 1676, during which Simon was “very apt to treat with the local inhabitants.”<sup>44</sup> The commercial success of the expedition, and the positive feedback he received from the ship’s officers, encouraged the Cape authorities to employ Simon as an interpreter on three subsequent voyages before his death in 1683.<sup>45</sup> By then, the important influx of Malagasy slaves at Cape Colony from previous expeditions meant that “the loss of the deceased interpreter Simon the Arab could be adequately compensated with the Malagasy slaves present here, who speak our Dutch language fairly well.”<sup>46</sup> As a consequence, on most slaving expeditions, a Malagasy slave from the Cape served as an interpreter.<sup>47</sup>

As the Dutch merchants mourned the loss of their precious interpreter, a revolution swept through the northwest coast of Madagascar, shifting political power from the Antalaotra community into the hands of the Sakalava sovereign Andriamandisoarivo (c. 1660–1702). He took control of the foreign slave trade at a time when a regular network with the Cape Colony was firmly in place. From this time onward, intermediaries assisting European traders became a normal presence, at least in Boeny Bay. This development was essential to the VOC’s ability to trade as “dealing with the indigenous population [of Madagascar] required some experience and a sophisticated bargaining strategy.”<sup>48</sup>

## The political situation on the northwest coast

The status of the intermediary was strongly dependent on – and cannot be dissociated from – the political situation and the economic role of the slave trade within its system. Andriamandisoarivo had witnessed the victorious campaigns of his father Andriandahifotsy (c. 1620–1683) in securing direct access to a maritime port, and understood the role of the slave trade in the political power of the

<sup>43</sup> Instructions of the *Elisabeth*, 14 Nov 1678. WCA, C2338, f. 36 and C1344, f. 108–109.

<sup>44</sup> Instructions of the *Voorhout*, 1676. WCA, C 2337, f. 69. See also: Armstrong, 1983, pp. 232–233; Westra & Sleigh, 2013, pp. 31–32.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Batavia to the Cape, 14 Oct 1684. WCA, C333.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from the Cape to Batavia, 12 Feb 1684. WCA, C1374. Although we know nothing about the criteria that were used to choose interpreters, it is certain that proficiency in both the Dutch and Malagasy languages was an essential prerequisite as well as overall good behaviour.

<sup>47</sup> On the rare occasions that expeditions were organised in Batavia, it proved difficult to find a Malagasy interpreter: Instructions of the *Binnenwijzend*, 23 Apr 1732. NA, VOC 985.

<sup>48</sup> Bialuschewski, 2005, p. 405. Andrew Alexander (2007, p. 15) speaks of an “unpredictable trading environment.”

Sakalava of Menabe. Deprived of succession, this prince made a daring move to take control of the most active slave exporting region of the island.<sup>49</sup> Between 1683 and 1686, he conquered the entire northwest coast of Madagascar, including Boeny Bay and Bombetoka Bay. Instead of excluding the Antalaotra community, he left them in place and took control of their commercial networks.<sup>50</sup> The trade in captives was essential to the monarchist system, which was dependent on the influx of firearms, ammunition, gunpowder and silver coin.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, a kind of mercantilist system was put in place, because no European could trade without the formal agreement of the king.<sup>52</sup>

How did the slave trade in the Sakalava kingdom of Boina differ from that in other Malagasy coastal regions? This trade formed the foundations for the creation of Sakalava, as was the case with the Betsimisaraka community in the northeast coast in the 1720s.<sup>53</sup> However, it was the continuous presence of different foreign traders, not only European, but also Arab and Swahili, that confirmed the northwest coast as the foremost slave exporting region of the island. This made the Sakalava kingdom the political and economic superpower of Madagascar in the first half of the eighteenth century, while also receiving tribute from surrounding regions.<sup>54</sup> For other regions, the slave trade remained somewhat irregular and of secondary importance to the local sovereigns.

This difference is also reflected in the prestige of the king of Boina, who was “feared like a god” by his subjects. From 1730s onward he forced foreign merchants to come to his inland capital to obtain a license to start trading.<sup>55</sup> Although the sovereigns of other regions such as St. Augustine Bay and Fort Dauphin also had inland capitals, they would always move their court to the shoreline in order to trade with the Europeans. Ratsimilaho of Betsimisaraka was the only king who lived directly on the coast, in the town of Foulpointe.<sup>56</sup> Because trade took place on the beach, the Sakalava sovereign needed to have some trusted intermediaries on the coast to ensure the slave trade was properly executed in accordance with his rules.

<sup>49</sup> Kneitz, 2014, pp. 97–98.

<sup>50</sup> According to Rantoandro, they took on the role of intermediaries, but it is difficult to know the exact origin of the Malagasy intermediaries. Rantoandro, 1983, pp. 207–209.

<sup>51</sup> The same thing was witnessed on the West African coast: Strickrodt, 2015, p. 134.

<sup>52</sup> Randrianja & Ellis, 2009, p. 67; Ellis & Randrianja, 2000, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, 2007, pp. 448–450; Cabanes, 1982, pp. 170–171.

<sup>54</sup> Ratsivalaka, 1995, I, pp. 109–112.

<sup>55</sup> Armstrong & Westra, 2006, p. 128. See for example: Ship’s logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>56</sup> Filliot, 1973, pp. 132–133.



The Dutch, being aware of the fierce competition between foreign merchants in Bombetoka Bay, started to visit other Malagasy regions from the 1740s onward. After the death of King Andriamahatindriarivo around 1755, the Sakalava kingdom was divided and subsequently weakened by external and internal pressures, and the sovereigns had more and more difficulties in assuring a regular flow of slaves to the coast.<sup>57</sup> We have reason to believe that this strengthened the power of the Antalaotra merchants, who regained much of their power in the 1770s, especially under the rule of Queen Ravahiny. We will see how this changing political and economic situation was reflected in the status of the intermediary.

### The first intermediaries of the Sakalava (before 1730)

Although the first intermediaries were the result of fortuitous encounters with shipwrecked sailors, between roughly 1685 and 1730, the existence of Europeans as intermediaries can best be explained in the context of piracy, as the island became an important refuge for buccaneers. At several points along the east coast, pirates and their offspring even established themselves as political powers amidst the coastal communities and they might have helped Andriamandisoarivo to conquer the Antalaotra strongholds in the 1680s.<sup>58</sup>

Consequently, an important number of retired pirates became intermediaries in the European slave trade in Madagascar.<sup>59</sup> Other Europeans came ashore as deserters or victims of pirate attacks or shipwrecks. In 1705, the crew of the *Ter Aa* found that a dozen Englishmen had taken up residence in Boeny Bay and ten years later, those on the *Leidsman* found around thirty Dutchmen at Bombetoka Bay, after being put ashore by a French privateer.<sup>60</sup> With the end of pirating, the number of Europeans in Madagascar diminished, although the island continued to attract fortune seekers.

Real intermediaries seem to have been absent under Antalaotra rule in the 1670s. This community generally spoke good Portuguese and their role as a merchant society with a century-long experience in maritime trade may have eliminated the need for an intermediary.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, the Dutch make mention of

<sup>57</sup> Evidence is found in the log of the *Schuilenburg* in 1755, which mentions the disorderly and pitiful state of the Kingdom of Boina, due to a civil war between the brothers of the deceased king. WCA, C2250, f. 51.

<sup>58</sup> Ratsivalaka, 1995, I, pp. 100–101.

<sup>59</sup> Larson, 2000, p. 65; Bialuschewski, 2005, p. 420.

<sup>60</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Ter Aa*, 1705. NA, VOC 10812, without folio; Westra & Armstrong, 2006, pp. 88–89.

<sup>61</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Voorhout*, 1676. NA, VOC 4012. This also underlines regular maritime contacts between the Antalaotra community and the east coast of Africa. Rantoandro, 1983, pp. 206–207.

the presence of certain “courtiers” of the king in trade transactions – such as Faki and Boeba who assisted them with some favours – but without going into much detail.<sup>62</sup> This changed with the creation of the Sakalava Kingdom of Boina, when trade was directly overseen by the sovereign, probably wanting to control commerce in the freshly conquered Antaloatra community and possibly influenced by a lack of experience of direct trade with European merchants.<sup>63</sup>

Although *commis* Jeremias Brons of the *Standvastigheid* indicated in 1694 that these Sakalava spoke some English, we see that the first intermediaries who made their appearance were Europeans, including Lou Lou, who was identified as a *Noorman* or Norwegian.<sup>64</sup> The reasons for this can be linked to their commercial know-how and multilingualism, and their military support for the Sakalava king. This resembled common practice in Guinea, where William Snelgrave informs us of the case of Bullfinch Lambe, an English intermediary in the 1720s.<sup>65</sup> Lou Lou gave advice to the Dutch on what gifts to give the king and acted as a spokesman between the two parties. He also acted as an intermediary in the case of any complaints. This allowed the Dutch to get things done on a day-to-day basis, especially when the Sakalava king was in his capital. In the end, they gave him a present for his loyal service.

For the services he provided, Lou Lou can accordingly be identified as the first real intermediary in the Dutch slave trade, at least about whom we possess detailed information. Under Andiantoakafo (reign c. 1710–c. 1732), only one Dutch vessel, the *Leidsman*, traded in Boeny Bay.<sup>66</sup> No real intermediary can be identified, although the Dutch praise the help of a certain Andian Simonalij, who was “the second person of the kingdom” and “had a great influence on the king.”<sup>67</sup> In return for his help in persuading the sovereign to accept the proposed price, Simonalij was given a musket. He also sold some of his slaves to the Dutch, as well as slaves of other Malagasy, encouraging them to accept the muskets offered.<sup>68</sup> However, can he be qualified as a broker?

In order to fully comprehend the status of the intermediary within the dynamics of the slave trade, we need to take into consideration certain specific criteria that can be found in the ship’s logs. In this article we see an intermediary as

<sup>62</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Voorhout*, 1677. NA, VOC 4013.

<sup>63</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Tamboer*, 1694. NA, VOC 1544, f. 1050-1051.

<sup>64</sup> A *commis* is a VOC merchant. Brons, *Een kort berigt wegens den quaden uijtslag den slavenhandeling aen ’t Eijlant Madagascar*, 14.01.1695. NA, VOC 1560, without folio.

<sup>65</sup> Snelgrave, 2008 [1735], pp. 61–62.

<sup>66</sup> This period represents a slump in Malagasy trade: Worden, 1997, p. 54.

<sup>67</sup> Westra & Armstrong, 2006, p. 95. He is identified by Stephen Ellis as sovereign Ratsimilaho of the Betsimisaraka community: Ellis, 2007, p. 452.

<sup>68</sup> Westra & Armstrong, 2006, p. 101.

being a courtier close to the king, but without being a member of his family or a high ranking official. However, they were most likely to have had an elevated status and a favourable position without holding any real political power, as we might see with some *rijksbestierders* who are identified from the 1740s onward.<sup>69</sup> Andrew Alexander, talking about St. Augustine Bay in the 1770s, states that the *Rijksbestierder's* role was that of the primary negotiator with the king, whereas the *makelaars* negotiated with the local Malagasy community.

However, it is difficult to compare different Malagasy regions, and a *Rijksbestierder* can be best identified as the right hand man of the Sakalava sovereign, or the official with whom West African sovereigns on the Slave Coast shared their control over the slave trade.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, he was given some gifts, as he might influence the king favourably, but he always remained close to the court and therefore cannot be seen as a trade intermediary, but instead as yet another person whose favours had to be "obtained."<sup>71</sup> In this light, Andian Simonalij was a "hybrid broker", as he took on this role, without being continuously employed in it.

The identification of a brokers' status within the Sakalava community is problematic. They had to live close to the shore in order to welcome foreign traders, and needed some commercial experience in the slave trade in order to know its dynamics. The fact that they were paid for their services, at least by the Dutch, is also essential. Although Alexander believes they were not language proficient, we consider that fluency in a European language would have been a fundamental prerequisite for obtaining their status, together with being accustomed to European culture.<sup>72</sup> West African courtiers, for example, always spoke a European language and they offered their services to the Europeans.<sup>73</sup>

These brokers should not, however, be confused with the king's close courtiers identified as ministers and emissaries sent to oversee trade and assure that the rules of the Sakalava sovereign were respected and the negotiated price was paid.<sup>74</sup> These deputies of the king could even decide on the prices of minor merchandise, clearly indicating their subordinate role and illustrating an important

<sup>69</sup> For example: Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1762, NA, VOC 4229, f. 379. His role seemed to have been that of a "primary mediator" according to Andrew Alexander (2005). However, there is no evidence of this in the Boina Kingdom.

<sup>70</sup> Law, 1991, pp. 206–207.

<sup>71</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761, WCA, C2250, f. 116–117. In 1741, the Brak had to use gifts for a number of people: "2<sup>e</sup> stem Andian Woana", "gunsteling Joema", "1e minister Andian Manoedoe", "two courtiers Andian Inatoew and Mangsaka".

<sup>72</sup> Alexander, 2007, pp. 42–43.

<sup>73</sup> Crété, 1989, pp. 120–121.

<sup>74</sup> Ellis, 2007, p. 452.

difference from the brokers.<sup>75</sup> Lastly, Jane Hooper identifies an “interpreter or an ambassador” in the English slave trade on Madagascar. It is not quite clear who she is referring to, but the role of an intermediary should be defined somewhere in the middle.<sup>76</sup> We should also emphasise that during the absence of slave ships, which could have lasted months or even years, brokers must have held a high social status in the Sakalava society.

## The golden age of brokers (1730–1770)

Our best information about Malagasy intermediaries in the Sakalava Kingdom of Boina is for the period between 1730 and 1770. These years seem to correspond to the institutionalization of their role. Smooth communication with European foreigners was of great importance and it is during this time that we see the assignment of brokers to Dutch slave traders by the sovereign.<sup>77</sup> Something very similar can be identified in Ouidah, on the West African coast, where the king appointed several brokers who served as agents as well as interpreters.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the number of Europeans in Madagascar diminished, thereby leaving the job of intermediary to other subjects of the king. In the following part, we introduce the different intermediaries that were encountered in chronological order and discuss their status, personality and background as perceived by the Dutch.

In 1732, the VOC ship *Binnenwijzend* encountered three different interpreters: Don Jan Sandpinder, Crismis, and Anthonij. Don Jan, who spoke “good Portuguese”, seems to have been the principal intermediary, and he was the one favoured by the *commis* who indicated that he was the most “political” one.<sup>79</sup> Crismis<sup>80</sup> was identified as a broker who spoke “crooked” English and subsequently assisted the ships *Huis ten Donk* in 1733, and *De Brak* in 1741 and in 1743, when he was the third *makelaar*.<sup>81</sup> In 1752, the Dutch encountered him again. This time he was identified as a septuagenarian, but his role as an official intermediary seems to have been over, as the king assigned three different brokers: Jan, Rhemeinte, and Jek.<sup>82</sup> The next year, however, we find Crismis as a broker,

<sup>75</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Schuijlenburg* 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

<sup>76</sup> Hooper, 2010, pp. 114–115.

<sup>77</sup> For example: Ship’s logbook of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 4157.

<sup>78</sup> Law, 2004, p. 132; Klein, 1999, p. 104.

<sup>79</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>80</sup> Other spellings include Krismus, Krismis, and Crusmusse.

<sup>81</sup> Ship’s logbook of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 4157, f. 156–157.

<sup>82</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Schuijlenburg* 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

together with Lourens and Rhemeinte.<sup>83</sup> After this, he was never mentioned again, although he might have died considering his age.

Antony Cheraha (or Seraha, or simply Anthonij) was the third interpreter for the *Binnenwijzend*, He spoke "good" Portuguese" and was described by the Dutch as of "Jesuit physiognomy and extremely cunning."<sup>84</sup> In 1741, Anthony was labelled as being the "King's favourite broker."<sup>85</sup> He would meet a tragic end in 1752, when the *Schuilenburg* was trading at Bombetoka Bay. "Recently, broker Antony was attacked, and killed in an unfortunate manner, after which the assassins took with them his wife, children, slaves, goods and other inhabitants, and we have been unable to retrieve them."<sup>86</sup>

Table I: Malagasy intermediaries in the Kingdom of Boina (1694–1770)

ACTIVE YEARS	NAME(S)	NUMBER OF VOC SHIPS
1694–1700	Lou Lou <sup>87</sup>	5
1732	Don Jan	1
1732–1753	Crismis	7
1732–1743	Anthonij	5
1752–1753	Remeinte	2
1753–1760	Laurens	2
1760	Remeinharo	1
1762	Reijgoege	1
1769–1770	Noeme	2

This table was compiled by studying dozens of ship's logs found in the Nationaal Archief in The Hague and in the Western Cape archives in Cape Town.

Political instability after the death of Andriamahatindriarivo, and the subsequent decline in Sakalava power, initially had no effect on the role of the brokers. In 1760, we find the usual broker, Laurens (together with Remeinharo), which

<sup>83</sup> Ship's logbook of *Drie Heuvelen*, 1753. NA, VOC 18014, without folio.

<sup>84</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>85</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 186–187.

<sup>86</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Schuilenburg*, 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

<sup>87</sup> He might have been there until 1705.

emphasizes the continuity of their status.<sup>88</sup> Two years later, the log of the *Meermin* recorded that Laurens had died and his brother Jacob had taken his place, assisted by Reijgoege and Jan Beene.<sup>89</sup> By 1770, the king had appointed no fewer than four brokers for the Dutch, among whom we find Noeme and Mahasinoe, together with multiple deputies, which might attest to the monarch's weakening power.<sup>90</sup> Things seem to have changed fundamentally in the mid-1770s, when the Dutch dealt exclusively with the Antaloatra as intermediaries.<sup>91</sup> The importance of the Malagasy interpreters in the Dutch slave trade is reflected in the continued use of the same people as brokers in the eighteenth century, as illustrated in Table I.

How does this compare to similar trade in the Western Indian Ocean region? The Comoro Islands were an important refreshment station for any European ship passing the Mozambique Channel. Being close to Madagascar, its political situation was similar to that of the Antaloatra community and their king, Saïd-Mahmet, primarily sold livestock and vegetables to the Europeans. In the 1730s and 1740s, French ships were mostly assisted by a certain "Abdala," who was seen as an interpreter and the "*courtier des étrangers, connu de tous nos François qui fréquentent cette Isle* [Anjouan]."<sup>92</sup> Although concrete details needed to make a thorough comparison are missing, we are inclined to believe that Abdala occupied virtually the same role as the Malagasy interpreters in Boeny Bay and Bombetoka Bay. In their voyages to the east coast of Africa in the 1770s, the Dutch did not encounter any intermediaries.<sup>93</sup> Other Malagasy regions also had their intermediaries as early as 1672, when the crew of the Dutch ship *Pijl* discovered an English-speaking Malagasy at St. Augustine Bay.<sup>94</sup> This continued in the 1740s, when the French found a certain James Martin, who spoke and even wrote English and Portuguese, although his role is difficult to distinguish in terms of political status, as he is labeled *Rijksbestierder*.<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately, the ship's logbooks are silent about the origins of the intermediaries. Their names are Europeanised in most cases, with Don Jan Sandpinder being the most notable case: He was a Portuguese nobleman.<sup>96</sup> Antony Seraha

<sup>88</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761. WCA, C2250, f. 109.

<sup>89</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1762. NA, VOC 4229, f. 378.

<sup>90</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Zon*, 1769. NA, VOC 4257, f. 183.

<sup>91</sup> The Antaloatra are identified as "moors." Ship's logbook of the *Zon*, 1775. NA, VOC 4279, f. 931.

<sup>92</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Penthièvre*, 1743. AN, MAR, 4JJ/116, p. 60.

<sup>93</sup> Ross, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> Hubert Hugo, *Cort extract*, 24 June 1672. NA, VOC 4009, f. 261.

<sup>95</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 4157, f. 156–157; Monet to the Archbishop of Paris, Bourbon Island, 13 Apr 1742. Archives de la Congrégation de la Mission, Manuscript 1504, piece 25.

<sup>96</sup> This might have been a name given by Portuguese to identify him easily. The English gave titles such as "Duke of York" to certain Malagasy interpreters in St. Augustine Bay: Hooper, 2010, pp. 122–123.

was said to have spent ten years in Lisbon, which is an extremely interesting reference as it is the only one indicating a prolonged stay in Europe, a phenomenon which seems to have been more widespread in West Africa. Plasse explains that in the 1760s, there were multiple *courtiers nègres* who had been in Europe, such as the nephew of the viceroy who had resided in Amsterdam for a long time.<sup>97</sup> These brokers were probably not Europeans, as they are usually named explicitly, as in 1733 when the VOC ship *Huis ten Donk* traded with “Louw [...] a Swiss [...] taken by the French in 1708 on [the] Companies’ ship *Overwinnaer* and sent here. He now acts as beach guard on Fomatoeke [Bombetoka Bay] on the orders of King Baba [Andriamahatindriarivo].”<sup>98</sup> In most of the African coastal regions, brokers were the offspring of European fathers and Malagasy mothers, as was quite common among the Betsimisaraka on the northeast coast of the island.<sup>99</sup> This is underlined by broker Crismis, who might have been close with the English pirates who stayed on the northwest coast in the 1690s.<sup>100</sup> However, from the end of the 1760s, these brokers seem to have lost every European aspect, as they no longer spoke any European language and ceased to have European names.<sup>101</sup>

Nathalie Everts states that in West Africa brokers did not always have a high status, though their importance and high status in Madagascar were attested to on different occasions.<sup>102</sup> In 1743, when two intermediaries were drunk and forgot to bring the Dutch traders to an audience with the king, they were immediately pardoned by the sovereign and their lives were spared.<sup>103</sup> The fact that broker Anthonij possessed slaves is also proof of his high social status. This is further emphasized by the fact that, when he murdered his wife in 1732, he was only punished by having his livestock confiscated, which was a typical punishment for Malagasy nobles.<sup>104</sup> Some brokers even became viceroy or *rijksbestierder*. Yet another example shows a certain freedom of movement, as in 1742, broker Jan fled from St. Augustine Bay to the Sakalava Kingdom of Boina after a failed military expedition to obtain slaves.<sup>105</sup> Subsequently, in 1753, a certain Jan (the

<sup>97</sup> Plasse, 2005, pp. 41–42, 54.

<sup>98</sup> Louw should not be confused with Lou Lou from the 1690s. This is probably sailor Lourens Lossinge from Basel, who embarked on this ship in 1707. Ship’s journal of the *Huis ten Donk*. 1733. NA, VOC 2266, f. 5186.

<sup>99</sup> Thiébaud, “La creation d’une élite franco-malgache à Madagascar au XVIIIe siècle,” forthcoming.

<sup>100</sup> His name also closely resembles the word for “Christmas” in both Malagasy and Swahili.

<sup>101</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Zon*, 1769. NA, VOC 4257, f. 183

<sup>102</sup> Everts, 2012, pp. 61–63.

<sup>103</sup> Ship’s logbook of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 2585, f. 210–211.

<sup>104</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Binnenwijzend* 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>105</sup> Boucher, 1979, p. 55.

same person?) was again found in St. Augustine Bay and claimed to have been a broker for VOC commis Daniel Rousselet in Bombetoka Bay ten years earlier.<sup>106</sup>

## The role of intermediaries in the slave trade

By this time, the VOC was well accustomed to the conventions of trade. However, the trading environment remained somewhat unpredictable, which is reflected by the varying success of the different expeditions.<sup>107</sup> We should note that interactions between the Malagasy sovereign and the VOC merchants were conducted on the basis of equality, as was the case in West Africa.<sup>108</sup> To illustrate the different phases of the slave trade, upon arrival foreign ships were greeted by some canoes, normally bringing a Malagasy broker – sometimes called a *strandwachter* – on board, who offered his services in assisting the merchants during their entire stay.<sup>109</sup> Most of the time, two or three individuals were continuously employed on different tasks. Again, we can see an important resemblance with the West African slave trade, where William Snelgrave was always accompanied by interpreters during his stay.<sup>110</sup>

The first task of these brokers was to inform the Sakalava king of the arrival of the Dutch traders and to help them assemble a reasonable gift. This is what the French called a *coutume*, some kind of trading rights, officially to honour the king, but in fact to “open” the negotiations on slave prices. Unlike some west African kingdoms, there was no real export tax per slave ship.<sup>111</sup> In 1741, broker Crismis gave advice on the sort of gifts that would please the king in order to be able to conduct trade in slaves.<sup>112</sup> For this, the European merchants had to visit Marovoay,<sup>113</sup> where they were again assisted by a broker, who they called *geleidsman*.<sup>114</sup> At the king’s residence, a “counter gift” was given by the Sakalava sovereign, often consisting of one or more oxen. This was followed by long, wearying price negotiations, which were carried out entirely by the king himself and we do not find evidence of intermediaries interfering in these discussions. Until

<sup>106</sup> Ship’s logbook of *Drie Heuvelen*, 1753. NA, VOC 18014, without folio.

<sup>107</sup> Alexander, 2005, p. 14.

<sup>108</sup> Klein, 1999, p. 111.

<sup>109</sup> Ship’s logbook of *Drie Heuvelen*, 1753. NA, VOC 18014, without folio. According to Jane Hooper, interpreters remained on the European ship throughout their stay, but we found no evidence of this on the northwest coast. Hooper, 2010, pp. 113–114

<sup>110</sup> Snelgrave, 2008 [1735], p. 119.

<sup>111</sup> Klein, 1999, p. 104.

<sup>112</sup> Ship’s logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 187–188.

<sup>113</sup> The Sakalava capital is situated several days’ walk from Bombetoka Bay.

<sup>114</sup> Ship’s logbook of the *Schuilenburg*, 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio. In 1743, as many as three brokers accompanied the Dutch to the Sakalava capital: Ship’s logbook of *De Brak*, 1743, NA, VOC 4157, f. 138–139.



the prices were fixed and freedom of commerce declared, which could take several weeks, nothing could be traded except for minor provisions such as poultry, eggs, and vegetables.<sup>115</sup>

It is not always clear how translating was carried out during these negotiations, as the Sakalava king and other chiefs did not speak any European language, or only knew a few words at best.<sup>116</sup> This contrasts with their counterparts on the northeast coast, who often spoke good French. The sovereign of Anjouan, Saïd-Mahmet, spoke very good Portuguese and acceptable French, and some West African sovereigns, such as Opubo Fubara Pepple, the king of Bonny, could speak sufficient English to make themselves understood by European traders.<sup>117</sup> In the case of Sakalava, the assistance of the Dutch interpreter is often explicitly mentioned, and in 1741, *De Brak* encountered the French interpreter "Pool" and two years later a French deserter "Raaijfiel," acting as a close counsellor and personal translator to the Sakalava king.<sup>118</sup> After successful negotiations, the Dutch would return to the beach and construct a temporary stronghold, called a *factorij*, where they received the slave sellers.

This construction was the responsibility of the brokers and when it was finished, the actual trading could finally begin.<sup>119</sup> Although the Sakalava sovereign could offer many dozens of slaves for sale to foreign traders, private merchants – mostly Antalaotra – accounted for the majority of the slaves traded. In general, no captive could be sold under the fixed price, unless their age differed or if they had physical defects. It was the duty of the intermediaries to direct the sellers, who might be deputies of the king as well as private merchants, to the Dutch *factorij*.<sup>120</sup> This took place on a daily basis, where slaves were often offered one by one.<sup>121</sup> In contrast with interpreters on the western coast of Africa, who had some involvement in the selling of slaves, there is no evidence of brokers selling their own slaves in Madagascar.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>115</sup> The penalty for trading slaves without royal permission was death: Ship's logbook of the *Huis ten Donk*, 1733. NA, VOC 2266, f. 5182.

<sup>116</sup> Andriamandisoarivo, who greeted the merchants of the ship *Soldaat* with "Goedendag," explained to them that the deserter Andries had taught him some Dutch words. Chamuleau, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>117</sup> The king of Anjouan exclaimed: "Piti-prince, Piti-pais, Piti-Roy, mais bon-gens, bon cœur, bon foy, et toujours bon service pour le François." Ship's logbook of the *Penthièvre*, 1743. Service historique de la Défense at Toulon, Ms. 10; Snelgrave, 2008 [1735], pp. 71–72; Saugera, 2012, pp. 83–84.

<sup>118</sup> Chamuleau, 2004, pp. 19–20; ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741, NA, VOC 2585, f. 213; Idem of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 4157, f. 142. Rafiki is the Swahili word for "friend." I thank James C. Armstrong for this observation.

<sup>119</sup> Alexander, 2007, p. 50.

<sup>120</sup> In West Africa the local sovereign as well as private merchants also traded their captives to the same Europeans: Law, 1989, p. 47.

<sup>121</sup> Alexander, 2005, p. 45; 2007, p. 54

<sup>122</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1762. NA, VOC 4229, f. 346; Law, 1991, p. 211.

The role of the brokers was nevertheless more complicated than that of simple intermediaries as they were the only liaison the slavers had with the Malagasy world and brokers intervened if there were complaints about the sale, locals' behaviour or anything else. They mediated disagreements with the local population, as happened in 1732, when broker Don Jan received complaints from the Dutch concerning firearms that were initially accepted by the Malagasy but afterwards returned. This broker ensured that trading items were more readily accepted by the Malagasy and not given back.<sup>123</sup> The same thing happened with the *Schuilenburg*, when the intermediaries forced private sellers of slaves to accept muskets of lesser value.<sup>124</sup>

When trade progressed too slowly, the broker tried to calm the Dutch, visiting the king on multiple occasions to resolve disagreements such as the low number of slaves offered for sale, while the sovereign tried to obtain some gifts from the Dutch to encourage him to trade more quickly.<sup>125</sup> In 1760, the *commis* complained to the brokers that work on the *factorij* was advancing too slowly.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, complaints could also come from the Malagasy, such as in 1741, when Dutch sailors who had bought *toak* (an alcoholic beverage) from the local population, refused to pay them. The Malagasy in question complained via the brokers to the *commis*, who replied that they should not sell alcohol to his crew.<sup>127</sup> In the end, the VOC merchant agreed to pay for the drink to calm the situation. Their presence seemed to inspire confidence, for both Malagasy sellers and Dutch buyers, and the trade might even be interrupted when the *makelaars* were absent.<sup>128</sup>

The brokers frequently had to follow orders from the king, such as in 1761 when they had to make sure that the Dutch did not trade with the Antalaotra.<sup>129</sup> In 1732, Don Jan promulgated the order of the king that obliged every subject to sell their slaves to the Dutch. According to Crismis, it was a very strict order, because someone had already been beheaded for not offering slaves for trade.<sup>130</sup> Their role was also to assure the sale of the king's slaves, encouraging the Dutch to buy old and less valuable slaves, because these belonged to the sovereign.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>124</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Schuilenburg*, 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

<sup>125</sup> Sleight & Westra, 2013, pp. 29–32.

<sup>126</sup> For example: Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1760. WCA, C2250, f. 111.

<sup>127</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 287. At the same time, these brokers made daily demands for portions of strong arak from Batavia.

<sup>128</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1763. NA, VOC 4229, f. 367.

<sup>129</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761. WCA, C2250, f. 118–119.

<sup>130</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>131</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1762. NA, VOC 4229, f. 350, f. 353.

On one occasion, the brokers claimed that trade was slow because the sovereign was not as powerful as his deceased brother, and that the young slaves had all run off when the ship arrived.<sup>132</sup> Accordingly, the brokers might have been in a dependent situation vis-à-vis the Sakalava sovereign.

## Relations between the Sakalava king and the VOC merchants

The role of the brokers can be better understood if we focus on the dynamics of the slave trade. One of the main tasks of the brokers was to secure communications between the Sakalava kings, residing at their inland capital, and the Dutch, staying at the shore. Although trade benefitted both parties, their respective goals were different: The VOC merchants sought to buy as many young male slaves as possible for a fair price in a short space of time, whereas the Sakalava sovereign tried to get rid of all his captives, while trying to stall trade in order to receive more gifts.<sup>133</sup> Somewhere in the middle we might find the broker, who had to find a compromise that would satisfy both parties. In this, the king had the home advantage. Most of the time, the Dutch merchants did not have any experience in the Malagasy slave trade, and had to find practical solutions in a sometimes hostile environment. Alexander explains that the Dutch were engaged in a heavily dependent relationship with the Malagasy.<sup>134</sup>

This can best be seen in the light of competition, when the intermediary might send slave sellers to the European trading party offering the highest price.<sup>135</sup> In 1741, the brokers explained to the Dutch:

If you don't buy everything that we bring to you, young or old, man or woman, then we shall not bring any more slaves for sale and we will send them all to the French. It is a favour that we send slaves first to you and afterwards to the French.<sup>136</sup>

When they kept on refusing old or unfit slaves, the brokers came to them saying, “you liars, don't we offer you any slaves? And is our king not a mighty one and is he not fair?”<sup>137</sup> The Dutch finally gave in and bought some old and partially

<sup>132</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761. WCA, C2250, f. 122–123; Ship's logbook of the *Meermin*, 1763. NA, VOC 4229, f. 377.

<sup>133</sup> In addition to the *coutume*, which was necessary to start trading, the Dutch would occasionally give more gifts to the Sakalava sovereign in order to speed up trade.

<sup>134</sup> Alexander, 2005, p. 29.

<sup>135</sup> However, some brokers could show loyalty, such as Don Jan who refused to trade with the French, unlike his colleague Crismis. Ship's logbook of the *Binnenwijzend*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio.

<sup>136</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 243.

<sup>137</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 278.

disabled captives in order to smooth the trade. This was a well-known tactic often encouraged by the VOC in order to please the king and encourage trade.<sup>138</sup> The Dutch could also be firm, as shown in 1761 when the *commis* refused to take the old captives of the king, although the *makelaars* insisted strongly.<sup>139</sup> Several years later, the Dutch even pretended to sail away from the bay, after the new king demanded no less than 150 Spanish piasters<sup>140</sup> for a slave. This threat made the sovereign quickly agree to the initial price of 20 piasters.<sup>141</sup>

## Independence of the intermediary

The actions of the brokers, who seem to have been relatively independent, were mostly dictated by the prospect of economic gain. There is evidence that on every slaving expedition the Dutch gave gifts to the brokers and although no salary was negotiated, they knew that they would receive these offerings. This was mostly in order to encourage them, for example in 1752, when the Dutch gave a musket to every intermediary, “in order to bind them to us and make them favourable to our cause,” promising them a more important gift if the slave trade was successful.<sup>142</sup> On other occasions, gifts were given to thank them for their completed services. As illustrated in Table II, this compensation fluctuated and changed per expedition, but appears to have been approximately equivalent to the price of an adult male slave. Although sometimes, as was the case in 1743, even the wives of the brokers were given a present, compensation could also be “less than usual,” such as in 1761, when poor trade was “reflected in the [poor] gifts.”<sup>143</sup>

In addition to the normal compensation, the Dutch traders were sometimes inclined to give more presents to encourage the intermediaries, as indicated in the journal of *De Brak*.<sup>144</sup> This was as well as the continuous pouring of arak, a very popular strong spirit, which seemed to have been the perfect way to smooth relations and get the brokers on their side.<sup>145</sup> These advantages contrast with their West African counterparts, who received a sales commission.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>138</sup> See for example: Instructions of the *Westerwijk*, 3 Nov 1685. NA, VOC 4022, f. 183–185.

<sup>139</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761, WCA, C2250, f. 113.

<sup>140</sup> Silver coin.

<sup>141</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Zon*, 1769. NA, VOC 4257, f. 384–385.

<sup>142</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Schuilenburg*, 1752. VOC 10815, without folio.

<sup>143</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761. WCA, C2251, f. 2; Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1743, NA, VOC 4157, f. 150–151.

<sup>144</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1743. NA, VOC 4157, f. 156–157.

<sup>145</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 318–319; Armstrong & Worden, 1989, p. 110.

<sup>146</sup> Klein, 1999, p. 104; Crété, 1989, p. 128.

we do not know if the brokers also received anything from the Sakalava king for their part in the slave trade, but they could be relieved from their duty.<sup>147</sup>

Table II: Compensation received by broker Crismis on three different voyages (compared with the price of a male slave).

YEARS	GIFT	PRICE OF A MALE SLAVE
1732	1 firearm, 1 silk	2 firearms and 5 ounces of gunpowder
1741	2 firearms, 6 ounces of gunpowder, 10 ounces of bullets, 30 flints, 4 simple rough	2 firearms, 2 ounces of gunpowder, 14 ounces of bullets, and 10 flints.
1752	1 piece of simple rough	2 firearms, 8 ounces of gunpowder, 4 ounces of bullets, and 25 flints.

Sources: Ship's log of the *Binnewijsent*, 1732. NA, VOC 11257, without folio; Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 321; Ship's logbook of the *Schuijlenburg*, 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

Although these gifts seem to have been sufficient incentive for brokers to go back and forth between the two parties in order to get the most benefit possible, they remained relatively independent in their actions; from the Dutch merchants as well as from the Sakalava king. For example, the Dutch were not able to build their factorij without the presence of the brokers.<sup>148</sup> In 1741, broker Crismis tricked the Dutch into buying the same slave three times, as he had been able to escape twice.<sup>149</sup> Another trick used on multiple occasions was that of the brokers trying to stall the Dutch departure by promising more slaves in a few days.<sup>150</sup> On another occasion, Crismis cursed and insulted a Dutch merchant who deceived

<sup>147</sup> Ship's logbook of the *Neptunus*, 1761, WCA, C2250, f. 123–124.

<sup>148</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 287.

<sup>149</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 287.

<sup>150</sup> The Dutch preferred a quick trade with mostly male adults for a reasonable price. Ship's logbook of the *Schuijlenburg*, 1752. NA, VOC 18015, without folio.

him.<sup>151</sup> The ship's logbook of the *De Brak*, 1741, shows a perfect example of their strategy:

[...] now we [the Dutch] want to leave, but they [the brokers] try to stall us because our 'counter gifts' haven't been satisfactory enough for the natives, because they do not honour their words as we have often encountered that they try to persuade us in the beginning and even forced our hand to accept from their wives or relatives as well as some native officer or friend a bowl of milk or a fowl, though after which they bother us directly or the other day to pay a gift and by this end we try to swindle them with a bottle of arak, but they wouldn't be satisfied until we added some piece of cloth.<sup>152</sup>

Both parties tried to get the better of the situation, as was the case in West Africa or indeed in any commercial exchange.<sup>153</sup>

Although a useful trading tool, the intermediaries could sometimes be a real obstacle to trade. Again on the expedition of *De Brak* in 1741, problems persisted when the brokers offered livestock in return for some help from the Dutch who note "this appeared [to] us too dangerous, because from all circumstances, it is clear that they have nothing good for us, and they will give nothing away, or they want to have a cow in return for an egg."<sup>154</sup> Europeans also risked treachery in West Africa, where Marie Grand, a courtier of the French "*est un nègre moins menteur que les autres.*"<sup>155</sup> The image given by Jean-Pierre Plasse of the West African brokers fits perfectly with the Malagasy ones:

*Il faut avoir toujours un nègre courtier par rapport à la langue du pays, lequel entend les langues d'Europe comme le Français, l'Anglais et le Hollandais et auquel on donne une bagatelle pour sa peine. Tous ses semblables sont pour l'ordinaire un peu fripons [sic]. C'est pourquoi il faut prendre garde dans les marchés. Ailleurs, ils sont assez bons gens.*<sup>156</sup>

## Conclusion

Because linguistic and cultural differences existed in the commercial interactions between the Malagasy and the Dutch, both parties tried to overcome these barriers. The Dutch did this by employing their own translators, the Malagasy by

<sup>151</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 325.

<sup>152</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 297.

<sup>153</sup> Crété, 1989, p. 121.

<sup>154</sup> Ship's logbook of *De Brak*, 1741. NA, VOC 2585, f. 298.

<sup>155</sup> Plasse, 2005, p. 57.

<sup>156</sup> Plasse, 2005, pp. 40–41.

using intermediaries. The political and economic situation in the region reflected the evolution of the intermediaries, from accidental European castaways and former pirates, to multilingual Antalaoatra. From the eighteenth century, as the role of the broker became institutionalised we commonly see the same intermediaries assisting the VOC merchants in their relationship with the Sakalava and their sovereign. They became indispensable trading tools for the VOC in order to get their share of captives from the Sakalava sovereign, and for the latter, were essential in regulating the slave trade that was primordial to their survival. In this, we see many similarities with other slave trading regions, especially West Africa.

The role of the brokers consisted of guiding the Dutch merchants during their entire stay in Madagascar. However, because they were dependent on the king for their position, we argue that these intermediaries were able to exploit their position within the possibilities that lay in their reach. In particular, they were driven by the economic profit that would result from helping the VOC merchants in carrying out their orders, and they might also have received advantages from helping the sovereign and private Malagasy traders sell their captives. Therefore, we argue that their role was much more ambiguous, somewhere between carrying out the king’s orders and meeting Dutch demands, while trying to get the best out of their situation. They were of fundamental importance to both parties in securing a profitable deal.

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**“BEHIND SO MANY NAMES, THE SEA”.  
MOZAMBIQUE AND THE INDIAN OCEAN**

**Elena Brugioni**

Department of Literary Theory of the University of Campinas  
Brazil

*This chapter proposes a discussion based on a critical intersection between Indian Ocean studies and Cultural and Literary Studies in Portuguese-speaking contexts, by addressing the Indian Ocean as a critical framework for interpreting literary and visual narratives from Mozambique. Its objective is to put forward a counterpoint between literary and visual representations and thereby address the Indian Ocean as an aesthetic and epistemological paradigm in order to (re)situate the Mozambican cultural imagination, and thus, contribute to "new disciplinary developments" (Pearson, 2011) in the field of Indian Ocean studies.*

keywords: Indian Ocean studies, African Literatures, Visual and Written narratives, Mozambique, Indian Ocean.

A historical study centred on a stretch of water has all the charms but undoubtedly all the dangers of a new departure.

**Fernand Braudel**

In order to provide an appropriate introduction, I would like to start my reflection by underlining at least two preliminary aspects that characterise both the state of the art regarding transnational approaches in the Portuguese-speaking world, and the relevance of Mozambique in the field of Indian Ocean studies.

Regarding the state of the art, when it comes to the application of transnational frameworks to the study of African literary and visual narratives, the concepts related to the Atlantic space are the most established and properly theorised (Gilroy, 1998; Shoat & Stam, 2012). They represent a productive alternative paradigm in addressing historical, social and cultural relationships. As far as the Portuguese-speaking world is concerned, the transnational approach favoured by theorisation, originally analysed, for instance, by leading scholars such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2001) and Miguel Vale de Almeida (2000), offers the opportunity to outline an alternative political, social and cultural history of the southern region of the Atlantic by addressing the specificity of this area as crucial to an understanding of the past and present of the region and the cultural “*branchements*” (Amselle, 2001) related to the “*postcolonial situation*” (Balandier, 2007). Slave trade history and heritage, international relations, transnational development policies, South-South cooperation and migration, race and ethnic studies, cultural and social representations are just a few of the topics that are addressed in the transnational perspective of the Global South Atlantic, establishing this very concept as one significant category of analysis in the Portuguese-speaking critical contexts, in order to (re)think relations between Portugal and its former Empire (Almeida 2000; Santos, 2001; Alencastro 2000; Bethencourt & Chaudhuri 1998-2002, among others).

At the same time, critical and theoretical production regarding the Indian Ocean in the Portuguese-speaking world is rather different, still representing a very marginal framework, even in the fields of maritime study, slave trade his-

tory and social history in general. Few works on the slave trade in the Indian Ocean have been published in Portuguese and there are very few publications in the fields of anthropology, sociology or history that actually address the relations between, for instance, Mozambique and the Indian Ocean and conceptualise the maritime space as a region or a unit of analysis (Alpers, 1975; Boxer, 1963; Campbell 2004; Capela 2002; Pereira Leite & Khouri, 2012; Perez 1998; *Oceanos* 1998-2002). Moreover, the majority of the works published until now are actually dedicated to ancient times, the period prior to European colonisation, and so far have left modern and contemporary space and time roughly untouched in different fields of research (Pearson, 2011). Especially in the field of history, research on the Indian Ocean has considered the different presences and contacts established in this space-time framework over history and addressed the different nations, areas and regions linked through the Indian Ocean "network" (Kearney, 2004; McPherson, 1993; Pearson, 2003; Vergès, 2003). Although the Indian Ocean world represents a well-established study area in a number of disciplines in so-called African studies this critical perspective still appears to be a ground-breaking approach.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in Indian Ocean studies the linguistic divide that characterises the region represents a very strong impediment to the inclusion, for instance, of Mozambique in an area where the hegemony of languages other than Portuguese, i.e. English, French and Swahili, among others, fosters a difficult attitude of a Portuguese-speaking context in the Indian Ocean region. In my opinion, on the contrary, it appears to be remarkably emblematic for a cultural and socio-political analysis of the Mozambican context, as I hope to highlight in this article.

Where methodology is concerned when addressing history through a space-time framework, following Fernand *Braudel* ideas, and tackling the sea as a place of historical, economic and also cultural relations (Braudel, 1985), Indian Ocean studies<sup>2</sup> provides a set of epistemologies and concepts that define the Indian Ocean as a "network of dynamic and structured relationships" (Chaundhury, 1990). They underscore the critical assumption that "Space is a more fundamental, rational and a priori dimension for social action than time-order and succession. (...) Space takes precedence in historical understanding over its complementary

<sup>1</sup> The definition of *Literature of the Indian Ocean* within the field of African literary studies represents an ongoing critical debate, especially within specific critical contexts such as the francophone one. In this regard see "Claiming the Field. Africa and the Space of Indian Ocean Literature" by Moradewun Adejunmobi in *Callaloo* 32.4 (2009) 1247-1261. Also in the so-called Portuguese-speaking African literatures, the Indian Ocean perspective it is not yet an established critical framework, especially in a comparative approach among narratives written in different languages and thus placed in distinct national contexts.

<sup>2</sup> For an essential bibliography on *Indian Ocean Studies*, see Bose 2006, Gupta, Hofmeyr & Person, 2010; Fawaz & Bayly 2002, Kearney 2004, McPherson 1993, Moorthy & Jamal, 2010, Pearson 2003, Vergès 2003.

field of chronology” (Chaundhury, 1990). In this respect, historian Sugata Bose (2006) has a specific definition for the Indian Ocean, which engages with the critical debate in the very field of the Indian Ocean as a study area, and promotes an alternative framework to define this space-time region.

The Indian Ocean is better characterized as an “interregional arena” rather than as a “system”, a term that has more rigid connotations. An interregional arena lies somewhere between the generalities of a “world system” and the specificities of particular regions. (Bose, 2006, p. 6)

According to Bose, the relationship between a regional entity and world-system that the definition of the Indian Ocean as an “arena” attempts to promote is based on the need to problematise spatial constructs that seem to project a certain *coloniality of knowledge* (Mudimbe, 1998; Quijano, 2002). However, the conceptual definition of the Indian Ocean as an “interregional arena” and, of course, its epistemological developments is far from being a consensual theoretical assumption. In this respect, the problematisation proposed by Shanty Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal (2010) engages with Bose’s theory and sets forward a number of different critical perspectives and paradigms that provide a distinctive framework to situate and analyse the Indian Ocean space-time. Underlining commonality as a crucial aspect in order to deconstruct the opposition between the “local” and the “global”, according to this theorisation, the Indian Ocean needs to be addressed as an independent area, thus eliminating the risk of using a diminished critical and epistemological definition of the region.

We propose that the Indian Ocean region possesses an internal commonality which enables us to view it as an area in itself: commonalities of history, geography, merchant capital and trade, ethnicity, culture, and religion. This we contrast to Sugata Bose’s notion of an “interregional arena.” While usefully raising the possibility of viewing the Indian Ocean region as a human theatre which occupies interstices and straddles several regions, “interregionalism” runs the risk of diminishing the Indian Ocean region as a unique space, locking it into being a region between more significant regions, overshadowed by the concerns of nations with fixed borders and orchestrated histories, and continents that dominate by virtue of sheer mass. We prefer to treat the Indian Ocean region as one, among many, liminal spaces of hybrid evolution, an area whose boundaries are both moveable and porous, which brings us close to Devleena Ghosh and Stephen Muecke’s notion of *transnational imaginative geography*. (Moorthy & Jamal, 2010, p.4)

Moreover, the critical reflection from Moorthy and Jamal (2010) is based on a specific critical framework regarding the notion of "world-system" and thus suggesting an interesting theoretical articulation in the field of African studies.

Reorienting significance and temporality features large in Andre Gunder Frank's application of world system analysis, advocating one, rather than many, world systems. This not only restores the Indian Ocean world to its place in the panoply of human history, but allows this region to be treated as a unit for analysis in a contemporary world which Frank proposes has always been international, economically integrated and globally interconnected. (Moorthy & Jamal, 2010, p.10)

Furthermore, this specific articulation underlines an important epistemological perspective regarding the "human dimension of the Indian Ocean region" (Moorthy & Jamal, 2010), and the role of the imagination for its study and theorisation.

To speak of a "human ocean" then, is not merely to speak adjectivally, or metaphorically, but to harness human cultural practice to the element which has made it possible. Moreover, to think the oceanic human is also to affirm "the rearrangement of desires" within the ethico-political sphere of the humanities. (Moorthy & Jamal, 2010, p.14)

To sum up, the critical debate in Indian Ocean studies offers a number of diversified theoretical discussions and epistemologies that appear to be particularly relevant in the field of African literary, visual and cultural studies, putting forward an original and alternative outlook to read and place African literary and artistic narratives in a transnational and transdisciplinary framework. It is in these theoretical and critical articulations that contemporary African literary and visual narratives offer the opportunity to tackle the Indian Ocean as a "transnational imaginative geography" (Ghosh & Muecke, 2007), suggesting "alternative epistemological experiences" (García Canclini, 2012), to (re)define the grammar of human knowledge and experience.

Within this theoretical discussion, Mozambican cultural imaginary, social and political features can be addressed, tackling the relation between the land — Mozambique — and the sea — the Indian Ocean — as a paradigmatic link in order to (re)situate and understand the contemporary cultural and social transformations of this country whose relevance is increasing in transnational relations in the Western Indian Ocean arena. However, in order to situate the relationship between Mozambique and the Indian Ocean, I need to set up a specific space-

time framework, by moving back in time to the age of the Portuguese imperial expansion in Africa, and by heading north in space, to arrive at a paradigmatic place such as the Island of Mozambique, *Ilha de Moçambique*.

## **Ilha de Moçambique and the Indian Ocean, a metonymy of the literary nation**

Situated in the northern part of the country and linked to the mainland by a narrow bridge, the Island of Mozambique is an exceptionally symbolic and paradigmatic place both for the “great narrative” of the Portuguese discoveries — *descobrimentos* — and for the colonial and post-colonial eras. From a historical point of view, the Island of Mozambique is the place where Vasco da Gama, one of the key figures of the Portuguese imperial narrative, arrived with his fleet in 1498, and where the poet Luís Vaz de Camões stopped on his way back to Portugal from India. One important aspect is the political definition of the Island of Mozambique in the Portuguese Empire. The island was in fact the African outpost of the Indian State, and thus the administrative headquarters of the Portuguese establishment in East Africa. In 1753, the Portuguese Crown established the Island of Mozambique as the capital of the province of Mozambique. In 1898, the capital was then moved south, to the city of Lourenço Marques, now called Maputo.

From a cultural perspective and thus from the point of view of the national imagination, the Island of Mozambique often stands as a synecdoche for the nation — the part for the whole — or, as the historian Alexandre Lobato pointed out, “a living symbol” (1989), signifying and projecting a peculiar imaginary particularly with regard to the variety of subjects, histories and cultures that populate the Mozambican cultural universe. It is the “astonishing Indian Ocean” in particular — *o espantoso Índico* — as Lobato stated (1989), that shapes the distinctive historical, social and cultural features of this “fragment of the nation” (Chatterjee, 1993) and establishes the Island of Mozambique as a fundamental starting point in approaching, defining and problematising the relationship between the Mozambican national cultural imagination and identity and its maritime component.

Observing Mozambican poetry during both colonial times and after independence, the Island of Mozambique represents a paradigmatic place or, as Jessica Falconi pointed out, “the metonymy of the nation” (2008). From here it raised an alternative and disruptive identitarian discourse which pointed to a potential *alternative utopia* (Chaves, 2002; Falconi, 2008) of what has been defined as



the literary *Mozambicaness* — *moçambicanidade* — whose limits go far beyond the telluric space and where the Indian Ocean represents a crucial standing point in order to re-think and re-define the cultural discourse on the Mozambican narratives of the nation. In her reflection on three key figures of Mozambican poetry Rui Knopfly, Luís Carlos Patraquim and Eduardo White, concerning Ilha de Moçambique, Rita Chaves states:

As metonymy of a larger history, each with its own geographical, historical, political and cultural reality that Mozambique is setting, the Island will be represented as an incomplete mosaic, in which the pieces were lost and/or were improperly placed. The design, therefore, proves to be confusing and the exercise of the word is a means to revolve the ground and extract meaning from now deposited fragments before each gaze. (...) the attachment to the space should not be confused with the idealization and what stands out are the signs of a relationship which, being one of love, does not pacify spirits nor hides frustrations. (...) the island is organized as a metaphor for an identity in disquiet, a process that mixes refusal and persecution, far from finding in the field of subjectivity the serenity that monsoons offered to the difficult art of navigation. (Chaves, 2002)<sup>3</sup>

In this regard, the dimension of “disquiet, refusal and persecution” (Chaves, 2002) is particularly relevant when reflecting on cultural and identitarian discourses that are related to an idea of a homogeneous and hegemonic nationhood, inscribing in the national paradigm a differential and counter-hegemonic feature, which seems to be crucial in rethinking the national construct in its cultural articulation. In this respect, the Indian Ocean as an “inter-regional arena”, according to Sugata Bose (2006), becomes a particularly useful concept for highlighting the fragmentary and confrontational dimension that constitutes a crucial feature of this symbolic, political and cultural maritime space-time. Furthermore, the Island of Mozambique becomes a physical and conceptual place to (re)think cultural discourses and narratives placed in the Mozambican space, before and after independence, pointing to a number of representations, ambiguities and contradictions and thus underlining a symbolic, cultural and political ambivalence that becomes emblematic in questioning the present and the past, not only from

<sup>3</sup> Original quote: “Como metonímia de uma história maior, a de cada um com essa realidade geográfica, histórica, política e cultural que Moçambique vai configurando, a Ilha será representada como um mosaico incompleto, no qual as peças se perderam e/ou foram inadequadamente colocadas. O desenho, portanto, revela-se confuso e o exercício da palavra é um meio de revolver o terreno e extrair o significado dos fragmentos ora depositados diante de cada olhar. (...) o apego ao espaço não se confunde com a idealização e o que salta são os sinais de uma relação que, sendo de amor, não pacifica espíritos e não esconde frustrações. (...) a ilha organiza-se como a metáfora de uma identidade em desassossego, num processo que mistura recusa e perseguição, muito distante de encontrar no terreno da subjetividade a serenidade que as monções ofereciam à difícil arte de navegar”. (Chaves, 2002)

a national perspective but also from a regional and transnational standpoint. In other words, as Jessica Falconi points out:

On the one hand, the Island as “brothel of history” (Soupa & Saúte 1992, p.53), hellish place of slavery, and submission to the different dominations that passed by; on the other hand, in the antipodes, the image of an exemplary place of peaceful coexistence between peoples and cultures, emblematic of that “world that the Portuguese created” theorized by Gilberto Freyre (...) Such representations make of the Island’s memory a problematic heritage, determining the controversial role that this place still takes in the Mozambican national imagination (Chaves, 2002) nowadays. Therefore, it is with these images of the island that the poetic of representations either get in an open rupture, or in processes of negotiation. (Falconi, 2013, p. 80)<sup>4</sup>

The Island of Mozambique becomes the geographical, poetic, political and visual place from which to examine the relationship between the land — Mozambique — and the sea — the Indian ocean — underlying the epistemological potential of these *fragments of the nation* in order to establish the importance of the maritime space in Mozambican contemporary cultural discourses and representations.

## “Transnational Imaginative Geographies”: Mozambican visual and written narrative of the Indian Ocean

As noted by Francisco Noa, the Indian Ocean is emerging loudly among the new voices of Mozambican poetry. Following the path of the previous, acclaimed generation of Mozambican poets,<sup>5</sup> such as Virgílio de Lemos, Rui Knopfly and Luís Carlos Patraquim, among others, the new generation is claiming the Ocean as a “source and motivation” (Noa, 2012) in order to propose an “unconventional” and “dispersive” identitarian and cultural discourse defined by a number of specific themes such as, for instance, “the sea and travel” (Noa, 2012).

(...) The trajectory of the Mozambican poetry, from the origins to the present day, not even necessarily setting it as a dominant theme, but with a weight and unquestionable value, reveals that the sea, specifically the Indian Ocean, is not and has

<sup>4</sup> Original quote: “Por um lado, a Ilha como “lupanar da história” (Soupa & Saúte, 1992: 53), sítio infernal de escravatura, e de submissão às diferentes dominações que por ali passaram; por outro lado, nas antípodas, a imagem de um lugar exemplar de convivência pacífica entre povos e culturas, emblemático daquele “mundo que o português criou” teorizado por Gilberto Freyre (...) Tais representações fazem da memória da Ilha uma herança problemática, determinando o papel controverso que este lugar ocupa no imaginário nacional moçambicano (Chaves, 2002) ainda na contemporaneidade. É, pois, com estas imagens da Ilha, que as representações poéticas entram ora em aberta ruptura, ora em processos de negociação”. (Falconi, 2013, p. 80)

<sup>5</sup> In this respect see: Francisco Noa (2012; 2014), Rita Chaves (2002), Fátima Mendonça (2011), Ana Mafalda Leite (2003), Carmen Tindó Secco (2006), Maria-Benedita Basto (2006), Jessica Falconi (2008; 2013)

never been, an empty space, but a place of deep, endless and consequential commitments and dynamics of human, social, cultural, political and economic nature. But above all, a place where the poetic imagination not only recreates dimensions hitherto unsuspected, but also manifests itself as a powerful exercise of aesthetic freedom, assertion of subjectivity and historical consciousness. In the mirrored relationship established between the sea and the actual writing what outweighs it are the worlds that one and the other can provide. Moreover, of how to transition from one to the other in a relentless demonstration of how both the writing and the Indian Ocean are platforms of transgression, evasion, denial of territorial or other limits and also of a restoration and reinvention of existence and destinations, either private or collective. (Noa, 2012, p. 14; my translation)<sup>6</sup>

In this respect, the work of contemporary Mozambican poets such as Adelino Timóteo, Eduardo White, Guita Júnior, Sangare Okapi and Júlio Carrilho<sup>7</sup> represents a very significant literary *corpus* that provides an original, alternative view of the question of national identity and embraces the Indian Ocean, its meanings and agency, as one of the stronger motivations in contemporary artistic and cultural discourses. As far as the contemporary Mozambican novel is concerned, it is the work of Mía Couto, and particularly João Paulo Borges Coelho, that takes a very peculiar approach to the Indian Ocean space-time, through an original literary project that uses the maritime perspective as an operational standpoint to re-present Mozambican specificity. It is interesting to consider, for example, the literary work of Borges Coelho in this light (Can, 2013; Chaves, 2008). His writing paints an original picture of the relationship between space and time, thus redefining the so-called national cultural context through an emblematic repositioning of facts and subjects in a transnational space and time framework.<sup>8</sup> It is in its engagement with a complex relationship between time and space that the literary work of Borges Coelho points to a contextual dimension that blurs the boundaries of the nation, putting forward relationships and dynamics that must be observed

<sup>6</sup> Original quote: "(...) a trajetória da poesia moçambicana, desde às origens até aos nossos dias, mesmo não se colocando necessariamente como uma temática dominante, mas com um peso e valor inquestionável, revelamos que o mar, mais concretamente o Oceano Índico, não é, nem nunca foi, um espaço vazio, mas um lugar de profundos, intermináveis e consequentes compromissos e dinâmicas de natureza humana, social, cultural, política e económica. Mas sobretudo um lugar onde a imaginação poética não apenas recria dimensões até aí insuspeitas, como também se manifesta como um poderoso exercício de liberdade estética, de afirmação da subjectividade e de consciência histórica. Na relação de espelho que se estabelece entre o mar e a própria escrita o que sobrepõe são os mundos que tanto um como outro nos podem propiciar. Mais, de como se transita de um para outro, numa incessante demonstração de como tanto a escrita como o Oceano Índico são plataformas de transgressão, de evasão, de negação de limites territoriais ou outros e, também, de reconstituição e de reinvenção da existência e dos destinos sejam eles privados ou colectivos." (Noa, 2012, p. 14)

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed analysis of the contemporary Mozambican poetry see Noa 2014.

<sup>8</sup> I am referring, for example, to the two collections of short stories *Índicos Índicios I – Setentrião* (2005) and *Índicos Índicios II – Meridiano* (2005) or to the novel *O Olho de Herzog* (2010). In both cases, the spatial dimension occurs as a narrative paradigm, highlighting a number of emblematic transnational relations.

through a critical perspective that goes beyond a national geopolitical context.<sup>9</sup> In other words, from a cultural and literary point of view, as Isabel Hofmeyr puts it:

We need to think of the Indian Ocean as the site par excellence of ‘alternative modernities’; those formations of modernity that have taken shape in an archive of deep and layered existing social and intellectual traditions. (...) Understanding political discourse and action, then, becomes a task of understanding a complex layered pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial archive in which versions of modernity are negotiated in an ever-shifting set of idioms around ‘tradition’. (Hofmeyr, 2007, p.13)

An artistic counterpoint to these literary voices can be found in the work of the contemporary Mozambican artist Pekiwa — Nelson Augusto Carlos Ferreira (1977) — whose sculpture seems to portray a very peculiar claim to the sea, recovering, for instance, old *remains* from the Island of Mozambique and reshaping them in a way that immediately brings to mind the theme and imagery of travel. Working with emblematic and highly symbolic “traces” from The Island of Mozambique — doors, windows, pieces of wood — in his sculpture entitled *Barco Mensageiro*, the artist gave new life to these abandoned “remains” with a history, as António Cabrita states (2010, p. 196), making them new, without silencing their past, integrity and materiality.

Picture 1. Pekiwa in *Abélard, Luís (Org.) (2010). Com As Maões. 24 Artistas Moçambicanos.*



Lisboa: Babel, pp. 199.

<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Borges Coelho’s literary work seems to contribute to a reconfiguration of the so-called national context. For a critical reading of the literary work of this author, see: Chaves 2008 and Can 2011.

Furthermore, the work of Pekiwa poses a critical and conceptual question about an artistic practice where remains and ruins play a central role, pointing to a set of theoretical constellations of undoubted interest in a conceptual reflection on what could be defined as the aesthetics of the Indian Ocean (Brugioni, 2015).

On the other hand, striving to establish different comparisons and counterpoints among different narratives, it is important to underline that the Indian Ocean represents a visual element of critical and emblematic importance in modern and contemporary Mozambican photography.<sup>10</sup> Within a broad, diverse universe — and in the impossibility of making a more detailed analysis in this article — an emblematic example can be found in the photographic work of Mauro Pinto *Portos de Convergência* (2003) — *Ports of Convergence* — in which the relationship between the land and the sea is built from the point of view of its *materiality and humanity* throughout a visual construction in which the monumentality of the port is a counterpoint to the corporality of the man who inhabits this space.

Figure 2. **Mauro Pinto**, *Portos de Convergência* (2003; Copyright Maro Pinto).



*I would like to thank the author who kindly authorised the reproduction of his picture in this text.*

In conclusion, the dialogues that can be found addressing the Indian Ocean — and *Ilha de Moçambique* — as a theme, motivation and, thus, a new and *alternative cultural utopia* (Chaves, 2002; Falconi, 2008) in the Mozambican cultural and social context could be much more than these and the aim of my research is, in fact, to keep looking for these “silent” ties and counterpoints, inside and outside the limits

<sup>10</sup> In this respect, the analysis of the representation of the Indian Ocean in Mozambican contemporary documental photography will offer a number of insights for a reflection regarding a Visual Aesthetics of the Indian Ocean.

of the Mozambican nation, searching for old and new imaginations that could possibly “emerge” from the sea, and thus remembering, as Borges Coelho states in his book of short stories titled *Índicos Índicios* that: “Behind so many names, so many intersections, and so much diversity, it is always the same, *the sea*”. (Borges Coelho, 2005, p.10; my translation). From a theoretical point of view, as Isabel Hofmeyr points out, “At every turn the Indian Ocean complicates binaries, moving us away from the simplicities of the resistant local and the dominating global and toward a historically deep archive of competing universalisms” (2010). Therefore, the Indian Ocean and its “ability to complicate received paradigms and academic traditions” (Hofmeyr et al, 2011) offers a critical situated (re)vision of the theoretical paradigms through which Mozambican cultural representations are read and analysed, re-orienting the meaning and the agency of visual and written narratives rooted in the *transnational imaginative geography* of the Indian Ocean world.

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**"SPONSORSHIPPED": REFLECTIONS ON TEMPORARY FEMALE  
MIGRATION FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA TO THE GULF  
AND LEBANON**

**Manuel João Ramos**

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Centro de Estudos Internacionais  
Portugal

*Female migratory flows from the Horn of Africa are mainly directed to Arab countries and tend to take the form of temporary legal migration. Like their Asian counterparts, these girls and women are subject to varying degrees of trafficking and even enslavement, working mainly as in-house maids in affluent Arab households, where they tend to be denied free and fair labour rights, under a harsh interpretation of the kafala, or "sponsorship" system, prevalent in Arabic countries. Although there are signs of better legal protection under international labour rules, the system in place and the culture that supports it impose a tense situation where maids are subject to everyday "structural violence" and employers have to bear an unwonted responsibility. The psychological, social and economic costs of this migration are well documented but there's still a lack of understanding of the trends of female agency that emerges as a direct reflection of the hardships of such forms of migration. This chapter reflects on the ways this situation is understood and managed in the hosting countries.*

keywords: Horn of Africa, GCC countries, Lebanon, Female migration, Trafficking networks, Housemaids

Human migration and trafficking<sup>1</sup> in the Western Indian Ocean has a long and complex history. Only slightly touched by centuries of Western political and military presence there,<sup>2</sup> it developed and matured under the various layers of formal and informal transnational networks of traders that connected the shores of the Eastern African coast, the Horn region, the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and frequently extended eastwards to the Indian subcontinent and beyond (Austen, 1988: 35-40; Harris, 1971; Sheriff, 1987). The general trend has been consistently unidirectional, in the sense that throughout the centuries East African populations have been repositories of migrant forced labour in the Gulf and further afield in North Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean shores (Alpers, 1975: 185-6; Ewald, 2000; Lovejoy, 2000: 1-29; Sheriff, 1987; Vernet, 2013). The gradual illegalization of slave-trading coupled with the fading of the Ottoman empire in the early 20th century produced a lull in these migratory flows until the boom in oil production and export after the Second World War became central to the radical transformation of the Gulf countries into a magnet for cheap, unskilled labour from both West Asian and East African migrants (Jureidini, 2003: 2-3). After 1972 in particular the Gulf witnessed a growing mass migratory flux of temporary unskilled Asian and African labourers and within a few years it became the world's leading region where the demographic imbalance between fixed residents and temporary migrants is highest. Up to 80% of the population living in the GCC countries have no proper national citizenship rights.<sup>3</sup>

Against this historical background of human trafficking in which the Arabian Peninsula interfaced between Eastern Africa and Western Asia, what has been called the feminization of migration has in the past thirty years become a particularly relevant factor in the characterization of a renewed transnational human trafficking set-up (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005: 15-7; IOM 2001; Chammartin, 2003, 2004; De Regt, 2010: 240). It involves millions of women from very di-

<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking is certainly a catch-all word of evanescent sense in the context of labour migration. I use it here with some caution and with full knowledge that its use doesn't preclude a variable quota of voluntary agency of those migrants who are subject to a game with harsh rules. See Aronowitz, 2009: 1-3, and Anderson & Davidson, 2003 (specifically on migrant female labourers: 42-53). For a review of research into contemporary trafficking in the MENA countries, see Calandruccio, 2005. See also Reyhan Atasü-Topcuoğlu (2014) on how the very notion of "human trafficking" is shaped by what he calls the "ideological closure" of anti-trafficking discourses and practices (Atasü-Topcuoğlu, 2014: 47 ff). Finally, see Anne Gallagher (2009: 791-2) on the disadvantaged position of human rights advocates facing the security standpoint during the so-called "Vienna Process" that led to the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* - Nov. 15, 2000, S. Treaty Doc. No. 108-16 (2004), 2237 U.N.T.S. 319.

<sup>2</sup> Or, as Janet Ewald notes, under the shadow of its hegemony (Ewald, 2000: 77). On the competing European-Arab slave trading in the Indian Ocean, see Vernet, 2013: 244 ff.

<sup>3</sup> In the Gulf, nationality is totally based on *jus sanguinis*, via paternal descent. Although naturalization is possible, it remains exceptional and generally restricted to (Arab-speaking) foreign wives of the country's nationals. On the difficulties of precisely quantifying the massive foreign migration in the GCC countries, see: Cadene & Dumortier, 2008: 3-6. On the so-far meagre and mixed results of the 2010s policy reforms directed at job creation for nationals in Saudi Arabia, and in general in the GCC countries, see Bel-Air & Zahra, 2015; and Bel-Air, 2014.

verse regional backgrounds moving to and from the Gulf to work as domestic labourers and also in the tourist and sex industries<sup>4</sup>. Official estimates indicate a steady growth in the ratio of female migrant workers (30% in the early 2000s, up from 8% in 1980; Calandruccio, 2005: 273; Chammartin, 2004: 10-13) and that at any one time there are around 2 million female migrant domestic workers in the GCC countries (Fernandez, 2014: 3-4),<sup>5</sup> although unofficial reports from credible NGOs suggest the twice and even three times these numbers<sup>6</sup>. They presently originate mostly from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and the Horn of Africa (Bergem, 2006: 65; Chammartin, 2004: 12-13), catering for a pattern of "conspicuous consumption"<sup>7</sup> of an affluent lifestyle that is widespread in the Gulf countries.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter addresss female migratory trends from the Horn to the GCC and Lebanon, how these trafficking networks function and how employees, employers and traffickers cope with legal, ethical, linguistic and cultural constraints and barriers. It relies on data collected between 2011 and 2016 in sets of open interviews and informal surveys of men and women of different social standing during regular fieldwork research in the Amhara and Oromia regions (Ethiopia) and in Beirut (Lebanon). These were complemented by short visits to Dubai (UAE), and London (UK), surveys and exchanges using long-range communications (email, Skype, etc.), swiping of data in online social media forums, weblogs and news sites, reviews of available literature (reports from international organizations, university theses and dissertations, sociological and anthropological papers, grey literature from NGOs and national institutes and ministries), and screening of film and video footage (documentaries, internet videos and televised newsreels). The collected data was processed through content analysis and partial results were rechecked by qualified informants for control.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Or more frequently sliding down from (legal) in-house work towards (illegal) external house cleaning and nanny jobs and partial or full sex-work (see Mahdavi, 2011: 125 ff).

<sup>5</sup> According to IOM's lowest mean estimation, there were 14 million international migrants in the Middle East in 2003, or around 40% of the total population (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005: 1-2; Calandruccio, 2005: 268). For a more recent breakdown of migration in the GCC countries, see Bel-Air, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Estimates vary, particularly due to the high percentage of non- or partially-documented migrants (that is, those who entered the country legally but lack work permits); see Fernandez, 2014: 4.

<sup>7</sup> S. Shami, 1996: *Emigration Dynamics in Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon*, Geneva, IOM/UNFPA, Policy Workshop on Emigration Dynamics in the Arab Region. 1996; in Bergem, 2006: 65.

<sup>8</sup> On the degrading power relations in households where maids, in quasi-slavery conditions, act as "status reproducers" of their employers' intended accession to, or maintenance of a high-status lifestyle, see Anderson, 2000; 2004: 108-10.

<sup>9</sup> Early outcomes of the ongoing research were presented and discussed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Iberian Conference of African Studies, July, 14-16, 2009, in the first and second editions of the *Intensive Course on Europe-Africa Relations – Border Crossings In and Out of Africa* (Erasmus Intensive Programme - Consortium ISCTE-IUL, EHESS and UNIOR - July, 7-19 2014; and Master of International Studies, ISCTE-IUL, October 28 – November 5, 2015), and later at the *Conference on The Current Refugees Crisis and Beyond: Narratives and Itineraries* (CEI-IUL, April, 18, 2016).

## Feminization of migrant labour in the Gulf

The phenomenon of temporary female mass migration from the Horn of Africa to Arab countries, which mainly uses air travel, is strikingly different in characteristics and global social perception from that of the perilous predominantly male land and sea crossings that draw so much attention in the (Western-led) international media these days, perhaps too focused on a morbid aestheticization of rough forms of travel and human suffering, and exploitation of collective fears of mass in-migration to Europe. Still, its scale is no less significant, the number of people involved being similarly astounding, and its root causes cannot be disentangled from those that lead to male migratory flows from the same region (on their use of the Libya-Lampedusa route, see Triulzi, 2013: 214 ff). As any traveller arriving or leaving Bole airport in Addis Ababa will readily testify, the sheer visual impact of hundreds of dazed Ethiopian girls and women uncomfortably dressed in newly bought hijabs waiting in line to board flights to Dubai, Abu Dhabi or Beirut, day in, day out, intuitively points to the weight of the phenomenon.

It is indeed widely recognized that global female migration is today no less relevant than that of men (see Momsen: 1999: 1-2), having expanded considerably in the last decades. The feminization of migration is a major concern of the IOM and other international agencies because of the vulnerabilities it entails (IOM, 2001). Regarding migration from the Horn of Africa to the GCC members and Lebanon (the preferred countries for this flow), the numbers are telling: between 200,000 and 600,000, depending on the type of estimates, or a third of the maximum female migrant population of those countries. Also, at least 50 to 60 percent of women migrating to the Gulf and Lebanon are documented with both entry visas and labour contracts.<sup>10</sup> Although perilous travel by land and sea does occur (to Sudan and across the Red Sea; De Regt, 2010: 251-4, 2012), the preferred means of travel is by air – to the extent that companies such as Emirates and Al-Etihad are sometimes called the 21<sup>st</sup> century slave-ships. This is, on the whole, understandable: travel costs are lower, the routes are safer, and (temporary) employability is more easily granted.

Whereas male migration from the Horn, because of its more informal, illegal and sinuous character, is difficult to quantify and break down by nationality (many Ethiopian migrants claim political refugee status by passing as Somalis or Eritreans, for instance), female migration is more easily quantifiable, though

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<sup>10</sup> On a discussion of legal vs. illegal, and contract vs. freelancing options for migrant female domestic workers in the Gulf, see Moors & De Regt, 2008: 153-4, 162-3.

its numbers are also often blurred by the so-called "free visa" problem (Gardner et al, 2014: 206). This was so clearly shown in 2013, when Saudi Arabia deported more than 6,000 undocumented female Ethiopia migrants.<sup>11</sup> From the registered numbers given by the authorities from Gulf countries plus Lebanon it is clear that Ethiopian women make up the undisputable majority of the African temporary labourers there, and that service as live-in housemaids is the standard option offered to them before departure. That is not to say that the numbers of hotel workers and independent cleaning jobs are not on the rise, and that a small percentage do not accept other menial and even degrading occupations (prostitution, especially), but overall the largest occupational pattern since the 1990s<sup>12</sup>, has been non-specialized domestic labour (i.e. performing a wide range of tasks, from cleaning to cooking, to caring for children, while living in the household).

In this labour cum enslaving market,<sup>13</sup> girls and women from the Horn/Northeast Africa (mostly Ethiopian, but also to a lesser degree Eritrean, Somali and Kenyan) seem to have occupied a position that falls below Indonesian and Philippine job-seekers in terms of both preference and pay.<sup>14</sup> The questions regarding their relatively low marketability relate to a number of factors: racial discrimination (see Beydoun, 2006: 1017; Jureidini, 2005: 48-71) that reflects historical Arab attitudes towards imported African slaves, but also perceived lower skills and assumed lower per capita income in the country of origin on the part of the employers. Like their Asiatic counterparts, Horn (and generally African) girls and women are equally subject to a harsh employment system that runs against international labour laws and directives – the so-called *kafala* (or "sponsorship") system.<sup>15</sup> And even though in some countries, such as Kuwait, Bahrain and Lebanon, the labour and residency laws seem timidly on the way to tackling the specific problems raised by the working conditions of live-in

<sup>11</sup> Part of the controversial *Nitaqat*, or Saudisation policy; see Bel-Air, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> After the fall of the DERG regime in 1991, the new Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government removed legal restrictions on foreign migration (Fernandez, 2011: 439). On migration to the Gulf and Lebanon as an unintended demographic consequence of the rural interventionist development in present-day Ethiopia, see Gibson & Eshetu Gurm, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Romina Halabi makes clear the link between the *kafala* and the slave trade in Saudi Arabia (Halabi, 2008: 43). On the legal aspects of the slide of female labour towards enslavement, in the particular case of Ethiopian maids in Lebanon, see Beydoun, 2006. See also Kathleen Hamill's legal analysis of the trafficking of migrant women in Lebanon (Hamill, 2011). On the general concept of housemaid servitude as quasi-slavery, and on rationalizing exploitation, see Anderson, 2003: 35-40.

<sup>14</sup> Diederich, 2005: 135. In Saudi Arabia, the continued reporting of abuse of Bangladeshi and Indian maids in the 1970s and 1980s, resulted in an anti-migration policy in Bangladesh that led to the opening of the Arab labour market to Indonesians, Sri Lankans, Filipinos, and Africans. In Lebanon, a still-used nickname for maids today is *Bangladeshis*.

<sup>15</sup> See below, next section. For a comparative analysis of the legal framework of the *kafala* in the GCC countries, see: Zahra, 2015.

maids (and thus hesitatingly coming in line with ILO's regulations),<sup>16</sup> it is widely accepted that the actual labour relations, and the culture that supports them, are in general very far from abiding to these regulatory efforts (Bergem, 2006: 70-1; Bel-Air & Zahra, 2015: 164 ff).<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Yemen (but also Sudan and Saudi Arabia) stands out because of its geographical proximity to the Horn of Africa, and hence the lower travel costs involved (De Regt, 2010: 239; 2012; Yoseph Endeshaw et al, 2005: 24-6). Many migrants use the Red Sea passage via Djibouti and Somaliland (or fly to Saudi Arabia disguised as Hajj pilgrims),<sup>18</sup> and so tend to remain undocumented (i.e. without valid resident or work permits), which makes it growingly difficult for them to return to their country of origin (De Regt, 2010: 245-8). It also stands out because the pay tends to be much lower, on a par with the country's comparative poverty. Yemen is generally taken as a country of passage, either to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, or the Emirates; but a very difficult passage it is, because of the environmental conditions and now the war currently raging in the country.

Of course, for many female migrant workers in the other Gulf countries the return trip may not be easily granted, due to the difficulties posed by the contract terms on compensation and discharge implied by the *kafala* bondage mechanisms. Also, returning home often becomes a positive (that is, not a forced) choice only when the worker has saved enough money to meet her financial obligations to her employer, employment agencies and her family. The family may have lent her money for her travel, either by using their own funds or taking out high-interest loans or mortgages. Ideally, at least, she can start a business or some other independent livelihood.<sup>19</sup>

The unending flow of dramatic stories of abuse, humiliation and trauma that many foreign maids reportedly endure while living and working in Arab family households, and the myriad sad cases of reintegration problems upon their return home (Yoseph Endeshaw et al, 2005: 36 ff; Abebaw Minaye, 2012, Waganesh

<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive review of the latest reforms in domestic migrants' legal protection in the Gulf, see Varia, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Of the four types of visa available under the *kafala* system (for domestic labour, company work, official government and business partnerships), the house visa is the one most prone to trafficking and the denial of rights and freedom (Blanchet, 2002: 27 ff).

<sup>18</sup> Or fly via Kenya and Tanzania, to avoid the restrictions imposed by the Ethiopian Private Employment Agency Proclamation (1998), that seek to protect Ethiopian migrant workers' rights and dignity in the Gulf (Adepoju, 2005: 78-79, IOM, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Female migrant remittances are today a crucial source of income, both to their families and to the home country's economy in general (Chammartin, 2004: 14-5). This is true in most cases and not only for the Horn countries. But even if the total amount of remittances is, comparatively, smaller than those sent by Asian workers, their economic impact is still of great relevance (Mohapatra & Ratha, 2011: 11-17). Still, the difficulties faced by migrants in Yemen are of a slightly different nature, as they often become stranded in a poor, convoluted country without the necessary means to return home or to move on to richer places (De Regt, 2010: 245-8).



Zelege et al, 2015) overshadow two other realities in the literature. These are the positive or simply non-negative outcomes of this temporary migration for those women that decide to work abroad – which greatly contributes to its perpetuation –, and their Arab employers' anxieties caused by a largely unregulated labour system whose insecurity and risks they have to shoulder individually – a burden which they are not likely to help change due to the patronizing policies that prevail in the GCC countries.

So, just as there are many deeply traumatized migrant women returnees, cases abound of women who have managed to become financially and psychologically independent from their families, who have gained a more emancipated social position, who have broadened their knowledge of the world beyond their otherwise closed cultural environments, who have learned new social and linguistic skills and who endured and overcome formidable culture shocks (De Regt, 2010).

## Women from the Horn and the *kafala* system

Conditions that apply to female migrants from the Horn (and elsewhere in Africa, such as Madagascar, Tanzania or Cameroon), though not different in nature from those of their Asian counterparts, are nonetheless deemed harsher and less gratifying. But, as Andrew Gardner (2014: 4, 6-7) posits when discussing the "structural violence" inherent in migration in the Gulf, "still they come".<sup>20</sup> Even today they come to Yemen (De Regt, 2010; 2012), especially since Saudi Arabian, Kuwaiti and Lebanese authorities agreed with the Ethiopian federal government to impose caps and outright interdictions on Ethiopian female migration there after 2012-13 as a consequence of the much-publicised suicide of the Ethiopian maid Alem Dechasa. In Saudi Arabia, it was a result of a "cleansing" programme by the Saudi police and in Kuwait after a much-highlighted infanticide case involving an Ethiopian maid.<sup>21</sup>

It seems clear, both from direct observation and from most comparative analyses, that female migrant workers from the Horn tend to be less aware of the kinds of tasks required in an affluent Arab household, less familiar with modern domestic technology, and more ignorant of the changing nature of their contracts. This is particularly because they are induced by their facilitators and dealers

<sup>20</sup> Andrew M. Gardner draws on Paul Farmer's concept of an age-old "social web of exploitation" regarding Haiti: "structural violence is the natural expression of a political and economic order that seems as old as slavery" (Farmer, 2004:317).

<sup>21</sup> Official estimates suggest that Ethiopians working abroad (both permanent and temporary) number between 800,000 and 1 million. In 2008, the recorded inflow of remittances from migrants was worth over US\$800 million (National Bank of Ethiopia's 2006 and 2008 reports, in Fernandez, 2010: 248-9). Unofficial estimates suggest that the figures of unrecorded migrants and informal remittances are at least equivalent, if not higher.

before departure (*delaloch*, in Amharic) to accept conditions that rarely materialize, or that are very far from the promises made – often putting them in situations of forced labour that easily descend into virtual (or real) slavery (Yoseph Endeshaw, 2005: 47-8). First-time migrants are often not sufficiently warned by previous migrants (frequently of the same family or neighbourhood), or by the employment agents, about the working and living conditions and the cultural and technological requirements they are going to face.

Maids' unwillingness to share their experiences and knowledge with their kin and friends back home is correlated with the psychological need to stick to a positive narrative of migrating to fulfil their families' original expectations, to justify the heavy financial investment made – in other words, to “save face”. Given that this kind of migration tends to be temporary due to the terms of the contract, the need to weave a “success story” through letters, phone calls or any other communications means it is paramount to ensure adequate social and familiar integration upon return home. Such self-censorship in communications with home contrasts with the almost obsessive impulse to share negative experiences with co-migrants if, and when, possible, which does much to help create a much-needed communal feeling.

Notwithstanding, the spread of rumours of dramatic and even tragic situations, especially through institutional and social media, has caused important breaches in this careful filtering of negative stories. The irregular burst of media attention to stories of rape, suicide, murder, etc involving migrant maids fuel sudden states of social panic and condemnation in the sending country that lead to exaggerated generalizations, based on an obvious lack of information about the specificities of the working and living conditions of migrants in the Gulf. The migrants' response tends to be one of distancing themselves and holding on to an equally exaggerated positive narrative. This is duly corroborated by an increased need to display material signs of affluence, as evident in the pressure to send remittances reflected in apparent material benefits of their families, and in the flashy style of their clothing and accessories when they return.

This said, the *kafala*, or “sponsorship”, relationship has been under fire from various quarters for some time now (Western, Indian and local NGOs being on the forefront of a “glocal” battle over changes in labour relations and human rights in the context of the ambiguous modernization of Arab countries). The most obvious claim against it is that it fosters a type of labour relationship between employer and employee that falls beyond and below state control and consequently state protection. This lays it open to systematic forms of human-rights abuse and induces a socially unquestioned situation of “structural

violence" in the migrant labour market (Gardner, 2010: 211-14, 2014: 4-6; also, Jureidini, 2003).<sup>22</sup> To have an entry visa that allows migrant workers to temporarily reside in the country, authorities demand that they have a personal contract with an Arab national, who will be (in principle) solely responsible for their stay, work bond, until the time of their return to their country of origin.<sup>23</sup> The *kafala* as it is understood today was an *ad hoc* legal solution to deal with the first influx of migrant workers that took place in the 1950s, and was widely adopted in the region to cushion states from claims to fixed residency and other legal rights (social security, health care, etc).<sup>24</sup> The iniquity and inadequacy of the *kafala* solution started becoming more or less obvious during the *tafra* ("boom") that led to the sudden expansion of the GCC countries' economies. The boom was initially driven by the early 1970s global oil embargo and the resulting demand for large amounts of temporary migrant labourers, which were and are mostly from the Indian subcontinent, to perform unskilled, manual work in the construction sector and oil industry (Osella & Osella, 2011: 10-11).

It is a known fact that the GCC countries have one of the most unbalanced demographic relations between native, or permanent residents, and temporary migrants in the world. As mentioned, around 80% of the population is of foreign origin and lacks the guarantees given by birth to Arab nationals, be it in terms of residency rights, labour protection, social security and access to education and health services, not to mention political rights or the ability to tap into the otherwise rich and generous financing system for both employed and entrepreneurial nationals. In Europe, for instance, an entry visa, being dependent of the presentation of a contract, is a process that allows the future employee to be independent from the employer and not necessarily tied to a particular job. Employees have the chance (and inherent guarantees) to quit the original job and employer and some time to find a new one.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, in the GCC countries and Lebanon (and also in Jordan), migrant workers are bound to the employer from the time of arrival (their passports are often withheld until

<sup>22</sup> Silvia Pessoa, Laura Harkness, and Andrew M. Gardner refer to the *kafala* as the "antithesis of a free labour market" (Gardner et al, 2014: 205). On the Arab states' complicity in establishing the parameters of such situation of "structural violence", see also Gardner, 2010: 215-16.

<sup>23</sup> Except for Yemen and Bahrain, all Gulf countries (as well as Lebanon and Jordan) also have a strict exit visa policy that is part of the *kafala*: the foreign worker is required to secure clearance from the employer, who declares that the worker has fulfilled the terms of the contract and his/her services are no longer needed, to be able to return home when his/her employment period ends; the exit visa may also be withheld if there are court charges or penalties due to the administration.

<sup>24</sup> On how the segmented nature of the labour markets in the GCC countries stimulates the spread of (legal and illegal) migration intermediaries, both in source and destination countries, see Fernandez, 2014: 5.

<sup>25</sup> Such guaranties don't necessarily prevent the harsh reality of human trafficking in Europe; see Aronowitz, 2009: 54-6, 58-60.

departure, or until the employer releases them from their original job). From the point of view of the employer, this is a guarantee that workers will comply to their duties, as the employer has to pay a large amount to the brokers/agencies who deal with the migration process (travel costs, visa and other legal documentation). From the point of view of the authorities, this is an easy way to delegate to a private person or company (the *kafeel*) the responsibilities of controlling, managing and caring for the worker's obligations and needs (Bergem, 2006: 70).<sup>26</sup> From the worker's point of view, though, this situation offers few advantages besides his/her employability. Little or no pressure is exerted on employers to fulfil their duties, such as adequate (or actual) monthly pay, and any other contractual obligations (in terms of health, weekly days off, workload, and working hours). Furthermore, little or no prior knowledge of Arabic is frequently a poignant hindrance, as workers are generally made to sign a contract upon arrival that is, at best, read to them in conditions that leave them few options. If they do not sign it they will be deported and have to repay all the travel costs due to the employer, the broker (and the agencies in the country of origin), which is virtually impossible for most migrants (since they are to pay their expenses with their future work). In general, as Strobl shows when discussing the Bahraini case, the inequity of *kafala* is made clear by the harsh criminalization of allegedly runaway, thieving, seductive or violent migrant domestic workers coupled with the laxity or inexistence of sanctions towards employers and traffickers (Strobl, 2009: 178-9).

It must be said that from the point of view of the employers the situation is also unsatisfactory. The personal responsibility the sponsorship imposes on them is the main factor explaining the recurring, spiralling tension that characterizes many complaints – fear of the worker running away, fear of the worker being infected by STDs (especially HIV), fear that rash behaviour on their part may lead to food poisoning or child molestation on the part of the worker, suspicion of criminal acts (unauthorized use or even stealing of property and food), or anxiety towards imagined mystical powers (such as witchcraft and black magic).<sup>27</sup>

In fact, what makes the situation of many foreign workers highly problematic is the combination of the restrictions typical of the *kafala* (in which the employer

<sup>26</sup> Bina Fernandez, discussing the role of intermediaries in Ethiopian female migration to the Gulf, refers to J. Black's notion of "decentred approach to regulation", whereby governments' monopoly on regulation is lacking, making regulation occur "within and between other social actors". (J. Black (2002) "Critical Reflections on Regulation." *Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy*, 27, 1-35 (in Fernandez, 2013:816).)

<sup>27</sup> On the impact of foreign maids in child-rearing in Arab countries, and more generally on Arab research on employer/maid relations in Arab households, see: Al Omari, 2003; Al Zikra, 2005; Khalifa & Nasser, 2015.

is required to pay travel and visa fees in advance) with the financial aspects of trafficking, and in particular the so-called "recruitment fee system". In order to obtain a job in the Gulf, foreign workers need to pay large fees in their home country to a long chain of beneficiaries that includes recruiters, employment/training agencies, traffickers and government departments and officials). These high costs, which can amount to thousands of dollars, can often only be met by high-interest loans from moneylenders that result in debilitating debts or land and house mortgages for the families, who then become dependent on the worker's regular remittances. This exerts enormous pressure upon the migrants to 1) accept whatever job they are offered on arrival, no matter how different from what was promised back home, and 2) try to keep the job, whatever the working conditions are. Likewise, it puts the employers in a situation of neurotic fear and suspicion against the worker. Media coverage of single cases fosters a state of societal "moral panic" (see Cohen, 2002), that can lead (and has led) to embarrassing bilateral diplomatic hurdles (Jureidini, 2003: 11-2).

The mechanism that was put into place throughout the Gulf states to deal expeditiously with the expanding needs for a cheap foreign work force is itself a variation of very old form of labour bond in the Gulf countries. Anh Longva (1997: 25, 106-7) claims it originates in the ancient pearl fishing economy on the Gulf shores, where pearl divers' and their families' expenses would be sponsored by boat owners, to be deducted from their wages in the end of the pearling season. But, as is revealed in the case of Saudi Arabia (Vasilev, 2000: 89-90, 884-5), where slavery was only formally abolished in 1962, there has been a clear legal and sociological overlap between slavery and the *kafala*, because they seem two faces of the same patriarchal and patronage system of labour relations built to deny Arab citizenship to migrant workers and their progeny (or, in the case of low status Arabs from the north of Yemen, access to higher echelons of Saudi society).

As the number of migrant labourers grew exponentially, the positive sides of this patronage system dwindled. The personalized bond in which the employer bears extensive legal and economic responsibilities for the worker's welfare is no longer adequate or controllable when the tight social pressure typical of small close-knit societies disappears, and employers suffer no sanctions for violating their legal commitment towards the foreign worker. In the specific case of domestic workers, the *kafala* functioned also as the traditional regulator of labour relations between indigenous female workers from rural or nomadic backgrounds (and later from poorer Arab countries) employed in rich urban merchant families' houses. In exchange for domestic work, the maid would be given protection

and rights that would make her almost a member of the employer's extended family (see al-Najjar, 2002: 4).<sup>28</sup> The *kafala* did not simply regulate the relationship between an employer and a worker but rather established a bond of responsibility between two families within a tribal society. When applied to labour relations between Gulf nationals and non-Arab foreigners, this integrative essence necessarily had to be lost. Particularly in the case of African migrants, it resurrected attitudes relating to another historical type of labour bond – one that didn't require an established relation of responsibility between families, slave ownership. Like pearl fishers and poor maids, slaves or forced labourers were given patronage, protection from outside aggression and rights to food and health, but this time simply in exchange from the denial of their freedom and the obligation to work for the *kafeel* and his/her extended family, to make up for the financial investment made.

Whereas the *kafala* suffered changes throughout time as recognition of the mandatory nature of labourers' rights (most of the GCC countries are signatories of a variety of international treaties and regulations that grant protection to workers worldwide), in the case of domestic workers – and particularly female domestic workers living in extended family homes – the situation is still one of great disenfranchisement in terms of their status and rights to protection and also a source for various coping and reactive strategies:

- Laws, when they exist, rarely regulate working hours, workloads, days off, rights to healthcare, etc.
- In legal and often in practical terms, the worker has little or no say in the termination of the contract (except in the short trial period: usually the first three months), or in the transfer of the *kafala* bond from the original employer to subsequent employers and has no prior knowledge of the working conditions.
- The enforcement of the laws is problematic, with few or no inspections and little or no sensitivity to investigate and prosecute employers in case of complaints by maids. The opposite is generally the case, as runaway maids are usually considered criminals who have escaped the bond and are thus in a position to be deported, and so are returned to the employer.
- Lack of experience and linguistic or other skills is generally blamed on the workers, never on the *kafeel*. Employers are obviously not interested in the levels of knowledge and experience of the maids from their context of origin. They are

<sup>28</sup> Knut V. Bergem points out that, today, in this mostly unregulated and unbridled live-in domestic service market that is dependent on foreign labour, it's simply unthinkable that Arab females be hired as maids in the Gulf, due to what he calls a "culture of shame" (Bergem, 2006: 66-7) – house service being considered degrading and irreconcilable with the social dignity due to the citizens of a modernized state, it paradoxically has guaranteed the perpetuation of "an archaic institution like unlegislated domestic servitude".

interested and invest primarily in the acquisition of the knowledge and experience that is useful in their own context). This is generally combined with a total lack of privacy and even denial of the right to leave the home. The argument for this is either to protect a female servant or as a consequence of the *kafala* bond that makes the employer responsible to whatever happens to the worker. The most common fears are of her running away before termination of the contract, and somehow acquiring sexually-transmittable diseases. All this fosters a situation that easily becomes akin to forced labour, and falls under what is internationally defined as human trafficking and enslavement, with resulting forms of unchecked abuse: psychological and physical aggression, sexual assault, starvation, denial of medical treatment, etc (see Abebaw Minaye, 2012: 117-126; Waganesh Zeleke et al, 2015).

This situation promotes a whole range of misrepresentations, fear, suspicions and tensions that can, on unfortunately too frequent occasions (and subsequently in much expanded rumour networks and with viral effects in online social media), descend into a spiralling slope of hostility, suspicion, aggression and abuse. On the other hand, maids from the Horn of Africa do have a reputation in the Gulf for, unlike Asian women, standing up against their employers and counter-abusing them, with recourse to verbal confrontation, veiled menaces, and even displays of violent or erratic conduct. Often, these displays (that include repetitive body movements, regressive behaviour and even catatonic states), though they frequently indicate probable confused and hyper-stressed mental conditions due to recursive psychological tension (Waganesh Zeleke et al, 2015), are usually dismissed by the employers simply as theatrical forms of pressure to be released from work or to escape the *kafala* contract.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding the multiple degrees of family coercion and personal choice that shape the push factors of female migration from the Horn, and the highly varied ways they are received and treated by their employers, the fact is that one finds a number of commonalities in their experiences, hopes and complaints: racial prejudice, cultural misunderstanding and lack of concern for work rights and personal privacy. But there is a sense of personal enrichment that comes from living at least temporarily away from the bounds of the patriarchal and male-dominated family environment of their home country, that, coupled with the attraction of material benefits (however small: usually clothing and other personal accessories), makes up for the hardships, traumas and loneliness of

<sup>29</sup> In the context of Arab countries, Lebanon stands out as a special case, in terms of collective class action: with the help of local NGOs, maids have staged demonstrations in Beirut, have organized collectives that offer peer-support (see Pande, 2012: 398-400).

their migratory experiences. On the other hand, when listening to Arab employers, one is overwhelmed with stories that speak of shared stereotypes: maids from the Horn of Africa are inept at using sophisticated home appliances than Asian women, but more trustworthy when it comes to dealing with employers' personal valuable items (jewellery, silver and gold, in particular). They are known to stand up to their employers, and to take advantage of the work situation by playing on the fears of Arab women by using "African" witchcraft to sexually entice husbands or other family members, hurting or abusing children and babies, food poisoning, etc. And, whereas migrants often deride their female employers as vain, lazy and arrogant, they themselves can become a subject of bewilderment. Why would a racially inferior and less civilized African woman harbour, and surreptitiously display, a sense of moral superiority towards their employer? Such perplexities rarely lead to engagement in cross-cultural understanding, be it because of language barriers or depersonalizing attitudes. Instead, they linger on, feeding small talk inside families and in social circles. Furthermore, when it comes to trusting African maids to look after their babies and children, tensions arise quickly due to the employers' fear of racial lines becoming blurred, their jealousy of growing empathy between maid and child, leading to suspicion of evil-doing and feeding the perpetuation of racially-charged stereotypes.<sup>30</sup>

Employers tend to be aloof of the fact that the maids they hire from the Horn of Africa are frequently urbanite, high-school educated young women that travel abroad with the full knowledge that this is but a temporary destination<sup>31</sup> and that, traumatic as it may be to many, working in the Gulf may be conceived as a rite of passage to female emancipation from an age-old patriarchal society – in some cases an unintended one, in others an expected and even sought one.

Evidently, the collective price to pay, in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere in other African and Asian lower-income countries, is the perpetuation of the deeply flawed and inhumane international labour-bondage *kafala* system centred in the Gulf countries.

## Conclusion

The use of the notion of "trafficking networks" to define the myriad ways though which women temporary migrate from the Horn of Africa to work as

<sup>30</sup> As Bridget Anderson puts it: "Employing a foreign migrant domestic worker, or one from a different ethnic, social, or religious group, enables households to perpetuate and promote the idea of other races and social groups as servers and doers of dirty work that they themselves are too important to do. When the worker is charged with looking after children, these power relations are quite literally reproduced" (Anderson, 2001: 28).

<sup>31</sup> She will either return home after her contract terminates, or may in some cases extend her stay, usually by working free-lance without a visa; or may move on to another country (Lebanon, Europe or the US, preferably).



live-in maids in the Gulf is made possible may perhaps be misleading. Although employment agencies in all Gulf countries have legal status, and some of them are long-established, state control can be scant or non-existent. Their relations with recruitment agencies from the sending countries may be direct or mediated by the migrants themselves, who act as recruiters of new workers via family and neighbourhood contacts or by interacting with the sending agencies. Arab employment agencies rarely or never have offices in the Horn countries (except for a few in Addis Ababa), and prefer to establish informal contacts – and share the benefits – with local agencies. This means that the costs of the recruitment and training processes (when they exist), travel expenses and legal exit and entry documentation are passed on to the worker (or her family) and the employer's family, on both sides of the Red Sea. This set-up multiplies the number of intermediaries, which in turn exacerbates the unaccountability of the system, totally distorting the original concept of "sponsored" responsibility in which the *kafala* is supposed to be based.<sup>32</sup>

Still, one should fend off the idea that such networks – or meshes or arrangements – are strictly structured and highly regulated. The case is often quite the opposite – very fragmented, immensely varying, extremely personalised – which makes it very difficult to gauge (and to reform), and quite prone to diverse readings (particularly evident in the in-country official vs NGO arguments, and in inter-country diplomatic interpretations). The recent history of female migration from the Horn to the Gulf is laden with traumatizing experiences, with often dramatic and even tragic stories, the socialization of which has through the years fostered and crystallized an accepted collective discourse of mutual fear, suspicion and disdain, both in sending and receiving countries. It is also common that migrants stifle their grievances and negative experiences when communicating with their family and friends for reasons of self-preservation and self-image. But in all it seems that success stories tend to outweigh dramatic and tragic ones. So, the trafficking of female workers doesn't necessarily need to be perceived as coerced, lacking agency on the part of the migrants themselves, and based on a conspiratorial view of the recruiters as demonic agents. Trafficking as an integral part of the migration process, and bondage as an integral condition of the work system, foster a state of collectively accepted structural violence of the *kafala* system shaping the foreign maid labour market of Arab countries. But reading this system, and the position of female migrants from the Horn of Africa in it, in terms of a clear-cut contrast between hapless victims and malignant villains

<sup>32</sup> On the three main channels of migration to the Gulf ("public migration", "private employment agencies", "illegal brokers"), see Fernandez, 2010: 251-3.

offers little room to understand the complexity and variety of female migration to the Gulf countries, the evolution of the *kafala* bond and the social and cultural impact of such migration in source countries.

There are too many factors that help keep the system in place to expect major changes and improvements, in the short run. Somehow, it suits most parties involved in it. International trafficking networks linking the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula do exist but are multi-centred and multi-layered – legal employment agencies, both in sending and in receiving countries, exist and are trackable, and to certain small extent accountable, but a great number of people use informal contacts, and a variety of mediators. The major factor of future change, all over the Gulf, is the perilous mixture of falling oil prices (the GCCs main source of income), and a continued demographic expansion coupled with growing youth unemployment and changes in the domestic structure of Arab family setups. Foreign maids are not likely ever be replaced by Arab nationals, but potential changes in the affluent Gulf life-style may cause reduced attractiveness of the migratory trend. Also relevant are the fast-evolving political and economic situations in the Horn of Africa. As Eritrea's dictatorial regime spirals towards its downfall and war-torn Somalia sees little prospect of overcoming its immense hurdles, the appeal of migration from there to the Gulf won't wither. As for Ethiopia, despite its recent fast economic growth, it is not likely to decrease and will probably increase, continuing to push its growingly urbanized but unemployed or underemployed youth away from the country. Hence, it's not likely that the female migration flows from the Horn, or more generally from Africa, to the Gulf will drastically dwindle in the next decade.

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**CONFRONTING THE “ARAB NORTH”: INTERPRETATIONS  
OF SLAVERY AND RELIGION IN SOUTHERN SUDANESE  
SEPARATIST RESISTANCE**

**Aleksi Ylönen**

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Centro de Estudos Internacionais  
Portugal



*For centuries, the greater Horn of Africa has been exposed to actors and influences crossing the Red Sea and sailing the Indian Ocean. The extension of these forces has had a profound effect in shaping contemporary societies and states in the sub-region over time. Contemporary Sudan is a fascinating example on how the extension of Islam and the elites-led emphasis on Arab identity has resulted in a society embracing Arab and Muslim culture. These characteristics in the territories that became the heartland of the contemporary Sudanese state translated into the formation of a nationalist governing elite promoting a particular form of Arab culture and interpretation of Islam as the main pillars of national identity for Sudan as a whole. However, the vast territories of contemporary Sudan are culturally highly heterogeneous. This contrasts starkly with the northern political elite's nation- and state-building project since decolonization, seeking to homogenize society through forced cultural assimilation. Since Sudan's independence, the state elite imposing Arab culture and Islam has led to varying degrees of direct confrontation with groups that oppose such forced cultural and religious transformation. This chapter reflects on the role of interpretations of slavery and religion in armed opposition and its aftermath in Southern Sudan. It points to the use of particular views of slavery and religion in the two main insurgencies in 1955-1972 and 1983-2005, and reflects on their representations in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005). The chapter argues that these interpretations are related to the Orientalist image of Sudan that connects with the aspirations of southern Sudan's self-determination, independence, and drift towards East African socio-cultural and Indian Ocean economic space.*

keywords: Southern Sudan, slavery, Islamization, civil war, secession

Over the centuries, influences crossing the Red Sea and connected to the prevailing Indian Ocean dynamics have been important in shaping the societies of the greater Horn of Africa. This has been the case for the social organization that laid the foundation for contemporary Sudan. Historically, various actors sought to establish hegemonic power over the territories that extend over contemporary Sudan. Here, as in many other places in the world, cultural influences from far-away lands, spread through peaceful interaction or conquest, over a long period of time, were significant. In the case of today's Sudan, historical narratives tend to lend support to the importance to Islamic and Arabic cultural influences from the Arabian Peninsula, across the Red Sea and through Egypt, as those sculpting contemporary social organization and identities.

However, the territories of what constitutes contemporary Sudan were highly culturally heterogeneous before the arrival of Islam and the later overwhelming emphasis on Arab culture. While the extension of Islam was largely pacific, it also involved conquest and violence. One generation after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Muslim armies invaded Africa. Over the centuries, the kingdoms in the territories that later came to be known as northern Sudan were slowly annexed to Islam's sphere of influence as a result of migration, peaceful assimilation and conflict. In pre-Islamic times, Arab migrations to Sudan appear to have originated from Egypt and across the Red Sea, which set the pattern for later migrations (Hasan, 2003, p.11). From the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, economic motivations related to trade, and notably slaves that initially came from the western and central *Bilad al-Sudan*, among other commercial items, and mining of gold and emeralds, drove many Arabs to migrate to the heartlands of what constitutes contemporary Sudan (Hasan, 2003, p. 11, 17-18). By the 16<sup>th</sup> century this movement eventually overwhelmed the kingdoms of Nubia and Alwa, while Arab migrants settled in Butana and Gezira along the Nile as well as in the lowland areas of Kordofan and Darfur. Moving in these areas, they interacted and frequently intermarried with locals, which gradually produced mixed, at times culturally Arabized, frontier communities (Iyob and Khadiagala, 2006, p.22).

Over time, sectors of the Arabized part of the population gained influence in the local communities. This was due largely to their increasing societal prominence, often as traders, which tended to promote the Islamic religious culture that was gradually transmitted to other sections of the population, "... many of whom adopted Islam, some Arab customs and Arabic (though many Nubians,

Beja and others kept their ancient tongues)" (Hasan, 2003, p.25).<sup>1</sup> The patriarchal system dictated by Islam contrasted with the Nubian matriarchal structure and according to some authors fostered the prominence of the Arabized peoples ('Abd al-Rahim, 1970, p.135-6; Iyob and Khadiagala, 2006, p.22). The gradual expansion of Islam then led to most societies in central, eastern, and western Sudan gradually adopting the new religion. Although mixed with local traditions and belief systems it became mostly celebrated in its local *Sufi* form.<sup>2</sup> After the demise of the Nubian kingdoms in the early 14th century, notably the indigenous Sennar and Darfur sultanates became influential in territories of today's central and western Sudan, respectively. Their spheres of influence extended from the borderlands of contemporary southern Sudan to the northern territories bordering today's Egypt until first Sennar and then Darfur had to give way to the Ottoman invasion in the course of the 19th century.

The conquest by the Ottoman Egyptian viceroy Muhammad Ali is often considered the prelude to the making of a centralized polity in Sudan. Among Ali's prime motivations in occupying the lands south of Egypt was to obtain slaves to strengthen his army. At its height, the Ottoman dominion bordered Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and had its frontier lands extend to Darfur, southern Sudan, and the Red Sea coast. Yet, in 1885 the Ottoman rule collapsed before the Mahdist revolution that drew heavily from the support of the *Ansar* (the Mahdi's followers) from various parts of Sudan, but notably including cattle-herding *Baggara* from Kordofan. One of the major grievances behind the rebellion was the suppression of the slave trade which undermined the livelihoods of many Arab *jallaba* traders who by now had largely moved from *Bilad al-Sudan* to southern Sudan. The state during the Mahdist period (1885-1899) engaged in continuous warfare, and slave raids in southern Sudan continued. The administration incorporated elites that had been influential during the Ottoman period, giving the centralized state a degree of continuity. Still, the Mahdist experiment was short-lived and by 1899 the Anglo-Egyptian army had taken control of most of northern and central Sudan. Anglo-Egyptian rule, under *de facto* British administration, further consolidated the centralized administration initially put in place by the Ottoman rulers under the British and Egyptian colonial elite. The slave trade was largely suppressed but slavery continued to exist in northern Sudan, while southern Sudan was cut-off for more than a decade and subjected to a different colonial

<sup>1</sup> Some prominent authors have theorized that the spread of Islam and Arabic culture in Sudan was facilitated by the increasing wealth of part of the Arabized sections that converted them into a desired source of husbands for Nubian and other local women, while at the same time culturally Arabized Muslim women were unable to marry non-Muslims (Mazrui, 1973, p.72-3; Deng, 1995, p.80).

<sup>2</sup> For more on Sufism in Sudan, see e.g. Warburg (2003), Karrar (1992), and Daly (1985).

policy seeking to preserve the “native” way of life while promoting Christianity and Western education.

The process of decolonization, initiated in the 1940s, brought remarkably little change to the state and governance. The post-colonial state largely inherited the dominant elites, organization and structure from the Anglo-Egyptian colonial state. The nationalist movement was dominated by the leaderships of the northern *Sufi* brotherhoods, the Mahdists and *Khatmiyya*, which had become dominant forces partly due to their collaboration with the colonial masters.<sup>3</sup> One of its main features, which marked both continuity and change, was the emphasis on national identity based on the most important self-defining features of the Sudanese political elite, Arab culture and Islam. Following the contours of the established political identity perceptions of the small well-educated elite, this project was highly exclusive and sought to maintain the concentration of political and economic power. An important part of this political project was the cultural homogenization of Sudan by using state policies to assimilate its diverse peoples through active promotion of Arabization and Islamization. Failing this, the resistant sectors of the population on the edges of the state were subjected to marginalization and exclusion. Essentially, they were deprived of effective political participation, economic development and social integration that would provide a degree of ownership towards the state, subjecting them to perpetual poverty and deprivation compared to the Arabized and Islamicized groups in central Sudan.

The political elite’s hegemonic project appears to have faced most opposition in those communities that were least integrated with the state and whose cultural and ethno-political identities contrasted with the Arab-Muslim dominated socioeconomic and sociopolitical state order. From the 1940s onwards, among the most adamant against Arabization and Islamicization of their local societies were a selection of members of the contemporary southern Sudanese elite who saw forced cultural assimilation, in the historical context of slavery and perpetual racial inequality, as an outright assault on their own cultural dignity and values. This was due in part to the perception of not being treated equally by the Arab-Muslim governing elite, and the feeling of exclusion from political power at the centre of Sudanese polity, as well as a sentiment of resistance towards assimilation into the Arab-Muslim culture and the attempt to promote a regional identity in southern Sudan. Among the mission-educated southern elite there was likely an element of fear that being unable to prevent cultural assimilation would gradually result in the southern intelligentsia becoming obsolete. The southern elite would lose local constituencies to the national elite, and eventually a whole-

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Niblock (1989), Karrar (1992), and Warburg (2003).

sale cultural transformation would take place resulting in the eradication of local southern ways of life and conversion of southerners as a whole into a class perpetually servile to the "Arab north". The promotion of Arab culture and Islam provoked resistance among sections of the southern elite in parts of southern Sudan, and precipitated mobilization for anti-state activities to counter the perceived repressive policies.

This chapter explores interpretations of slavery and religion in the context of armed opposition in southern Sudan, and points to their connection with the aspiration for self-determination and an independent polity aligned with East Africa. The chapter does not aspire to give a comprehensive account on slavery, religion or the complex insurgencies themselves, but seeks to show that Orientalist views and images of Sudan became apparent in the political project aimed at separating the southern region from the rest of Sudan. Interpretations of slavery and religion were used to justify southern self-determination and independence, and have served to legitimize its drift towards the East African socio-cultural and Indian Ocean economic space.

## Slavery and Religion in the Making of "Sudan"

Over the centuries, the territories that form today's Sudan became Islamicized. The central areas of this region also became gradually culturally Arabized in terms of language, religion, and customs. In the presence of intense 19<sup>th</sup> slave trade and slave holding in north-central Sudan, and in connection with the attempt to preserve the lucrative slave trade by sectors of northern Sudanese elites, a discourse of a particular kind of social hierarchy emerged in which adherence to Arab culture and Islam justified higher social status, and were used to legitimize access to economic and political power.<sup>4</sup> This stratification included a social perception of race, in which the slave, considered the lowest status (Deng, 1995b, p.369-400, 484-5), constituted the starkest contrast to the most ideal forms of Arab and Muslim social and cultural purity.<sup>5</sup>

The slave trade in the northernmost territories of contemporary Sudan originated in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This was the prelude for many Arabs engaging in commerce taking up lucrative slave trading in the region. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century trade among the Sudanic kingdoms was relatively low in numbers in comparison to what followed during the period of Ottoman Egyptian domination. Particularly

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Deng (1995a, 1995b) and Jok (2001, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Idris (2001, 2005) views Sudan as a "racialized state" in which social race, measured by excellence in Arab culture (language and customs) and Islam, defines societal status and the right to claim economic and political power.

the southern fringes of the Keira (Darfur) and Sennar (south-central Sudan) served as major sources of slaves forming part of the overall Trans-Saharan trade as well as that across the Red Sea. The captives taken from the southern frontiers, largely from today's southern Darfur, South Kordofan and Bahr al-Ghazal, came from societies that were outside the limits of the respective states. Their religious status appears to have been less of a factor in deciding their enslavable status.<sup>6</sup>

Most of north-central Sudan had become Muslim in the centuries following the Arab expansion. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards *Sufi* orders originating in the Middle East and practising mystical form of Islam based on a personal relationship with God had become increasingly popular and gained influence in northern and central Sudan.<sup>7</sup> Sufism became a significant and resilient part of shaping social organization in which the brotherhoods played an important role. The societal importance of the major *Sufi* and religious orders allowed them to accumulate economic power and political importance, leading to the establishment of sectarian organizations as power centres in the context of the political order of the state. These formations hosted prominent sections of Sudan's political elite until their later marginalization during the military dictatorship of Jaafar Nimeiri (1969-1985).

The structures of centralized state inherited by contemporary Sudan originated in the colonial period. The "Sudanese" administration replacing the colonial state during decolonization inherited the governing apparatus derived largely from the need to control the extensive territories and extract resources. It was centralized in Khartoum which was a strategically opportune location in the centre where the Blue and White Nile met. In order to consolidate their rule, the Ottoman Egyptians had initially chosen to collaborate with sections of the central riverine *Shaigiyya* peoples and the sectarian *Khatmiyyah Sufi* order based in Kassala, both of which seized the opportunity to benefit from cooperation with the colonial state. Consequently, the Ottoman Egyptian rule in these areas became strongest. However, the colonial state faced a number of revolts and in the early 1880s the harsh rule had resulted in a violent anti-colonial movement by Muhammad Ahmad, who claimed to be and was accepted by many as the Mahdi. Originating in Kordofan, the movement drew particularly support among the Baggara many of whom became Mahdist followers, the *Ansar*. Similarly to a number of other Muslim groups in contemporary Sudan, the Baggara have manufactured genealogies for generations that trace their lineage

<sup>6</sup> On slavery in pre-colonial Sudan, see e.g. O'Fahey (1973) and O'Fahey and Spaulding (1974).

<sup>7</sup> According to Woodward (2003, p. 96), "The politics of Islam from the eighteenth century onward was a reflection of the growth of the Sufi orders, or *turuq* (singular *tariqa*), who came into Sudan and steadily grew in size".

back to Muslim ancestors, and, despite being mixed peoples, they embrace Arab culture (Cunnison, 1971, p.186-96).

The rebellion grew quickly and extended in different regions due to the Egyptian rule that had made life increasingly hard due to high taxation, corruption and attempts to abolish the slave trade on which many merchants depended. Faced by the overwhelming popular revolt, the state collapsed and was replaced by the Mahdist Islamic administration. However, although the Mahdists showed animosity towards the former regime collaborators and drove the *Khatmiyyah* out, their government did depend on officials who had formed part of the former administration. As a result, the new regime continued to rely on sections of the north-central riverine peoples, namely *Shaiqiyyah*, but also *Jaaliyyin* and *Danaqla*, to administer the state. This not only promoted sections of the central-riverine groups in the prevailing social order, but laid the foundation for their future prominence.

During this time in north-central Sudan, the idea of *awlad al-balad* (sons of the land) was adopted by the "fathers" (earlier generations) to claim a socially prominent position mainly among the *Shaiqiyyah* and *Jaaliyyin*. It came to be used as identification of belonging to the prominent state elite (Adam, Bartlett, and Nour, 2009, p.7), which as a whole wielded economic and political power. This "invention of tradition"<sup>8</sup> had wide reaching consequences largely because the educated northern elite promoted the discourse to advance the historical narratives of "Arab" conquests and superiority in Sudan, and thereby claimed ownership of the Sudanese polity. In the course of decolonization it therefore established a core of elite individuals claiming a socially defined exclusive right to power within the political structures of the state. Their self-proclaimed "pure" Arab and Muslim identity, justified by claims to generations of Arab and Muslim lineage, gave this exclusive group the right to power and generally disqualified other elites from exercising state power collectively. Although members of other, marginalized, elites have held positions of power, they have never been allowed to form collective blocs that could shift true economic and political state power from *awlad al-balad*.

British colonial rule had also contributed to the social prominence and symbolic capital of Arab identity and culture. Professing European superiority over the local societies, the British perceived Sudanese "Arabs" as largely "semi-civilized", and the people of the southern territories as "blacks" and "savages". They deemed sections of the riverine groups and the influential heads of the sectarian orders, whom they considered "Arabs", as the most useful collaborators of the

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992).

colonial state and relied on them to help to administer the polity. This way, the exclusive British ruling methods followed the practice of governance initiated during the *Turkiyyah*, and perpetuated political sectarianism, tribalism, and the use of culture for domination and racism (El Zain, 1996, p.525), the latter of which had originated in social subjugation related to the perceptions of “Arab” superiority.

In certain circumstances, collaboration with the colonial state was highly beneficial in terms of wealth and status. For instance, elite sectors of the riverine peoples who occupied administrative positions, as well as some privileged individuals connected to the leading *Sufi* and sectarian orders, were able to acquire higher education at Gordon College, Sudan’s main institution of higher learning. Modern education, participation in the colonial administration and British views of the more sophisticated central riverine Sudanese, in comparison with the peripheral populations and borderlanders, gave fertile ground for growth of the attitude of superiority among these elites. Moreover, the heads of the leading *Sufi* movements and sectarian orders benefited significantly from their collaboration. Particularly Sayyid Abd Rahman al-Mahdi (the neo-Mahdists) and Sayyid Ali al-Mirghani (*Khatmiyyah*), used their large social constituencies and sectarian rivalry to extract resources and strengthen their social status. The British feared the mobilization capacity of each movement that could be used against the state, and sought to keep their leaderships content by proportioning economic wealth and allowing them to exert influence over large sections of the northern Sudanese population.

In the social order of the colonial state which to an extent privileged Arab-Muslim identification, it was southern Sudan that contrasted the most. The British perceived the territories roughly south of the 10<sup>th</sup> parallel north as “savage” and in need of civilization, which was deemed to come through Christianity and Western education. Missionary societies were endorsed in southern Sudan to provide such education. Realizing that southerners might be prey to Arabic and Islamic influences brought by officials and merchants from the north, the colonial masters became protectionist. Particularly following the nationalist current in the early 1920s which mainly shook northern Sudan, the protectionist attitude manifested itself in the promotion of native administration based on appointed “tribal” chiefs and separate rule according to the isolationist Southern Policy (Abdel Rahim, 1969, p.49-51, 75). The Policy, separating southern Sudan from the north, was progressively implemented from 1920-1930 (until it was abandoned in 1946), and Western historiographers often see it as a defining period for cementing differences between northern and southern Sudan. This view, which portrays the



British effort to isolate southern Sudan as an effort to protect the “noble savage” from Arab and Islamic domination and slavery, has been instrumental in shaping the Western approaches to Sudan. It also permitted the instrumentalization of the sense of difference between northern and southern Sudan by the southern Sudanese separatist leadership in the attempt to achieve its objectives of self-determination and/or an independent state.

## Interpretations of Slavery and Religion during Decolonization and Early Armed Opposition

The changing political landscape after the Second World War, including increasing superpower pressure and local demands, pushed the British to decolonize Sudan. This process was conducted hastily in a ten-year period largely because of the fear of Egypt successfully annexing Sudan and it falling out of the sphere of British influence. Sections of the educated riverine Sudanese nationalists, projecting their Arab-Muslim self-identification as the basis for Sudanese national identity, were vocal advocators of the end of colonial rule. While the neo-Mahdists who formed the Umma party sought independence, *Khatmiyyah* and its political wing, the National Unionist Party (NUP), leaned towards Sudan’s association with Egypt. The British viewed the northern intelligentsia composed of the sectarian elite, and associated educated class, as the fittest to govern Sudan and inherit control of the administration. The decolonization process, initiated in 1946, resulted in the “Sudanization” of public administration and security forces, which in practice meant that they became dominated by the northern riverine elites and their constituencies.

In the process of decolonization, the Southern Policy was abandoned and the southern provinces were re-annexed to northern Sudan. In 1947 the British convoked a conference in Juba to assess the attitudes of hand-picked members of the southern elite towards reunification with the north, which had already been decided on. Although the sentiments of fear and mistrust expressed by southerners at the conference are apparent in its documented proceedings (RJC, 1947), the British eventually re-annexed southern provinces to northern Sudan despite disagreements among themselves about the possible consequences.<sup>9</sup> The southern representatives were initially assured of safeguards when reincorporated into northern Sudan, and the northern political forces that had been actively present

<sup>9</sup> A number of the British administrators in southern Sudan were against the reunification due to fears that southern Sudan could not stand up for itself and would be subjugated.

at the conference promised full consideration of a federal solution for Sudan following southern demands.

It was the exclusive Sudanization and reunification, which primarily triggered the southern fears of renewed northern domination. In the context of the electoral campaign for the first parliamentary election in 1953, the NUP (linked to *Khatmiyyah* and backed by Egypt), which emerged as victorious, promised southerners priority when administrative positions in the southern provinces would be Sudanized (Ruay, 1994, p.69). However, when this promise failed to materialize because southerners were considered mostly unequipped for the positions and disqualified,<sup>10</sup> the mistrust towards the northern “Arabs”, combined with the memory of violent subjugation and slavery which the missionary education and oral histories in the southern communities had undoubtedly maintained, began to turn into contempt and hatred. The influx of northern administrators, teachers, and senior army and police officers into the southern provinces generated these adverse sentiments. They joined with that of impotence of gaining economic and political power (mainly jobs and effective representation able to secure southern rights), while the northern “Arabs” seemed to enjoy both of these and take advantage of their privileged position in southern Sudan.

A number of authors mention the collective sentiments of fear, anxiety, and mistrust towards the northerners as being important to the understanding of conflict formation in southern Sudan.<sup>11</sup> In such situations, the local leaders may play a significant role in encouraging and instrumentalizing such feelings, which serves to fuel the existing sense of insecurity towards the other (Arfi, 1998; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998; McSweeney, 1999). Indeed, the interpretation of slavery as a violent form of extreme subjugation and exploitation and the fear of its return in the context of northern “Arab” domination contributed to the radicalization of opposition and played a significant role in the rise of insurgency in southern Sudan in the 1950s.

These collective fears of the northern “Arab” were particularly acute in southern Sudan. It was likely due in part to the lack of contact with northerners because the British administrators cut most of southern Sudan off from interaction with the northern “Arab”, and to the Western missionaries extending Christian and to an extent anti-northern and anti-Islamic values among the members of the embryonic mission-educated southern elite. The colonial administration had sought to build a buffer against Arabic and Muslim influences by socializing

<sup>10</sup> In the final stage of the Sudanization process, southerners obtained 6 of 800 administrative positions (Taisier and Matthews, 1999: 203).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Eprile (1974), Holt and Daly (2000), Collins (2005), and Wassara (2007).

members of the southern elite along Western principles, using English instead of Arabic or local vernacular languages, and deliberately sought to consolidate Christianity. But at the same time the northern "Arab" became demonized as a term that was used and later instrumentalized in rallying for political opposition. From the Anglo-Egyptian colonial, a dominant narrative emerged in southern Sudan that the British were good to the southerners, while the "Arabs" sought to forcefully assimilate southern Sudan through Islamization and Arabization in order to perpetually dominate and subjugate it and its peoples.

Armed with this understanding, a selection of members of the southern Sudanese elite became antagonistic towards what was viewed as northern riverine "Arab" domination. Apart from perceivably marginalizing southerners during Sudanization, the new rulers discarded the earlier promises of political safeguards and possible federal solution for southern Sudan. By the mid-1950s the antagonism had turned into hatred, particularly in areas in the southernmost Equatoria Province following the farcical trial of a local member of parliament, Elia Kuze, and when southern workers in the Nzara agricultural scheme were laid off while more northern personnel was simultaneously hired. In 1955, a conspiracy to murder northern army officials in southern Sudan, to which some prominent southerners were linked, came to light and, soon after, disturbances targeted northern "Arabs" and a mutiny broke out among southern army troops in Torit, Equatoria. Eventually the mutiny was repressed with British help, but some soldiers escaped with their weapons and began a low-intensity insurgency that for a number of years amounted mainly to occasional banditry and isolated violent incidents. The government response to the disturbances in which a number of northerners died was characterized by revenge. A wave of terror followed which included arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture and killings in southern Sudan. This generated further fear and antagonism locally.

In 1958, a military coup resulted in the end of the brief democratic experiment in Sudan and the Ibrahim Abboud's military junta (1958-64) assuming power. In this situation, the state embarked on a mission of forced cultural assimilation to end resistance in southern Sudan, which according to the government was due to foreign agents, mainly the Christian missionaries.<sup>12</sup> The regime imposed a policy of active Islamization and pushed the Arabic language in southern Sudan. It was accompanied by large-scale violence in counterinsurgency operations, which mainly targeted the civilian population (Eprile, 1974). In this way, religion and language were politicized and used as tools for forced cultural assimilation, to

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<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Poggo (2002).

serve the attempt to cement the governing Arab-Muslim elite's domination in southern Sudan.

Yet, the Abboud regime's measures were unable to annihilate the armed opposition, which began to receive increasing external support in the early 1960s. Some of this assistance came from Christian organizations, with Equatorian priest Father Saturnino Lohure becoming an important figure in channelling resources (Gray, 2002, p.120). The regime's policy to expel Christian missionaries from southern Sudan (1962-1964) followed the perception that missionaries were agents of foreign powers. This led to foreign Christian players becoming active in supporting the southern opposition. The repression, but without sufficient strength to end the rebellion, and the external support, allowed the expansion of political opposition into a number of armed factions and non-armed resistance. The antagonism towards the northern "Arab" state was an mobilization important factor and fuelled the rebellion. Another crucial element was external support, which strengthened the armed opposition.

In the course of the conflict, various opposition factions controlled areas and their communities in southern Sudan. Still, it was Joseph Lagu, who had defected from the army and founded his Anya-Nya rebel command, that controlled much of the arms flows to the opposition, who unified the rebel groups under his leadership and the later Southern Sudan Liberation Front/Movement (SSLF/M). In May 1969, Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri had taken power in Sudan in an Arab socialist officers' army coup. He increasingly curbed external support for southern rebels by improving relations with the southern neighboring states, intensified the counterinsurgency effort and promised development in southern Sudan. Both through Lagu's unification of the rebel command and Nimeiri's successful counterinsurgency policy the way for a negotiated settlement became possible.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in 1972, the government and the SSLF/M agreed on peace in Addis Ababa with Ethiopian mediation. This became a reality largely because of the SSLF/M's weakening position and Nimeiri's Arab socialist approach, which for the first time officially recognized the different southern way of life that was reflected in the policy on language and religion. The Addis Ababa peace agreement granted southern Sudan self-government and limited autonomy by uniting its three original provinces (Bahr al-Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile) into one region, and ensured that English became recognized as the "principle language" of the southern region (AAA, 1972, Chapter II, Article 6.). Although it did not directly address the issue of religion or social subjugation of southerners, it

<sup>13</sup> There are a number of accounts on the insurgency and peace negotiations. See in e.g. Eprile (1974) and Alier (1990).

was implicit that southern self-government could buffer Islamic influences and protect southern rights. The 1973 permanent constitution, in turn, recognized Christianity and other “noble spiritual beliefs” (Part II, Chapter I, Article 16), and the constitutional validity of the Addis Ababa Agreement (Part I, Article 8) (PCS, 1973). The Addis Ababa peace agreement can be seen as a political settlement that sought to protect southern Sudan from the perceived northern “Arab” domination. But in the end the Southern Region remained subject to the arbitrary and unchecked political influence of the leadership of the dictatorial national government, which was a major factor leading to its eventual failure.

## The Second Insurgency in Southern Sudan

The second rebellion in southern Sudan emerged in the context of abolition of the Southern Region and its institutions. President Nimeiri had personally influenced the southern leadership throughout the 1970s,<sup>14</sup> and dissolved the regional political institutions in 1980 and finally re-divided southern Sudan into its three original provinces in June 1983. These actions heightened the sentiment of renewed northern “Arab” control and were vigorously opposed in southern Sudan. They coincided with grievances over the partially failed integration of the former rebel military elements into the army after the Addis Ababa Agreement. A military conspiracy among officers, who claimed dissatisfaction over the political developments, triggered mutinies, which escalated into a rebellion.<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1970s Islamic resurgence was penetrating northeast Africa. In this regional context, soon after a failed 1971 allegedly communist coup attempt and the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, the government initiated a policy shift. By the mid-1970s, Nimeiri considered that the northern sectarian political elite, which for the first time had lost power in 1969 and had been driven into exile, needed to be accommodated. The sectarian leadership had found refuge in the Gulf States, and had staged aborted coups with external backing. Clearly, substituting the northern elite organizations with southern Sudan as an unprecedented regime constituency had been insufficient to consolidate the regime against political instability caused by the exiled northern political factions. While it had become apparent that in the regional context of Islamic resurgence embracing Islam would be beneficial, Nimeiri found support from the Sudanese Muslim brothers who had formed a minority party formation of Islamic Charter Front (ICF) in the

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Collins (2008, pp. 112, 115, 133, 134).

<sup>15</sup> See Madut-Arop (2006) on an extensive account on the military conspiracy.

1960s. This allowed Nimeiri to avoid sharing power with the still-powerful and potentially threatening sectarian parties. As a result, Nimeiri, a skilful political pragmatist, embarked on “national reconciliation” with the most influential and potentially threatening northern sectarian opposition factions, and invited them to return to Sudan but deliberately marginalized them to maintain control. The regime began favouring the Muslim brothers as its new constituency and secured backing from Saudi Arabia and the United States while it became increasingly inclined to abolish the Southern Region.

The Muslim brothers advocated Sudan’s Arab and Muslim identity. The National Islamic Front (NIF), founded by Hassan al-Turabi in 1976, and increasingly politically influential, was among the most eager northern elite organizations to assimilate the peripheries through active Islamization. As such, it opposed any special recognition of southern Sudan, and perceived any concessions to the southerners as the state giving in to separatism and outright secessionism. However, this was not new since the sectarian parties had already been concerned about the possibility of southern secession since decolonization, and generally echoed the concerns of the Islamists. As a result, Nimeiri’s national reconciliation became a process of rapprochement, involving sections of the northern Arab-Muslim elite and leading to marginalization of the southern elite and the undermining of southern political autonomy.

In this context, certain Islamist sections of the northern elite thrived. Receiving financing from the Arabian Peninsula and diaspora, and controlling much of the banking and economic sector in Sudan, Turabi’s NIF grew in power and influence. Under increasing pressure, Nimeiri made concessions to Islamist elements, notably regarding the issue of southern Sudan. Having been involved in the politics of the Southern Region throughout the 1970s, and to an extent fuelling the ethnically unfolding rivalries in the region, Nimeiri became increasingly inclined to abolish southern self-government.

However, Nimeiri was also under pressure to salvage the Sudanese economy which was on a downward spiral. Oil had been discovered in southern Sudan near the northern Sudanese border in the 1970s and Nimeiri sought central government control of the oil fields. Seeking to capture the oil-rich territory, the government distorted the administrative boundaries and in 1980 Nimeiri created a new Unity State, but southern politicians discovered the attempt to manipulate the regions’ borders and denounced it. A dispute over the oil issue flared up and eventually became an important factor in influencing Nimeiri’s decision to abolish southern self-government.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Alier (1990) for an account on the dispute and its effects.

In May 1983, before the eventual break-up of the Southern Region, a number of orchestrated mutinies took place in the south and led to a second rebellion. Securing external support mainly from Ethiopia, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) led by John Garang emerged as the most powerful among the competing southern armed factions. The revolutionary SPLM/A manifesto detailed a number of grievances, which were mainly related to northern "Arab" political and economic domination. Following the outbreak of the rebellion, Nimeiri first abolished the southern autonomy that formed part of the 1973 Sudanese constitution in an unconstitutional move, and in September 1983 declared Islamic shari'a law in the whole country. These constituted symbolic steps subjugating southern Sudan and propelling state-led Islamization. The two measures fuelled the war as they caused re-emergence of fears of violent northern "Arab" domination of southern Sudan, and played into favourable conditions for mobilization of armed opposition. As one sign of a growing feeling of insecurity when faced with Islamization policies, many local people in southern Sudan turned to Christianity for solace and support (Johnson, 2003, p. 35).

In April 1985 a popular revolution in northern Sudan toppled Nimeiri, and the Arab-Muslim political elite-led multi-party system was restored. The government under the neo-Mahdist leader Sadiq al-Mahdi that followed sought to end the war in southern Sudan. However, in June 1989 the NIF took power in a military coup. The new regime, headed by Omar al-Bashir, with initially critical behind-the-scenes support from Turabi, further politicized religion as an effort to implement its "National Salvation Revolution" that entailed the building of an Islamic state through societal transformation (Voll, 2000, p.165-6). The NIF regime took radical measures to eradicate opposition, using religion in its counterinsurgency campaign while seeking to Islamize defiant populations, and declared jihad against the insurgents. It sought to forcefully assimilate local populations into Islam, including in some regions to systematically eradicate local cultures.<sup>17</sup> For instance, in southern Kordofan this effort consisted of eliminating those opposing the state, displacing the civil population ostensibly supporting them, and seeking to Islamize particularly the internally displaced who made their way to the government administered "peace camps" where they were subjected to harsh treatment.<sup>18</sup>

The SPLM/A sought to capitalize on this situation by repeatedly highlighting in its propaganda how government politicized religion was an extension of its at-

<sup>17</sup> Probably the most radical attempt for forced cultural transformation was undertaken in the Nuba Mountains. See e.g. Ylönen (2009).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

tempt to dominate the rest of Sudan. It also portrayed religious and ethnic differences within its organization and in southern Sudan as non-issues, and it sought to maintain this image until and beyond the end of the war in order to feed the perceptions of southern Sudan as a united “Christian” and “African” front resisting “Muslim” and “Arab” government’s violent repression. Highlighting the continuing group-based inequality and marginalization to which southern Sudan was subjected, it succeeded in presenting the fight against forced Arabization and Islamization as synonymous with the liberation of southern Sudan from northern domination. This was instrumental in influencing the interested and powerful Western states’ approach to the conflict, and was consequently reflected in the peace terms.

## Peacemaking and the Break-up of Sudan

The established outside perceptions on slavery and religion featured strongly in the peacemaking in Sudan. The external players most active in the peace process, mainly the US and a selection of European states (namely Norway, the UK, Italy and the Netherlands), had for long assumed the importance of historical narratives of slavery and religious subjugation as the main explanations of understanding political instability and armed conflict in the country. This was due to an extent to the Western historiography, with its orientalist overtones (Spaulding and Kapteijns, 1991), which has often depicted southern Sudan and its peoples as the victims of northern oppression. Both slavery and religion are inherent in the subjugation narrative, transmitting into the attitudes of external actors towards the main protagonists of the war in Sudan and influencing their relations with and approach towards the warring parties and the conflict.

Indeed, powerful narratives of slavery’s legacy of unequal status between the Arab-Muslims and southerners continue to appear. For instance, Jok (2007) argues that due to continuing racist attitudes in northern Sudan, the black southerners have had no chance of becoming full members of the “Arab” in-group and exercising equal rights despite adopting the cultural prerequisites, including customs, language, and religion. Others have also pointed to this persisting social marginalization based on physical appearance, ethnic background and cultural attributes (Idris, 2001, 2005; Sharkey, 2003), which has generated grievances and fed antagonism. Moreover, relevant to grievances related to lower social status, Collins (1985) has noted that in the early stages of the insurgency in southern Sudan some southern young men being “...the lowest economic and social scale... became strongly militant as well as knowledgeable of the outside world. They



returned regularly to their homes in the South, bringing with them pent-up hostility and militancy that they developed while working as labourers on construction projects in the North" (p.138). Such attitudes have fuelled perceptions of "Arab-Muslim" imposed social inferiority of southerners.

The dominant Western discourses on religion and conflict in Sudan often emphasize the use of religion as a political weapon. In them, Islam has often been singled out as having played a prominent role in inciting violent conflict, particularly as a political tool of the Islamists. The National Congress Party (NCP, the former NIF) government's use of religion has been apparent as part of its counterinsurgency campaigns particularly in the early 1990s against the SPLM/A linked insurgents of South Kordofan and southern Blue Nile, as well as the armed opposition groups in Darfur. By imposing strict Islamic laws, the regime has been able to concentrate power in its core and its security apparatus on which its power largely rests.

In contrast, the protracted wars in southern Sudan, during which the government was using religious rhetoric for mobilization, enabled the local opposition movements to portray Christianity as a counterforce to forced Islamization. The perception in the West, and elsewhere, that the reductionist view given in the media about the war was largely responsible, emerged, in which southern Sudan and its peoples were victims of a violent form of radical Islamism propagated by the government in Khartoum. This generated sympathy for southern Sudan, and as the wars dragged on, played into the hands of those who promoted its secession from Sudan.

In the final stages of the peace negotiations leading to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the SPLM/A leadership found itself in a strong position. It was backed by the powerful Western states, especially the US, which largely positioned themselves against the Islamist regime in Khartoum, and could use the "Arab" domination narrative in order to try to influence these actors for favourable negotiation outcomes. Despite little evidence of slavery in contemporary Sudan, at least in the sense and magnitude that had occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>19</sup> it became a topic that the SPLM/A could exploit and that eventually formed part of the final CPA. As a result, the SPLM/A, which portrayed itself as the voice of victims of "Arab" and Islamist domination and subjugation, was successful in including at least part of its anti-slavery, religious freedom, and anti-discrimination agenda as stipulations in the agreement. Even more importantly, however, highlighting the protracted violent domination and massive human

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Veldkamp (2014) for more evidence and first-hand accounts on abduction and slavery during the second civil war in southern Sudan.

rights violations present in the negotiations also captured sympathies, and contributed to the otherwise favourable terms for the SPLM/A in the CPA, including the clause for a self-determination referendum and the possibility of seceding from Sudan (CPA, 2005).

In contrast, the Sudanese governments have generally used “Arab” and “Muslim” labels to gain external support especially from Arab States. They have used the historical links and cultural affinities between northern Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula, and the current NCP government has been no stranger to exploiting these generally warm relations. Among the latest manifestations of this is Sudan’s involvement in the Saudi-led coalition intervening in the civil war in Yemen, which has resulted in economic support to improve the ailing finances of the Sudanese regime. The NCP has benefited from crucial financial assistance and investments from the states in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as from political support from individual Arab states and the Arab League.

However, in the peace process facilitated largely by the Western states these relations could be viewed as an impediment. Having been accused of harbouring Islamist terrorism throughout the 1990s, in part due to having hosted Osama bin Laden and allegedly participated in the assassination attempt of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995, the US blacklisted and imposed sanctions on Sudan. This led to further deterioration of already problematic relations, culminating in a political confrontation in which the US and its Western allies appeared increasingly to be siding with the SPLM/A and other Sudanese opposition forces. In these circumstances of mounting international pressure, Khartoum attempted to improve its position by seemingly changing its posture. Particularly the US was keen on Sudan’s volte-face, and welcomed Sudan’s newly expressed willingness to assist in intelligence on Islamist terrorism after the 1998 embassy bombings in East Africa and the 9/11 attacks attributed to al-Qaeda. Khartoum’s cooperation and the warring parties’ seeming willingness to reach a negotiated end to the conflict facilitated the Inter-Governmental Agency on Development’s mediation efforts over which especially the US exerted significant influence.<sup>20</sup>

The long and occasionally stagnated peace process, originating in the mid-1990s, and involving a series of agreements notably in 2002-2003, eventually culminated in the signing of the CPA in January 2005. A vast document, the 259-page CPA clearly reflected the main external actors’ concern about political and economic subjugation of southern Sudan, the issue of slavery, and the politicization of Islam. For instance, the CPA stated “No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held

<sup>20</sup> For more on the peace process, see Young (2012) and Ylönen (2014).

in servitude or be required to perform forced or compulsory labour... [and that] ... Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...” (CPA, 2005, p.15). Chapter I of the CPA – also known as the Machakos Protocol, signed on 20 June 2002 – stipulated the requirement for religious freedom and that religion and customs should not determine access to public employment (CPA, 2005, p. 5). It also restricted Islamic shari’a law to the capital, Khartoum and exempted non-Muslims from its penalties, while recognizing Arabic as the national language and English as the language of government business (CPA, 2005, p.23, 25-6). These provisions can be seen as important because they posed an attempt to remedy the perceived marginalization, exclusion, and subjugation of southerners (and others) in Sudan as a whole. But in this regard the CPA also became an ultimatum to the northern governing elite to end marginalization and discrimination, because failing “to make the unity of the Sudan an attractive option especially to the people of South Sudan” (CPA, 2005, p. 2) would allow them to vote for secession in a self-determination referendum to take place after a six-year (2005-2011) interim period (CPA, 2005, p. 8).

The transition period was to assess the former warring parties’ capacity to overcome their differences and to work together within the framework of one state in which the region of Southern Sudan would again exercise autonomy. This autonomy was guaranteed by the stipulated SPLM majority in Southern Sudan’s newly created political institutions (while it became a minority partner at national level), and crucially the SPLA becoming the formal regional security apparatus in charge of protecting Southern Sudan. This formalized the SPLM/A’s one-party domination of the region (mirroring the NCP domination in Northern Sudan), while giving it security safeguards which the earlier Addis Ababa agreement and Southern Self-Government Act had not. Both parties committed to “making unity attractive” for the Southern Sudanese, including celebrating civic liberties and religious tolerance, and promoting economic development, while the Southern Sudanese could opt for secession in the self-determination referendum in case unity was not made attractive during the six-year transition period. This way, the discourse of subjugation and religious domination continued play a part in the political dynamics during the interim period.

The CPA was heavily influenced by the southern and Western views of the conflict, the history of violence and massive human rights violations. Following the sudden death of SPLM/A’s supreme leader John Garang in July 2005, secessionist elements within the movement close to the new leader Salva Kiir gained relative importance. Their objective of gaining independence contributed to the SPLM/A propagated and pre-established separatist views being used to justify

the secession and international recognition of Southern Sudan. During the interim period the SPLM/A governed Southern Sudan with an iron fist to ensure the desired outcome of the vote for self-determination. Expectedly, the referendum brought an overwhelming 98.33% vote for secession, with 97.58% voter turnout (SSR, 2011), and Southern Sudan became the independent Republic of South Sudan on 9 July 2011.

One important factor considered during Southern Sudan's referendum, secession, and international recognition was the economic viability of the new state. Politically, many believed rather naively that the SPLM/A-dominated order would be sufficient to end armed conflict and maintain stability, and that the SPLM/A elite would be equipped to successfully lead the country. Economically, South Sudan was seen as a viable state because approximately 75% of Sudan's oil reserves were located in its territory. Little consideration was given to the fact that its oil needed to be piped through Sudan and subjected to Khartoum's control and transit fees, and overlooking its overwhelming dependence on oil exports (98% of the official budget) and a potentially chronic case of "Dutch disease"<sup>21</sup> in the absence of any significant agricultural and industrial sectors.

However, alternative plans for exporting oil were made. These were accelerated by the crisis in which South Sudan accused Sudan of siphoning off its petroleum revenues and imposing excessive transit fees. This eventually led it to stop oil exports from its territory and the fighting of a brief but destructive border conflict (Ylönen, 2012). The plans to find alternative solutions for exporting oil also represented the South Sudanese government's attempt to break the bond of dependence on Khartoum, and symbolically move South Sudan from the sphere of "Arab" north and the Arabian Peninsula to ever closer alignment with East Africa with which southern parts of the country have historically intimate cultural and economic ties.

One idea which embodies this attempt was to ship oil on barges up the Nile to Uganda from where it could be transported to Kenya for export. Another version of this was that oil could be transported by road in trucks either to Uganda or directly to Kenya from where it could be shipped out. Yet, due to infeasibility and likely severe environmental problems, these ideas were abandoned when the plan to build an alternative pipeline became increasingly serious. Initially, it was proposed that perhaps a pipeline could be constructed to connect with the already functioning Cameroon-Chad pipeline, or another one built to the Kenyan coast. This was not only an economic but also a strategic geo-political question

<sup>21</sup> "Dutch disease" is meant to describe the overwhelming dependence on oil exports relative to other sectors of the economy which simultaneously receive little or no sustained development effort.

of crucial national importance. Any such pipeline would constitute a permanent tie in terms of strategic infrastructure between South Sudan and its neighbours. With the background of Uganda and Kenya having supported the SPLM/A for a long time, and the longstanding cultural and commercial ties between South Sudan and the two neighbouring states, the relations between South Sudan and its East African partners have been close.

In this context, building a pipeline to the Port of Lamu in Kenya became an obvious choice, connecting South Sudan to the Indian Ocean’s commercial sphere. For Kenya, the pipeline complements the Lamu Port Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor in the making, which forms part of its ambitious “Vision 2030” development plan.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, relations between Juba and Addis Ababa are good in part due to Ethiopia’s role in mediating in the South Sudan civil war. Ethiopia and Djibouti are also in the process of building a transport corridor which they hope to eventually to extend from the Red Sea to the Atlantic through South Sudan (Mail & Guardian Africa, 2015). This may offer landlocked South Sudan yet another route to the sea in the future.

However, the current crisis in South Sudan which initially unfolded in 2013 has pitted the country between the supporters of President Salva Kiir and the former Vice-President Riek Machar. The armed opposition under Machar has threatened to occupy the oil fields, while Khartoum has likely supported the rebels at least in the eastern part of South Sudan (SSNA, 2013) partly in response to the alleged support of South Sudanese elements for the SPLM/A-North armed opposition in Sudan based in South Kordofan and southern Blue Nile. Despite this situation, which has involved Ugandan armed forces intervention on the side of Salva Kiir, the construction of the pipeline connecting South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda, which seeks to export oil in and from the vicinity of Lake Albert, is to begin in 2016 (Pipeline International, 2015). Simultaneously, any plans to improve transport connections between South Sudan and Ethiopia are complicated by the increased instability in the Greater Upper Nile in eastern South Sudan and in Gambella in western Ethiopia caused by the conflict in South Sudan. It is likely to take years before South Sudan can decidedly diminish the relative importance of economic and commercial ties with the “Arab” Sudan, the Red Sea, and the Arab countries, and fully endorse the economic potential of its relationship with Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia that would tie it ever more in the broader East African and Indian Ocean commercial space.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Lamont (2013) for more on the LAPPSET and “Vision 2030”.

## Closing Remarks

Sudan has suffered from protracted war since its independence. The two longest rebellions in the country in which millions of people perished took place in southern Sudan. The role of the legacy of slavery and religion in these insurgencies has been debated, as they have been interpreted in different ways and used politically during the war and the peacemaking.

Historically, both slavery and religion have been forces used for societal organization in Sudan. The governing elites of the Sudanese state have used their self-proclaimed “Arab” and “Muslim” identity to justify their political and economic power and to gain support from Arab states. They have largely sought to maintain the social organization based on socio-culturally hierarchical and stratified perceptions formed along the past conceptions of race and social status. This has continued to perpetuate the relevance of hierarchical social order in contemporary Sudan. In this perception, the legacy of slavery and religion (particularly certain approaches to Islam) has been associated with and determined social status.

Moreover, the legacy of slavery and politicization of Islam has been linked to the armed conflict, especially in southern Sudan. First, the type of social subjugation marked by the legacy of slavery and politicization of Islam imposed as part of northern (state) domination has been mostly confronted in southern Sudan as external forces and resisted by large sections of the local population. Western historical narratives point to this resistance and the role of northern “Arab” domination, articulated through the legacy of slavery and forced Islamization, as a source of fear and grievance fuelling armed opposition. While this appears to have been the case in the formation of the first rebellion in southern Sudan during decolonization, the case of the second insurgency is less clear. Rather, it seems that the later southern Sudanese armed opposition, particularly the SPLM/A, was more successful than the earlier movements in using the belief among Western external players that the legacy of slavery and religious intolerance leading to discrimination and marginalization played an important role in the war. This helped to get the interested Western states involved.

Second, when considering the role of religion, it can be argued that Islam and Christianity played a role in both rebellions. Islam’s prominent role in organizing society in northern Sudan, and the politicization and use of religion to define political and economic power and marginalize non-Arabs and non-Muslims has been a source of discord. The occasional use of jihad as a counterinsurgency mobilization tool and periods of forced Islamization appear to have further an-

tagonized many southerners. As a counterforce, Christian proselytization took place in southern Sudan during the colonial period and the insurgencies, while numerous Christian organizations of various types were involved. This indicates that although religious differences of individuals may not cause rebellion, the association of religion with power, marginalization, and domination in the society may lead to grievances and fear which, when exploited by the elites, favour the formation and sustenance of armed resistance.

Finally, the importance of the legacy of slavery and religion in the rebellions in southern Sudan has been determined largely by the behaviour of the actors involved. Promoting the belief in the importance of both has been essential, along with heavily Orientalist attempts to influence external actors and approaches to the conflict. Adopting such views, the CPA was a crucial manifestation of this by paving way for the eventual break-up of Sudan, and the ever increasing association of South Sudan with East Africa and the Indian Ocean economic space.

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**INDIA AND AFRICA: MARITIME SECURITY AND INDIA'S  
STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN**

**Denis Venter**

University of Johannesburg  
South Africa

*In the 2010s, in conjunction with an expansion of India's naval capabilities, there has been a significant extension of India's maritime security relationships throughout the Indian Ocean region. Much of the emphasis has been on developing relationships with small states (Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Oman) at, or near, the key points of entry into the Western Indian Ocean. Arguably, the extreme asymmetries in size have made the development of such relationships relatively easy, as there is no question of competition or rivalry. Some of these states have long seen India as a benign security provider and have maritime policing needs that India can usefully fulfil. In some cases, India may effectively act as a security guarantor, as is arguably the case with Mauritius and the Maldives. But gaps inevitably remain in India's strategic posture and New Delhi needs to further strengthen its hand in coastal Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula. Also, littoral states on the African seaboard look towards regional power centres for assistance in maintaining maritime order and addressing security challenges. Countries with enhanced maritime capabilities like India, South Africa, Australia, and the US could assist by not only co-operating amongst themselves, but also by taking other littoral states on board as part of multilateral efforts towards the maintenance of maritime order. A challenge for New Delhi is to maintain perceptions of India as a benign and non-hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean region as it moves towards achieving great power status.*

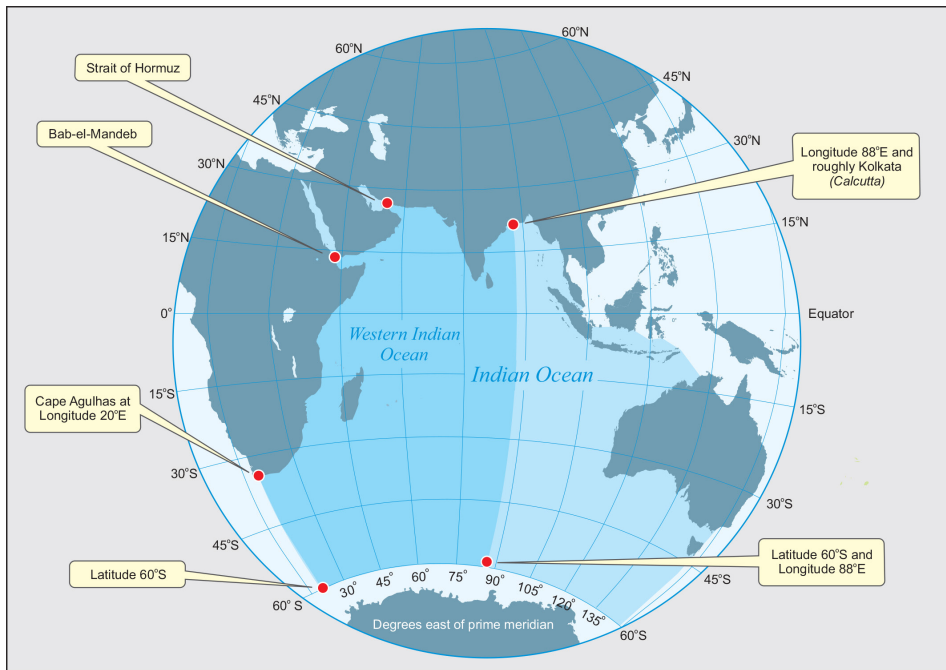
keywords: maritime security, naval strategy, strategic interests, sphere of influence, India, Western Indian Ocean, Somali piracy.

There are a number of the critical issues that are likely to play a major role in the western Indian Ocean region over the next 10 to 15 years. But first the region has to be defined.

## Defining the Western Indian Ocean

Covering an area of some 68.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and bounded by land masses on three sides (Africa, Asia, and Australia), the Indian Ocean is the world’s third-largest ocean. The greater oceanic region, though complex, forms a distinct geographical area. In comparison to the world’s other oceans, defining the exact boundaries of the Indian Ocean has been something of an imprecise science and has been a long-standing source of disagreement (Luke & O’Loughlin, 2010, p. 9). Sithara Fernando (2011, p. 23) adds a fourth land mass, Antarctica, in which case the total ocean area increases by several million square kilometres.

Figure 1: Parameters of the Western Indian Ocean



For the purposes of this chapter, the ‘Western Indian Ocean’ can be delimited by the following maritime points and boundaries:

- latitude 60°S (the northern-most limit of the Southern Ocean)
- Cape Agulhas (the southern-most point on the African continent) at longitude 20°E

- the east coast of the African continent from South Africa in the south to Somalia and Djibouti in the north
  - the Bab-el-Mandeb, which separates Djibouti and Yemen, on the southern-most reaches of the Red Sea
    - the east coasts of Yemen, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
    - the Strait of Hormuz between Iran and Oman on the Arabian Peninsula, on the eastern-most reaches of the Persian Gulf
      - the southern coasts of Iran and Pakistan
      - the west and east coasts of India and
        - longitude 88°E, running roughly through Kolkata (Calcutta) on India's east coast, down to latitude 60°S.

According to this delimitation, the Western Indian Ocean region comprises the following countries (littoral and island states): the Comoros, Djibouti, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, the Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, the Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

On the basis of this conceptual framework, the Western Indian Ocean region (hereinafter referred to as the Indian Ocean, or the region) is comprised of 18 littoral and island states, as well as three territories in an entirely different category, controlled by extra-regional states: Réunion and Mayotte (both France) and the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), including the Chagos archipelago and the atoll of Diego Garcia (United Kingdom). Moreover, the region also includes numerous other island territories, such as Lakshadweep (India), Socotra (on the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, Yemen), and Tromelin Island, the islands of Juan de Nova, Bassas da India, and Isle de l'Europa (in the Mozambique Channel, France), which constitute valuable exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and strategic outposts (Schofield, 2007, p. 3).<sup>1</sup>

## Maritime Security and the Threat of Somali Piracy in the Western Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is, once again, becoming an arena for geostrategic rivalry of some sort (see Brewster, 2014, pp. 5-11; Shambaugh, 2009, pp. 137-157). In fact, the region is emerging as one of the 21st century's leading strategic theatres,

<sup>1</sup> The broader Indian Ocean 'Rim' consists of 29 littoral countries and 6 island states. The Indian Ocean 'Region' can either be limited to the Rim countries, or it can be expanded to include landlocked countries dependent on the Indian Ocean. Thus, the number of states that comprise the Indian Ocean 'Region' can vary from a minimum of 35 Rim countries to a maximum of 52 states; see Fernando (2011, p. 23); Roy-Chaudhury (1998, note 4).

as a stage for the pursuit of global strategic and regional military and security interests.

Relations between the three major powers of the region, India, China (the People's Republic of China, PRC), and the United States, continue to evolve in complexity, heightened by the rise of India and China and a possible decline in US power in the region. However, the perception of US strategic decline warrants caution and should not be taken too literally. Of the three powers, indeed of all the world's leading powers, the US alone has the ability to project significant and sustained force into the region. It is a capability which, to 2020 at least, other powers can only aspire to. Furthermore, the US presence is viewed positively by India, which recognises it as a bulwark against Chinese expansion and assertiveness. In the broadest possible sense, while a rising China seeks to counter the dominance of the US and assert itself as the regional hegemon, an emerging India seeks, in turn, to act as a counter-balance against China. This is a situation which can serve US interests well, as the two regional rivals are left to compete and take all or most of the risks involved. India's naval expansion is a case in point, as it adds additional weight to the US naval presence (Luke & O'Loughlin, 2010, pp. 12-13).

At the same time, there is a burgeoning concern over an array of non-traditional security threats, especially energy security. Without any doubt, the Indian Ocean is critical to global trade and economic growth, as well as food and energy security (Chaturvedi & Okunev, 2012, p. 1; Hartley, 2012, p. 5).<sup>2</sup> However, now the world's most important route for international maritime long-haul cargo, the Indian Ocean remains vulnerable to piracy and highly unpredictable potential acts of maritime terrorism. Maritime security can no longer be conceptualised only in terms of a composite of sea power and naval arms build-ups, island and maritime boundary disputes, navigational regimes, activities in EEZs, competition over resources, and the maintenance of law and order at sea, including the protection of sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). The concept of human security also needs to be revisited with reference to some of the most pressing environmental issues: land degradation, access to fresh-water resources, the exploitation of fishing stocks, climate change, the illegal disposal of nuclear waste, environmental refugees and urban expansion and deterioration (Chaturvedi & Okunev, 2012, p. 1; see Hughes, 2011, pp. 41-45; UN Secretariat, 2008; UNEP, 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> For overall GDP figures and GDP figures per capita, see World Bank (2015), and IMF (2015).



Figure 2: Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC)



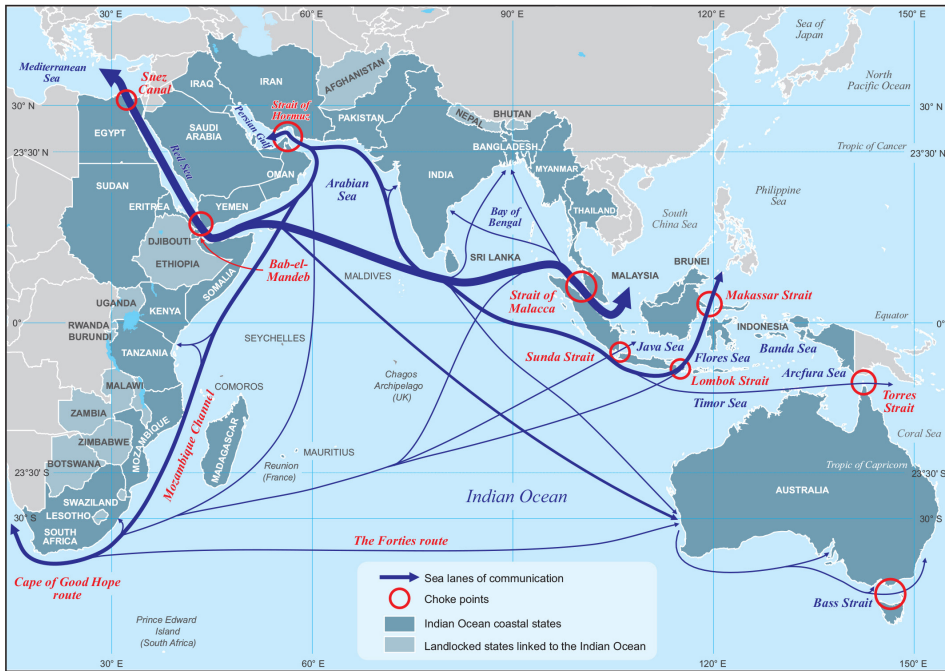
Of the three temperate oceans of the world, the Indian Ocean is probably the most problematic for security management. Despite this reality, however, the ocean seems bereft of any collective maritime security arrangements. The lack of maritime security around the Horn of Africa, in particular, causes a great deal of concern as it not only threatens commerce, but also peace and regional stability, international trade and global energy flows. From whichever direction, entry into the Indian Ocean is constrained by geographical imperatives. The routes through the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz have been used since antiquity for purposes of trade and communication and, naturally, a huge proportion of this trade is carried by sea. It raises the important question of what the strategic responses of regional navies are, ensuring the safe and efficient passage of these cargoes. Indeed, there are also countries outside the immediate region depending on secure shipping and they, too, have a legitimate interest in fostering a regime of co-operation. Some do not see a threat to shipping because of the interdependence of all in the region on maritime trade, but reliance on such a notion has obvious shortcomings. Rather than leave security management to chance it is axiomatic that it is in the interests of all to build a maritime security mechanism to promote an ocean-wide sphere of peace and tranquillity (Cozens, 1998, p. 1).

In determining particular strategies, regional navies have a vital role to play, but it should also be appreciated that “maritime strategy has a [clear] peacetime dimension” (McCaffrie, 1996, p. 7; see also Groenewald, 1997, p.1). Maritime strategy is idiosyncratic; in fact, it is fundamentally and significantly different from any other purpose -- it is unique. To quote Jack McCaffrie (1996, p. 4) again:

Navies have always been noted for their versatility and, in particular, their utility in situations short of conflict. This versatility comes from the characteristics of reach (including sustainability), adaptability (including the capacity to threaten and apply force in a finely graduated way), and acceptability (in that warships are diplomatic instruments unlike any other kind of armed force).

Maritime security, on the other hand, can be a rather broad, unfocussed and somewhat amorphous concept (Potgieter, 2012, p. 1) as it is both multi-dimensional and multi-faceted and involves both military and non-military issues. In the world of today, however, the luxury hardly exists of making clear-cut distinctions between traditional ‘military’ security issues (naval threats and challenges), hard, ‘non-military’ security issues (arms, narcotics and human trafficking, piracy and terrorism at sea and the protection of shipping, SLOCs, fishing stocks, seabed minerals and offshore oil and natural gas resources) and soft, ‘non-military’ security issues, such as providing energy security, safeguarding port and ship-building facilities, delimiting extended maritime spaces (EEZs), enforcing legal and regulatory mechanisms in maritime zones (maritime management), protecting the maritime environment, preventing pollution and dumping of toxic waste and securing dual-purpose oceanographic data (Roy, n.d., pp. 1 & 2). Thus, maritime security basically deals with the prevention of illicit activity in the maritime domain, covering national, regional and international efforts to enforce such security. Current global realities have introduced a range of maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean region as the roles of non-state actors have direct and fundamental effects on the evolving situation. This is a serious development as the rich Indian Ocean maritime trade, which includes much of the world’s energy shipments and almost half of global container traffic, traverses the ocean and is crucial to the world economy (Potgieter, 2012, p. 1).

Figure 3: West-East-West SLOCs Traversing the Indian Ocean



Recent economic turbulence worldwide suggests that a prudent and cautious approach to the matter of maritime security is required everywhere. Indeed, when economic growth is charging along and prosperity seems assured for all, voices of protest and disquiet usually tend to fade, especially in authoritarian regimes (Lingle, 1997, p. 55). But the present political discord in some countries is symptomatic of the converse of that contention. It is difficult, of course, to predict what the next stage in the world economy will have in store, but it is fairly obvious that economic growth will, of necessity, rely to a very large extent on the use of SLOCs (Cozens, 1998, pp. 1-2). What, then, are the latent and potential areas of friction which could surface to threaten freedom of navigation or otherwise impede the free flow of trade in the SLOCs of the Indian Ocean area? The following represent some areas of insecurity (see Valencia, 1998):

- Transnational disputes may arise from perceived irregularities by a littoral state in the practice of the right of 'innocent passage' through territorial waters by foreign ships. A littoral state may merely suspect 'activities inimical to its interests'.
- Marine pollution is a major source of concern. An estimated 25,000 tonnes of washed-out crude oil per day are being jettisoned into the sea anywhere between the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab-el-Mandeb, the Mozambique Channel, and

longitude 88°E. The effect on local communities and traditional fishing villages could be catastrophic and thus has political and security consequences.

- Undersea exploration for oil and gas (and minerals, although presently unlikely) pose not altogether unforeseen problems and security challenges.<sup>3</sup>
- Piracy has been evident in and around the waters of Somalia, in the Arabian Sea, and down the coast of East Africa.
- Maritime territorial disputes and inter-regional tensions could be exacerbated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) which now permits littoral states to impose national development interests in the ocean arena (EEZs), an extension of jurisdiction that has opened up a Pandora's Box of volatile issues.

There are also some tasks not readily appreciated or understood, grouped under the collective title of 'maritime confidence-building measures' (see Grove, 1996, Chapter 5): (1) transparency measures, such as visits by naval vessels, sharing general information on doctrine, policies and force structures, joint publishing of tactical and operating doctrines (that is, replenishment at sea, RAS), exchanging of personnel, and joint observation of naval exercises; (2) co-operation measures, more generally search and rescue (SAR) and humanitarian operations; and (3) incidents-at-sea agreements, addressing particular regional concerns, such as surveillance, fisheries, anti-piracy, anti-narcotic and illegal migration traffic, and dealing with activities usually tending to be bilateral in nature, but could also be extended to a multilateral forum such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

The fact that these measures are suggested as necessary illustrates a degree of 'uncertainty-based planning' in the Indian Ocean. This is not to suggest the beginnings of an arms race, but rather the convergence of at least two important motivators. First, since the ratification of UNCLOS III, governments are acutely aware of the importance of their rights and sovereignty over their respective ocean territories and EEZs. Second, in order to exercise these responsibilities countries need 'sea-securing resources'; in other words, ships capable of exercising sea power. It is into this arena that Indian Ocean navies and others need to insert sea-control platforms as a contribution to reducing insecurity at sea, thus demonstrating a

<sup>3</sup> Underwater oil exploration and production in the north-western Indian Ocean takes place in an offshore oilfield, Bombay High (65km long, 23km wide, 75 metres deep), 176km off the coast of Mumbai in the Gulf of Khambhat off the Indian west coast, opposite the shores of the Indian states of Gujarat and Maharashtra (Rao & Talukdar, 1980, p. 487). British Petroleum (BP) joined India's Reliance Industries in a partnership on 23 oil and gas production-sharing contracts. This includes the KG-D6 block, spread across more than 50,000km<sup>2</sup> in the Krishna and Godavari river basins, off the east coast of India's Andhra Pradesh state in the Bay of Bengal (*Reuters India*, 22 February 2011; *Reuters*, 13 August 2012). Naturally, in order to safeguard these vital national assets, India has to maintain a very strong naval presence in both these maritime theatres.

firm resolve to maintain and preserve good order at sea. The costs of disrupted trade flows are probably incalculable, but nevertheless enormous, and the effects are unpredictable, but nonetheless deleterious to all in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. As the impact of the provisions of UNCLOS III takes effect, and as the changing strategic landscape of the Indian Ocean comes into sharper focus, the need for a stable and secure environment increases. Undoubtedly, there is a pressing need for a system of collective maritime security in the Indian Ocean (Cozens, 1998, p. 3).

## India's Strategic Interests in the Western Indian Ocean

In recent times, India has adopted an expansive maritime strategy. Driven by great power aspirations and by strategic rivalry with China, India is expanding its naval capabilities and security relationships throughout the Indian Ocean region. It is paying specific attention to developing relationships at the key points of entry into the Western Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2010a, p. 1), i.e. the Strait of Hormuz (from the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Sea), the Bab-el-Mandeb (from the Red Sea into the Gulf of Aden), and through the Mozambique Channel northwards into the south-western Indian Ocean along the shores of the Southern and East African littorals.

### The Maritime Dimension in Indian Strategic Thinking

Among the changes in Indian strategic thinking in recent years has been a partial reorientation in India's strategic outlook in the maritime domain. Clearly, Indian strategic thinking has traditionally had a continental outlook. For thousands of years, military threats to India have been perceived as coming primarily from the northwest,<sup>4</sup> reinforced by the country's experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when any direct military threats (from Japan, Pakistan, and China) were land-based. The continuing threats on India's western and northern borders and from domestic insurgencies has led to the Indian Army holding an undisputedly dominant position within the Indian military establishment. However, there is a developing view among some Indian strategists of India as a maritime power: that India's peninsular character and geographic position gives the Indian Ocean a preponderant influence over the country's destiny (see Brewster, 2014, pp. 11-15 & 23-35; Brewster, 2010a, p. 1; Menon, 2009). As Subhash Kapila (2012, p. 1) points out:

<sup>4</sup> However, this is not to suggest that the Ottoman (Turkish), Portuguese, Dutch, French and British military presence in India, from around the 1490s and during the course of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not also include a major maritime component.

The Indian Ocean stands aptly named because India's peninsular geographical configuration... places [it in a] unique commanding position on the Bay of Bengal on the eastern flank of the Deccan Peninsula and the Arabian Sea on the western flank. In strategic maritime terms, India is in a position to dominate the vast expanse of maritime waters from ... the Gulf of Aden ... all the way down south to the outermost extremities of the ... [Southern Oceans].

Some Indian leaders have also drawn a close connection between India's maritime ambitions and its destiny as a great power. As former Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee (2007) noted:

... after nearly a millenni[um] of inward and landward focus, we are once again turning our gaze outwards and seawards, which is the natural direction of view for a nation seeking to re-establish itself, not simply as a continental power, but even more so as a maritime power, and consequently as one that is of significance on the world stage.

Thus, one could argue that any significant geographical expansion of Indian influence can only take place in the maritime domain. As Rajiv Sikri (2009, p. 250), a former Secretary in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, commented: "If India aspires to be a great power, then the only direction in which ... [its] strategic influence can spread is across the seas. In every other direction there are formidable constraints."

India's standing as the most populous state in the Indian Ocean region and its central position in the northern Indian Ocean have long contributed to beliefs about the country's destiny to control its eponymous ocean (the ocean to which its name was given). According to some, there is now a well-established tradition among the Indian strategic community that the Indian Ocean is, or should be, 'India's Ocean'. Many in the Indian Navy see it as destined to become the predominant maritime security provider in a region stretching from the Bab-el-Mandeb to the Malacca Strait, and also having a significant security role in areas beyond (Scott, 2006, p. 99). This view was amplified by former US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates affirming that the US was "... look[ing] to India to be a partner and net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond" (Murphy, 2009). And, according to Donald Berlin (2006, p. 60):

New Delhi regards the Indian Ocean as its backyard and deems it both natural and desirable that India function as, eventually, the leader and the predominant influence in this region – the world's only region and ocean named after a single

state. This is what the United States set out to do in North America and the Western Hemisphere at an early stage in America's 'rise to power'.

Many Indian maritime strategists see predominance in the Indian Ocean as potentially also delivering significant influence in East Asia. Alfred Thayer Mahan, the 19<sup>th</sup> century American naval strategist, is frequently cited by Indian strategic thinkers, including a statement (incorrectly) attributed to him: "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its [the Indian Ocean's] waters".<sup>5</sup>

During the Cold War, India's ability to pursue its maritime ambitions was severely constrained and for decades following independence the Indian Navy was known as the 'Cinderella' of the Indian armed forces. However, increased enthusiasm for maritime power has been accompanied by an expansion in India's naval capabilities;<sup>6</sup> since the mid-1990s the country has embarked on a major programme to develop a 'blue-water' navy with significant increases in naval expenditure. India's armed forces budget grew at an annual rate of 5% from 2001-2005, at around 10% from 2005-2008, and to a massive 17.63% in 2012/13, but fell back to a rather modest 5.31% in 2013/14, primarily due to economic constraints. Yet, under the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the defence budget has again been boosted by 12% for 2014/15. At the same time, the Navy's share of the increasing defence budget has risen from 11% in 1992/93 to 18% in 2008/09, and now seems to have stabilised at 17.8% for 2013/14. Still, in relation to the overall defence budget it faced a resource cut of 2.6% in real terms. Nevertheless, initial increased capital expenditure had encouraged plans for significant changes in the Indian Navy's force structure, with an emphasis on sea-control capabilities (see Miglani, 2014; Brewster, 2014, p. 13; Behera, 2013a; Behera, 2013b; Brewster, 2010a, pp. 2 & 3). Already, the Navy is undergoing substantial expansion with 40 ships and submarines, including two nuclear submarines and two aircraft carriers, either on order or already commissioned. The target is to have a 165-ship fleet by 2022, consisting of 60 surface combat craft, submarines and three aircraft carrier groups with a total of 400 MiG-29K aircraft and attack helicopters (Potgieter, 2012, p. 3). As some India observers are keen to point out, with two aircraft carriers in operation by as early as 2012/13,

<sup>5</sup> A slightly different version of this quotation is: "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean controls Asia. The ocean is the key to the Seven Seas." This quotation is often attributed to Admiral Mahan but, in reality, is of doubtful provenance. The earliest reference to this quote in English appeared in an article, "Will the Indian Ocean Become a Soviet Pond?", in the *Atlas World Press Review* magazine of November 1979 – an article originally written by Italian journalist, Guido Gerosa, entitled *La flotta sovietica presidia nuovi mari*, and translated from the Italian publication *l'Europeo* (Milan) of 6 August 1970.

<sup>6</sup> For a general discussion of India's maritime strategy and capabilities, see Buzszynski (2009, pp. 73-93); Holmes, Winner & Yoshihara (2009); and Naidu (2000).

“the balance of power in the Indian Ocean ... [would have] tilt[ed] decisively in India’s favour” (Rai, 2009, p. 7). And, according to Admiral Arun Prakash, the former Indian Chief of Navy Staff, India aims to exercise selective sea control of the Indian Ocean through task forces built around the projected three aircraft carriers that will form the core of separate fleets in the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Sea. The rapidly expanding Indian Coast Guard may also play an important complementary role to the Indian Navy, particularly in circumstances where there are reasons to emphasise policing functions over those of the military (Brewster, 2010a, p. 3).

In conjunction with an expansion in naval capabilities over the last decade or so, India has been quietly expanding its influence throughout the Indian Ocean. The Navy has been active in developing security relationships that are intended to enhance India’s ability to project power and restrict China’s ability to develop similar security relationships in the region. Given that the Indian Ocean is in many ways an enclosed sea, the Indian Navy has placed particular emphasis on the ‘choke points’ at entrances to the ocean around southern Africa (including the Mozambique Channel), the Arabian Peninsula (including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb) and the straits connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through the Indonesian archipelago (the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits). According to the Indian Navy’s 2004 Maritime Doctrine, “... [control] of the choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game, where the currency of military power remains a stark reality” (IMOD-N, 2004, p. 64). The Navy has also sought to institutionalise itself as the leading power in the Indian Ocean through such initiatives as sponsoring the multilateral IONS, to which the navies of all Indian Ocean littoral states are invited (Brewster, 2010a, p. 3).<sup>7</sup>

But India’s naval ambitions have not been without its critics. Given the long-standing lack of co-ordination in strategic planning in New Delhi, the Indian Navy’s activist role in the Indian Ocean has often been way ahead of the views within the other armed services and the government. There is long-running tension between the Indian Navy and the Ministry of External Affairs over the Navy’s assertive regional policy, including over the 2008 decision to participate in anti-piracy operations off Somalia (Unnithan, 2008; *Thaindian News*, 20 November 2008). According to some, the Ministry of External Affairs repeatedly turned down requests from the Indian Navy to conduct naval interceptions.

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<sup>7</sup> Invitees to the naval symposium include France (which India recognises as a littoral state by virtue of its colonial territories), but not Britain or the US (notwithstanding their presence in the British Indian Ocean Territory, BIOT), or China.



It is not clear to what extent these tensions merely reflect bureaucratic caution or a more fundamental disagreement over the Indian Navy's regional strategy (Brewster, 2010a, p. 4; Maitra, 2005). Others are sceptical about the ability of India to transform itself from a continental to a maritime power. Varun Sahni (2005), for example, warns that the Soviet Union's failed attempts to become a naval power in the 1970s and 1980s should act as "a cautionary ... [note] for India's Mahanian navalists ... [and] a grim warning of what happens to a continental state that harbours overly grandiose maritime ambitions".

However, over the last decade or more the US has actively encouraged India's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean region. In March 2005, the Bush Administration announced that it would "help India become a major world power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century", adding that "... [we] understand fully the implications, including the military implications, of that statement" (US Department of State, 2005). In fact, the US has focused on assisting in the expansion of India's power projection capabilities and its role as a security provider in the Indian Ocean, with the former US Secretary of the Navy Donald Winter stressing that Washington welcomes India "taking up ... responsibility to ensure security in this part of the world" (Dikshit, 2008). US encouragement for the development of India as a regional naval power in the Indian Ocean has been compared to Britain's strategy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it found itself challenged by the growth of German naval power. Britain then forged partnerships with emerging naval powers, the US in the Western Hemisphere and Japan in the Pacific, allowing them a measure of regional hegemony, while the UK concentrated its resources in the North Atlantic against Germany (see Holmes, Winner & Yoshihara, 2009, Chapter 3). This analogy, while far from perfect, does capture some of the facets present in current US thinking, particularly its perceptions of the growing Chinese maritime threat and its desire to see India grow as a regional balancing power against China (Brewster, 2010a, pp. 4-5; see Chellaney, 2008, pp. 23-36).<sup>8</sup>

### **India's 'Emeralds' in the Indian Ocean**

Over the last decade or so, India has developed good security relationships with many states throughout the Indian Ocean, with particular emphasis on the maritime choke points of the Mozambique Channel in the south-western

<sup>8</sup> In 2007, the US Navy released a maritime security strategy that still stressed the Atlantic and Pacific oceans as the principal centres for regular US military presence – but now, the Indian Ocean was added as a key strategic focus. This reflects in part the importance the US attaches to the Gulf, but it also illustrates how central the integrity of sea lanes and their multifaceted connections have become to US strategic planning. In the past ten years, India-US security co-operation has expanded markedly, and naval co-operation centres on the Indian Ocean is its most active component. In the same period, India's attitude towards a permanent US presence in those waters has shifted from deeply sceptical to supportive (Schaffer, 2011).

Indian Ocean and the entrance to the Persian Gulf in the northwest, as well as the Malacca Strait in the northeast. India is also developing a security presence in the central Indian Ocean, astride the east-west SLOCs across the Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2010a, p. 7).

To be sure, the south-western Indian Ocean is the gateway between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. India's security relationships in the region are anchored by its close relationship with Mauritius (see Brewster, 2014, pp. 69-76), the island state that lies around 900km to the east of Madagascar. India has long-standing and close political, economic and security associations with Mauritius. Some 70 per cent of the Mauritian population is of Indian ethnic origin and for several decades Mauritius has acted as the primary gateway for international investment into India originating from the US, Europe and elsewhere, largely due to favourable tax arrangements.<sup>9</sup> Former Mauritian Prime Minister Paul Bérenger described the bilateral relationship as "umbilical and sacred" and security relations as "intense" (*The Hindu*, 2 April 2005; Baruah, 2003), while former President Sir Anerood Jugnauth referred to the connection in terms of "blood relations" (*The Hindu*, 3 December 2009). Consequently, the Mauritian élite regards India in largely benign terms and appears to have accepted India as having a special role in Mauritian security.

Indian-Mauritian co-operation was formalised in a 1974 defence agreement under which India has transferred patrol boats and helicopters to Mauritius (including the supply of a patrol vessel in 2010) and provides training to Mauritian personnel and officers for the Mauritian National Coast Guard and Police Helicopter Squadron (effectively, the Mauritian navy and air force). Since 2003, the Indian Navy has provided maritime security through periodic patrols of Mauritian waters, including anti-piracy patrols in 2010 (*Deccan Chronicle*, 24 November 2009; Ramachandran, 2007b). India also backs Mauritius' territorial claims to Diego Garcia which was separated from Mauritian administration in the 1960s (Vyas, 2001). Mauritian political leaders have publicly indicated on several occasions that India would be permitted to establish naval facilities on Mauritius if it so wished (Harrison & Subrahmanyam, 1989, p. 263) and there are claims that India already operates a signals intelligence station (*India Defence*, 7 July 2007). In 2006 and 2007 there were reports of discussions between the Mauritian and Indian governments over the long-term lease to the Indian government of the Agalega islands (which lie between the island of Mauritius and the Seychelles),

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<sup>9</sup> Between April 2000 and January 2010, Mauritius was the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India, comprising 43% of total investment, with the second largest investment source being Singapore; see IMCI (2010).

ostensibly for tourism (Sidhartha, 2006a; Sidhartha 2006b). It has been speculated that India's intention was to upgrade the Agalega airstrip to service Indian manned and unmanned surveillance aircraft (Forsberg, 2007). Discussions over the proposal reportedly ended due to political sensitivities concerning the local Creole population - contemplating, perhaps, the complaints of Diego Garcians who were dispossessed of their islands following a deal between the British and Mauritian governments (Brewster, 2010a, p. 8).

India also has growing security relationships with Madagascar, Mozambique and the Seychelles, littoral states in and around the crucial Mozambique Channel, the SLOC used by shipping transiting the Cape of Good Hope (Brewster, 2010a, p. 9). The security of the Seychelles was highly contested during the latter half of the Cold War as the US and the Soviet Union competed to maintain or establish a security presence in the islands. At the same time, India was seen by the Seychelles as a benign regional protector. In the early 1980s, Seychelles' leftist former President Albert René sought commitments from then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to intervene in case of an attempted coup. Although Gandhi declined to provide any public assurances, India did contribute two helicopters and training for the Seychelles security forces (Harrison & Subrahmanyam, 1989, p. 263). The Indian Navy has also assisted with maritime security in the Seychelles EEZ under a 2003 defence co-operation agreement in terms of which it provided anti-piracy patrols in early 2010 (see Brewster, 2014, pp. 76-79).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in 2005 India donated a patrol boat to the Seychelles, reportedly in a hurried effort to pre-empt offers of Chinese assistance (Ramachandran, 2007a). Also, in July 2007 the Indian Navy opened an electronic monitoring facility in northern Madagascar at the head of the Mozambique Channel (Ramachandran, 2007b; *India Defence*, 7 July 2007) and apparently had been granted 'limited' berthing rights in the island for Indian naval vessels (Pubby, 2007).

The Indian Navy has also acted as a maritime security provider for Mozambique, including taking responsibility for maritime security during the 2003 African Union (AU) and 2004 World Economic Forum (WEF) summits held in Maputo (Ramachandran, 2007b). And, in 2006, India and Mozambique entered into a defence co-operation agreement that envisages joint maritime patrols, supply of military equipment, training and technology transfer in repairing and assembling military vehicles, aircraft and ships (Brewster, 2010a, p. 9; *People's Daily*, 7 March 2006).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The US also provides anti-piracy maritime surveillance through unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) stationed in the Seychelles.

<sup>11</sup> For a wider discussion of India's strategic ambitions and role in south-eastern Africa, particularly in Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya, see Brewster (2014, pp. 85-89 & 92-93).

What is more, India's maritime security relationships in the south-western Indian Ocean are buttressed by growing maritime security relations with France (Brewster, 2014, pp. 79-80) and South Africa. Since 2001, the Indian Navy has conducted annual exercises with the French Navy, which operates out of Réunion and Djibouti. India has sponsored the 'IBSA Trilateral Security Dialogue' between India, Brazil and South Africa, pursuant to which trilateral naval exercises (IBSAMAR) have been held in 2008, 2010, 2012, and in 2014 off the Cape of Good Hope in South African waters (*Cape Times*, 21 October 2014; Brewster, 2014, pp. 96-98; Brewster, 2010a, p. 9). Further south, India also has a growing presence in Antarctica, with one active research station and a second that was scheduled for commissioning in 2012.

While some might see India as having a strong security role in the south-western Indian Ocean, there are fears in New Delhi that China might try to undermine or pre-empt India's relationships. Again, according to the former Indian Chief of Navy Staff Admiral Arun Prakash (2007b, p. 7), India "cannot afford to have any hostile or inimical power threatening the island states in this region". Political and economic relations between China and Mauritius and Seychelles are closely watched by New Delhi (Lamont, 2010),<sup>12</sup> and it has been claimed that a so-called Chinese 'thrust' towards these island states presages Sino-Indian naval rivalry in the Western Indian Ocean (Mohan, 2009). While China may seek to develop its economic and political interests in the area, it seems unlikely that it would be able to dislodge India as the dominant security provider to Mauritius, and there are no indications at present that it would be able to seriously challenge India's maritime security role elsewhere in the south-western Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2010a, p. 10).

India historically exercised a special political and economic role in the north-western Indian Ocean. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, British India was the dominant economic, political and military force in the region. The Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates) and Aden (now Yemen) were administered from British India and British Indian Army garrisons were stationed throughout the Persian Gulf until 1947. However, India's influence in the region diminished significantly following independence and, although New Delhi generally adopted a pro-Arab foreign policy, its ties in the region were regularly strained as a result of the India-Pakistan conflict. Pakistan's close political, economic and military ties with many states in this region continue to this day. Some argue that the ability of India to extend its security presence in the north-western

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<sup>12</sup> This includes an announced US\$700 million investment by China in a special economic zone in Mauritius.

Indian Ocean has also been constrained by the US predominance in the Gulf, leaving little room for New Delhi to develop its own relationships, and that the US has not encouraged an increased Indian security presence there (Brewster, 2010a, p. 10).<sup>13</sup>

Despite these constraints, India is developing security relationships in the region, particularly with Oman (which sits on the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf). Oman may see India as partially balancing its security relationship with the US and, since 2003, India has entered into several defence agreements with the Sultanate dealing with training, maritime security co-operation, and joint exercises (*India Defence*, 6 April 2010; Jha, 2009). The Indian Air Force uses the Thumrait air base for transit purposes and Oman has offered the Indian Navy berthing facilities in support of anti-piracy patrols (Dikshit, 2009). The Indian Navy has also sought to play an active role in the containment of Somali-based piracy and since October 2008 has one or two vessels in anti-piracy patrols off Somalia. However, India's contribution has been made separately from the US-sponsored Combined Task Force-150, in which Pakistan has played an active role (Brewster, 2010a, p. 11).<sup>14</sup>

The two island chains that dominate the central Indian Ocean are the British-administered Indian Ocean Territory (which hosts the US air and naval base at Diego Garcia), and the Maldives, both sitting north-south astride the major east-west SLOCs between the Middle East and East Asia. India has long regarded the Maldives as falling within its South Asian sphere of influence. In 1988, with the apparent blessing of the US and Britain, India sent troops and naval forces to the Maldives to support former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom against an attempted coup by Sri Lankan mercenaries. Since that time, India has supplied the Maldivian armed forces with equipment and training and the Indian Navy has provided maritime security. In August 2009, a security agreement was formalised that will significantly enhance India's capabilities in the central Indian Ocean. India has been granted use of the former British naval and air base at Gan Island, part of the southern-most group of islands in the Maldives lying around 1,000 km south of India and around 700 km north of Diego Garcia (Brewster, 2010a, p. 11). India is reportedly planning to base Dornier aircraft and helicopters at Gan, although it is unclear to what extent the Indian Navy will establish a

<sup>13</sup> This perception is reinforced by the fact that the US military relationship with India is the responsibility of US Pacific Command, based in Hawaii, while the US security presence in the north-western Indian Ocean is administered by US Central Command, based in Qatar (which also has responsibility for the US military relationship with Pakistan). For a discussion on India's role in the north-western Indian Ocean and its attempts to develop a strategic relationship with Iran, see Brewster (2014, pp. 112-118).

<sup>14</sup> As at April 2010, Pakistan had led CTF-150 on four occasions.

permanent presence at the associated Gan naval facilities. India also reportedly plans to station aircraft and naval vessels at Malé in the central Maldives and at Haa Dhalu atoll in the north (Dutta, 2009). As part of the agreement, India is building a system of 26 electronic monitoring stations across the Maldives archipelago, apparently to protect the Maldives' large EEZ from illegal fishing activities (Chandramohan, 2009).

### **An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?**

To what extent should India's maritime security relationships in the Indian Ocean be seen as the beginnings of an Indian sphere of influence in the region?<sup>15</sup>

The discourse on an Indian sphere of influence beyond South Asia is sometimes identified with Lord Curzon, the former British Viceroy of India who, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, advocated the adoption of a 'forward policy' to secure India's strategic position. Curzon's so-called 'forward school' argued that India's security demanded, amongst others, control of maritime routes and key ports en route to India, including Aden and Singapore.<sup>16</sup> In many ways, the policies of the British Raj represented a significant departure from Indian traditions which had little history of territorial expansion or military and political adventure beyond the limits of the sub-continent. George Tanham's (1996, p. 73) study of India's strategic culture in the early 1990s characterised Indian strategic thinking as being "defensive" and "lack[ing] ... an expansionist military tradition". Indeed, any affirmation of an Indian security sphere beyond South Asia largely ceased following independence. After 1947, India effectively withdrew to the Indian sub-continent and asserted what has been called 'India's Monroe Doctrine' according to which New Delhi would not permit any intervention by any 'external' power in India's immediate neighbours in South Asia and related islands (Brewster, 2010a, p. 15). While India's attempts to exclude other powers from South Asia had only limited success, New Delhi's 'Monroe Doctrine' was used to justify military interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the 1980s (see Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008, pp. 997-1011).

Several decades earlier, Kavalam M. Panikkar (1943, pp. 100-101), India's most famous maritime strategist, argued that the Indian Ocean should remain "truly Indian", advocating the creation of a "steel ring" around India through the establishment of forward naval bases in Singapore, Mauritius, Yemen (Socotra),

<sup>15</sup> On an Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean, see Brewster (2014, pp. 35-37).

<sup>16</sup> This included the creation of territorial buffer areas to insulate direct contact with other empires, including Afghanistan in the west, Tibet in the north, and Thailand (Siam) in the east, and for British India to take an active role in managing the affairs of these buffer zones.

and Sri Lanka. Towards the end of World War II, he wrote that "... to India ... [the Indian Ocean] is the vital sea", asserting that "Indian interests have extended to the different sides ... of the Indian Ocean [and], based as they are on the inescapable facts of geography, have become more important than ever before" (Panikkar, 1945, pp. 84 & 94). In a similar vein, Keshav Vaidya (1949, pp. 91, 101 & 130) talked of India's oceanic destiny needing around half a century to come to fruition. And nearly seven decades later, his hopes that India "... must, at least, rule the waves of the Indian Ocean" and "... must be the supreme and undisputed power over the waters of the Indian Ocean .... well on the path to becoming a mighty sea power ... which alone can ensure national greatness" are, perhaps, about to be realised.

Since the end of the Cold War there has been a revival in discussion in India about a 'natural' sphere of influence extending well beyond South Asia. This is related to a desire to move beyond India's traditional strategic preoccupations in South Asia and re-engage with its extended neighbourhood; in other words, to rectify what former Indian Minister of External Affairs Jaswant Singh called India's unnecessary acceptance of "the post-Partition limits geography imposed on policy" (Mohan, 2003, p. 205). Eric Margolis (2005, p. 70) perceptively remarks that what is "driving India's naval strategy is the concept that the vast Indian Ocean is its *mare nostrum* .... that the entire triangle of the Indian Ocean is ... [its] rightful and exclusive sphere of interest". As David Scott (2006, p. 120) emphasises, "... [to] shape the Indian Ocean as India's ocean is India's 'Grand Strategy'" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, from the turn of this century, the Indian Ministry of Defence began describing India's 'security environment' as extending from the Persian Gulf in the west to the Strait of Malacca in the east (IMOD, 2001), an area which Jaswant Singh called India's "sphere of influence" (Rajghatta, 2001) and what former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2004) has somewhat more diplomatically referred to as India's "strategic footprint" (Brewster, 2010a, p. 16).

While there is obviously an aspiration in New Delhi to develop an expanded Indian strategic space, it is not at all clear what this might mean in practice. There is little doubt that India's approach to spreading its influence in the region differs significantly from Lord Curzon's, and it seems unlikely even in the long term that India will regain the regional hegemony exerted by British India. However, short of hegemony, India could express regional dominance through the development of a more hierarchical regional order or seeking to exclude other powers from the region. To date, the Indian Navy has taken a co-operative approach in developing security relationships, an approach that has been relatively successful. The failure of India to project military power beyond the limits of South Asia

during the Cold War has placed New Delhi in good stead in much of the Indian Ocean region.

New Delhi has a noticeable lack of historical baggage in many of its dealings in the region, with the exception of the Islamic factor arising from the Pakistan conflict. India is often perceived as essentially a benign power and not a would-be hegemon, in contrast with other external powers such as the US. While India is not in a position to exert significant power through military predominance or ideological means, it may be able to do so as a provider of public goods. This is certainly the current approach of the Indian Navy, which emphasises its ability to provide maritime policing, anti-piracy, and anti-terrorism functions. However, there are sometimes also noticeable overtones of hierarchy in India's dealings with the region, particularly in New Delhi's overt opposition to regional relationships with China (see Brewster, 2014, pp. 194-196; Brewster, 2010a, pp. 16-17).

In the longer term, India's role in the Indian Ocean will likely be determined (and limited) by the extent to which its naval expansion plans come to fruition. Drawing on the experience of the US in the Western Hemisphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, James Holmes (Holmes, Winner & Yoshihara, pp. 50-52) identifies three basic roles which the Indian Navy could play: first, a 'free-rider' navy, in which the Indian Navy can play a growing role in maritime policing and humanitarian functions, while the US continues to play a dominant role; second, a 'constabulary' navy, in which the Indian Navy would, sparingly and with tact, intervene in littoral countries to advance the common interest of South Asian states; and third, a 'strong-man' navy where it seeks to establish hegemony in the Indian Ocean and has the capability to mount a forward defensive posture beyond the Indian Ocean. Holmes concludes that the ambitions represented by the Indian Navy's expansion programme in the coming decades would give it the capability to act somewhere between a 'free-rider' navy and a 'constabulary' navy (Brewster, 2010a, p. 17). Undoubtedly, challenges in the maritime domain call for more effective law enforcement and the maintenance of maritime order. These challenges are, essentially, part constabulary, part economic, and part human welfare. And as crime on the high seas has increased, various avenues have opened up for maritime security co-operation (Ghosh, 2004, p. 1).

It should be noted that the potential for an Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean is also subject to some important caveats: although India has ambitions to expand its strategic space in the Indian Ocean, there are real questions as to whether these aspirations will be achieved. India has a long history of its strategic ambitions surpassing its capabilities, of strategic goals and military expansion plans going unfulfilled. The planned expansion of India's naval capabilities



is probably years away from being achieved and is highly contingent upon the sustainability of India's high economic growth rate. India's security partners in the Indian Ocean (with the possible exception of the Maldives) will likely maintain other important security relationships as well and will not easily grant an exclusive security role to India. And, most importantly, the US has every reason to maintain a major regional security presence, particularly in the north-western Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2010a, p. 17).

Nevertheless, India's aspirations to expand its strategic space in the Indian Ocean region are clearly related to its broader ambitions to be recognised as a great power, ambitions that may, if anything, grow in coming years. Certainly, many would see a sphere of influence as a natural appendage of great power status. One study on India's regional plans (Pardesi, 2005, p. 55) concluded that:

... a rising India will try to establish regional hegemony in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region ... just like all the other rising powers have since Napoleonic times, with the long-term goal of achieving great power status on an Asian and, perhaps, even global scale.

From a geopolitical perspective, spheres of influence are seen as a normal part of ordering the international system. According to Saul Cohen (1973, p. viii) "... spheres of influence are essential to the preservation of national and regional expression ... the alternative is either a monolithic world system or utter chaos". The key feature of a sphere of influence is not just the ability to project power, but an acknowledgement of a hierarchical relationship in which the great power provides security to lesser powers in return for an acknowledgement of its leadership role (Brewster, 2010a, pp. 17 & 18).<sup>17</sup> Many Indian strategists see China's political and security relationships in South Asia and its putative 'String of Pearls' strategy as part of a cohesive policy of 'encirclement' or 'containment' of India that justifies the development of a 'defensive' sphere of influence by India. As Arun Prakash (2006, p. 11) argued: "The appropriate counter to China's encirclement of India is to build our own relations, particularly in our neighbourhood, on the basis of our national interests and magnanimity towards smaller neighbours."

As it expands its influence in the Indian Ocean region, India also has had to accept the continuing role of the US in the region. The US, particularly with its base at Diego Garcia and its naval facilities in Singapore and the Gulf, seems likely to remain the predominant naval power in the Indian Ocean region for many years to come. However, there are indications that the US is willing to cede

<sup>17</sup> For an incisive analysis of India as the natural centre of gravity and its leadership role in a regional security order in the Indian Ocean, see Brewster (2014, pp. 199-200 & 202-206).

to and, indeed, encourage a major regional naval role for India, particularly in the north-eastern Indian Ocean. For its part, India's willingness to co-operate with the US in achieving its ambitions is not as paradoxical as it may seem. As former US Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1955, p. 64) once conceded, the US (in developing its sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) relied on Britain, the then superpower, to enforce the Monroe Doctrine until the US was sufficiently strong to do so itself. Similarly, India may have good reason to co-operate with the US while it builds its own naval power (Brewster, 2010a, p. 18).<sup>18</sup>

Yet, with the exception of the US, India will likely wish to co-operate with extra-regional navies in the Indian Ocean only as long as they recognise India's leading role in the region (Pardesi, 2005, p. 53). The apparent willingness of Japan to recognise India's role as the 'leading' maritime security provider west of the Malacca Strait forms a not insignificant element in the developing India-Japan security relationship (see Brewster, 2010c, pp. 95-120). How Australia fits in this picture is also not entirely clear. Australia's naval power ranks second only to India's among the littoral states. There is no suggestion that India is seeking to expand its strategic space into the south-eastern Indian Ocean and there is little reason for it to do so as the junction of the Southern and Indian Oceans is not a maritime choke point (Brewster, 2010a, p. 19). Nevertheless, there is a 'strong mutual interest' for Australia and India to enhance maritime security co-operation (Australian Government, 2009, p. 96), particularly in areas such as maritime policing (piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, human trafficking) and disaster management (see Brewster, 2010b, pp. 1-9).<sup>19</sup>

## **A Brief Outline of Security Threats in the Western Indian Ocean Region**

Multiple sources of insecurity afflict many of the countries that rim the Indian Ocean. These challenges include terrorism in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India; state failure, civil war and insurgency in Yemen and Somalia; high-volume drug-trafficking via Pakistan and Iran; and piracy and armed robbery at sea around the Horn of Africa and in the Arabian Sea. Not all of these security concerns have occurred at peak intensity at the same time, and thus it is arguable that they have been addressed 'insufficiently' and on an 'if-and-when' basis. Even so, these risks

<sup>18</sup> For an insightful discussion on US-Indian co-operation in the Indian Ocean region, see Brewster (2014, pp. 171-179).

<sup>19</sup> For a perceptive analysis of a new security partnership between India and Australia in the Indian Ocean region, see Brewster (2014, pp. 154-159).

threaten one of the most critical strategic and trading spaces in the world. The Persian Gulf remains the global market's most important source of crude oil, while the northern Indian Ocean constitutes a key sector of the globe's 'West-East-West' trading belt. For this reason, it is all the more remarkable that these issues have not previously caused a greater holistic security breakdown in the Indian Ocean region.

As trends that have particularly worrisome security implications continue to evolve, it is conceivable that the conflated pressures of political insecurity, insurgent conflict, terrorism, illicit trafficking of all kinds, and piracy and vessel hijacking outstrip the international and regional community's ability to effectively respond to such issues in a sustained manner. Decision-makers should now confront the logic of adopting a 'management' approach to these challenges. Yet, successful management of security challenges of this magnitude, complexity, and inter-connectedness requires policy coherence, imagination, sustained participation, and considerable resources. Amidst the existential pressures of geopolitical fragility, internal political upheaval, insurgency, famine, and inter-state tensions, there is now a growing danger that the specific threats from terrorism, human trafficking, arms smuggling, and piracy will not get the resources and policy attention they require, and could therefore increase further in the near-term and beyond.

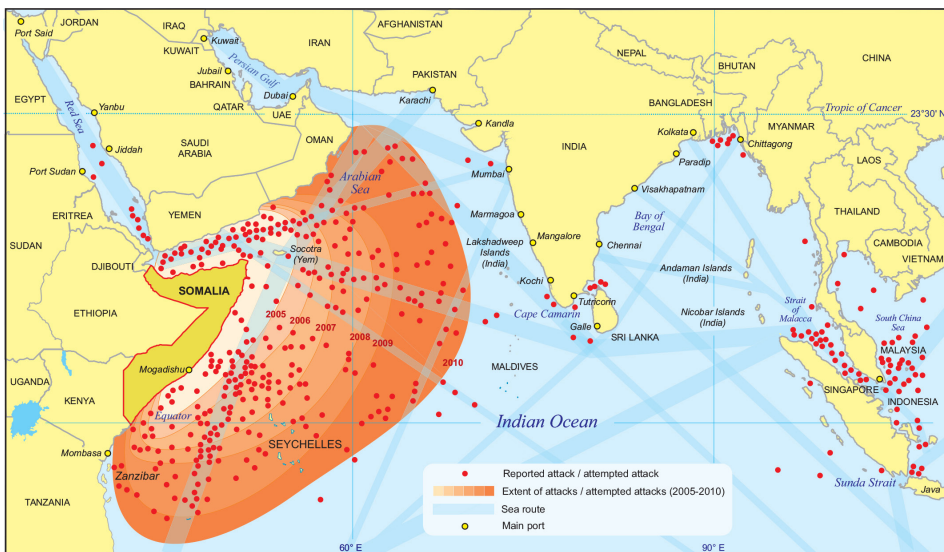
As offshore oil and gas exploration and production evolves along Africa's east coast from Mozambique northwards to Somalia, improved private and government maritime security have to be put in place, especially in the coastal waters of northern Mozambique, Tanzania, and Kenya. And as offshore industries expand, infrastructure, port facilities, and support shipping will likely be tempting targets for armed robbery, piracy, kidnappings, and sabotage for a range of actors, including organised criminal gangs, terrorists, and insurgent groups (some of which have yet to emerge or be identified). Also, historically, the settlement of territorial disputes has been one of the most protracted areas of geopolitical conflict. In most instances, disputes are benign, rendering them virtually dormant but, even so, they have the potential to become flashpoints in the coming years.

There appear to be a daunting number of maritime security threats and challenges in the Indian Ocean region, both extant and potential,<sup>20</sup> and insufficient resources to address them. Indeed, the mere fact that the Indian Ocean region

<sup>20</sup> These parts of the Indian Ocean region are categorised by Lloyd's Market Association of London, which provides professional and technical support to Lloyd's underwriting (insurance and, specifically, shipping) community, as 'Piracy, Terrorism, and Related Perils Listed Areas', enclosed by the following boundaries: on the north-west by the Red Sea, south of latitude 15°N; on the west of the Gulf of Oman by longitude 58°E; on the east by longitude 78°E; and on the south by latitude 12°S; see IMO (2013), and IMO (2009).

constitutes the world’s largest swath of maritime space that is prone to piracy and terrorism of some sort, signifies that the region will arguably remain the maritime area with the greatest array of security challenges for the foreseeable future.<sup>21</sup> However, while the resources that a very large and diverse group of states have devoted to addressing these challenges have never been adequate to the task, the largely successful coalition-building measures (CBMs) and joint task-force deployments have been impressive. With appropriate leadership from the US and the European Union, these multilateral efforts can be built upon in future. Other key states such as Australia, India, the UAE, Oman, Pakistan, Iran, and South Africa should come forward to forge regional multilateral solutions to address piracy, hijacking, human trafficking, terrorism, illegal fishing, and the integrity of EEZs. While not all these states and powers will be (or can be) grouped to address every challenge, opportunities for security co-operation and confidence-building in the region do exist (Herbert-Burns, 2012b, pp. 23 & 38-39).

Figure 4: The Somali Piracy Threat in the North-Western Indian Ocean



The oceanic area now threatened by Somali pirates is vast (more than 2.5 million square miles) and security of this space can never be assured, even with hundreds of warships. The 35 to 45 warships collectively provided by many states that are routinely deployed in the international recognised transit corridor

<sup>21</sup> For various perspectives on the piracy conundrum, see Herbert-Burns (2012b, pp. 23-39); Luke (2012a, pp. 31-33); Luke (2012b, pp. 35-39); *Oman Tribune*, 4 November 2012; Potgieter & Schofield (2010, pp. 86-112); Middleton & Quartapelle (2010, p. 5, note 11); Tsvetkova (2009, pp. 44-63); Harper (2009); Middleton (2008); *Associated Press*, 12 October 2008; Murphy (2007, Chapter 3).

(IRTC) and in parts of the Somali Basin are woefully inadequate. However, most of the Gulf Co-operation Council states, including the UAE, have decent-sized naval forces and patrol craft. The Gulf States rely heavily on shipping for their economic prosperity, especially to secure the flow of crude oil exports. This reality should be matched with far more robust and sustained naval patrolling by Oman and the UAE, while Western powers that have replenishment capabilities could provide the necessary logistical support. On the north-eastern and eastern side of the high-risk area (HRA), India<sup>22</sup> and Pakistan could likely provide more sea and air surveillance resources. Additional maritime patrol aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles based in Oman, the Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania, and Madagascar could further enhance current levels of maritime domain awareness. Those states with sufficient warships, such as the US, the UK, China, France, Germany, Japan, and Turkey, could provide additional frigates and destroyers to extend the patrolling footprint deeper into the high-risk area, guided by improved maritime domain awareness and intelligence.

Ever since the piracy threat began to grow in 2008, maritime domain awareness has improved considerably due to the efforts of the UK Maritime Trade Organisation (UKMTO), the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa (MSC-HOA), and various combined task forces. Even so, more could be done to harness the surveillance and threat-reporting capability of all the merchant vessels in the high-risk area, which could potentially expand the intelligence-gathering capacity for military forces by an order of magnitude. In the longer-term, an internationally supported financial programme to boost the naval and coastguard capacity of countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles would enable these states to provide far better maritime security and counter-piracy operations in their own waters (Herbert-Burns, 2012b, pp. 35 & 36).

## Conclusion

Without any doubt, for India the Indian Ocean has huge and growing strategic significance, as it is most concerned with the ocean as a geostrategic space as opposed to a regionally significant one. India's traditionally land-oriented strategic vision has expanded in the past two decades to place greater weight on its maritime environment, and the Indian Ocean is now looked on as part

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<sup>22</sup> India's National Ship Owners' Association, figuring that piracy costs the global shipping trade some US\$10 bn annually, has formally urged the Indian government to back the creation of a maritime anti-piracy force under UN command (*Washington Post*, 3 October 2011).

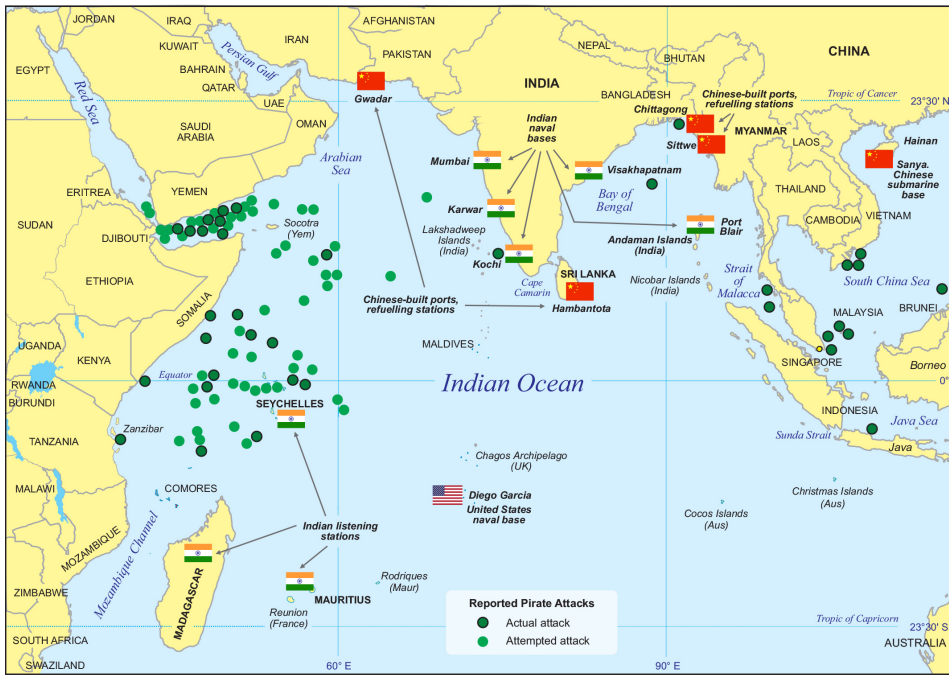
of the inner ring of India's security environment. Being the pathway to international trade, the Indian Ocean is strategically and economically more important than ever before (Schaffer, 2011, pp. 1 & 2).<sup>23</sup> Quite evidently, India is dependent on substantial seaborne trade and, consequently, its security interests have an important maritime dimension. Security and trade (commerce) have long been linked, and navies have long ago ceased to be military platforms only and have become tools for the protection of trading vessels and the policing of SLOCs (Pandya, Herbert-Burns & Kobayashi, 2011, pp. 2 & 4).

But, the Indian Ocean is also a potential arena for competition with a rising China and a setting for security co-operation with the US. In the past, India regarded with suspicion any country or development that challenged its ability to dominate its maritime space. As India's economy has grown, and as it has become more integrated with the world economy, this perspective has shifted. For the past decade, New Delhi has recognised that it cannot dominate on its own, and has come to regard the US presence as neutral or even beneficial to its interests. However, India's big strategic concern in the Indian Ocean is China, and New Delhi has been watching China's growing presence with great suspicion.<sup>24</sup> This includes not just the 'String of Pearls', places along the littoral where China is arranging for preferential access (including the new ports of Gwadar in Pakistan and Hambantota in Sri Lanka), but also the political links that China is building with these two countries and with Myanmar (Burma) and Bangladesh. In internal government deliberations in New Delhi, these factors enhance the strategic importance and bureaucratic clout of the Indian Navy, which has been consistently built up since 1990. Although the Navy accounts for a relatively modest share of Indian military spending (18% for 2012/13), it gets a significantly larger share of new procurement, some 72%. However, Indian officials speak of its mission in language reminiscent of their American counterparts: 'naval diplomacy', also with a focus on humanitarian operations like tsunami relief (Schaffer, 2011, pp. 1 & 2). Clearly, the rendering of assistance during natural disasters (tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, flooding) have spawned a multitude of additional 'out of area' operational roles for regional navies, and these have dramatically increased transnational maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean region (Ghosh, 2004, p. 10).

<sup>23</sup> In 2010, the growing share of trade in India's economy stood at around 43%. Rapid economic growth, exceeding 8% per year since 2003/04, depends on a steady and secure supply of energy. Imports of oil and gas represent some 70%, and about two-thirds of this cargo has to come in by sea. Crude oil is India's largest import, about US\$100 bn per year and one-third of all imports, while refined oil is its largest export at about US\$29 bn per year.

<sup>24</sup> For a penetrating analysis of the expansion of Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean, see Brewster (2014, pp. 182-196).

Figure 5: Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean Region



Other security threats in the Indian Ocean have also achieved a higher profile in the past decade. Piracy in the Arabian Sea and around the coast of Somalia in the Horn of Africa, to India's west, has become the major menace.<sup>25</sup> However, almost paradoxically, India's approach to the Indian Ocean is primarily as a solo player, and so far it has been wary of direct involvement in multinational enterprises such as international anti-piracy operations. It has sought other ways to co-ordinate with the other nations concerned: co-operation rather than joint operations. Anti-piracy ought to be the major arena for international organisations to shape regional policy-making, but it has thus far been a relatively ineffective one as far as India is concerned. Nevertheless, India has been the driving force behind the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Co-operation, IOR-ARC (dedicated to strengthening economic co-operation among the Indian Ocean littoral states) and a consultative group for the navies of the countries bordering the Indian Ocean, the IONS.<sup>26</sup> Because of the naval focus of the IONS, it is likely to

<sup>25</sup> Somali piracy has dropped off dramatically in recent times and there has been no attack on a commercial vessel in over two years. Piracy seems to have been suppressed, but not stopped – it may well return at some stage in the future. Therefore, the international maritime presence remains vital to maintaining this welcome reduction in pirate attacks; see *Agence France Press* (Paris), 8 April 2016.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed discussion on the IOR-ARC and the IONS, see *Oman Tribune*, 4 November 2012; *The New Delhi Post*, 4 November 2012; *The Hindu*, 2 November 2012; Rumley & Chaturvedi (2012); Fernando (2011, pp. 23–27); Luke (2010c, pp. 19–22); McPherson (2002, pp. 251–261); Roy-Chaudhury (1998, pp. 258–282); Jayawardene (1994).

attract a greater degree of attention, but it is noteworthy that the Indian government has emphasised its responsibility not just for security but also for disaster management, ocean resources, and environmental issues, signalling New Delhi's desire to build a broad-based set of relationships around this vital waterway. Neither of these organisations, however, alters the basic judgement that multilateral organisations have had a relatively modest impact on how New Delhi addresses Indian Ocean issues, and that India's absence from the multinational anti-piracy task force limits the impact of that multilateral effort (Schaffer, 2011, pp. 1 & 2).

To sustain its current economic growth and achieve its great power ambitions, India sees the Indian Ocean region as critical to securing its strategic interests. India's interests in the Indian Ocean region are heavily focused towards improving trade, investment and economic growth, while it also attempts to secure access to hydrocarbon reserves and arable land in order to strengthen its energy and food security. Due to its heavy dependence on inbound seaborne trade, India has placed a premium on developing its naval capabilities to safeguard and project its influence across the Indian Ocean. Given that India sees itself as a major power with strategic interests across the Indian Ocean, and that its requirements for access to natural resources are set to grow, it is likely that New Delhi will aim to significantly expand its influence across the Indian Ocean in the coming years (DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 2011, pp. 1 & 10). Undoubtedly, maritime strategy is playing an ever-increasing role in Indian strategic thinking (see Prakash, 2007a, pp. 157-176). As India reaches for great power status, it is turning more and more to the Indian Ocean as a means of expanding its strategic space. Although it currently co-operates with the US, India has long-term aspirations towards attaining naval predominance throughout much of the Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2010a, p. 19). Also, the rise of India will play a key role in the gradual co-operative integration of the various countries and peoples of the Indian Ocean basin. The long-term result will be a more prosperous and globally more influential region (Berlin, 2006, p. 84).

In the 2010s, in conjunction with an expansion of India's naval capabilities, there has been a significant extension of India's maritime security relationships throughout the Indian Ocean region. Much of the emphasis has been in developing relationships with small states at or near the key points of entry into the Western Indian Ocean (including Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Oman). Arguably, the extreme asymmetries in size have made the development of such relationships relatively easy: there is no question of competition or rivalry, for example. Some of these states have long seen India as a benign security



provider and have maritime policing needs that India can usefully fulfil. In some cases, India may not only be a co-operative security provider, but may also effectively act as a security guarantor, as is arguably the case with Mauritius and the Maldives (Brewster, 2010a, p. 20). But gaps inevitably remain in India's strategic posture and New Delhi needs to further strengthen its hand in coastal Africa and on the Arabian Peninsula (Berlin, 2006, p. 84). Also, littoral states on the African seaboard look towards regional power centres for assistance in maintaining maritime order and addressing security challenges. Countries with enhanced maritime capabilities like India, South Africa, Australia and the US should assist by not only co-operating amongst themselves, but also by taking other littoral states on board as part of multilateral efforts towards the maintenance of maritime order (Ghosh, 2004, p. 10).

But, in reality, things look slightly different. India is by far the dominant littoral naval power in the Indian Ocean. Australia has the next most powerful Navy, but it can only feasibly aspire to be a middle power (Gordon, 2012, p. 2). In such company, South Africa is the naval midget amongst maritime giants. Despite being the best in the southern African region, if not in Sub-Saharan Africa, the South African Navy is grossly under-resourced (Van Rooyen, 2012, p. 13). The urgent need to re-equip the Navy was seemingly addressed by acquiring four corvettes and three submarines for delivery by 2007, as part of an arms deal package of some R70 bn concluded in 1998/99 (*Engineering News*, 23 November 2005). As late as 2010, however, Vice Admiral Refiloe Mudimu, Chief of the South African Navy, expressed apprehensions about the ability of the Navy to effectively "patrol and protect" even South Africa's territorial waters (Heitman, 2010, p. 10).<sup>27</sup> Although a senior naval officer tried to put a positive spin on the situation by noting that maritime security around the African continent "... is being addressed by means of the AU 2050-African Integrated Maritime Security Strategy" (Teuteberg, 2012), this is in all likelihood yet another paper tiger – given the AU's poor track record and the strategy's extensive projected timeline. Given continued limited maritime resources and the fact that a dramatic positive change in terms of maritime resource allocations in the near to medium-term is rather remote, the situation 'in the water' is not likely to change soon (see Van Rooyen, 2012, pp. 13-14; Van Rooyen, 2011, pp. 22-23).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> It was reported at the time that the South African Navy's capabilities remained rather limited; that it would have difficulty in contributing to anti-piracy operations off Somalia; that budgetary constraints would allow for only one frigate and support ship to be put to sea at any given time; and that such a deployment would deplete the entire 2011 annual operational budget (*allAfrica.com*, December 2010 & January 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Although the South African Navy has since commenced limited anti-piracy operations, it is restricted to the Mozambique Channel, in pursuance of South Africa's commitment to the Southern African Development Community (*Mail&Guardian*, 15 November 2011).

In the coming years, therefore, India needs to develop much stronger co-operative security relationships with the larger littoral states, particularly South Africa and Australia. There is much scope for security co-operation, especially in the maritime domain. However, the implications of India's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean still need to be worked through. To what extent, for example, might India expect implicit acknowledgement of a leadership role in Indian Ocean security and/or support in any attempts to exclude China from the region? In future, a challenge for New Delhi is to maintain perceptions of India as a benign and non-hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean region as it moves towards achieving great power status. A strong and influential India means a more multipolar world, and this is consistent with Chinese interests. However, as China increasingly regards India as its main Asian rival, Beijing sees India's power projection in the Indian Ocean as a disconcerting development.

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**A NOTICE TO MOTION: EXPLORING STATES OF STILLNESS  
WHILE WAITING ON THE ARRESTED VESSEL WBI TRINITY  
AT THE PORT OF CAPE TOWN**

**Meghna Singh**

Drama Department of the University of Cape Town  
South Africa

*The paper focuses on the theme of waiting during maritime arrest and the effect this has on the lives of men who are caught up in it. Here we present the case of WBI Trinity, a supply ship, arrested to foreclose a mortgage, at the port of Cape Town, during its voyage from Nigeria to Dubai. Focusing on a 'dialectic of stasis and movement' (Bissell and Fuller) and using moments of bodily stillness and movement as a trope, our research highlights a policy of waiting and shows how the sailors inhabit forms of stillness.*

keywords: seafarers, mobilities, maritime arrest, waiting, stillness, humanism

We are not the first to observe that while money and goods are increasingly mobile, human bodies are subject to forms of border control that restrict, filter and stratify their mobility often by means of detention and delay. While the passage of wealthy travellers with the right passports is streamlined by biometric technologies and other forms of databasing, efforts to control the mobility of labour are redoubled by these same means. (Neilson and Rossiter, 2010, p 11)

“Waiting is something Castandes Lourdino is used to. In India,” he says, “if you go to a government office they make you wait for hours. Even at the train stations, you will see people waiting endlessly on the platforms”... then as an afterthought, “I am very comfortable sitting on my chair and keeping watch for hours.” (Castandes Lourdino, interview, July, 2014).

It was September 2014 and we were sitting on the deck of the *WBI Trinity*, a supply vessel which docked at the port of Cape Town one cold morning in June and had been stationary ever since. Or rather, had been in limbo as the ship and its all-Indian crew were enmeshed in a complex web of transnational economic shipping structures they had no control over. It had been four months and the men still had no idea when they would set sail again. From when I first encountered some of the crew members speaking in Hindi at the port, I became enmeshed in their story, their waiting. Having gained permission to access the port of Cape Town for my PhD research, I had spent a few months understanding the functioning of the port. I made journeys on tug boats and filmed the towing in of container ships, the workings of the container terminal, the constant flux of things arriving and leaving. Once I stumbled upon the case of the arrested vessel with the Indian seafarers, I decided to portray the gaps in the smooth flows of traffic at the port. While thinkers like Bauman (2000) have used “fluidity” and “fluid modernity” as the leading metaphor for the present stage of modern era, we must be aware that flows are not smooth in society. The idea that everything is connected and sails smoothly through these conduit points needed to be disrupted.

By proposing an alternative way of engaging with the metabolic flows of energy and the moments of interaction, where the global and local meet in myriad messy and magical ways, the paper focuses on the notion of suspended mobility and the effect this had on the lives of men caught up within this space. Being from India myself and based in Cape Town, I identified with the crew on board and it also allowed easy access which becomes visible through my filming and the writing. The men onboard trusted me and over a period of time they looked forward

to my visiting them onboard, almost like a family member visiting inmates in prison. As time passed, the visits became more than research; they became about anchoring each other in a city away from home. Not only did we share a common spoken language and culture but a nostalgia about everything Indian.

In this paper, I try to expand the writings within the 'new mobilities regime' that looks at "how the global mobility of people and things change the world today" and "how these movements are designed, formed and controlled" (Witzgall, 2013, p. xxv). I do this by linking the complexities surrounding contemporary oceanic mobilities to the concept of a 'post humanist condition' (Biemann, 2008, p.57). My research presents the case of the *WBI Trinity*, a supply vessel, sailing from Nigeria to its homeport Dubai, which was arrested at the Port of Cape Town for a period of six months from the 9 June to 6 December 2014. This is done through my engagement with the crew on board: eight Indians and one Indonesian man. The research focuses on problems of social isolation, uncertainty of movement and the erosion of temporal and spatial boundaries. This is presented in an analysis of observational footage, interviews with the seafarers, field notes, photo collages and legal facts provided by a shipping law expert, Graham Bradfield, head of the Shipping Law Unit, University of Cape Town.

The argument in the paper addresses two main themes. First, it shows how neo-liberal policies relating to the shipping industry immobilize people and how this immobility is linked to a broader subaltern experience. The shipping industry "needs workers from developing countries to compromise their employment conditions to remain competitive" (Borovnik, 2011, p. 59). Secondly it unpacks the period of waiting and how the 'men-in-waiting' inhabit forms of stillness. Reflecting on Jean Francois Bayart's (Bayart 2007) argument that waiting has become central to the subaltern experience, I borrow from the writings of Craig Jeffry (2010) on the idea of 'unstructured time' and the notion of 'timepass' amongst unemployed youth in North India. Following this I frame the experience of the Indian seafarers in waiting by using David Bissell's phenomena of the "variegated affective complex" where he suggests that the period of 'waiting' entails a "mix of activity and inactivity" and describes waiting as a "corporeal experience" (2007, p. 277).

By deconstructing the observational footage of the bodily movements of the arrested seafarers, I show how rhythms of physical activity are linked to human interaction with their environment and how activity and inactivity is linked to an emotional switching on and off to the world: emotions of numbness and despair combined with a forced injection of hope for movement. I conclude by showing how 'waiting' allows us to expand on the critique of neo-liberal policies within

the maritime world and how it links to the concept of the ‘posthuman condition/space’ that reflects on the paradoxical inhuman conditions offered under the name of globalization: “confinement within a world of systematized mobility” (Biemann, 2008).

## The Arrest of WBI Trinity

My research began in June 2014 when I encountered a few crewmembers of the ship, speaking in Hindi as I made my way through the ‘Landing Wharf’ section of the port of Cape Town. For the crew on board, the trouble began the day they sailed into Cape Town and the vessel was served a ‘notice to motion’ - a court order barring it from continuing its voyage to Dubai. The notice stated:

Please take notice that the applicant intends applying as a matter of urgency to the above Honorable Court on the 09th day of June 2014 at 16h00 or as soon thereafter as counsel for the applicant may be heard for an order in terms of the draft delivered evenly herewith (Affidavit, 2014, p 1).

“A notice to motion is a request to the court to grant an order to authorize the arrest. When the court orders the arrest, that order is taken by the sheriff and served on the vessel followed by the vessel coming under the sheriff’s control” stated Bradfield, the Maritime Law expert. He further informed me “the port authorities are notified so they don’t let the vessel leave unless there is court order permitting that. The affidavit provides the legal requirements that have to be met in order to arrest a vessel” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). The company that owned the *WBI Trinity*, Work Boat International, owed another maritime entity, SIMGOOD, a Malaysian company, more than US\$4 million. And according to the law, maritime creditors can pursue claims anywhere the ship is located. Case No: AC 14/ 2014, the affidavit was addressed as a matter between: SIMGOOD 1 PTE limited and MV "WBI Trinity", Workboat International DMCCO, Master Of The MV "WBI Trinity" in the ‘High Court of South Africa, in the Western Cape Division. The captain of the ship, Maria John, told me:

Our company name is Workboat International. The company is based in Dubai. The owner is Indian but he is settled in Canada. This vessel is a supply vessel and operated in Nigeria. There is another party SIMGOOD, a Malaysian company, who has to be paid \$4.8 million with interest. They have some pending business and that’s why they have to pay. SIMGOOD filed a case in the court and until the

money is paid we cannot sail. That's why they arrested us. We don't know all the details. (Interview by MS, July 2014)

In the following six months, I spent time with the crew and discovered more about their situation and the background of their journey. Citing clauses from court affidavits and interview statements from the seafarers, I will show the ways in which the seafarers are torn between accessing their legal rights to demand their salaries and repatriation home and a sense of loyalty towards the company. There is increasing research in the area of seafarer abandonment (Couper et al 1998; ITF 1999, Alderton et al 2004). Describing the experience of stranded, unpaid, Turkish seafarers aboard the arrested vessel '*Obo Basak*' in a French port in 1997, Erol Kahveci in *Neither at sea nor ashore: the abandoned crew of the Obo Basak* (Kahveci 2005) throws light on the treatment of modern day seafarers who are frequently left unpaid and abandoned when a ship operator gets into financial trouble or is arrested pending legal proceedings.

Another affidavit the captain showed me further clarified the background of the arrest. It stated that the "applicant had chartered the MV '*SIMGOOD 1*' to Workboat International DMCCO, the Second Respondent in these proceedings" (Affidavit, clause 11). The payment of the charter hire was to be made within 30 days of presentation of the invoice (Affidavit, clause 13.6) but was not paid. Interest on all outstanding amounts was to be paid at the rate of 12% per annum (Affidavit, clause 13.7). Further it stated, "It will be noted from what is set out in the previous paragraphs and from annexure "TR3" that the outstanding hire totals USD 4,854,508.61 (Affidavit, clause 20). Emphasizing the debt, it stated "the applicant claims interest on the capital amount in the sum of USD 2,390,642.03 up to 31 May 2014 and interest will continue to run at USD 1,568.15 per day until date of payment (Affidavit, clause 28, 2014). Further, I noted that the two companies were officially registered and based in Malaysia and Dubai. The affidavit stated: "The applicant is SIMGOOD 1 PTE Limited, a company duly incorporated and registered in accordance with the company laws of Malaysia and carries on business, *inter alia*, as an owner of vessels at Level 15B, Main Office Tower, Financial Park, Labuan, Jalan Merdeka, 8700 Labuan F.T., Malaysia" (Affidavit, Clause no. 2, 2014). The second respondent is "Workboat International DMCCO, a company duly incorporated and registered in accordance with the company laws of the United Arab Emirates and carries on business, *inter alia* as a shipowner at Suite 116, AL Arti Piazza, United Arab Emirates" (Affidavit, Clause no. 2, 2014).

The clauses explain how the case was anchored in various international locations with a mix of international partners, creating a web of legal tentacles for

the seafarers to unravel. The applicant was a company registered in Labuan, an island in East Malaysia, an offshore financial centre and a tax-free haven. The applicant's legal representatives were based in Singapore as stated in clause 3.1: "Mr Raymond Ong, the principal of CTLC Law Corporation of Singapore, is the legal representatives of the applicant in dealing with enforcement of the claims to which this application relates". While the applicant's legal representatives were based in Singapore, the "dispute resolution between the parties was to take place in Mumbai, India and subject to the law applicable there (which is to say Indian law) (Affidavit, clause 13.8). *WBI Trinity* was based in Dubai while the port of its registry was Panama. Its details on official papers stated: "WBI Trinity, Reg. Owner: Workboat International DMCCO Dubai U.A.E, Vessel Type: Tug/Supply Vessel, Gross Tonnage: 1159, Date of Build: 26 Feb 2009, Port of Registry: Panama."

"Panama is notorious for registering ships for cheap. Ship registers are supposed to have a genuine link between the ship and the country of registry but there are many registers that don't require that link or require it in very tenuous forms and these are the open registers" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). Tony Lobo, the managing director of Workboat International told me that most of their business was in the Middle East and this was the first time that they had sent their vessel to Nigeria and "got into trouble". "Our company is based in Dubai because Dubai is a global financial centre, centrally located between the East and the West, providing tempting business incentives in terms of a no tax policy" (Tony Lobo, interview, December, 2014). Lobo further stated: "Nigeria has a quota for Nigerian workers onboard and we didn't get any work for two years and hence the vessel was on its way back to Dubai" (Interview, December, 2014). Sanjiv Kumar, the oiler onboard, was of the opinion that the company should have never let the vessel go beyond the Middle East. He stated, "It's best if the vessel is close to home" (interview, August, 2014). The Indian seafarers also agreed that they liked Dubai and that it 'felt almost like home'.

In an attempt to unravel this specific case, we need to understand the conditions or prerequisites for the arrest of vessels. Global shipping movements are easily tracked so once there is a legal maritime claim against a vessel there is 'no real running away'. Neilson and Rossiter write that according to the Port State Control and International Maritime Organization the convention on port state control allows the inspection of foreign ships in national ports to "verify that the condition of the ship and its equipment comply with the requirements of international regulations and that the ship is manned and operated in compliance with these rules". They further expand on this by stating, "Under the various



regional memorandums of understanding (MOUs) applying to port state control, states have the right to detain substandard ships” and are expected to “publish lists of detained vessels on the relevant MOU websites” (2010, p 15). Bradfield informed me that maritime creditors or the company that is owed money can pursue those claims anywhere the ship is located. He said that from a legal perspective there might be slight differences in the circumstance in which you can arrest from country to country and in that sense South Africa is what is termed an “arrest friendly jurisdiction”. “It is easier to get arrested here than many other jurisdictions but in this specific case of *WBI Trinity* would have been arrested in any port” (Bradfield, Interview, 2014). Writing about the different kinds of “diversions, stopovers and waiting” within “progressive linear forms of mobility” such as trade ship voyages, Gillam Fuller states:

Port state control becomes mixed with border control. Both employ detention or delay as the primary means of checking mobility and producing governable mobile bodies from seemingly ungovernable flows. Combined with logistical methods of operation that can slow as well as speed voyage times, the net effect is to create hierarchized zones of mobility. (Fuller 2007)

In analyzing the case further, Bradfield informed me that there were very few instances when ships were arrested and are not released immediately on provision of security. “Normally the owners put up a guarantee by a bank or a protection indemnity club undertakes to pay, if their clients are found liable. There is no real need to detain the ship under arrest since a substitute form of security is offered” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). He further speculated that Workboat International must be in “financial difficulty” or “heading to insolvency” or “their security must have lapsed due to non-payment of the premium” (Bradfield, interview, 2014). I was told that smaller vessels, mostly fishing trawlers, that do not have insurance or access to bank guarantees would normally be arrested. ‘The landing wharf’, a site of arrested vessels at the port of Cape Town, where *WBI Trinity* stands, is one of the main sections of the harbour. Rusting fishing trawlers that have been arrested surround *WBI Trinity*. One can extend the concept of Foucault’s ‘Heterotopia’ beyond the ship and the prison to the site of the entire ‘landing wharf’. During one of my visits to the ship, Sanjiv, pointed out of his cabin window and said:

Do you see all the ships on this jetty? They are all arrested vessels! They are all stuck like us! The Cape Town port authorities have delegated this berth for arrested vessels. There are a few times when vessels arrive and leave but mostly all the ves-

sels are arrested vessels! We cannot really communicate with the other seafarers. I went to ask them about the shore power and they said, “No English! No English!” We are prisoners who cannot even talk to each other! (Interview, August, 2014)

While Marx described the category of labour as ‘energy’, ‘unrest’, ‘motion’ and ‘movement’ (Nicholas De Genova, 2010), Neilson and Rossiter (2010) examine the role of logistics as an important factor in the “stasis” or “slowing” of maritime transport. The last century has seen ships become automated and crews on board diminish. The life of a seafarer at sea means extended periods of stasis but this is intensified by the “growing practice of slow steaming” (2010, p 5). Neilson and Rossiter write that “as a way of meeting the rising cost of fuel” the ships are made to take long haul “loops” or “delays” in their journeys and this creates the “presence of phantom ships parked in the world’s most affordable waters” (2010, p5).

During my first few encounters with the seafarers on board I learnt that two of the team members had paid for their own tickets and flown back to India. The crew was upset with them for not showing camaraderie in a tough situation. The captain had signed a three-month contract but could not leave since he was party to the law suit against the company.

Writing about the forms of control and conditions of labour at sea, Neilson and Rossiter state that “a seafarer who begins work for a voyage ‘signs articles’ that oblige him to complete a journey from and to certain ports and to accept penalties if he willingly fails to do so. The terms of these ‘articles’ also place limitations on the seafarer’s right to strike and freedom of movement” (2010, p13). In the affidavit facilitating the arrest of *WBI Trinity*, the ship was cited as “the first respondent”, the company the “2<sup>nd</sup> respondent” and the “master of the vessel” as the “3<sup>rd</sup> respondent” in the case. The affidavit stated: “The third respondent is the Master of the MV “WBI Trinity” currently on board and in command of the vessel. The master’s name and particulars are not known to me or to the applicant” (affidavit, 2014, p. 1). The captain was the oldest member of the crew and the most stressed. He explained his situation to me: “The company office in Dubai only communicates with me and I am responsible for passing on the information to everyone else. However, the company doesn’t send us messages through the Internet since they don’t want these people to know our messages. They only call us to tell us things. I attend to their phone calls and pass on the messages to the entire crew (interview, August, 2014). The ship and the captain being indicted in the dispute between the shipping corporations is a distinctive

feature of admiralty jurisdiction. Bradfield explained why the ship is cited as a respondent in the case to me:

Outside admiralty you always cite parties who are natural persons or corporate entities in law suits. That idea of proceeding against a piece of property is that you pursue your claim against the property and that's your best chance to be paid under these circumstances. This arises because the ship incurs debts all along its trade routes by not paying suppliers and these organizations don't have the resources to pursue their claims but by going to the country of origin of the owners of the ship so it gives them an opportunity the next time the ship comes past to arrest it and have their claim settled (Bradfield, interview, 2014).

The main underlying problem for the seafarers who found themselves trapped in this fight for money between the shipping corporations was that their salaries had not been paid and they could not fly back home due to the lack of money. Also, they had left India with a plan for earning a monthly salary for the period of their agreed contract which was between six to nine months, varying from person to person. Their company had informed them that the sheriff who had arrested them was responsible for the payment of their salaries. The sheriff played an important role as the 'on-the-ground' person the crew interacted with. He was responsible for supplying the crew with provisions. Speaking of the sheriff's responsibilities, Bradfield informed me that "the sheriff is looking after the seafarers but he will recover his money. He works for a private company that runs this work as a business" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). If the ship were to be auctioned and sold, the sale price would form a fund and any claimant against that ship could claim money. Further, I was informed that if the money was insufficient to pay everyone in full, the claims would be ranked and certain claims would be preferred over others. Bradfield stated, "At the top of the ranking would be the sheriff's costs followed by the seafarers' claim to their salary" (Bradfield, interview, 2014). Even though the seafarers' salary ranked relatively high in the payment list, it was the private company and their employee, the sheriff, who would get paid first. If the seafarers were to even think of returning home, it would terminate their contract and they would return home without any money. Hence they waited endlessly in the vessel, not knowing when this indefinite period would end.

Post containerization, the maritime world has created passive environments in which collective voices of seafarers are muted, and acceptance and waiting become the norm. In questioning the "automated, accelerated, computer-driven, and monolithic maritime world" (Sekula 1995), Allen Sekula asks, "Are there,

even today, forms of human agency in maritime environments that seek to build a logical sequence of details, synoptic interpretation of observed events? Is it possible to construct such knowledge from below, or is this only the purview of elites?" (1995:133) All the seafarers on WBI Trinity came from working class families and bore the responsibility of sending remittances home. Sanjiv Kumar told me, "You see we are middle class people. We belong to a kind of family where even before the money arrives; the money has been allocated for things. And if the money gets stuck in the middle then the entire system gets blocked" (Sanjiv Kumar, interview, September, 2014).

The cook, Lopes Jeroni Socio, had a similar story to share. He told me he had worked for the company since 2005 when he met the owner in Qatar on a vessel and was asked to join Workboat International. Besides the captain, he was another person who had been instructed not leave the vessel and sail to Dubai. He expressed his stress about not having received his salary for three months:

Back home in Goa, I have a wife, an 11-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old son. My wife calls me from home. We don't even have money to call on the phone. We have asked the company for money many times or even an advance from our salary but they haven't given us any money. Our company tells us that SIMGOOD, the company that got us arrested, has to pay our salary but we haven't received any news from the sheriff who arrested the vessel. (Jeroni, interview, September 2014)

The crew could have pressurized the owner to fly them back home but they stayed due to a sense of loyalty towards the Indian owner and the company. Most of them had a long relationship with the company and had worked with the same one for several years. There is a sense of Indian brotherhood and camaraderie amongst the men and trust in their Indian employers. Gurjeet Singh, the electrician, told me that it helped to have all Indians on board. "We can laugh and joke with each other in our own language in this difficult situation. It provides some relief since we all understand each other" (Singh, interview, October 2014). The only person who complained about the company was Vikramjeet Singh, the boatswain. During a morning drinking sessions with three other men, he argued. "The company washed their hands of us when we got caught here. Have they checked on us? Have they bothered to make sure that we receive our salaries or to even check whether we have any cash to spend here?"

Sanjiv Kumar, an employee of the company since January 2010 responded, "There is a delay but I hope the company will come up with a solution. Our salary isn't worth the amount of the boat. If we are stressed about our salary then

imagine the stress of the person who owns this expensive boat". The men slowly got more and more drunk on cheap Indian whisky and the discussions continued (Field note 2, November 2014). Even their stock of Indian whisky was depleting. This was something the men had brought along with themselves when they left India. Sanjiv wanted to maintain a good relationship with the company and not upset the owners. In a later private interview he told me, "If we go back to an agent in Mumbai we are required to pay the first one month salary to the agent. Now we have a relationship with this company. It's best we keep this relationship so we don't have to pay commission to an agent" (Sanjiv Kumar, interview, November, 2014).

It was a clear situation to analyse. The crew was not in the best position because they did not want to lose out on a relationship with their company. They believed there wasn't a guarantee that another company would employ them. Their concern was that the ship owner would label them as 'troublemakers' and tell other shipowners not to employ them. Also they were far from home with no financial resources. Their plight was desperate even though their conditions were relatively comfortable compared to their conditions elsewhere. Most of them had families to support back home. They were also aware of the many cases of seafarers being abandoned at foreign ports, having to make their way back home. Given the circumstances, they chose to wait.

## **Mobility/ Immobility**

During one of my visits before dinner Abhi told us that this was not the first time he had been in a situation like this, on board an arrested vessel. "It happened to me once before," he said, "in Iraq. It was 2006, 2007, I had joined as a fresher and the owner of the ship was Iraqi. There was a problem with an agreement and they kept us there for six months. They didn't know English and we didn't know any Arabic. It was a huge problem. They used to serve us some bread and black tea. That was like a real prison. There was no one to help us. The crew consisted of 12 Indians and the captain was from Iran." Everyone nodded, listening to the story. "When they took us for the court hearing, they put handcuffs on us and they had more security for us than a prime minister. Six cars in front and six cars behind us and we were in the middle. They didn't even stop at the red light while driving. For the final hearing they arranged for an Arabic to Hindi interpreter. Our passports and seaman books were returned to us after two months. Then we came to Dubai and then I went home. After six months our

ship was released. That time I spent a total of 13 to 14 months on a ship.” (Abhi, interview, September 2014)

‘Borders’ as zones of control are a key consideration for research into mobilities. As the world gets more fluid in its movements, new forms of borders have been created and dispersed in a mobile and globalized world. According to Van Houtam et al (Houtam 2005) we need to revisit the “static notion of the container-border”. What exists now is instead a network of “complex and varied patterns of both implicit and explicit bordering and ordering practices” (p. 78). Expanding on the forms of ‘bordering practices’ they list other existing forms of border controls. They state these as “modes of location, tracking and surveillance, textual locatability in the form of ID cards, or more archaic devices such as the passport” (p. 79). Other historical and contemporary ways to filter movements can be seen through the various “toll systems”, “stopover” and “brakes” (Virilio 2006). These methods of controlling movement are increasingly seen in urban spaces but “extend beyond urban space into the larger-scale spaces of global migration through organisational techniques able to control fairly vast spaces” (p. 28-32). Adding to the set of contemporary bordering practices, other conduit points on the global map are used to check the speed of movement, be it acceleration or deceleration.

Graham and Marvin state that this control of speed is produced via “tunnel effects” (Marvin 2001). They describe these as “transit conduits connected at a variety of hubs (major seaports, teleports, railway stations, e-commerce hubs etc.) where adjustment occurs” (p. 27). While capitalism allows for the selective fluidity of borders, ‘power’ lies at the core of the emerging field of mobility studies as indicated by Sheller & Urry (Urry 2006). Urry further advocates that a “notion of power” and “social inequality” must be linked to “network capital” within mobility studies (Larsen 2007). There is literature to show that the people most affected by these disparities within the era of accelerated mobility are those vulnerable people who form a part of “the complex debates on migratory practices and refugee mobilities” (Martin 2011, 194). This state of waiting in undocumented migrants exists in many different contexts. In his editorial *Waiting*, Craig Jeffery (Jeffery 2008) writes about Finn Stepputat’s study of Guatemalan refugees and shows them trapped in a state of “infinite waiting”. Stepputat quotes C. S. Lewis’s description of grief to describe what he calls a period of unending, unstructured time: “like waiting: just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling... almost pure time, empty successiveness” (1992, p 110).

Other parallel descriptions of waiting within this context include Greta Uehling’s (Uehling 2004) research among Crimean Tatars living in Uzbekistan

to uncover a somewhat similar culture of suspense-filled waiting. She uses the term “suitcase moods” to describe the condition of women who sat on their suitcases the whole day, waiting, unsure of the possibility of returning home. Giorgio Agamben uses the term “space of exception” to describe the space of the “camp” (Agamben 2005), which for him represents “a space of suspension where stillness is produced through the construction of permanent mechanisms to lock out” (Martin 2011, 195). Writing about the emotional state of the “encapsulated undocumented migrant”, Martin uses the term “turbulent stillness” to describe this state of stasis. He states:

Stillness in these situations is divested of its cosmopolitan connotations of respite and calm: for these people are locked-into a violent trajectory where the apparently stilled space of the lorry or container is a form of capsularization, but one in which the protective functioning of the capsule is manifestly absent. Perhaps more readily this is stillness as incarceration. The body remains still to circumvent detection. These travel conditions inflict a form of violence on the stilled body of the migrant in movement – what might be termed turbulent stillness. (2011, 199)

Adding to these debates on refugee ‘lock-outs’, is the invisible world of labour mobilities, in which workers endure the period of “chronic waiting”, a term used by Craig Jeffery (2008, p71) to describe how people have little control over their movement.

## Trapped in a period of waiting

“The very familiarity of waiting has obscured it” (Schweizer 2005: p. 778).

While everyday practices of waiting in the Third World countries are accepted as a part of the everyday ‘corporeal experience’, one must highlight a slow passive violence inflicted on the subaltern body beneath the mask of a progressive global mobility. In the case of the *WBI Trinity*, most of the crew onboard stated that they joining the shipping industry because it would give them a chance to travel see the world, to be free... The hidden side of the dream to move freely around the world forms an antithesis of the stasis in which the crewmembers of *WBI Trinity* found themselves. In a country like India, large populations are used to the phenomenon of ‘waiting’. It forms an unquestionable part of the everyday lives of people especially in smaller cities, towns and rural India. Bissell states: “waiting is a specific kind of relation to the world” (2007, 284). Most of the seafarers accept the period of endless waiting as a familiar experience. To frame ‘waiting’ as a subaltern experience is to question and understand the inherent

acceptance of waiting. Writing about the “dilemma of chronic waiting” (Martin 2011), as a dominant experience in the global south, Martin quotes Bayart (2007) and Appadurai (2002) in stating the reason behind such an experience:

The liberalization of national economies in the global south, often in the context of donor-led structural adjustment programs often leaves people in a situation of limbo. Neoliberal economic reforms have also triggered disinvestment in the social welfare state, and, in turn, vast “floating populations” are forced to wait for food, shelter, education or health care. (p. 195)

Craig Jeffrey writes about the effects of waiting on the numerous excluded individuals and groups who are forced to reside in a state of indetermination. In his book, *The politics of waiting*, he examines “situations in which people have been compelled to wait for years, generations or whole lifetimes, not as a result of their voluntary movement through modern spaces but because they are durably unable to realize their goals” (Jeffrey, 2010: 3). Examining the problem of “unstructured time” he analyses the behaviour of unemployed young men aimlessly hanging around waiting in Uttar Pradesh, North India. He writes, “Trapped in an endless present” enduring “feelings of heightened suspense”, the young men spoke of their activities as “timepass”. Some even labelled them as “timepass men” (Jeffery et al, 2008). Within this context of waiting as a subaltern experience, he writes:

Waiting must be understood not as the capacity to ride out of the passage of time or as the absence of action, but rather an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people forge new political strategies, in which time and space often become the objects of reflection, and in which historical inequalities manifest themselves in new ways. (2008,p.957)

## The waiting process for the crew of WBI Trinity

Waiting as an event should be conceptualized not solely as an active achievement or passive acquiescence but as a variegated affective complex where experience folds through and emerges from a multitude of different planes (Bissell, 2007, p. 277)

Borrowing from Bissell’s conceptualization of the waiting period as a time period of activity and inactivity and not a dead period of stasis or stillness (Bissell 2007), I analyse the experience of the *WBI Trinity* crew through the lens of the



'variegated affective complex'. Expanding on the VAC, Dastur states, "The enacting of a variegated affective complex is a mixture of activity and agitation to the world, and conversely a deadness-to-the-world" (Dastur 2000). There exists the possibility of rupture that "intimately threatens the synchrony of transcendental life or existence" (2000, p. 182). Given the nature of the combination of stillness and agitation, the period of waiting can be viewed as an 'embodied corporeal experience' allowing for a 'renewed focus on the body' (Bissell 2007, p 279). By viewing the crew's activities under the theme of both 'corporeal engagement' and 'withdrawal', I traced a path of the various activities and in activities to portray the experience of 'being-in-waiting'. Drawing from my field notes and observational camera footage the recurring activity that stood out during the research period was that of the men pacing up and down, in small groups or alone, during the day and at night. My notes stated:

Hanis Kotze, the port security in charge dropped me at the ship. I walked up the small bridge connecting the key side to the ship and stepped onto the deck. Abhi, Vikramjeet and Sanjiv were pacing up and down the deck. I saw them pointing towards a ship coming in and discussing whether it was a tanker. "A routine evening activity for most of the crewmembers", I was told by the cook on the first day. "We don't go out much but like to walk on the deck every evening." (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

Writing about "transformations in bodily activity" such as "walking-sitting-walking, sleep-slumber-wake, stasis-activity" Bissell states that these "thresholds that frame the experience of waiting" are determined by "the degree of certainty or uncertainty about the length of the wait" (2007, p 290). The motion of pacing up and down enhances the mood of anxiety on the ship. The relentless motion of moving up and down within the limited space of the deck of the ship forms the symbolic action of what it means to wait indefinitely. My notes further read:

I climb up to the topmost section of the ship, the bridge area. I find the captain sitting alone in the dark. The sharp light of the computer screen lights up his face as he stares at it. The screen saver has the *WBI Trinity* as its background image. He looks stressed and anxious. He gets up and goes outside to smoke a cigarette. He goes down one level and stands outside staring at the container terminal lights. The wind is strong and the smoke and sparks fly back towards his face. He then paces up and down the length of the balcony. I have watched the captain pace up and down several times now. Inside the bridge area, outside the bridge, staring at

the oil rig, staring at the mountain, staring at the rest of the arrested vessels. He shakes his arms as he walks at times. Perhaps that is his idea of getting some exercise to stay fit. (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

Writing about the slow passage of time and an intrinsic “corporeal awareness of duration” (Buetow 2004), Buetow states, “Perceived duration is postulated to be highest through time passing slowly, when individuals are highly conscious of themselves and their situation” (p. 22). The captain’s actions of switching between sitting still and walking up and down exhibit this intrinsic awareness of the slow passage of time while enacting a variegated affective complex that we are discussing here. These acts being active or acquiescent to the world also point towards Levinas’s notion of patience as a “combination of urgency and delay” Writing about Levinas’s notion of patience within these situations, Fullagar (Fullagar 2004) suggests that his concept of patience describes “patience as a mode of being detached from the self, but at the same time it involves a particular temporal quality of being with self” (p. 16). The last paragraph in my notes from that evening further reiterates the activity of constant pacing up and down. It states:

Another person enters the bridge area. It’s Lobo, the boatswain. His job is to keep watch. He sits on the chair and stares out of the window. The captain joins him, they exchange a few words and both of them stare out of the window. I walk towards them to see what they are staring at. Closer from the window, I look down at the deck of the ship and see Abhi pacing up and down, talking on his cell phone, going in and out of my sight. (Field note 3, 11/10/2014)

The other activity that allows for social interaction takes place every night in the recreation or television room. My notes describe the first time I observed the men watching a film:

Jeroni, Sanjiv and Vikramjeet are sitting on the L-shape green leather couch and watching a Bollywood film. Abhi joins them on the couch and Sanjiv moves to sit on a white plastic chair next to the couch. The four of them greet me and go on to watch the film. They tell me that they can’t remember how many times they have watched the same film. It’s a comedy and it makes them laugh. (Field note, 15/11/2014)

Writing about activities people undertake to kill time while they wait, Jain states, “The myriad forms of mundane activity that people may enact while waiting, vary from drinking and eating to reading, talking and listening to music” (2006). Technology plays an important role in providing some relief from the

bodily engagement of the wait. Jain further writes, “Various mobile technologies are also frequently enlisted during the period of waiting perhaps through the action of texting or WAP-ping, or even gaming through mobile phones for example” (Jain 2006). Along with staying in touch with family via Whatsapp and Skype, the crew downloads films through their phone connection to entertain themselves. My notes from that evening further state:

Abhi tells me that they were bored of standing on the deck every evening and watching the same scenery. Instead he tries to “download pirated films from the Internet and watch those in the TV room.” He says “from 11pm-7am you get 1 GB for R10 so I download films at night. I have created a wifi hotspot. Every night I download about five-six films. We connect the laptop to the TV through a HDMI cable and so sit and watch till midnight every night.” (Field note, 15/11/2014)

Later that evening, I witnessed a surge in aggression and a bout of anger from Sanjiv, one of the crewmembers while they were watching the film. Highlighted as one of the moments of outburst, my notes stated, “Sanjiv looks at me and says that there are a lot of Hindi movies being filmed in Cape Town. ‘We have recently watched four five Hindi films that were filmed in Cape Town! We have developed an allergy towards the name Cape Town! The next time I watch Cape Town on the TV screen, I will break the screen!’ He expressed his anger about the fact that they had been in Cape Town for four months and could not really enjoy what all Cape Town has to offer.(Field note, 15/11/2014).

Writing about the event of waiting as “not the immobile being-in-the-world that it first appeared” Bissell writes about the various emotions that resonate during the period of waiting making it a corporeal engagement. He states that the event of waiting is both “active and intentional” and emotions such as “impatience, anger, aggression, and cessation, such as tiredness, fatigue and hunger” make it a state of engagement and withdrawal at the same time (2007, p 294). Further Bissell states that these “heighten feelings of aggression and anger displaying affective intensity” demonstrates well how “waiting could be considered in a more transhuman form” (2007, p 291). The ‘inactivity’ or withdrawal for the crew involved staring blankly out of the window, long periods of sitting motionless and doing nothing, sitting in the dining room alone, playing with their phones and even walking on the deck alone. This disengagement from activity involves the body not being involved in any ongoing performance. Diski recognises this particular disengagement with the world, of the body held in suspense while waiting comparing it to be a form of desirable acquiescence (Diski 2006)

while Harrison views these “moments of suspension” as corporeal phenomena “which trace a passage of withdrawal from engagement” (2008). My notes under the heading ‘lingering gazes’ read:

Its Diwali and I visit the crew with a box of Indian sweets. Not seeing anyone on the deck or below, I go upstairs to the bridge of the ship. I see three men staring out of the main window. Muhammed Rizvan is sitting on a chair in front of the computer screen with his back turned to the screen. Sanjiv and Vikramjeet are standing against the window and looking out at the port. Muhammed turns back to look straight at the computer screen and looks down at his mobile phone. He starts playing with his mobile phone. He switches between playing with his phone and gazing at the screen. Sanjiv turns away from the window and starts playing with his phone and Vikramjeet sits on the main chair looking out at the port and starts texting on his mobile phone too. Their movements seem to be orchestrated—first they all looked out of the window in the same direction and then all three fiddle with their mobile phones. (Field note, 23/10/2014)

Writing about “corporeal attentiveness” and “how bodies are perhaps more highly attuned through stillness” Bissell suggests how “the act of bodily stillness through waiting is instrumental in heightening an auto-reflexive self-awareness: of attention to the physicality of perception of the body itself” (Bissell 2007). Besides the physical stillness of doing nothing and staring out at sea for long durations, the stillness took another form and that was seen in the behaviour of the men towards each other. In different spaces of the ship but especially the dining room, I witnessed that the men avoided each other’s gaze so as not to engage with each other. Bissell writes, “through this stillness, the strategies involved in averting the gaze so as not to engage in interaction effectively intensifies corporeal relations, producing a wholly active and co-managed interaction, an act that has become almost cliché when thinking through collective waiting situations” (2007, p 285) My notes on the interaction between the men in the dining room state:

Down the long corridor, we see a figure coming towards us. The time is 12.30 on the dining room clock and the captain is the first person to come down for lunch. The captain serves himself a plate of food and sits down at one of the two tables in the room. The tables seat four. The plastic covers on the chairs are peeling off. I see another man walk in and serve himself food through the camera screen. The second person to walk in is Vikramjeet Singh. He sits next to the captain at the same table and they both face the wall. They sit next to each other but don’t ever look at each other. They sit and eat. As they eat, a third crew member, Lobo, walks in. Untroubled

by the camera or me, he picks up a steel plate and serves himself some lunch. He proceeds to sit on the second table, facing the opposite wall to the other two men and eats. The camera records three men sitting in silence eating. Not once within the duration of the 20-25 minutes do they make eye contact with each other or the camera. Lobo, the first to finish, gets up, washes his plate, stacks it back on the pile of plates and leaves. He gives me a knowing nod as he exits the room. (Field note, 12/07/2014).

This asociality of waiting through acquiescence is described by Bissell as “a particular relationship without context that eludes the traditional definition of the social” (2007, p 289). This behaviour of the crew in the dining room also relates to what Harrison writes about in the context of conduct of people in the most public, ‘traditionally social’ spaces from “the waiting room to the platform, to the train itself” (Harrison 2008). He states “the ‘asocial’ implications or a tendency towards withdrawal, disengagement, and acquiescence” exist in the sphere of the social (2008, p. 433).

## Reflections and conclusions

In this paper, I have drawn attention to the theme of waiting as a space occupied by not only by migrants and refugees within the mobility paradigm but suggested how waiting can be considered a specific subaltern experience. While we are aware of the temporal and spatial ruptures that maritime labour at sea endures due to processes of neoliberal economic policies, the papers points to the politics of waiting. Adding to Ursula Biemann’s notion of the ‘post human space’ that constitutes in-between spaces at the border where people are stilled, I would like to introduce Rob Nixon’s notion of ‘slow violence’ (Nixon 2011) to this period of endless waiting. He describes it as:

By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility but we urgently need to re-think-politically, imaginatively, and theoretically what I call “slow violence.” (P.2)

The term has been used to highlight “pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects” on the environment and eco-systems but extends to passive forms of invisible violence such as posttraumatic stress and domestic abuse. I propose to extend the use of the condition and apply it to period of indefinite delays and hidden threats

that were faced by the crew of WBI trinity. The slow emotional breaking down of a man takes time and in this I have shown what it does to the body and human relations in terms of a physical and social acquiesce. By rethinking our accepted assumptions of violence created by we need to search in spaces that are invisible to society. To borrow from Kevin Bales, I would conclude by stating that “turbo-capitalism” exacerbates the vulnerability of so called “disposable people” and we need to understand the politics within the period of forced waiting (Bales 1999).

*Figure 1.1 and 1.2 Screenshots from Arrested Motion (Meghna Singh, 2015)*



Figure 1.3 and 1.4 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)

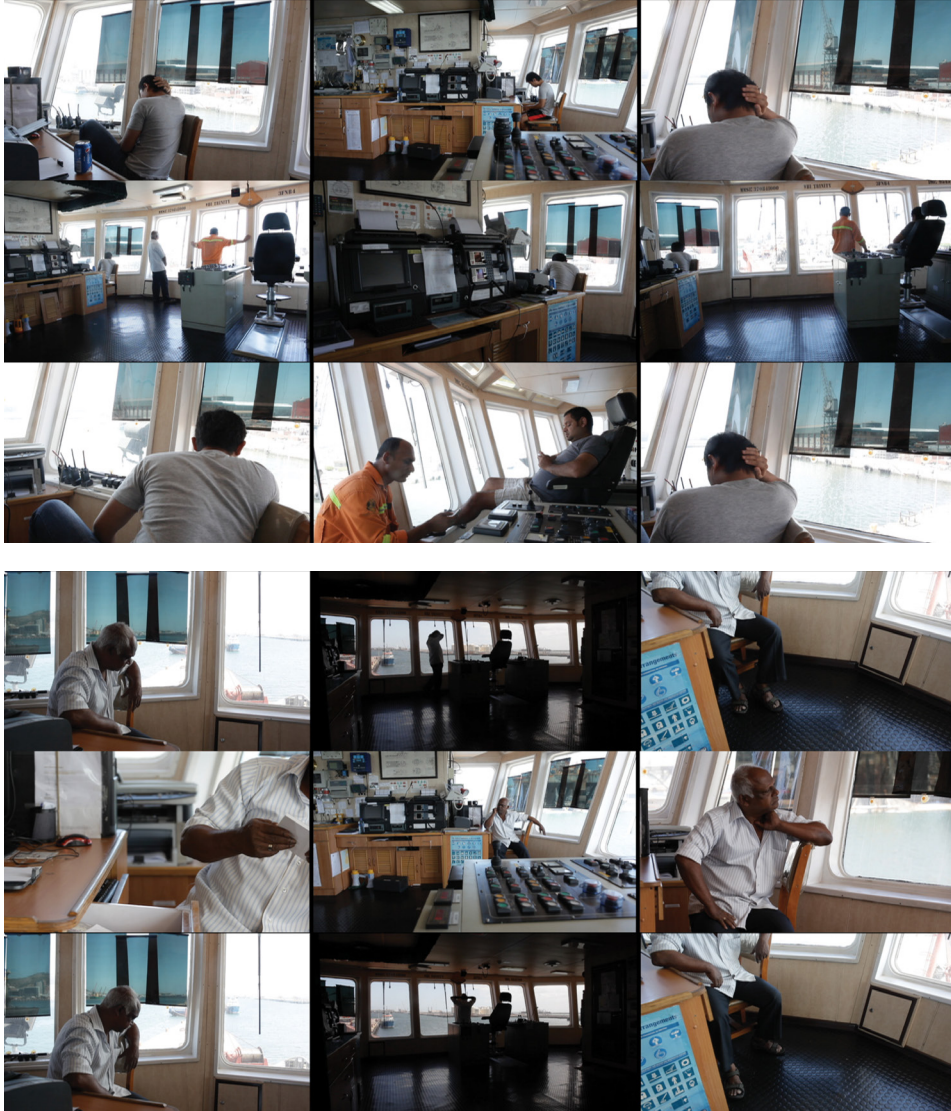


Figure 1.5 and 1.6 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)





Figure 1.7 and 1.8 Screenshots from Arrested Motion (Meghna Singh, 2015)



Figure 1.9 Screenshots from *Arrested Motion* (Meghna Singh, 2015)



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