OCCASIONAL PAPER



MIGRATION, ISLAM AND IDENTITY STRATEGIES IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NOTES ON THE MAKING OF INDIANS AND AFRICANS

Preben Kaarsholm

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April 2008



INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES KOLKATA

Calcutta University Alipore Campus (Block A, 5th Floor) 1 Reformatory Street, Kolkata - 700 027

Phone: +91 (33) 2448-1364/8178, Fax: +91 (33) 2448-1364 e-mail: idsk1@vsnl.net, Website: www.idsk.org

Migration, Islam and Identity Strategies in KwaZulu-Natal: Notes on the Making of Indians and Africans*

Preben Kaarsholm

Associate Professor

Department of Society and Globalisation

Roskilde University, Denmark

Abstract

Segregation and apartheid in South Africa were focused on the control of movements of populations. Against the state were poised the energies of people depending on movement for their livelihoods, but also on consolidating their own strategic position within the hegemony of cultures, on which state power depended. After 1994, such confrontations have continued, and new types of battles around citizenship have emerged in the context of immigration pressures.

The paper examines discourses through which African and Indian identities have been negotiated from colonialism through to the 'New South Africa'. It discusses ambiguities inherent in Islamic identity formation, and ways in which it has interacted with Indian and African nationalisms. In KwaZulu-Natal, Islam has predominantly belonged to people of Indian origin and has provided a context both for the unification of Indian identities and for the articulation of differences within the Indian 'community'.

African Islam in KwaZulu-Natal has been much more limited and has been kept apart and segregated from Indian Islam. Recently, the relationship between Indian and African Islam has begun to change, and new varieties of Islamic discourse have come about. The paper argues that the impact of these new energies of islamisation is ambivalent: it offers possibilities for dialogue around ideas of citizenship across historical divides of racial segregation and discrimination. But it also provides the possibility for new hardenings of identity between groups keen to exploit the cultural capital represented by Islam.

Colonialist segregation and subsequently apartheid in South Africa were centrally focused on the control of movements of populations, and a prerogative of the state was the authority to delimit the boundaries between populations, and to codify the characteristics of their difference. Against this power of the colonial and the apartheid state were poised the energies of people depending for their livelihoods on movement and capacity to circumvent the obstacles placed in their way by geographical restrictions and state authorised definitions of identity. At the same time, the groups of population subjected to such forms of power also sought the recognition of the state. and interacted with it around attempts to fixate boundaries and identities in order to consolidate their own strategic position and situation within the hegemony of cultures, on which the legitimation of state power depended. Following the demise of apartheid, such confrontations have continued, and new types of battles around citizenship and entitlements have emerged in the context of both immigration and affirmative action for greater social justice.

This article sets out to examine some of the institutional frameworks through which African and Indian identities have been negotiated in South Africa from colonialism and the apartheid era to the 'New South Africa'. It discusses some of the ambiguities inherent in Islamic identity formation, and looks at ways in which it has interacted with other strands of identification, and with Indian as well as African nationalism in South Africa. In what is now KwaZulu-Natal, Islam has quite predominantly belonged to people of Indian origin – though from very different backgrounds – and has provided an important register of discourse and organisation for both the unification and delimitation of Indian identities and for the articulation and debate of cultural and political differences within the Indian 'community'. African Islam in KwaZulu-Natal has been of much more limited dimensions and – until recently – has been kept

^{*} Lecture delivered at Institute of Development Studies Kolkata on 4 February 2008.

carefully apart and segregated from the world of Indian Islam.¹ With the onset of new mobilisations for *dawah* among Africans (starting with the work of Achmet Deedat and the Islamic Propagation Centre International from 1957 onwards), with a new political playing field opening up after 1994, and the waves of transnational migration following it, the relationship between Indian and African Islam has begun to change, and new versions of Islam have come about. The article argues that the impact of these new energies of islamisation is in itself ambivalent: On the one hand it offers possibilities for new dialogue and elaboration of ideas of citizenship across historical divides of racial segregation and discrimination. On the other hand, it also provides the possibility for new hardenings of identity and of new types of confrontation between groups keen to control the cultural capital represented by Islam.

Liberation and Xenophobia

Transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994 brought with it an end to years of international sanctions and 'isolation' of apartheid South Africa. Liberation and majority rule were followed by an opening up of South Africa to the rest of Africa, by an offensive of investments (which has made South Africa in global perspective the biggest national investor in Africa), and by efforts to make democratic South Africa also an engine of political development on the continent. South Africa came to play a leading role in the transformation of the OAU into the more highly empowered African Union, in the formulation of NEPAD, and established itself as resourceful agent of peacemaking in Burundi, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Seen from South Africa, the new openness was meant to reciprocate the support received for the liberation struggle from other African countries, and immigration applications from Africans were given preferential treatment.

This programmatic openness, however, soon came into conflict with other developments. Some of these resulted from

the contradictory situations in which neighbouring societies found themselves, where democratisation and growth in countries like Botswana and Mozambique were matched by economic meltdown and nationalist dictatorship in Zimbabwe, and intensified poverty in Zambia and Malawi. The crisis in neighbouring economies was exacerbated by a reduction in demand for migrant labour in South Africa and consequently in remittances. All this led to increased pressures for illegal immigration into South Africa, which were intensified by influx from further north in Africa – from war zones in Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Congo, and from West African countries like Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana, where enterprising people were seeking ways out of the *cul-de-sac* represented by their local environments and drifting south towards the new post-apartheid powerhouse of development.

The large number of immigrants – and not least the hundreds of thousands of dabulap Zimbabweans crossing the border without papers – led to criticism and adjustments of the policies of openness.² Immigration came increasingly to be experienced as competition in labour markets, where demand was not expanding in proportion to the growth of the South African economy, and where unemployment figures continued to be high. While experiencing impressive levels of growth, the South African economy continued after 1994 to be characterised by radical inequalities. Establishing growth and modernisation within a context of neo-liberalism meant that it was difficult to develop the economy without also replicating the processes of marginalisation, which accompanied globalisation elsewhere, and to increase employment in disadvantaged sectors of society. Immigration also brought with it exacerbated competition for urban space, with groups of immigrants e. g. in Johannesburg's Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville suburbs, colonising segregated formerly white areas, which locally based residents had envisaged transforming in less dramatic fashion into South African multiracial environments. This, then, led to pressures for protectionist labour policies, and for restrictions on immigration which were at odds with the declarations of pan-African openness of the early democratic period.

In the wake of these developments have come frequent media reports of an upsurge in popular xenophobia in South Africa, with prejudice and stereotyping on the rise against immigrants, and physical attacks being carried out against *Makwerekwere* from Zimbabwe, or against Somali settlements in the Cape, with murder and arson being committed against pockets and ghettos of 'foreigners'.³ Government response to such events has included deportation of illegal immigrants, and the establishment of camps on the Limpopo, where invaders are being held without protection of rights, awaiting deportation in a 'state of exception'.⁴ But media have reported also on the futility of containment efforts in the face of the ingenuity of border crossers, and of the extent of the networks established by immigrants within South African cities and pockets of the countryside.

A History of Migrations

Migration – the movement of groups of people across borders and territories and changing them – has been a persistent and central feature of modern Southern African history, from the slave trade, the *mfecane*, the formations of colonies and nations, and the importation of indentured labour in the nineteenth century, through to more recent forms of land appropriations, forced removals, and labour migration. It has taken the form of both 'transnational' migration across borders and of 'domestic' migration – with the boundaries between the two not always being easy to define. People have migrated to escape poverty and seek new livelihoods, they have moved from the countryside to the city, but in doing so they have also transgressed boundaries within colonial societies between citizens

and subjects, between the owners of the land and those whose only claim to legitimate residence has been to offer labour.

In this sense migration has gone hand in hand with fixation and control of the movement of people through the establishment of reserves, bantustans and homelands, and the pinning down of their identities through passes, documents and biometric forms of identification.⁵ Thus dreams of breaking loose and migrating have been matched by dreams of control, of tidying up the map in the face of efforts to extend the mess. A personal record of clashes experienced between these two complementary sets of dreams can be found in the life of Demetrios Tsafendas - the man who eventually killed Hendrik Verwoerd – who during the first half of the twentieth century weaved himself in and out of South Africa, across regional borders, and between normality and madness. The more sophisticated bureaucracy and governance became in its identifications and control measures, the more easily Tsafendas sneaked through the net - '[w]as he the illegitimate son of a lathe operator now living in Pretoria? A Mozambican agitator? A South African métique with a Greek background? A deranged sailor? "Retarded" he plainly was not. Apart from fluent Greek, English and Portuguese, he spoke Shangaan, Arabic and a little Afrikaans. His Greek and Portuguese passports had long since expired. He possessed the papers of an American seaman, but these were of doubtful value...'. ⁶ Eventually he penetrated through to the heart of the state and killed its head. What this fable of life says is that while the edifices of classification have become ever more technologically refined, borders in reality have been porous and fictitious. This is a paradox in relation to migration which persists from colonial times through apartheid years and into the democratic state.

Migration was a central ingredient both in the setting up of grand apartheid in the 1950s and in its break-up from the 1970s. While the creation of homelands, group areas and new

townships was accompanied by dislocations – by forced removals and the eradication of unregulated spaces like Sophiatown, Cato Manor, District Six – the apartheid order brought its own disorder with it. Schemes were so ambitious that they were never fully implemented, and alongside the newly regulated spaces, new areas mushroomed of informality and defiance. The Inanda slums on the peri-urban outskirts of Durban, bordering Indian Phoenix, are examples of this – mixed spaces of tribal trust land, mission reserve, and 'scheduled area' land that came to offer sanctuary to those deprived of KwaZulu 'citizenship' and therefore of habitation in the new township of KwaMashu. Here residence remained largely unregulated by the state control through to the collapse of apartheid around 1990.

During the violence and ungovernability of the 1980s and early 1990s, migration also became an insurance measure, where people endeavoured to save their lives by moving away – moving from the countryside into town, or from town into the countryside, escaping the violence, or moving in stages into town and establishing footholds and security. In the face of domestic war, networks and multiple homes proved to be important resources for staying alive and preserving assets. In the aftermath of transition, it has been difficult to persuade people to relinquish such insurance through circular migration and multiple homes – to the astonishment of modernisation theorists, who had seen migrancy and migrant labour as inhuman perversities of the apartheid system or temporary stages on the way to urbanisation and industrialisation.

Apartheid as Order and Disorder

Migration, management of relations between residents and 'strangers', and the strategies of migrants have thus been integral parts of South African social and micropolitical life, and 'informality' has represented a central feature of both governance and accommodation. Informal settlements have provided

'transnational spaces', where notions of belonging, rights and citizenship have been the constant subject of local negotiation.⁸

Inanda is a good example of such dynamics of attempted control and contestation. It has been a space of multiple overlapping land holding systems, whose modern history begins in the mid-nineteenth century with the Shepstone system, which allocated land to Oadi chiefs and the American Board Christian mission, with the missionaries making free-hold land available to converts, and parts of land becoming available through the market also to post-indentured Indians – predominantly sugar farmers - at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a site of multiple memories and home to places of historical and cultural prominence like John Dube's Ohlange Institute, Mohandas Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement, and the original Ekuphakameni shrine of the Shembe Nazarite Church. It is a space which during the twentieth century has been encroached upon by land hunger and the expansion of urban space, by immigration pressures, and where sugar and vegetable farming has given way to sub-letting for residence.9

But it has also been a place where the overlap of different systems of landholding rights left authority structures in flux, and where the status of extended areas as 'scheduled land', whose future remained to be decided, made them a haven for informal residence, as grand apartheid got under way, and the neighbouring African township of KwaMashu was set up in the 1950s to be followed by the Indian township of Phoenix in the 1970s. When people were removed from Cato Manor/Mkhumbane in the 1950s to KwaMashu as part of the formalisation and tidying-up of grand apartheid, people who did not qualify for – or did not want – KwaZulu identity papers and bantustan 'citizenship' found informal residence in Inanda. The area thus became home to a highly composite group of inhabitants – in terms of class, race, 'ethnic' history, religion – with potential for conflict between them, but also functioning as

a laboratory for coming to terms with clashes of interests, claims, and understandings.

From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, the Inanda area was subjected to a series of planning processes and proposals for establishing order and possibilities for governance and regulation. Informal settlement areas were threatened with forced removal and later integrated in framework plans for consolidation as townships. 11 In the meantime, systems of intermediary and more or less informal sovereignty took care of the day-to-day practical functions of controlling immigration and settlement regulating access to land and housing, to citizenship papers and residence permits, to protection and justice. A variety of institutions succeeded each other or competed for authority in this game, including indunas with powers delegated from the Oadi chief, and with close relations to the Inkatha Freedom Party, local strong men or war lords, controlling vigilante regiments, land owners operating as shack lords, and - in a later phase – committees of UDF members ('comrades'), taking over authority in areas where the IFP and affiliates were expelled.

Control over immigration flows, the issuing of KwaZulu identity papers and permits of residence were central in this respect – especially as pressures of immigration from areas outside Natal and Zululand, and from Pondoland and the Transkei in particular, intensified. This led to confrontations between more rigid notions of Zulu identity on the one hand, and more 'flexible' ideas of citizenship on the other. 'Zuluness' was to an extent something which could be negotiated, and immigrants from both the Transkei and from outside South Africa developed strategies for coping with 'naturalisation' as 'Zulu', taking advantage of the elements in their cultural repertoires that would match Zulu understandings. The assignment of 'Zuluness' was also influenced by the political considerations by *indunas* or courts of elders. At the same time channels for immigration were provided by shack lords, offering settlement in return for

payment, and during the period of 'ungovernability' from the mid-1980s, UDF-controlled people's or disciplinary committees would lay claim to the powers and authority formerly held by *indunas*. As the volume of immigration from Pondoland and the Transkei increased, 'Xhosaness' came also to be asserted alongside 'Zuluness', and 'courts' of traditionalist Xhosa-speaking elders would set themselves up as authorities, offering dispute resolution, collecting fines, and exerting punishment on offenders. They would base their powers on close relations (and sometimes control of trade in *dagga* and other commodities) with home areas of immigrants in Pondoland and Umzimkhulu. At the same time, they would be close to Zulu-speaking conservatives and traditionalists in their patriarchal outlooks and views on generational control.¹²

Africans and Indians

Since the late nineteenth century Inanda has also been a prominent arena for the interaction between African and Indian settlers. It was one of the areas, where Indian indentured labourers, who had been arriving in South Africa from 1860. were able to buy land for sugar farming and market gardening at the end of their contracts, and where Gujarati 'passenger Indians' set up shops to trade with them. In November 1904, M. K. Gandhi, who was then a lawver in Johannesburg, bought a 'hundred-acre farm' in Inanda and established his Phoenix Settlement as a Ruskin-Tolstoy-inspired commune, where spiritual efforts and manual labour were combined, and his Indian Opinion newspaper was published.¹³ The compound was built in part by members of the ambulance corps that Gandhi had set up to support the British during the South African War 1899-1902. When the Gandhi household moved to Phoenix in 1906, the immediate occasion was his 'desire to lead a volunteer stretcher-bearer corps once again' - this time in the context of the suppression of the Bambatha revolt against the poll tax imposed on Africans: 'Gandhi felt it was important to demonstrate Indian support for the Empire and the Natal government... if Indians wanted rights, then along with that went responsibilities'.¹⁴

Gandhi's idea of 'imperial citizenship' into which Indians should strive to be included, but from which – because of their different evolutionary station – Africans were excluded. 15 signalled the contradictoriness, which came to characterise Indian and African strategies of fighting for footholds and citizen's rights in South Africa, and to bedevil later efforts at finding a common 'Black' platform between them in the struggle against apartheid and White supremacy. A culmination of such difficulties were the 1949 riots – not long after Gandhi had been murdered in India. and his ashes taken to South Africa and dispersed in the Umgeni river north of Durban – in which fifty Indians and eighty-seven Africans were killed, and which took their worst toll in the city centre and in Cato Manor. In Phoenix in 1949, though, according to Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 'Africans from the neighbouring Newfarm [came] to protect what they called, "Gods Place". They told the family: "Don't worry. Nobody will hurt you. We will take care of you". They set up a day-and-night security arrangement among themselves'. 16 In August 1985, violence had its epicentre in Inanda itself, as Indian landowners were chased away, and the Phoenix Settlement destroyed in riots at the background of battles between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Democratic Front.¹⁷ Subsequently, in the last phase before the transition to democracy the area around the Phoenix Settlement - known as 'Bhambayi' (Bombay) - became home to a massive influx of migrants from rural Zululand and the Transkei, divided by a 'buffer zone' from the Indian group areas township of Phoenix, and - with neighbouring Amaoti - an intense arena for Indian-African interaction after the changes of 1994.

Transnationalist Cultures

Cultural institutions and discourses have been central in the battles and mediations around both domestic, regional and international migration, in struggles for recognition, and in the articulation of changing notions of citizenship and belonging. Networks of tradition have served to regulate immigration and to manage the transition and continued interaction between urban and rural lives. They have offered re-interpretations of custom in the urban setting, have established courts, regimental structures and other instruments of generational control, and have been attacked by critics of tradition. Mobilisations of tradition have been especially prominent within moral debates on crime and HIV/AIDS, and have in their turn been fortified by the dynamics of migration.

Religious networks play a crucial role in providing structures of facilitation for immigrants. Networking across borders has been important for the old missionary churches, but transnationalism is even more central for the advancing new Pentecostalist. Apostolic and Evangelical churches. Isabel Hofmeyr's work has demonstrated the transnationality of churches and missionary worlds, and the role of translation in setting up spaces for believers that transcend boundaries. 18 On African Initiated Churches and Pentecostalism in particular, David Maxwell has recently followed the earlier work of Bengt Sundkler in breaking new ground, pointing out - in his study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa - the ambitions of Charismatic churches of articulating social aspirations and missionising internationally. He has also showed how such efforts have to a large extent been operating through diaspora networks.¹⁹ The importance of such religious movements is comparable in this respect to other churches with a more localised base - Zionist churches or the Shembe Nazarite church, for example. These are more restricted in their range of networking, but offer mediation between discourses of tradition and modernity that are attractive to migrants, and conversion helps to gain a local point of entry and a foothold.

The role of Islam is similarly important here, and little work has been done on African Islam in South Africa, and on relations between African and Indian Muslims. 20 In Durban and KwaZulu-Natal the history of African Islam has often been identified with that of the 'Zanzibaris' – a small community of liberated slaves. who were brought into indenture in Natal in the late 19th century. and later settled on the Bluff. From there, they were moved in the 1960s to Chatsworth, having successfully managed to negotiate for themselves an identity and recognition in citizenship terms as 'Other Asiatics' within the apartheid repertoire of classification.²¹ Emulating this success, other African groups – not least Muslim immigrants from Nyasaland/Malawi - would refer to themselves as 'Zanzibaris'. In Inanda, the Amaoti Islamic Society – which runs a mosque and madrassah and is controlled by people of Malawian descent – used to refer to itself as the Amaoti Zanzibar Muslim Society. There are continuities here between identifications and strategies for assimilation in the days of grand apartheid and similar efforts today in the context of democracy and intensified competition among immigrants.

Zanzibari Strategies

The case of the Zanzibaris demonstrates how religious institutions and agendas may provide very different avenues, strategic opportunities, and outcomes of accommodation for immigrants. It is also a quite special case in South Africa and Natal as far as interaction between Indians and Africans is concerned. For the group of 113 freed slaves, who arrived in Durban in August 1873, (who came to be known as Zanzibaris and were often represented – and represented themselves – as 'a lost tribe') were not only not from Zanzibar, they were also not all of them Muslims. They had been 'freed' by a British man-of-war as part of anti-slaving efforts from *dhows* en route to the slave market of Zanzibar, but were Makua speakers from northern Mozambique as were a further 239 liberated slaves, freed on their way to Zanzibar or Madagascar, and arriving in

Durban between 1873 and 1875.²² On arrival in Durban, their 'freedom' took the form of being given into indenture – on the model of Indian labourers and with five-year contracts overseen by the Protector of Indian Immigrants – with employers and farmers whose labour needs at the time were highly vocal. This was criticised in humanitarian circles, but being given parallel terms to Indians provided longer-term opportunities for the immigrants – or for those of them who remained or became Muslim.

The mediation and competition of religious institutions played a crucial role in forming the migration destinies and identity strategies of the Zanzibaris. On the one hand, Roman Catholics got involved, who – like many other 19th century missionaries – had found it difficult to make headway among the Zulu, and were keen to find 'foreign African' Catholic agents to take the cause forward. In 1872, a Mozambiguan African. Saturnino do Valle, was supported in establishing a Catholic community on the Bluff peninsula across from the Point and the entrance into Durban's port – an establishment that eventually became St. Xavier's Mission from 1880. When the Zanzibari indentured labourers came to the end of their contracts, a group of them were given plots and accommodation within this Catholic compound. Subsequently, they were encouraged to assimilate, intermarry, disperse and proselytise among Zulu-speaking Africans - and some may have been involved in setting up a second Catholic Mission at Oakford in Inanda in 1884. For these Zanzibaris, gaining entry into South African society thus came to involve the giving up as far as possible of their own distinctive culture.23

Another and larger group of Zanzibaris were taken under the wing of Indian businessmen and trustees of the Juma Masjid Mosque in Grey Street, and were approached as 'Zanzibaris' or 'Siddhis' – i.e. as belonging to a similar culture as that of the Swahili-speaking Africans who had been plying the Indian Ocean trade with Guiarat and Kutch for centuries and had established settlements in India. The Juma Masiid trustees were impressed with the boatmanship of the Zanzibaris, which not only allowed them to bring produce for sale to the central Durban markets. but also to piously attend Friday prayers at the Grey Street mosque. In contrast to the Catholic approach, the Islam that the Zanzibaris met with thus encouraged them to emphasise, preserve and develop their 'original' distinctive cultural features and customs, and especially to hold on to Islam, and without any more ambitious aim of using them to proselytise among 'local' Africans.²⁴ Consequently, in 1899, a 'Mohammedan Trust' of seven Indian merchants bought a 'forty-three acre site' at King's Rest, also on the Bluff, to provide a 96 plot settlement with mosque. madrasah and cemetery for the Muslim Zanzibaris. with 15 of the plots, however, being given to poor and homeless Urdu-speaking Indians, who were thus integrated into the community. An African imam, Mustapha Oman, was brought in from the Comoros Islands as 'khalifa', 'spiritual guide', and 'faith healer'. Though the aim was not the conversion of 'local' Africans and Zulu speakers, but rather to maintain the superiority of the Islamic Zanzibaris above them, a certain number of other Muslim Africans managed to become part - both Zulus and 'foreign' Africans from Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africa. Among these members of a group of 150 contract labourers, who had been imported from Inhambane in Mozambique in 1890 and wanted to stay on – Seedat thinks this may explain the use of the Zulu term 'AmaYambana' in reference to Zanzibaris.²⁵ In 1916, control of the property passed on to the Juma Masjid Trust, owners of valuable land in central Durban, including the Grey Street mosque and surrounding commercial properties, which committed itself to work for the benefit of 'followers of the Sunni Muslim religious faith [on the Bluff], either in the present situation or at such other place as hereafter may be decided'.26

While the Catholic Zanzibaris were thus encouraged to 'Africanise' and increasingly transformed themselves into Zulus, the Muslim Zanzibaris held their ground by proudly maintaining their difference and distinct identity. Their strategy came to be tested from 1925 onwards, when the Native Taxation and Development Act was introduced, which imposed an annual two-rand poll tax on all African males between the age of 18 and 65. A number of Zanzibaris – as well as new groups of 'local' Africans claiming also to be Zanzibaris - sought to evade payment of the tax, arguing that they were of Arab, not African, descent. The matter was disputed until 1938 and the Rex vs. Fakiri court case, in which Mr Fakiri of King's Rest on the Bluff claimed to be 'not a Native within the definition of the legislation.' since he was a Swahili speaker, and his origins were in the island of Zanzibar. With the support of the Juma Masjid Trust and 'sympathetic Indian Muslims and a Christian Indian attorney,' he was able to take his case through to the highest court of appeal, the Appellate Division in Bloemfontein, but the judges decided against him. Therefore from 1938, in terms of governance, the Zanzibaris passed from the authority of the Protector of Indian Immigrants to that of the Department of Native Affairs, and Zanzibaris were from now obliged to carry 'reference books'.27 Evasion, however, continued. The Bluff compound was raided by police repeatedly, with the Zanzibari settlers trying to hide and meanwhile working hard to enhance their identity mystique, and the mythology of the 'lost tribe' of Zanzibar.

Further challenges to the rights and claims to citizenship of the Zanzibaris came about after the National Party victory in 1948, the introduction of 'apartheid' policies, and especially the implementation of the Group Areas Act from 1957, when the Bluff was designated a white area, and the Zanzibari settlements scheduled for removal. Of the approximately 2000 Africans by then living in the Catholic settlement of the Bluff, those 'qualified

for council housing' were moved to the townships of Umlazi and Lamontville (those 'not qualified' presumably disappearing into the slums of areas like Inanda), in consequence of their assimilation.²⁸ As to the Muslim Zanzibaris, they continued to have their interests looked after by the Juma Masjid Trust, even after the Trust in 1956 had been forced to sell (but not immediately vacate) the plots in King's Rest. New land was sought for the resettlement of the Zanzibaris, and the issue of their race classification taken up again, now within the terms of Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950.

According to the Act, there were three main race groups in South Africa - White. Bantu and Coloured - with the Coloured group comprising seven sub-groups - Cape Coloured, Malay, Grigua, Chinese, Indian, Other Asiatic, and Other Coloured. In the determination of differentiation between sub-groups, 'cultural distinctiveness' was taken into account, and this became important in the investigations and debates around the classification of Zanzibaris in 1958-9. The Manager of the Municipal Bantu Administration in Durban, Mr Bourguin, was 'absolutely convinced that these people are not Natives,' and that they would be impossible to absorb into 'African housing schemes'.29 At a meeting on 16 November 1958 at King's Rest, the Muslim Zanzibaris 'unanimously' expressed their desire to be classified as 'Coloured', and in 1959 153 families were indeed re-classified as 'Coloured'. This called forth protests from 'local Coloured leaders' claiming that 'we (the Coloureds) are more or less of European descent and these people have never been associated with us'.30 The Zanzibaris thus went through a 'crisis of identity and insecurity', but continued to be supported by the Juma Masjid Trust, until clarification was finally arrived at in 1961, when the Zanzibaris were designated a particular subsub-group within the sub-group of Other Asiatics within the Coloured group.31

The implications of this were tremendous, even though the

'clarification' involved in such an ambitious and intricate attempt at establishing racial and cultural 'order' in its implementation was sometimes chaotic and arbitrary, and family members often divided into different sub-group designations. There were constant fears of a new 'identity witch hunt'.32 But for those Zanzibari who were able to uphold their claim to being 'Other Asiatic' and consequently 'Coloured' in the broader sense of the apartheid legislation (including also Indians), this meant that they were at least citizens of a sort rather than mere subjects. and would be issued with identity cards instead of passes or reference books. They also now had access to housing opportunities that were being made available to Indians under the Group Areas Act. From December 1962 about 600 people constituting the majority of those re-classified were moved to accommodation in plots in a special area of the new Indian township of Chatsworth. At this point again, the support of the Juma Masiid Trust, whose members were keen to keep the group together and its distinct Muslim cultural identity intact. was crucial.

Indian and African Islam

The Zanzibari story illustrates a number of points. It shows the centrality of religion in providing strategies for migrants seeking entry and incorporation. It also shows the very different outcomes of operating through one or the other strategies made available in this way. On the one hand, a Catholic route to anonymity, Africanisation and dispersion is adopted, with 'foreign' Africans given special treatment because of their suitability for proselytisation and 'spreading the word'. On the other, the route through an engagement with Muslim institutions to a high-profiling of cultural identity and difference within the framework of Islam is taken. These two routes represent, one might argue, the extreme ends of a range of cultural strategies that continue to mark immigrant lives in contemporary South Africa. The Zanzibari story further provides an example of a long-term

process of interaction between Indian and African Islam in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal, and its peculiarity may help to understand what has been characteristic of such interactions more generally.³³

In recent publications, Goolam Vahed and Shamil Jeppie have thrown new light on the history of Islam in Durban and KwaZulu-Natal, and it is worth recapitulating some of the points made by them.³⁴ In his work on the Muharram procession in Durban. Vahed has underlined the diversity and syncretism of Islamic traditions, all of which unfolded within a common Sunni framework. Muharram – most prominent as a Shia commemorative holiday of pious mourning – became a central event in the Durban Muslim calendar, because it aimed not at sectarianism, but at bringing together all Indians, and competed with popular Hindu festivals like Kavadi by integrating also elements of Hindu culture and style.35 Though Islam in the first vears of Indian settlement was used to elevate traders - who would often present themselves as 'Arabs' - above Hindu indentured labourers and improve their standing with officials.³⁶ it has since – according to Vahed – played a prominent part in working out the parameters of a unified South African Indian sub-national identity, which became the platform for both selfunderstandings of identity and negotiations around group citizenship.

Coinciding with this central drift towards Indian unity, Indian Islam was made up of multiple internal strands, the confrontation among which was quite fundamental and, at times, as in the 1970s, violent. In simplified terms, a basic contradiction ran between a Barelvi, performance-oriented, and Sufi-inspired tradition related to the Juma Masjid Mosque in Grey Street, controlled by Memon-speakers, on the one hand, and a Deobandi, more literalist or reformist tradition on the other, with a base in the other big Durban mosque in West Street, controlled by Surtee-speakers, and finding voice also in the

Tabligh Jamaat.³⁷ Divisions between the sides included disagreement over legitimate holidays and reverence for holy men, but also questions of language and translation – whether the main language for the approach to truth should be the Quran in its original Arabic, in Urdu, or in translation into local languages. This again touched on great questions concerning degrees of reconcilability between Islam and local cultural traditions as well as democracy – whether lay practitioners should be able to relate to and interpret the holy texts directly and personally, or whether *imams* and *mawlanas* should be given a monopoly of authoritative interpretation.

The Zanzibari case demonstrates some of the boundaries that Islamic hybridisation in Durban was confined within, even in the context of the Sufi-related practices of the Juma Masjid. Obviously, there is a case here of Indian Islam in Durban embracing African Islam from very early on, but as demonstrated above it is also a case, where the so-called Zanzibaris were transformed into 'Siddhis', and domesticated into Indian Africans so to speak, thereby sealing them off from Africans in general and the Zulus of Natal in particular. They become a showcase of tolerance and *dawah* outreach, but they are also used to demarcate the limits of possible assimilation, and very pointedly – according to Seedat – NOT used to proselytise and gather converts to Islam among 'local' Africans.

To return to our even more specifically local focus on Amaoti and Bhambayi, Islam has in this environment also been thought of predominantly as an Indian or 'coolie'/amaKhulah religion and has been caught up in complex interactions with the history of segregation between Africans and Indians in Inanda. As told above, this history began with the acquisition of land in the area by Indian post-indenture sugar farmers in the late nineteenth century, and Gandhi's Phoenix Settlement from 1906 became the centre for a new Indian public culture within it of schools and media, which brought Hindus and Muslims together in

terms of a common Indian identity, and also incorporated into its 'harmonious living' a number of both White and Black non-Indians.³⁸ As was mentioned, this survived the introduction of apartheid in 1948, and the 'race riots' of 1949, but was disrupted dramatically in the violence of 1985-86, when Indians were forced to leave their homes in Amaoti and Bhambayi, the Phoenix Settlement was burned down, and its land subsequently settled on by squatters from a variety of African backgrounds, who used its remnant structures to build shacks.

This was an upheaval not only rooted in differences of cultural identity and political representation, but also of class – Indians in Inanda having been superior to African residents and above them as employers, landlords and traders. In spite of the fact that local Indians had also been prominent in their support for the ANC, the UDF and the anti-apartheid movement, this relationship of subordination is still remembered in interviews with resentment and prejudice. It also continues to frame the relationship between the squalor of slum life in Amaoti and Bhambayi and the comparative prosperity of Phoenix on the other side of the buffer zone.³⁹

After 1994 – and continued violence and a long and difficult process of negotiation – the squatters on the Phoenix Settlement grounds have been re-housed on newly acquired land in the buffer zone between Bhambayi and Phoenix, and Gandhi's Settlement buildings and printing press restored (with financial contributions from the Government of India) as a South African national historical monument. Currently efforts are under way to integrate African citizens of the new South Africa in Amaoti and Bhambayi with their Indian fellows of Phoenix within new electoral ward boundaries.⁴⁰ This is an exemplary exercise in deconstructing the architecture of apartheid space, both in its physical form and as a structure of segregated public spheres, which links up with the eThekwini (formerly Durban) municipality's INK development programme, aimed at integrating

Inanda, KwaMashu and Ntuzuma with central Durban as part of a unified urban environment. Critics would maintain that segregation persists because INK is not PINK, i.e. because Phoenix is not part of this integrated urban development programme, and should be.

Islamic Propagation and African Empowerment

Historically, the legacy of segregation and different citizenship status has been reflected in religious life, where Islam (along with Hinduism) remained guite predominantly an Indian reserve, and little effort was invested in spreading and sharing the faith with black African brothers and sisters – with exceptions like the Zanzibari case discussed. This has only recently begun to change. with Achmed Deedat's Islamic Propagation Centre⁴¹ and other missionising initiatives like the Southern African Dawah Network and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth moving into African townships and informal settlements in force and setting up mosques and madrassahs. There is thus an increasing presence of Islam and of Muslim institutions in border zones like that between Inanda and Phoenix that offer new avenues for dialogue and interaction between Indian and African citizens and possibilities for overcoming legacies of segregation, prejudice and mutual racism.

One example is the effort by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) – which has it Durban offices in Sydenham and very close to the Clare Estate slum settlement⁴² – to establish relations of mutual respect and recognition between the African slum dwellers and their Indian middle-class neighbours, who have been horrified by the prospect of falling real estate prices. WAMY have their flagship projects in Durban's second megatownship, Umlazi, including a newly built mosque and school complex, which offer not only madrassah teaching, but a full primary school package, for which government registration is being sought, and which does not include Islamic proselytisation

in its curriculum. WAMY also runs an orphanage for street children and HIV/AIDS orphans, which is crammed and struggling to keep up with health and safety standards. WAMY has worked long and hard to gain entry into Umlazi, using Zambian Muslims – 'foreign' Africans – to spearhead the movement, but experiencing many instances of hostility and xenophobia in doing so. With the new school and mosque, which also have a Zambian *imam* and head teacher, WAMY hopes to have made a local breakthrough, and also to have increased interest and commitment among Indians in Durban in extending the call of Islam to Africans. It is said, for example, that even members of Tabligh Jamaat – i.e. from the literalist side of Indian Islam – now come to attend prayers at the Umlazi mosque. ⁴³

Another example is provided by the efforts of local mosques and madrassahs in Amaoti in Inanda to help in establishing dialogue across the buffer zone between Africans in the slums of Amaoti and Bhambavi and Indian residents in Phoenix, many of whom have felt threatened by the gradual filling in of the buffer zone by housing and gardening schemes, and by 'being encircled by criminals'. The work of Islamic organisations here - including the Islamic Propagation Centre International and the Southern Africa Dawah Network – in promoting notions of African respectability is in many ways similar to and competing with that carried out by Christian Evangelical churches, and like the latter, it is supported by funding from abroad. In both cases, the work of religious organisations contributes to the creation of zones of 'transnational social life', 44 and gives voice to a rich variety of debates on the relationship and possible reconciliation or not between African cultural tradition and Islam or Christianity, and between notions of custom and modernity. In both cases, there is also a special focus on proselytisation among young people - men and women - and debates and on tradition and modernity figure prominently in this context, e.g. around lobola (bride price), virginity testing, polygamy, and circumcision. Such debates on African tradition and Islam may address specificities of Zulu culture, but are often articulated in pan-African terms, arguing the case for both Islamic and African unity. The reason for the appeal of Islam to young people and to young women in particular seems to be that it represents a different, 'enlightened' patriarchalism to that of more traditionalist institutions, that it is protective of women, and that it promotes a notion of bride price that aims at giving the woman security and independence, rather than at consolidating parental ties and powers.

Like the Christian churches, Islamic institutions in KwaZulu-Natal represent important institutions for transnational brokerage and debate. They are markers in the landscape of orientations that immigrants are faced with, and offer them possibilities of incorporation into the social and micropolitical worlds of the local through their representations of global and transnational discourses.46 But the cultural capital they represent is also an object of competition and potential conflict. Muslims in Amaoti disagree about the benefits of dawah and collaboration between African and Indian Islam across the buffer zone between Inanda and Phoenix. One of the imams, Adam Mncanywa of the Islamic Nation Foundation - who was one of the translators of the Quran into Zulu, and used to be close to the Islamic Propagation Centre International, which he has now left - is very critical of the dependency and subservience which charities may bring with them and thinks African Muslims should be self-sustaining entrepreneurs, and not ask for 'hand-outs from Indians'. Even WAMY, which gets most of its funding from the Middle East and Arab countries, he claims, is an 'Indian' organisation, on which people in Amaoti should not rely.⁴⁷

Informality as Transnational Space

There is a very important and extensive field for research here, which has hardly been entered into, and which it will be essential to explore in order to understand - not only the obstacles and hostilities which immigrants are faced with in South Africa, but also the opportunities, facilitations and openings, which are on offer, and which they are making use of in different ways. It will be well worth investigating to what extent religious and other cultural institutions such as the ones mentioned above provide elements of 'transnational social spaces' within particular South African localities, of which both 'domestic' and 'foreign' immigrants may avail themselves. Through such spaces immigrants may transgress understandings of themselves as bound to specific 'diasporas' of background. and of living within a context of 'multiculturalism' that in effect continues apartheid notions of the holism and boundedness of individual cultures.⁴⁸ And between them, immigrants as well as 'hosts' (many of them probably quite recent arrivals themselves) may be able to try out new notions of citizenship, which are centred not only around claims, rights and expectations vis-àvis the South African nation state, but also geared towards more global entitlements and possibilities for movement. participation and interaction as transnational citizens.

The 'war on terror' and 'clash-of-civilisations' thinking have made migration control a global concern in a new way, and such migration control has become a central objective of European development aid policies, which are increasingly being geared at 'securitisation'. Implementation is through DAR – 'development aid for refugees' – and support programmes aimed at 'neighbouring areas' in Africa, for example – i. e. areas bordering conflict, destabilisation, and 'state fragility' or 'collapse'. A central ingredient is certification of the identities of individual refugees and potential migrants – an ambitious endeavour related in scope both to 'Homeland Security' initiatives in the USA, and to apartheid as well as contemporary visions of controlling population movements in South Africa. Such efforts at a final 'pinning down' of identity is of course contrary to the interests

and efforts of many migrants and refugees, and are met with strategies on their behalf to avoid being 'identified' (or avoid being so until it happens in a way that suits their ambitions). Therefore, large numbers of 'strangers' – also in South Africa. and in Inanda – live their lives as hidden people, existing and surviving through network support and their ability to evade the controlling gaze of the state. At the same time, due to the chaos, arbitrariness and complexities of implementation that make up the other side of ever-increasing ambitions of control and also due to the networks and structures of welcoming and support that spring to life to resist them, other large numbers of 'strangers' feel confident enough to fly the flag of diaspora, and aim at establishing themselves as South Africans of a particular sub-national or regional attraction. Between these poles lie a wide variety of different possibilities for coming to terms with and living transnationality, and for giving it voice in articulations of identity and agendas for citizenship.

Notes

- See figures and discussion of categorisations in Goolam Vahed and Shamil Jeppie, "Multiple Communities: Muslims in Post-Apartheid South Africa" in John Daniel, Roger Southall and Jessica Lutchman (eds), State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 252-4 and 281-2.
- Dabulap 'double-up', i.e. shooting off and jumping the fence to South Africa in Bulawayo street language – was the title of a successful and very funny 1990 play on emigration from Zimbabwe by Cont Mhlanga and the Amakhosi Theatre company.
- Pearlie Joubert, "'We'll Drive Out Somalis'", The Mail & Guardian Online, 13 October 2006.
- 4 Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- Cf. Keith Breckenridge, "The Biometric State: The Promise and Peril of Digital Government in the New South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 2, 267-282.

- 6 As told in Henk van Woerden's novel *A Mouthful of Glass*. (London: Granta Books, 2000 [1998]), 65.
- 7 Doug Hindson and Jeff McCarthy, *Here to Stay: Informal Settlements in KwaZulu-Natal.* (Durban: Indicator Press, 1994).
- Cf. Michael Peter Smith and Luiz Guarnizo (eds), Transnationalism from Below. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); Aihwa Ong, Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Thomas Faist, The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Nina Glick Schiller, "Transnationality" in David Nugent and Joan Vincent (eds), A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Pia Steen, "Diasporas and 'Normal Politics': The Creation of Transnational Spaces in the Nicaraguan Diaspora in Costa Rica and the US", PhD dissertation. (Roskilde: International Development Studies, Roskilde University, 2006).
- 9 Cf. Heather Hughes, "The City Closes In: The Incorporation of Inanda into Metropolitan Durban" in Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards (eds), *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1996).
- 10 Iain Edwards, "Cato Manor, June 1959: Men, Women, Crowds, Violence, Politics and History" in Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards (eds), The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1996).
- 11 The Surplus People Project, Forced Removals in South Africa, Volume 4: Natal. (Cape Town: Surplus People Project, 1983).
- 12 Preben Kaarsholm, "Moral Panic and Cultural Mobilization: Responses to Transition, Crime and HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal", *Development* and Change 36, no. 1, 133-156.
- 13 Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner: The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal.* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005 [2004]), 59ff.
- 14 Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Gandhi's Prisoner..., 59f; cf. 68.
- Pradip K. Datta, "The Interlocking Worlds of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa and India", paper presented to conference on "The Visibility of Cultures: Identity, Contact and Circulation in the Indian Ocean", Bangalore, 13 and 14 January 2007.

- 16 Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Gandhi's Prisoner.... 335
- 17 Heather Hughes, Heather, "Violence in Inanda, August 1985". *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3, 1987, 331-54; Bill Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990.* (London: James Currey, 1995), 75.
- Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of the* Pilgrim's Progress. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
- 19 David Maxwell, African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism & the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement. (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), 181; Bengt Sundkler, Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- 20 Cf. Vahed and Jeppe, "Multiple Communities...". On African Islam in the Cape, see Sindre Bangstad, Global Flows, Local Appropriations: Facets of Secularisation and Re-Islamisation among Contemporary Cape Muslims. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), chapter 2.
- Cf. Preben Kaarsholm, "African and Indian Islam in Post-Apartheid KwaZulu-Natal", paper presented to conference on "The Visibility of Cultures: Identity, Contact and Circulation in the Indian Ocean". Bangalore, 13 and 14 January 2007.
- Zubeda Kassim Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban: A Social Anthropological Study of the Muslim Descendants of African Freed Slaves Living in the Indian Area of Chatsworth", MA dissertation. (Durban: Department of African Studies, University of Natal, 1973), 10ff. The account that follows is based above all on Zubie Seedat's dissertation, which to my knowledge is still the most substantial academic treatment of the Zanzibaris that exists. See also G. C. Oosthuizen, The Muslim Zanzibaris of South Africa: The Religious Expression of a Minority Group, Descendants of Freed Slaves. (Durban: Research Institute, Department of Science of Religion, University of Durban-Westville, 1982).
- 23 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 29.
- 24 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 32.
- 25 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 31, n. 13.
- 26 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 31.

- 27 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 37.
- A report in the Johannesburg *Sunday Express* of 4 October 1959 interestingly refers to them as having 'gone native' (Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 39f.).
- 29 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 42f.
- 30 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 46.
- 31 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 48. In the 'Other Asiatic' group 'shall be included any person who in fact is, or is generally accepted as a member of the race or class known as Zanzibari Arabs (also known as Zanzibaris or Kiwes) or any person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of a race or tribe whose national home is in any country or area in Asia other than China, India or Pakistan' (Proclamation No. 6620 No. 27 of 1961, Vol. CCIII dated February 1961, quoted in Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 48).
- 32 Seedat, "The Zanzibaris in Durban...", 50.
- 33 Cf. the work of Shahid Vawda on the contrasting strategies of groups of immigrants in Durban with Malawian and Senegalese background "Foreign Migrants, Governance and Local Development Strategies: A Case Study of International African Migrants in Durban" in Peter Skalník (ed.), Sociocultural Anthropology at the Turn of Century: Voices from the Periphery (Prague: SET-OUT, 2000), 105-124.
- 34 Goolam Vahed, "Constructions of Community and Identity among Indians in Colonial Natal, 1860-1910: The Role of the Muharram Festival", Journal of African History, 43, 2002: 77-93; Goolam Vahed, "Contesting Indian Islam in KwaZulu-Natal: The Muharram Festival in Durban, 2002" in Preben Kaarsholm and Isabel Hofmeyr (eds), The Popular and the Public: Cultural Debates and Struggles over Public Space in Modern India, Africa and Europe. (Calcutta and London: Seagull Books, 2008 [forthcoming]); Shamil Jeppie, Language, Identity, Modernity: The Arabic Study Circle of Durban. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007).
- 35 Cf. also Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement.* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995): 70-73.
- 36 Cf. Jeppie, Language, Identity, Modernity..., 23.
- 37 Jeppie, Language, Identity, Modernity..., 18ff.

- 38 Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Gandhi's Prisoner.... 72.
- 39 On the attitudes of Indian middle-class residents towards African squatters in a similar environment, see Anand Singh "Residents' Perceptions of Informal Settlements" in *Indians in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 2005), 51-67.
- 40 Cf. Kaarsholm, "Moral Panic...".
- 41 Originally founded in 1957 for background, see Jeppie, *Language*, *Identity*, *Modernity*..., 101ff.
- 42 Discussed in Singh, "Residents' Perceptions...".
- 43 This paragraph is based on interviews held in Umlazi in March 2007.
- 44 Cf. Maxwell, African Gifts..., 163ff.
- 45 Cf. Kaarsholm, "African and Indian Islam...".
- This is obvious from the Johannesburg citiscapes of areas like Berea and Yeoville referred to above, where venues housing Evangelical and Pentecostal chapels or mosques are as frequent in the streets as import-export enterprises serving links with the Congo or restaurants serving Nigerian food.
- 47 Interviews, March 2007. Thus, paradoxically, where Muslim 'passenger' Indians in the early days of immigration would often present themselves as 'Arabs' to be set apart from indentured 'Coolie' labourers, who were Hindus, Arabs may now have the experience of being dismissed as 'Indians'.
- 48 Cf. Sugata Bose, A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire. (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006); Amartya Sen, Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

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