

THE BUSINESS OF BELONGING: INDIAN MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT AND TRADE IN BOTSWANA, 1880-2012

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the methods used by Indian settlers to create and then retain their place in colonial Bechuanaland and post-colonial Botswana. This process, I argue, was one in which Indian migrants found ways to enter, settle and prosper in new territories, in a complex conversation with colonial powers, local politics and local and regional ecologies and geographies. They responded to the expansion of colonial commercial interests, exclusionary legislation, and settler racism through both subversive and legitimate challenges. With these they managed to forge a defensible space within the colonial system that fell between the received categories of “native” and “colonial” to form a new category which they identify as “Batswana-Indian”.

The dissertation starts with a discussion of the process by which Indians settlers, mostly Gujarati, first came to the territory and their need to adapt to local economic and ecological conditions, as well as the reactions of colonial authorities to Indian immigration. The dynamics established in the early twentieth century set the terms of debate as successive administrations, from Protectorate to Republic, came to view the ‘problem’ of Indian immigration in similar ways. The thesis then delves into how these adaptive strategies actually worked. Chapter two focusses on the legal and economic marginalisation of these settlers and the consequent development of mutually beneficial relationships with certain strategically located chieftaincies, as well as the social, political and economic results of those relationships. Chapter three shows how Indian settlers – many isolated from post-partition India and driven from Apartheid South Africa - further embedded their position within Bechuanaland’s society and economy in the last two decades before independence (1966). This created an uncertain policy toward Indians that alternated between exclusion and co-option as Bechuanaland neared Independence, when the need for foreign investment grew more urgent. As the final chapter shows, Independence attracted a new wave of immigration from India, especially once its mineral riches grew lucrative. But there remained policy continuities with the colonial period, as anti-Indian rhetoric had to be balanced against Botswana’s need for investment and skills that Indian immigrants offered to fill. Culminating with an in-depth case study of the Choppies enterprise, the dissertation shows how globally connected, entrepreneurial communities from India have flourished by adapting to the ambiguities of Botswana’s policies.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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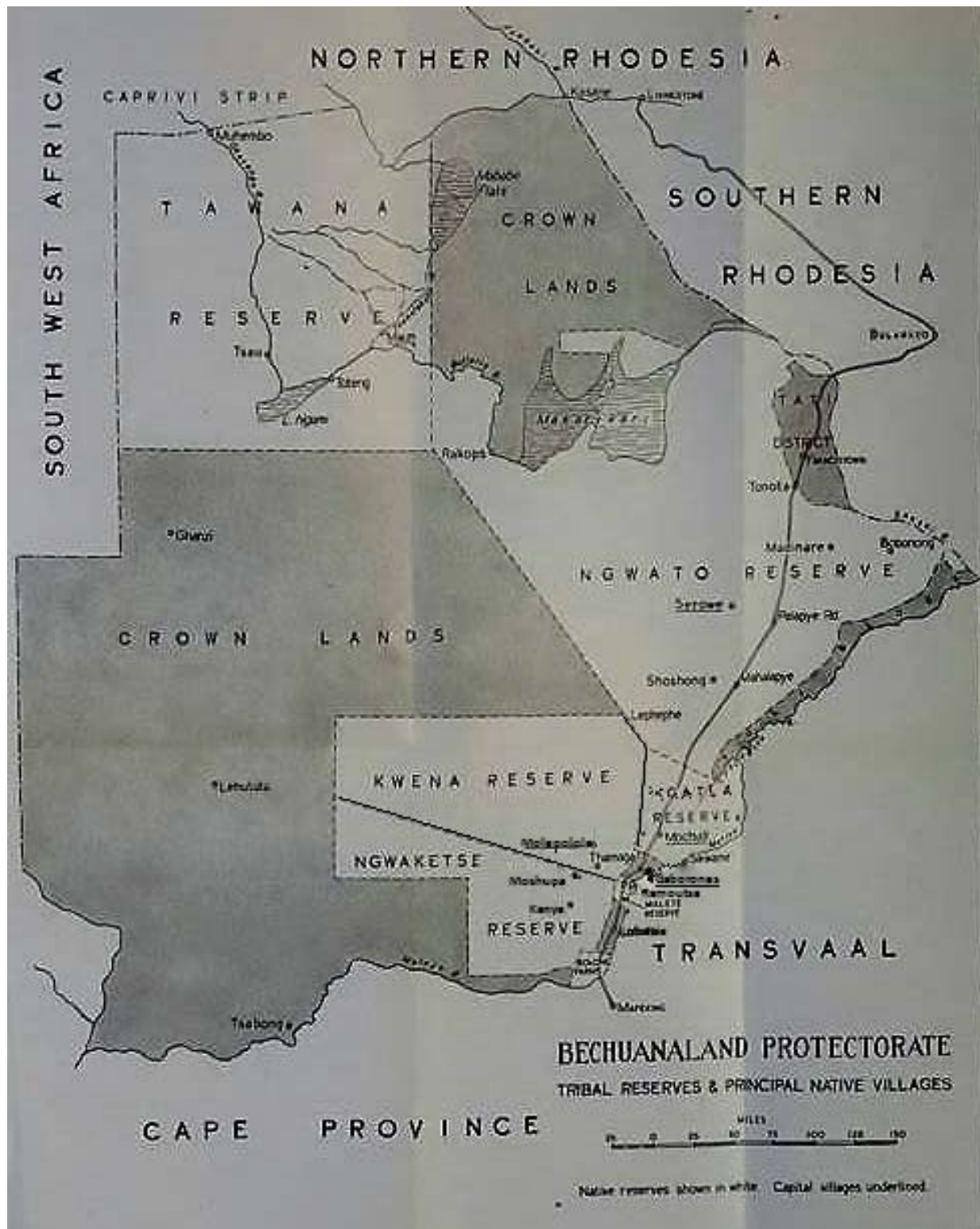
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Introduction

Introduction

Herman Charles Bosman's stories of Oom Schalk Lourens in the Groot Marico include in them reference to a surprising figure: sometimes exotic and worldly, sometimes devious and sly.¹ He is an Indian general dealer who owns the store at the railway siding in the village of Ramotswa in the Bechuanaland Protectorate where many farmers and residents gather after buying their goods to tell stories and catch up on news and gossip. This figure is a part of a small but commercially significant population of Indian settlers in the Protectorate, an extension of those networks of Indian immigrants who had come to settle across what would become South Africa and its surrounding territories. The story of the branch of these networks which came to and stayed in Bechuanaland is characterised by both the different histories and geographies of the territories and the manner in which that population transcended and straddled the boundaries between them. It is, in fact, quintessentially a story of attempts to adapt to local conditions and straddle the local, regional and global boundaries and categories of the British colonial system into which they arrived. It is the story of how Indian settlers carved a place for themselves in the area – an economic, social and political space as much as a geographic one – that allowed them to simultaneously retain a place in a global and regional economic, social and political order.

At issue in this investigation are the methods used by Indian settlers to create and retain their place in colonial and post-colonial Botswana. This process, I argue, was one in which Indian migrants found ways to enter, settle and prosper in new territories, in a complex conversation with colonial powers, local politics and local and regional ecologies and geographies. They responded, for example, to colonial expansions and encouragement of trade as well as to

¹For example the "Ramoutsa Road" story "Francina Malherbe" and others, see: Herman Charles Bosman, *The Complete Oom Schalk Lourens Stories* (Human & Rousseau, 2006); Herman Charles Bosman, *Ramoutsa Road* (A. Donker, 1987).

colonial racism by adapting to local political, economic and geographic conditions, using both subversion and legitimate challenges. With these they managed to forge a defensible space within the local colonial system that was between the received categories of “native” and “colonial” which are behind Mamdani’s concept of the “bifurcated state”. This was to be a third space, subverting that bifurcation. This space was defensible because the adaptive process was in direct response to, and took part in, both empire-wide political considerations and local struggles over colonial authority.

This introductory chapter charts the preconditions for migrants’ adaptive strategies, as well as the broader imperial politics that shaped migrant’s early relationship with the authorities of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. We begin with a discussion of local ecological and geographic conditions, and then a review how Empire-wide ideologies of paternal government manifested in southern Africa generally and Bechuanaland specifically. This presented some opportunities – and some limits – for the territory’s Indian merchant networks, to be detailed more fully in the chapters to follow.

The geography of the Bechuanaland Protectorate was the feature which differentiated this territory from its neighbours. Its massive arid expanse meant that there were few inhabitants and they generally lacked the commercial, trading or wage-labour opportunities of neighbouring areas. Most of the population was in the more hospitable south east and east of the country on the outskirts of what had been, in precolonial times, Ndebele, Kalanga and Tswana dominated areas of South Africa and Rhodesia but which had since been carved up by settlers of those new nations. This population was organised into a handful of central, unbroken and coherent Tswana Paramountcies and several smaller ones which came to be intersected by colonial border regimes and the related settler slaving, raiding and land-grabbing depredations. The population was clustered in village centres close to water sources and traditional power bases like Kanye, Serowe, Ramotswa, Tlokweng and others. The land did not, as far as colonial authorities could ascertain, hold its own natural riches, as its neighbours did, but it lay between the Cape Colony and Rhodesia allowing Cecil Rhodes and the expanding British Empire in Africa to bypass the less hospitable Transvaal and Orange Free State republics in linking their territories and investments. The territory also lay in what appeared to be a German path of expansion east from South-West Africa. Thus the value of colonial Bechuanaland to the British Empire at first was only its marginal

strategic physical position.² That is, it was valuable in relation to the position and control of its borders. To the Boer states there was value in Bechuanaland in the form of competing cattle farmers and, more informally, potential agrarian slaves or, later, wage labourers. In response, the paramountcies negotiated with the British for a Protectorate to shield them from Boer advances. The negotiation ensured some localised chiefly autonomy in return for the cession of land for a railway from the Cape to Bulawayo and farmland on either side. With that the British expanded their sphere in Africa north of the Cape and west of Rhodesia and, most importantly, drew the border, a line on the map which differentiated it from those territories in law and administration.

With these geopolitical claims, as with similar claims made all over the world, the British brought several things: firstly some infrastructure – both the railway line itself and the legal and diplomatic agreements that surrounded it; secondly British-style government – a border police force and its administration and soon the territory's own minimal administration. With this government came taxation – a cash system that ensured both that the Protectorate paid for itself to some extent and that the subjects, like all other subjects, were tied into the global economy of Britain and its empire. This, in turn, tied down fluid, mobile populations seen as harbingers of anarchy such that they could be accounted for and policed.³

Taken together these were the preconditions for the arrival of traders, especially from elsewhere in the empire. Intrepid settlers began to move in in increasing numbers. Among these were people of Indian origin, specifically Gujarati Muslim traders, who began to settle in the rail-side village of Ramotswa and nearby Moshupa sometime in the 1880s.⁴ These

² Cecil Headlam, "The Race for the Interior, 1881-1895," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire Vol VIII*, by Eric Anderson Walker (Cambridge University Press Archive, 1929). Henryk Zins, "The International Context of the Creation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885," *PULA* 11, no. 1 (1997): 55-62; Robert Lloyd, "The Caprivi Strip of Namibia: Shifting Sovereignty and the Negotiation of Boundaries." In *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State*. Ed. Alexander C. Diener, Joshua Hagen, Monageng Mogalakwe, "How Britain Underdeveloped Bechuanaland Protectorate: A Brief Critique of the Political Economy of Colonial Botswana," *Africa Development* 31, no. 1 (2006): 66-88.

³ Christopher Morton, "Fixity and Fluidity: Chiefly Authority and Settlement Movement in Colonial Botswana," *History and Anthropology* 15, no. 4 (December 2004): 345-65.
Christian John Makgala, "Taxation in the Tribal Areas of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1899-1957," *The Journal of African History* 45, no. 2 (July 2004): 279-303.

⁴ Utlwanang Maano and Muhammed Haron, "Botswana's Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse: Their Arrival, Settlement and Current Demographics," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31, no. 2 (June 2011): 259-71; Amanze, James, "Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 30 (1998): 67-78; Makgala, Christian John, "A Survey of Race Relations in Botswana,

settlers, arriving in the face of intense colonial disapproval, managed to adapt and remain in the territory for generations, with many of their descendants retaining a central role in the economy of that country to this day – how this was made possible, and the implications of that, are the primary concerns here.

This history of people of Indian origin⁵ in Bechuanaland and then Botswana is the history of a single, small node in an extremely long history of Indian trade and settlement in Africa and the Indian Ocean region. This larger history is one of adaptation to various hegemonic forces over centuries taking the form of a combination of challenges, subversions and compromises on personal and political levels to the shifting politics, ideology and attitudes of the colonies. In our case, a focus on Bechuanaland and Botswana illustrates the nature of that adaptability on multiple levels. It shows how adaptability came down to local level exchanges, alliances and specialised business practice as well as participation in politics on both a regional and Empire-wide basis. In doing so this history fleshes out the substance of our understandings of the history of the region, of the British Empire and of the history of Indian global mobility. In order to explain this contribution, however, one must first understand both the Imperial and diasporic context of the era.

Birth of Empire

The impact of European expansion into the Indian Ocean world, especially in relation to India and Africa, must first be placed in the context of the already long established history of Indian connections to Africa into which it intruded. This connection was closely associated with Arabic transoceanic trade⁶ and took on, importantly, the peaceful, non-state

1800-1966,” *Botswana Notes and Records*, 36 (2004): 11–26; Saroj N. Parratt, “Muslims in Botswana,” *African Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 1989): 71–82.

⁵ This is also a technical and legal category of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in India but here simply refers to people whose ancestry lies, at some point, in what was British India. This is the same loose principle which has long been used to categorise people in South Africa as “Indian”. Many of the people in question in this work qualify for the “Person of Indian Origin Card”, which grants certain rights to people within three generations of emigration from India, but many other families have been in the territory for seven or eight generations or more.

⁶ Edward A. Alpers, “Gujarat and the Trade of East Africa, C. 1500-1800,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9, no. 1 (1976): 22–44.

business model ascribed to Arabic trade by scholars like Engseng Ho.⁷ This is important because the arrival of the Portuguese and then Dutch and English at the Indian Ocean ports took the opposite approach, combining conquest and coercion with commerce. Not only did they conquer trading ports, people or the land beyond it, but they were able to assert control over the right to movement of people and goods within the networks which connected those conquered territories. This started a process whereby traders of Indian origin had to adapt to a transoceanic state with a monopoly on movement within its sphere, superimposed onto their networks of trade. In the Portuguese era this meant that Indians, Gujarati traders especially, were able to tap into imperial desires to influence trade in slaves, ivory and other things on the east coast of Africa in order to forge mutually beneficial alliances.⁸ Later, in the era of British Empire, where Indian movement did not directly collide with metropolitan interests, broadly speaking, and where traders paid for the privilege, it could proceed and even expand with the Empire, as shall be discussed. The question of when and how Indian movement and trade within the Empire would be said to collide with British interests was subject to changing attitudes in the Empire and was the central issue around which Indian travellers and traders had to tailor their adaptations. The realities of this tension, its outcomes and impacts, are the primary issue with which this history is concerned. In order to understand the process of tailoring adaptation, one must first understand certain ideological concepts in imperial thought, as they pertained to Indians, as well as the practicalities of administration in that context.

Creation of paternal ideologies around “the Imperial Subject”

While the British Empire was founded on material concerns, and those remained the lynchpin of its continued existence, empire was central enough in the lives of British people that it took its own place in the developing new ideologies for British politics. In particular new categories had to be developed to discuss the subjugated and conquered within those

⁷ Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁸ Luisa Pinto Teixeira, “Partners in Business The Workings of the Indian Traders of Zambezia, Mozambique, 1870s-1910s,” *Lusotopie* 15, no. 1 (2008): 39–58; Pedro Machado, “A Forgotten Corner of the Indian Ocean: Gujarati Merchants, Portuguese India and the Mozambique Slave-Trade, 1730–1830,” *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 2 (August 2003): 17–32.

ideologies. Colonial subjects, especially those outside of the white settler fold, formed an ideological, as well as practical category in imperial thinking. This is the category of subject who was epitomised most famously in Kipling's 'White Man's Burden'.

Uday Singh Mehta describes the emergence of this ideology as a direct function of the emergence of empire itself: that western liberal thought, in the works of people like James and John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, and their conceptions of citizenship, rights and responsibility were formed in large part in relation to empire, especially in India.⁹ This seems to produce an irreconcilable set of paradoxes within common conceptions of liberal thought, but Mehta shows that subjugating foreign peoples was central to the formation of the notion of the free, dignified individual. Their basic unit of the good society was, he shows, written in contradistinction to a foreign subject categorised by "history, ethnicity, civilizational hierarchies, and occasionally race and blood ties" as essentially un-free, and "coded as a child" until such time as that subject could be released from those categories through the force of their very subjugation.¹⁰ "Despotism," wrote Mill, "is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end."¹¹ Importantly these liberal principles, Mehta claims, were not confined to the ivory tower, nor simply in the principles informing certain politicians and administrators, but rather formed the basis of many popular conceptions of British public life. Thus many citizens in Britain understood both the rights of the individual within a representative government *and* the responsibility to their less advanced subject peoples as elements of the good society which they desired.¹² The 'Imperial Subject' thus took on a role in the democratic politics of the metropole.

⁹ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Jenifer Pitts follows a similar line in but highlights changes in liberal political thought around ethics and empire, describing 19th century French and British political philosophers turning liberal thought towards an embrace of empire in opposition to their 18th century forebears. *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 11–14. Note that these are all conceptual explanations: none of the thinkers in question had ever spent any time in India and had no *practical* knowledge of the realities of their paternal despotism. Mehta is quick to point out that they nevertheless did know a great deal about the place, if only from afar, and would probably have preferred it that way because they were attempting to theorise an ideal rather than describe a reality.

¹¹ Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 1.

¹² Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 193.

These ideological underpinnings of the category of the Imperial Subject were practiced in surprising ways in the administration of the Empire as described by Steven Patterson. He describes notions of the individual honour and status of administrators and soldiers that was tied up with their racial superiority and produced an accepted duty to the Indian population to maintain a strict racial hierarchy with Indians at the very bottom.¹³ The apparent paradox of the liberal imperialist in this case extends to the very real paradox of, for example, the Amritsar Massacre where a colonial officer had hundreds of protesters slaughtered in order to defend colonial “order” in the name of other Indian subjects and, more importantly, the pre-eminence of Anglo-Indian citizens.¹⁴ This illustrates how the paternalist liberal principle behind a concept like the British Indian Subject could be rendered malleable and be redefined when it was applied to reality. In as much as the officer can claim his “end be their improvement” then he is secured in his superior position as the decider of the “means” which, at some notional future moment, could be “justified by actually effecting that end”. In Britain the implications of Amritsar, however, were not thought to be justified by, but rather a departure from, the paternal responsibility in question. The ideology was in practice, then, *the* language with which one understood and argued one’s position in asserting some right or responsibility on all sides of the conversation within the British order. Though the status of British Indian Subjects was by definition inferior, by being defined in terms of paternal responsibilities it provided a language that Indians themselves could adapt in order to assert or negotiate certain rights between officials in the colonies and those in the metropole.

While they were regarded as racially inferior, Indians’ subject status provided them with some room for leverage – a kind of second class insider status. As Markovits argues, “each [Indian trader] network found its place in the global system through a complex and prolonged process in which collaboration and conflict were intertwined themes.”¹⁵ Moreover Subject-hood meant that Indians could not only attempt to defend their existing global activities under the official protection of the British Empire but could expand them along with the expansion of the Empire and its influence globally. For example “Sindwork

¹³ Steven Patterson, *The Cult of Imperial Honor in British India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63. The victims were, ironically, protesting increasingly illiberal policies and laws aimed at Indians emerging in the post-World War 1 colonial regime.

¹⁵ Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 19.

merchants, being British Indian subjects, benefited from the protection given to them by their status and could move freely more or less anywhere”.¹⁶

It is important to add to this, however, that as the Empire expanded it produced differentiated colonies with different local circumstances of incorporation and rule. Vitally, one of these differentiated types was the settler colony which would, over time, become the self-governing ‘dominions’ that, in theory, held generally similar status in the Empire to Britain itself.¹⁷ In the case of the dominions, the idea of belonging took on increased complexity where the imperial Subject status had to be superimposed on growing local ideas of citizenship within Subject-hood. In these cases the differentiation was essentially racial, insiders were ‘settlers’ and were defined by whiteness and, their status enforced by new-fangled immigration controls starting in the 1880s and 90s.¹⁸ In this context the notion of the ‘Indian diaspora’ emerged as a method of singling out difference and inscribing it as outsider, foreign and temporary.¹⁹ Subsequently, the status of British Indian Subject would not automatically grant passage, and on occasion would itself cause passage to be halted, but it did continue to provide the language with which demands for entry and settlement rights could be made.²⁰

Imperial aversion to black mobility

While there had long been theoretical debate about citizenship and belonging in the Empire,²¹ it was relatively easy to be mobile in the early period of the British Empire. This ease of mobility soon came to be a defining feature of the expansion of Empire. In the period

¹⁶ Ibid. 121.

¹⁷ Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester University Press, 2006).

¹⁸ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (Columbia University Press, 2013); E. F. W. van Pittius, “Dominion Nationality,” *South African Law Journal* 49 (1932): 215. Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*.

¹⁹ This is described in some detail in: Isabel Hofmeyr, “The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South – Literary and Cultural Perspectives,” *Social Dynamics* 33, no. 2 (December 2007): 3–32.

²⁰ Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, 215.

²¹ For examples see Duncan Bell, *Victorian Visions of Global Order Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

from the beginning of the crown Raj in 1858 to the rise of citizenship and immigration controls in the settler states in the 1890s, the official protection of the British Empire was significant to the easing of Indian mobility.²² This period was, however, marked by the gradual beginnings of a move away from the principle of generally easy movement to one concerned with governance of a threatening African and Asian mobility. The specific programmes for governing this mobility, like the early institution of passports and related rules of passage, give some insight into the depth of that menace in British eyes. Radhika Singha, for example, describes a very early start to the abandonment of the principles of “liberty of movement” in response to diplomatic embarrassment about the “*miskeen*, the beggar-pilgrim” on Hajj in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-late 19th century. Inevitably the *miskeen* was repatriated at the request of local authorities. A discourse around the mobility of particularly Muslim people as a kind of global “sanitation syndrome”²³ subsequently developed in which the cosmopolitan mixing of, especially poor, pilgrims represented a pathogenic risk to Europe through their colonies. These concerns brought with them the pilgrim passport designed to encourage, and later enforce, the purchase of a return ticket.²⁴ Mobility could also spread political ‘pathogens’ to empire and the ‘white world’ as undesirable political ideas could spread, mix and mature through such connection. Nile Green, for example, states: “Nineteenth-century colonial administrators were understandably concerned that the vastly increased number of Indian *hajj* pilgrims enabled by Bombay’s steamship routes would lead to the spread of anti-British ‘Wahhabism’ or other expressions of Pan-Islamist sympathy.”²⁵ Many British, in fact, believed pan-Islamic “fanaticism” to have been decisive in sparking the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the central event in the subsequent administration of British India and policing of its people.²⁶

²² Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, 214.

²³ Echoed in the South African context in the early 20th century as a formative part of the story of urban segregation in: Maynard W. Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909,” *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (January 1, 1977): 387–410.

²⁴ Radhika Singha, “Passport, Ticket, and Indian-Rubber Stamp: ‘The Problem of the Pauper Pilgrim’ in Colonial India c1882-1925,” in *The Limits of British Colonial Control in South Asia: Spaces of Disorder in the Indian Ocean Region*, ed. Ashwini Tambe and Harald Fischer Tiné (Routledge, 2008).

²⁵ Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840-1915* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). p105

²⁶ Michael Christopher Low, “Empire And The Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues, and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865–1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 02 (May 2008): 275.

Similar fears of Asian mobility as pathogenic informed the American systems of border control that set off the late 19th and early 20th century interest in limiting Asian mobility in the ‘white’ world. In this case the threatening contagion was a social one. The perceived threat in the US was blamed on Chinese immigrants who, accused of languishing in “backward” economies, cultures and institutions in China, threatened the American nation-state.²⁷ This had its origins in a growing sentiment in the settler colonial world, within the British Empire and in the United States, in the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries that divided the world into “white” and “brown and black” or “subject peoples”²⁸ (including the peoples of East and South Asia and Africa). This was a reaction to a generalised, threatening spectre of enormous and growing Asian and African populations agitating under the yoke of colonial domination²⁹ and their increasing global mobility which brought that threat home, economically, politically, socially and sexually.³⁰ The division was one which took place at many levels of society, representing a popular position on the ground as well as a part of the foreign and local government policies of the emerging ‘white nations’. Included in this were the organised working class inside Britain and its Empire. Upper- and middle-class Victorian conceptions of whiteness, especially within Britain, did not entirely include the working classes³¹ but, over time, through empire-wide white worker circulation and militant organisation, they formed or imported a common white identity as an “imperial working class” in opposition to Asian and African competitors rendered mobile by employers’ interests.³² This meant that from the late 1880s the Boer republics, Natal, the United States, Australia, Canada and subsequently many other colonies and nations were using their own notions of citizenship tied to anti-Asiatic immigration controls.³³ By 1917, in light of the First World War and the mounting pressure on other nations to follow suit with their border control systems, the British Indian government instituted the first

²⁷ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*.

²⁸ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (University of California Press, 2011).

³¹ Alastair Bonnett, “How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (re) Formation of Racialized Capitalism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11, no. 3 (1998): 316–40.

³² Jonathan Hyslop, “The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself ‘white’: White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 398–421.

³³ McKeown, *Melancholy Order*; Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*.

widespread mandatory passports to Indian Subjects.³⁴ Even this regime of control was limited by both material and ideological considerations on the part of a British Government of India concerned with securing its borders and keeping up with international standards, but politically unwilling to actively involve itself in limiting subjects' mobility.³⁵

Adaptation – securing mobility and extending into new realms

Our concern is not simply the attitudes to Indian mobility, though that is vital to the story being told here, but more to the ways in which, through challenge or subversion on the part of Indian agents determined to adapt to them, those attitudes failed to become effective policies. The central issue is that antagonisms on the part of first the British and later the Dominions, to certain kinds of Indian mobility did not completely stop it at its source or in the Empire more broadly. While Indian mobility was in the economic interests of the British, those interests were not always the deciding factor, as with the Hajj or when the Dominions' own internal pressures trumped them. In such cases the question of racial ideology came to the fore. Understanding the place of the Indian Subject in the Empire becomes important to understanding continued mobility because it provides the platform upon which Indian challenges to, and subversion of, British governance could take place.

Singha's poverty stricken Hajjis, for example, were not deterred by the controls in place but instead subverted them such that they were either rendered ineffective or actually facilitated cheaper pilgrimage. This was partially because the passport system stopped short of enforcing its intended limitations on free Indians and thus left space for Hajjis to manoeuvre around it.³⁶ Similarly, it was under conditions of the Dominions' anti-Indian belligerence that Ghandi made the demands for recognition and protection of the rights of Indians in

³⁴ R. Singha, "The Great War and a 'Proper' Passport for the Colony: Border-Crossing in British India, c.1882-1922," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 289–315; Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, 215.

³⁵ Singha, "The Great War and a 'Proper' Passport for the Colony."
R. V. Mongia, "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport," *Public Culture* 11, no. 3 (October 1, 1999): 527–55.

³⁶ Radhika Singha, "Passport, Ticket, and Indian-Rubber Stamp: 'The Problem of the Pauper Pilgrim' in Colonial India c1882-1925."

South Africa as *British Subjects* to British authorities. Leading up to the establishment of the compulsory passport regime in 1917, Indian “intelligentsia”, some of whom were transnationally oriented, bought into a system of control that could exclude poor Indians from being allowed to emigrate. This meant “that the passport was a form of civic credential for which only some sorts of Indians could qualify” and thus promoted the Government of India characterisation of the document as “a definite recommendation to good treatment”.³⁷ This latter idea, became the central issue of a kind of three way intra-imperial diplomacy between the Dominions and the powerful Government of India passing through the Colonial and Dominions offices in London. In that arrangement the Dominions attempted to assert their difference and their self-rule while maintaining their ties to empire and attempting to placate Indian officials dismayed at their bigotry and under pressure from within India to do something about it.³⁸ Practically this became a major terrain within which Indians could challenge governments and defend their rights as subjects to move, settle and trade. This was effective, not just in confrontation but, once that precedent had been established, in the threat of confrontation and embarrassment that it could cause both within the colonial bureaucracy globally and in parliamentary politics in Westminster. In order to tap into these diplomatic and ideological platforms Indians who formed part of a new kind of transnational “intelligentsia” began to organise themselves around ideas of global Indian political and religious belonging, that competed with imperial globalism through the use of things like multi-lingual print media.³⁹

Adaptation took a more material, economic form in the everyday practices of the global Asian commercial and financial systems that survived colonisation in parallel to western competitors – what Rajat Kanta Ray calls, after the British nomenclature of the time, ‘the Bazaar’. In his discussion of “the Rise of the Bazaar” he describes a three tier global economy in the colonial Indian Ocean. There was a tier of small time traders and localised moneylenders operating within a world dominated by a tier of large scale, technologically advanced western economies of financial instruments and mercantile conglomerates backed

³⁷ Singha, “The Great War and a ‘Proper’ Passport for the Colony.”

³⁸ Mongia, “Race, Nationality, Mobility”; Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, “The Place of India in South African History: Academic Scholarship, Past, Present and Future,” *South African Historical Journal* 57, no. 1 (January 2007): 12–34. Uma Shashikant Mesthrie, “From Sastri to Deshmukh: A Study of the Role of the Government of India’s Representatives in South Africa, 1927 to 1946” (University of Natal, 1987).

³⁹ Mark Frost, “‘Wider Opportunities’: Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870–1920,” *Modern Asian Studies* 36, no. 04 (October 2002).

by European states. In between, he places the third tier of Asian and Middle Eastern financial and mercantile networks which both predated the European system and survived it, by increasingly adapting to the latter's systems and technologies. The Bazaar is described as having retained a certain amount of informality and familial or network orientation⁴⁰ which often served to accommodate competing European concerns, who invariably had state backing, or remained relatively unnoticed by them. Ray describes not only a way in which Asian businesses managed to expand with territorial expansion, but also how they managed to expand financially through access to the systems and technologies provided by empire.⁴¹

In southern Africa Takashi Oishi describes another important example of the sorts of material economic adaptation made at the level of Ray's bottom tier to the negative sentiments of colonial officials and settlers. In the trade around the South African and Mozambican border region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the colonial authorities had a vested interest in expanding trading activities but had difficulty convincing most traders to operate in areas with poor infrastructure and small markets. By adapting to operate in such markets Indian traders manage to defend their presence in the area with little need for challenge.⁴²

Discrimination and response in Africa

The historiography of Indian settlement in Africa, both that which predated and that which came with colonialism, has focussed on a handful of salient themes. One of these is that it has tended to focus geographically on the large, prominent settlement on the Indian-Ocean

⁴⁰ The concurrence of globalised methods and familial/filial organisation is very effectively described in Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947 Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*.

⁴¹ Rajat Kanta Ray, "Asian Capital in the Age of European Domination: The Rise of the Bazaar, 1800–1914," *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 03 (1995): 449–554.

Vahed has illustrated a South African example of this sort of complex economy. He describes the overlap of both large and small scale Gujarati commercial-financial concerns and the large settler and colonial financial institutions like Standard Bank of South Africa over half a century in: Goolam Vahed, "Passengers, Partnerships, and Promissory Notes: Gujarati Traders in Colonial Natal, 1870-1920," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 449–79.

⁴² Takashi Oishi, "Indian Muslim Merchants in Mozambique and South Africa: Intra-Regional Networks in Strategic Association with State Institutions, 1870s-1930s," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 2/3 (2007): 287.

littoral and connected interiors.⁴³ These have focussed on a combination of imported indentured labour and a related labouring class⁴⁴ and, more especially, on a commercial class of “passengers” – upon whom this dissertation also focuses. Writing on the latter, tends to deal with themes of racial distinction⁴⁵, minority capitalism and colonial responses to those. These themes are reinforced in these dissertation in many ways but by dealing with a previously neglected geography, the arid central part of Southern Africa, and focussing on the specifics of adaptability in relation to that place I tend to complicate some of those ideas.

In Africa the colonial or settler objection to Indian mobility, while multiple and complex as will be explored in the chapters to come, was added to a similar anxiety about mobility amongst Africans. Africans were idealised as notionally static physically, culturally and socially. Any challenge to that, any potential “detrribalisation”,⁴⁶ was threatening to colonial power in Africa and to the paternalism of the “liberal empire” – products, in part of the of liberal “civilizing” missions of the 19th century missionary-administrators like John William Colenso in Natal and John Moffatt in Bechuanaland.⁴⁷ Together, the combination of threatening Indian mobility and African contact with the outside world produced a narrative of a double threat of barbaric Africa in thrall to dangerously unscrupulous Indians.⁴⁸ One consequence of this was that the prime example of the attack on Indian mobility and settlement and consequent Indian contestation, subversion and adaptation came out of what

⁴³ Like Uganda and inland parts of South Africa.

⁴⁴ Bill Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* (James Currey, 1995).

⁴⁵ James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Ohio University Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ Amongst many others on South Africa see: Saul Dubow, “Holding ‘a Just Balance between White and Black’: The Native Affairs Department in South Africa C. 1920–33,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 12, no. 2 (1986): 217–39. Philip Bonner, “‘Desirable or Undesirable Sotho Women?’ Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Sotho Women to the Rand, 1920-1945,” in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker (D. Philip, 1990).

For excellent examples of this kind of concern in action within academia see: Ellen Hellmann, *Rooiyard: A Sociological Survey of an Urban Native Slum Yard*, 13 (Oxford University Press, for Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, 1948).

⁴⁷ See Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883* (Ravan Press, 1983). Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ For East African examples: I. R. G. Spencer, “The First Assault on Indian Ascendancy: Indian Traders in the Kenya Reserves, 1895-1929,” *African Affairs* 80, no. 320 (July 1, 1981): 327–43; “The Indians In Kenya,” *The Spectator*, June 22, 1923, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/23rd-june-1923/11/the-indians-in-kenya>.

In South Africa: Uma Mesthrie, “Reducing the Indian Population to a ‘manageable Compass’: A Study of the South African Assisted Emigration Scheme of 1927,” *Natalia* 15 (1985): 36–56. amongst others.

would become South Africa.⁴⁹ Here systems of government control of threatening African mobility emerged at more or less the same time as anti-Asiatic immigration laws.⁵⁰ South Africa also represents a classic example of the spread of Indian settlement and trade that went with the expansion of the British Empire. Indians arrived in South Africa both as indentured labourers on British sugar plantations and as “free passengers”, especially Guajarati Muslims, engaging in trade and expanding into new markets. “Passenger” networks had expanded into Mauritius when the British became involved in the sugar industry there and were active in East Africa as British interests expanded there. In South Africa, British political and economic interests spread into the hinterland of the country, taking in the diamond fields in the west and encircling the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Until the latter were conquered in the South African war, Indian settlement clustered along the borders of those territories under the technical protection of the British.⁵¹ Within that context the expansion of British interests regionally into the area of the Bechuanaland Protectorate can be understood in large part as a decision to distinguish between the settler colonies of southern Africa and the Tswana people who sought British protection from them. That differentiation meant that new Indian immigrants had new local conditions, both positive and negative, to which they could adapt as individuals and collectively.

The Bechuanaland Protectorate

The movement of people of Indian origin into the Bechuanaland Protectorate did not fit with British thinking about the nature and future of the territory, partially because the territory was thought of in a very similar light to the settler colonies that surrounded it and into which, it was expected, the territory would eventually be incorporated. It was also partially because the 1880s, when Indians first began to arrive there, was the period during which the intense

⁴⁹ Which inherited various elements of these from the laws of the Boer republics and Natal. See for example: Klaaren, Jonathan Eugene, “Migrating to Citizenship: Mobility, Law, and Nationality in South Africa, 1897--1937” (PhD, Yale University, 2004).

⁵⁰ Klaaren, Jonathan Eugene, “Migrating to Citizenship: Mobility, Law, and Nationality in South Africa, 1897--1937” (PhD, Yale University, 2004).

⁵¹ Surendra Bhana and J. B. Brain, *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1990).

anti-Asian systems with the notion of the political, social and cultural Asian contagion emerged and grew globally. Because of the question of incorporation, though it was not a settler colony as such, it was often treated as though it was in anticipation of incorporation and hope of attracting more settlers to that end. Because of this Indians were cast as fundamentally foreign and malign in ways that very clearly and directly were to differentiate them from the paternal British colonists and administrators. They were to be “immigrants”, not settlers. By the 1910s the British were already raising concerns and putting policies in place to inhibit Indian mobility and their ability to settle and do business, in spite of the presence of only a handful in the territory.

This plan to eliminate some of the differentiation between the colonies in favour of a larger southern African *settler* colony was central to politics in Bechuanaland in the period. Those politics largely focused on the Chiefly authorities’ struggles for greater autonomy and against incorporation. This was characterised by the fact that the administration of the territory was small and poorly resourced, as a poor colony might be expected to be, but had ambitions closer to those of its relatively wealthy neighbours. Apart from chiefly authority, an important issue in local politics was the ‘problem’ of Indian trade. This problem fell into two general, though not mutually exclusive, categories. First was the ‘problem’ of competition with white settler traders which might limit further settlement and “development”. This, importantly, was a complaint pushed by white settler lobbies with some degree of influence. Second was the pre-existing paternalistic ‘problem’ associated with the general “bad influence” of Indian traders over local subject peoples. These led to a repeated drive to limit immigration and to make settled Indian life uncomfortable enough for Indians to either leave or not desire to come.

Settlers of Indian origin were quick to adapt to these efforts in several ways. One was that they would take advantage of the very small capacity of the authorities to limit their immigration and settlement. This was backed by another adaptation: the threat of, and actual, appeals to the Government of India and the colonial/dominions offices for fair treatment as British Indian Subjects – an appeal to liberal empire. This was partly possible because of the lack of prestige of Bechuanaland in the colonial/dominions offices and thus in the imperial diplomatic system. The resulting fear of scandal and embarrassment became central to the dealings of colonial authorities with Indians as well as Africans right up to independence.

The Bechuanaland administration would never pass a law or make a public statement that was overtly anti-Indian. Another vital adaptation was related to that described by Oishi. Indian traders risked the small profit margins and poor infrastructure to settle in the hinterland of the territory where few white settlers would venture. This meant that the use of cash and thus the taxation system and related economic, political, administrative and social colonial elements and projects relied on their presence to some extent. This was related to another adaptation which appears to be unusual to the case of Bechuanaland. The areas in which Indians settled and traded until 1941, many of them the places least desired by European traders, were under the direct control of Chiefly authority, not of the British. This placed them on the periphery of British protection and British discrimination. Similarly, the core of the settlement of Indians throughout the territory always lay close to the border of South Africa, a place increasingly and eventually untenably antagonistic to Indian presence, but from which all regional goods and economic opportunity flowed in the colonial era. In as much as the latter is true, the entire Indian population of Bechuanaland could be said to have straddled the border of the two countries – with British protection on one side and access to goods, markets and capital through networks, on the other.

Each adaptation overlapped with the others, some being causally linked, and together helped to secure Indian settlement and trade. These adaptations would build on each other too – the securing of trade and a certain kind of belonging through chiefly authority, for example, could be used to trump questions of the validity of one's immigration or rights to trade. Through this process adaptation and accommodation early on could be built over a generation or two into a major challenge to the status quo of colonial discrimination. That these new ways of being in a new land involved ideas like belonging and sacrifice, took place over years and generations and involved the ways individuals interacted with their surroundings, meant that they inevitably also had an impact on the ways those people began to think about themselves. From this emerged, eventually, a new category: the Batswana-Indian.

When asked, members of families of Indian origin who have lived in Botswana for many generations, self-identified with the term "Batswana-Indian". This is a combination, in their minds, of the racial classifications of South African and British Colonial history and their understanding of the negotiability of ethnic categories which pertain in that country. It is a

statement about the ways that their historical struggle to carve out a place in the territory has earned them the right to that identity. It is, moreover, testimony to the ethnic-nationalist project of independent Botswana that this term has come into usage. Citizens of Botswana, including non-Tswana minority groups, are technically referred to as “Batswana”.⁵² This is the term used to refer to those who self-identify as such, especially in later periods in which local identities and political developments became increasingly important to that population. It is also the term which exemplifies the central theme of this history: It names practical, economic, political and social spaces that residents of Indian origin made for themselves through the manoeuvring of commercial and political influence.

The depth of the ill-feeling to Indian presence in the territory in colonial times can often be best seen in post-colonial realities. Largely freed from the limitations of metropolitan politics, independent Botswana immediately took on precisely the language of their colonial predecessors. This was partially, but not simply, a function of the British expatriates who, in practice, continued to run the government for some years after independence. Instead it is a part of post-colonial nationalisms’ inheritance of the language of colonial states which was a part of the development of the modern nation state with its boundaries and border controls. Those outside the now “national” boundaries of the territory were not simply outsiders, however, they were variously threatening to the access to the growing riches inside the territory after the discovery of diamonds. The division of the threats, at least at first, placed other Africans and Asians at the top of a list. This eventually softened in political thinking because of a need for skills and investment which India could provide. As a result a new wave of immigration began in the 1980s, one hundred years after the first.

Methods

This research used a combination of archival documentary and oral sources. Because of the dearth of literature on the topic of Indian settlement in the Protectorate, I chose to start the research process in South Africa with some exploratory interviews with Indians formerly

⁵² Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987).

from Botswana, or with family connections to the country. These were, for the most part, open-ended, one-on-one life history interviews with a focus on family and networks. Once in Botswana, I used the social networks of those already interviewed to gain introductions to further interviewees. A notable limitation of this method throughout the project was a lack of gender parity. Throughout the project I managed to interview only two women. I was only once introduced to a woman who might offer an oral history. The shops and other businesses I visited rarely had prominent female figures to whom I could introduce myself. This is in keeping with an historic pattern in which the female portion of the Indian population was for a long time much smaller than the male portion and tended to take on a less public role in business and politics. Once the preliminary interviews had painted a general picture of the themes that might be investigated further, the next step was to conduct a trip to Botswana to explore archival sources whilst continuing with the collection of oral histories.

The limitations and advantages of oral resources in the study of history have a very long and fraught history themselves. Arguments about the nature and fallibility of living memory, intention and shifting contexts etc. are well worn. Similarly counter arguments about the many of the same limitations in documentary sources, the intentions and fallibility of those who produced those documents and the pressing need to hear voices not present in them. What emerges in this study from time to time, however, are unusual dynamics in the production and remembering of oral histories over time, which make them useful in more ways than as simple records. These are dynamics unusual to the study of migrants and, in fact, emerge out of the core concern of this study – the process by which migrants create a space for themselves in their new homes. These dynamics in the histories are not just about how the making of that place is remembered, however. Indeed, this process of remembering is itself central to the process of finding and making the place. It is about writing themselves into the historical narratives of Botswana, South Africa, India and the globe. It is therefore interesting both as a source and in the analysis of its implications as a part of the historical process. This will hopefully make itself evident at various points throughout this study.

Documentary records largely came from the Botswana National Archives depot in Gaborone. Exploring this archive was interesting for several reasons. First, according to some of the archivists, the archive was moved from Mafikeng, where the colonial

government had been located, to Gaborone at independence. In the process, the new government archivists decided to scrap the colonial cataloguing system and produce a new one. This made it impossible to corroborate references of research done in the pre-Independence era. The new system also appears to categorise the sources under only a few collections such as “Secretariat” which refer to more or less the whole of the internal civil service of Bechuanaland. Colonial records are not catalogued by department or sectors of government, but rather in index booklets of key words. It is not clear if the set of indexes is part of the cataloguing system that replaced the colonial era one or a later addition to it. If there are also ordinary catalogues, I was not permitted to see them. These idiosyncrasies in the archiving system made it difficult to explore the documentation as I would have liked to. For later records, however, especially those emerging from the office of the presidency, there is a separate cataloguing system which operates in a more traditional way and makes research of the post-colonial era more systematic.

It is also not clear whether the moving of the archive and the changes to organising principles and systems resulted in any loss of documents. It should be borne in mind that recently released documents from the British National Archives have shown that one of the duties of departing Colonial officials during the decolonisation process, was to destroy documents that might prove embarrassing to the British government at a later stage. While I managed to find references to Indian settlers and related immigration and business topics, it was difficult to establish a continuous flow of information on a topic.

The majority of sources from the national archives were located in broad “secretariat” files. They included a lot of the correspondence and the minutes of meetings between divisional commissioners (who were also divisional magistrates), the government secretary’s office and the Resident and High Commissioners. There were also copies of local surveys submitted to the government offices in Mafikeng, important court documents, hearing records and the odd private letter.

The shortage of documents referring to Indian settlers in the colonial era, assuming that a fair proportion of them still survive, tells two interconnected stories on its own. One is that the undesirable nature of the Indian population to the Colonial authorities led them to attempt to neglect any formal reference to their presence. Such references would suggest the recognition of some obligations to that population as residents and subjects, as will be

shown. The other is that the small size of the population in the colonial era meant that that embarrassing and undesirable population could be more or less ignored in official practices and be dealt with by more informal means. Those informal methods and the official preference for them will also be shown through the dissertation.

Press archives helped in researching more recent concerns. Government publications, such as census and parliamentary reports, laws and most of the High Commission Government Gazettes, were found in the Cullen library at the University of the Witwatersrand. There was one private collection of documents and a collection of photographs that were made available to me during the oral history investigation. The documents were very useful for getting a general grasp of how immigration took from the small scale view of a single family's records which span India, Bechuanaland and independent Botswana. Two of the photographs can be found in chapter one.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one is set in the period of the arrival of Indian settlers in the Protectorate from the 1880s to the 1930s. The economic and ecological conditions of this arrival, as well as the development of a reaction from colonial authorities to the arrival and expansion, are central to that story. The chapter outlines a set of strategies and systems that Indian settlers used to respond to both colonial reactions and the economic specificities of the territory. These focus on business strategies, political manoeuvring and informal methods of establishing their presence as a kind of *fait accompli* in the territory.

Chapter two picks up the story of that *fait accompli* and explores the development of particular, locally specific, methods by which it was achieved, focussing on sources from the 1930s and ending in 1941. It discusses the ambivalent attitudes of colonial authorities to Indian trade in the territory which tended to promote trade and its expansion as a vital feature of the colonial project, but was vehemently opposed to Indian settlement. The physical and economic characteristics of the territory limited commercial investment, however, forcing the administration to allow some Indian immigration to fill the gaps. The coincidences of location and the political conditions in the territory, especially in relation to trade, the nature

of the chieftaincies and their power, was to create a deep and complex relationship between Indian residents and their chiefly hosts. That relationship would come to form a kind of chiefly representation on questions like the expansion of trade. That representation produced a sufficiently stable space in the political and social system for Indian residents that they could eventually use it as a starting point for direct challenges to the colonial system and their exclusion from areas reserved for white settlers and rights to freehold tenure.

Chapter three takes up the story from the beginning of the Second World War and returns the focus to a broader, global set of factors in the Bechuanaland Protectorate up to independence, leading to the consolidation of Batswana-Indian identities and positions in the economy and politics of the society in the face of both continued official animosity and increased pressure to moderate it. The beginning of the chapter deals with the economic and political impacts of the war on India and South Africa and with the process of decolonisation that immediately followed it. This sets the scene for both new political and economic conditions in the Protectorate, as well as new questions of identity, citizenship and belonging for its Indian residents, especially in light of the experiences in East Africa and in the rise of Apartheid across the border. Importantly, the newly independent India presented new passport regimes with new questions of belonging and colonial responsibility, which were immediately raised across the diaspora. The march of independence across Africa led Britain into new ways of thinking, talking and writing about their remaining colonial mandates. In Bechuanaland the mandate was to prepare the country for an independence that would suit British interests – one in which there was a local middle class, prospects for “development” and little embarrassing and costly ethnic strife. All of this meant a continuation of old antagonisms towards Indian residents, even as their population was swollen by new arrivals from Apartheid South Africa, and as their investment expanded. Again Indian adaptability meant that they would play a role in the independence process and manage to secure their positions in the new country through investments and through participation in the politics of the time.

Chapter four deals with Indian immigration, settlement and investment in the years immediately preceding independence and in independent Botswana. It picks up the discussion of the preparation of Bechuanaland for independence and the final colonial project of managing that process. That management would contain the same ambiguous

attitudes to Indian settlement as before. There was particular concern about property, business ownership and immigration, whilst at the same time larger political and diplomatic pressures forced the recognition of representation and, eventually, citizenship rights. The chapter shows a clear continuity in the discourse of the post-colonial authorities and those that preceded them in relation to protectionist xenophobia and racially motivated discrimination, yet without the checks on power that were represented by the metropolitan politics in Britain. It shows how, similarly to earlier British colonial experiences, the need for both investment and professional skills to make the most of the new-found mineral wealth of the country required a softening of those attitudes. This produced its own ambivalence towards a new set of globalised Indian immigrants with professional qualifications and connections across the world who have become vitally important to the economy of Botswana. The study uses several cases, focussing especially on the case of the Choppies Group of Companies who own 30-35% of the consumer retail market, to illustrate different ways in which immigrant Indian professionals came to settle in Botswana, start businesses there and arrange for further Indian immigration. Along with these stories of new immigration comes the story of Botswana's increasing globalisation, with its mineral wealth, especially diamonds, and its encouragement of investment and settlement. This is contrasted with the popular and official xenophobia which persists, again moderated by the continued desire to reap economic benefits of investment and immigration. These have produced new conditions to which immigrants have to adapt.

Ramotswa Road: The place of arriving Indian settlers in the Bechuanaland Protectorate

Introduction

This chapter tells the story of the arrival and the expansion of Indian immigrant settlement in the Bechuanaland Protectorate from the 1880s to the mid-1930s. It explains this process by placing it into local, regional and global political and economic contexts and then explaining how these played out in the lives of the immigrants themselves. It begins by briefly discussing the history of trade in the region, which formed the basis for early Indian immigration. It then describes the arrival of the first Indian immigrants, and places that in the context of the global Indian diaspora. A detailed analysis of the patterns and models which emerged from these movements in the region and in Bechuanaland specifically reveals the logics and pressures which shaped settlement and trade. The discussion then proceeds to the local colonial and global imperial political and administrative context of this migration and settlement and its practical implications. A constellation of local demands, tensions and ideals shaped, over time, the imperial project in Bechuanaland in particular ways. The ambiguities of that project produced certain sentiments among settler lobbies and law-makers concerning Indian imperial subjects in the Protectorate, which in turn led to a range of discriminatory, but often unstable, anti-Asian policies. These include both immigration controls and forms of local discrimination designed to discourage settlement.

The chapter thus introduces the key ideas necessary to understanding the process of immigration and settlement of people of Indian origin in Botswana. These will set the scene for subsequent chapters, which explain in greater detail the strategies for continuing to live in the territory and the related production of what many of Botswana's citizens of Indian origin now call their Botswana-Indian identity.

Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate

Indian immigration into the Bechuanaland Protectorate was fundamentally a response to opportunities for trade. Thus the presence of Indian immigrants in the territory has to be read first within the broader context of the history of trade in the region. The primary economic activity in colonial Bechuanaland, outside of the railway that linked the mines of Rhodesia with the Cape, was trade in skins, ostrich feathers, some ivory and, vitally, after the South African war and with the development of the Witwatersrand, cattle. This was a trading economy that had in fact predated the formal colonisation of the southern Tswana, with Griqua, Rolong and Tlhaping trading far north into Namibia and Angola, as well as a long-established European trader presence.⁵³ This trade became key to European settlement of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the integration of the territory into the global imperial capitalist economy. The argument is put forward strongly by F S Arellano-López: “Unlike other areas of Southern Africa where capitalist expansion was driven by mining and the expansion of commercial agriculture, trade was the basis of capitalist development [in the Protectorate]”.⁵⁴

White settler trader-farmers, apart from trading in skins and feathers, followed a model of buying up African cattle, fattening them on large ranches in the “European blocks” near the railway line and exporting them to the booming mining towns of Kimberley, the Witwatersrand and in Rhodesia. Bechuanaland became a vital source of meat for those towns before the advent of cold storage and transportation. This was key to the wealth of Batswana chiefs and the richer, more powerful Batswana families: while chiefs continued to draw considerable power and income from control over labour, chiefs and other major livestock owners could also pay taxes and even become rich by trading cattle and other goods with the settlers. Through this trade they could also obtain otherwise scarce goods, but more importantly, they could potentially avoid being forced to send their men to the mines in South Africa in order to pay the taxes. Eventually Rinderpest (cattle plague) and drought in

⁵³ Kevin Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900* (Braamfontein: South Africa, 1985). p. 21

⁵⁴ Fanny Sonia Arellano-López, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate” (Phd, Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2008).,p. iii

the 1890s, as well as a foot and mouth scare in the 1930s, lead to a growth in labour migration but trade remained central to local economic systems.⁵⁵ The connection between the taxation and the cash system at the stores with the labour importation regime in South Africa was most evidently represented by the many settler traders who acted as labour recruiters or as agents for recruiters.⁵⁶ This was the economic environment into which Indian traders found themselves expanding in the Protectorate: in direct competition with established British and South African trader-farmer settlers who had the backing of a colonial government system.

African residents were refused rights to trade in the territory altogether. This was a firm policy of the colonial administration on the grounds that the credit regulations of the territory and the technical requirements for the issue of licences were seen as beyond the capacity or willingness of Africans. Other arguments included a discomfort with the potential dominance of trade by chiefs and other political elites and the potential for abuse should that be the case. Settlers and officials also argued that failure was inevitable under the competitive conditions, because they felt Africans were at bottom incapable, and as such Africans needed to be “protected” from trade in favour of raising cattle or selling their labour. In short the argument was that African trade would *encourage* informality and would be uncompetitive where it was not coercive. The refusal of African trading rights will be explored more fully in chapter two.

Thus Africans were refused access to trading rights and White traders were either unwilling or unable to expand their trading practices into many of the smaller and more far flung areas. These small markets became a vacuum which, along with certain administrative factors, encouraged some small scale Indian trading operations to expand into the territory and ultimately, consolidate their positions there.

Arrival of Indian traders

The Indian diaspora’s presence in the Bechuanaland Protectorate was essentially an expansion of the “passenger”⁵⁷ Indian traders in South Africa. These were immigrants who

⁵⁵ Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900*. p. 125

⁵⁶ Arellano-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.”

⁵⁷ As opposed to indentured or formerly indentured Indians

had paid for their own passage seeking business and employment opportunities in other parts of the empire. These “passengers” came both as established business people with capital and the backing of local and global business networks, and as workers, sometimes shop assistants or labourers.⁵⁸ They were almost exclusively from Gujarat, largely from either Kathiawad or Surat,⁵⁹ and largely Muslim – almost exclusively so in the Protectorate era. These “passenger” traders had been expanding their commercial operations from Durban into the hinterlands of the Transvaal and Northern Cape since the 1870s, with expansion accelerating during the mineral revolution. Those “passenger” networks expanded from Gujarat into Mauritius between the 1830s and 1860s. Malaria and declining fortunes with the opening of the Suez Canal then pushed those networks to seek new realms of opportunity in Natal in the 1870s.⁶⁰ These systematic expansions of the “sub-imperial ‘Indian Empire’”⁶¹ through imperial channels to other settled dominions and colonies should be read as an overlaying of the British Empire onto an already long-standing tradition of mobility and trade in the region. Thus the mobile traders of India should be seen as part of a centuries old, adaptive diasporic tradition that reacted to imperial expansion as it unfolded, much as the Hadrami diaspora of Engseng Ho’s description responded to successive impositions of Portuguese and English power on the Indian Ocean world (and on Yemen itself). This adaptation involved, in part, taking advantage of the opening of new markets further inland and further south than had previously been the case – as with Mauritius then Natal and inland into South and East Africa.

In the 1880s, a group of men of the Chand family arrived from Gujarat to join their relatives in Dinokana, a niche rural area in north-western South Africa near to the border of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the railway from the Cape to Bulawayo.⁶² Shortly after

⁵⁸ Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, “The Passenger Indian as Worker: Indian Immigrants in Cape Town in the Early Twentieth Century,” *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (April 2009): 111–134.

⁵⁹ Goolam Vahed, “An ‘Imagined Community’ in Diaspora: Gujaratis in South Africa,” *South Asian History and Culture* 1, no. 4 (October 12, 2010): 615–629 and Bhana and Brain, *Setting Down Roots*.

⁶⁰ Vishnu Padayachee and Robert Morrell, “Indian Merchants and Dukawallahs in the Natal Economy, c1875–1914,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991): 71–102.

⁶¹ Nile Green, *Bombay Islam*.

or for a thorough discussion of this notion see: Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (University of California Press, 2008).

⁶² Naseer Chand, Iqbal Chand, and Fateema Khan, *Life and Family History*, March 2013. A few informants cited the Chand family was as the first family to move to the protectorate but other sources, like Amanze (1998) and Haron and Maano (2011), have made claims about names also drawn from oral sources. There appears to be little consensus except the general agreement on the early to mid-1880s as a period of arrival

arriving they were advised to follow the leapfrog pattern from Dinokana into a new and untouched niche market in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. They would settle in Moshupa and Ramotswa, and proceed to expand in a similar pattern further inland. Once settled in each location, the family would then have other members of the family and other families join them and proceed in similar fashion. Many people who came to the Protectorate also operated on both sides of the border. They would set themselves up first on one side, around Dinokana, Zeerust, Mafikeng or other nearby towns and then try their luck on the other side. Alternately, they would expand their own businesses from one area into the other either personally or through a relative or other representative. For many years this expansion was limited to 5 or 6 extended, endogamous “pioneer” families.⁶³ The new shopkeepers would build the early stores themselves and would stock them from the South African side as general dealerships. They would proudly acquire more or less anything customers requested but dealt largely in consumer goods and tools – blankets, cloth, simple medicines and grain being amongst the key items. Travelling to restock and fill orders forms the starting point of much of the oral history remembered in this area.

The expansion of Indian traders in South Africa in response to the mineral revolution was not simply an influx into the centres of mining activity; it also involved an expansion into smaller towns “*Op alle grenzen en langs alle groote wegen*”⁶⁴ (on every border and next to every major route). This followed a model of settlement that emphasised the use of niche markets to facilitate further expansion within a business and as a part of a network of related enterprises. Once a point of trade was established near a border and/or important transport infrastructure, the business began to serve a local market. Family and shop assistants could then be summoned or recruited to work in the store. In many cases these shop assistants, brothers and cousins would use the opportunity of the income, bed and board at the shop as a springboard into new markets either across the border or further down the railway line or road. This could provide an opportunity for the host shop owner to expand into a new territory through partial or whole ownership of the new shops. The original owner stood to

and Ramotswa and Moshupa being the 2 earliest settlements. There is no obvious documentary source dealing with settlement in that period though there is reference in the archives to Indians who entered the area temporarily during the gold rush at Francistown in the 1860s.

⁶³ Ibid. Fazlur Moorad, Life and Family History, March 2013.

⁶⁴ From an anti-Indian petition from the Transvaal in 1874 cited in: Bhana and Brain, Setting Down Roots. p

benefit, providing credit for the building and stocking of the shop, or being able to make claims on, and connections to, the developing market via the social networks developed through support. An interesting example of this is the border between the Natal and Cape Colonies and the Boer Republics before the South African War. The major areas of settlement in that period were in towns that bordered the Transvaal and could be used as springboards into it and the Witwatersrand. Similarly, the border of British Bechuanaland (not the Protectorate) and the Transvaal became an important area of settlement.⁶⁵

The pattern of expansion and settlement described was standard in the diaspora as a whole but at the same time it adapted to the specific conditions in Bechuanaland. Firstly, the Protectorate was an enormous, arid place – 600 000 square kilometres, 85 per cent of which was desert or semi-desert inhabited by a relatively poor population measurable in the tens of thousands. This was a daunting proposition for anyone and meant that most of the European settlers, who dominated trade for much of the colonial period, were unwilling to expand much beyond the boundaries of the “European block” areas in which they had farms and towns near to the railway lines. As a result the expansion of Indian businesses was quickly pushed out into the desert and onto another frontier. This frontier became revered by subsequent generations as indicative of the sacrifice and intrepidity of the entrepreneurial spirit of the “pioneers”.⁶⁶ This identification is similar to that which James Belich ascribes to Frederick Jackson Turner’s “The Frontier in American History”, in which the ability to make a success of oneself through working a virgin environment became part of the production of a certain ‘American-ness’ in relation to dominant Anglo-Saxon frontier images.⁶⁷

The Indian memories of the “frontier” illustrate the core of the process by which the population came increasingly to identify with their environment, which in turn would come to shape the emergent Batswana-Indian identity. These memories include many discussions of the wildlife in the desert, in particular stories about experiences with lions, and with the

⁶⁵ Surendra Bhana and J. B. Brain, *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860-1911* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1990).

⁶⁶ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*. Moorad, *Life and Family History*. Ayoob Khan, *Life History*, June 2013.

⁶⁷ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (OUP Oxford, 2009), p 6. These ideas were taken on in the African context in: Igor Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Indiana University Press, 1987).

difficulty of getting from place to place. The latter often involved cutting the first paths and roads for ox carts and, later, large American trucks to move between their shops in the villages and desert and the railway line at Ramotswa, or getting stuck and waiting for days for rescue. These stories are accompanied with descriptions of a free-for-all hunting culture both for the pot and for trophies – in particular for lions, the bogeymen of the bush.⁶⁸ The characterisation of hunting amongst such settlers is one which deals directly with ideologies and masculinities associated with the frontier, with mastering wild nature by virtue of individual merit in the form of hunting skills.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*. Mrs Khan, *Life and Family History*, June 2013. Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

he way that hunting, especially of trophy animals, feeds into the stories of the frontier and its harsh conditions is reminiscent of the large literature on hunting in colonial Africa which tends to focus on the devastating scale of hunting by colonial officials, settlers and visitors in juxtaposition to the “poaching” of game by native Africans. For example: William Beinart and Peter A. Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (Routledge, 1995); Hennie Grobler, “Dissecting the Kruger Myth with Blunt Instruments: A Rebuttal of Jane Carruthers’s View,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 455–72; Roben Mutwira, “Southern Rhodesian Wildlife Policy (1890-1953): A Question of Condoning Game Slaughter?,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 2 (January 1, 1989): 250–62; E. I. Steinhart, “Hunters, Poachers and Gamekeepers: Towards A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya,” *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 02 (1989): 247–64. This literature does not deal with the separate category represented by Indians and how their colonial status might influence the characterisation of their hunting activities. The Botswana National Archive do not throw much more light on the question, instead showing an authority preoccupied with the businesses and mobility of Indian residents and immigrants.

⁶⁹ John M. MacKenzie, “Chivalry, Social Darwinism and Ritualised Killing: The Hunting Ethos in Central Africa up to 1914,” in *Conservation in Africa: Peoples, Policies and Practice*, ed. Richard H. Grove and David Anderson (Cambridge University Press, 1988).



Male members of the Khan family of Molepolole proudly display their trophies

The oral record makes it clear that communal and Muslim identities associated with common Indian origins were also woven into the local frontier identity described. Related to the stories of hunts and dangerous journeys, for example, are stories about the need to maintain religious and cultural values and to get together with other families on religious occasions

and for weddings and funerals. The image that is conjured up is of families getting into ox wagons and later trucks to make a days-long trek through lion territory; stopping in order to shoot a springbok for dinner; celebrating Eid in a small house with cousins who had made a similar journey; and stocking up on necessities or collecting orders for stores. Many would travel to Mafikeng, Zeerust or Johannesburg from Ramotswa and Moshupa in order to make the best deals with wholesalers and other suppliers. Such tales of hardship and energetic frontier mentality produce a sense of belonging and a sense that residence was earned. At the same time it maintained and reinforced an independently Muslim and Indian identity. The latter identity has undergone several reconfigurations over time, particularly in relation to its changing use in South Africa and globally. It is viewed retrospectively by some informants, especially in light of Indian Partition and the rise of a pan-Islamic identity, as problematic.

These stories also highlight the incredibly small scale and great dispersal of the settlement of Indian traders in which there was often only one small trader in a village. The profit from that business would be extremely marginal but would have to be saved in order simply to restock or to expand into new stores. Having a second store, or a linking yourself to one, is likely to have become much more important in this context than in the more heavily populated parts of South Africa. This tendency to live as cheaply as possible and keep prices low is something that was particularly concerning to both the European settlers in the Protectorate and the colonial government.⁷⁰ According to oral sources, the closing times of Indian shops was a particularly sore point for European traders who closed early. Having flexible opening hours was an important local adaptation because customers would often have to travel very long distances to get to one of the thinly distributed shops and so would sometimes arrive at night.⁷¹ While it is not clear whether this is actually the case, it should be read as part of the productive narrative that the children and grandchildren of those shopkeepers produced about their heritage. This narrative, along with the stories of lions and

⁷⁰This was a sentiment repeated by objectors in response to Indian licence applications from the 1920s onwards, e.g.: Botswana National Archives (BNA)/Secretariat (S) 7/11, "Kika-Bangwaketse Reserve. Question of granting trading licence to Indians", 1925-1952 also in discussions about Indian migration in general: BNA/S 314/9, "Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society", 1934; BNA/S 90/7, "Indians in the BP", 1942.

⁷¹ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*; Ayoob Khan, *Life History*.

becoming stranded in the wilderness, emphasises hardship and hard work that, as I will show in chapter 2, earned the self-identification Batswana-Indian.

The production of these narratives and the processes that they describe are, and were, responses to the physical and demographic challenges of the territory. However, those described by informants as the pioneers of the Batswana-Indian population moved into the territory over an extended period within which local colonialism, and the broader imperial project, were steadily changing. Thus the development of a settled Batswana-Indian population, and their identification as such, cannot be understood without reference to the changing official administrative conditions to which they were subject.

The Imperial project in Bechuanaland

The period in which the early Indian pioneer immigrants entered the territory is important in terms of administrative and legal conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and in the Empire. It is also important in light of the development of the broader Indian diaspora as it expanded into other parts of the empire. The 1880s and 90s, when the first Indian men moved to Bechuanaland, coincided with the official formation of the Protectorate administration by the British in 1885.⁷² This population was therefore a fundamental part of the Protectorate, from the very start. The administration of the Protectorate went through waves of growth and centralisation in the early 20th century and demonstrated a recurrent concern with the existing Indian population and its potential growth. That population was increasingly out of place in the design of the broader paternal, extractive and modernist colonial project into which the territory was intended to fit.

The administration of the Protectorate was initially limited to a few military policemen tasked with defending the borders from Boer and German expansion. The administration's importance increased, however, as the British South Africa Company's railway line between the Cape and Rhodesia was built through Bechuanaland. This bypassed the Transvaal and Free State territories and was the ultimate source of growing imperial activity in the territory – not least the immigration of Indian merchants. By the 1920s Colonial office interest in the

⁷² Proclamation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. 1885

territory as a location of greater regional geopolitical importance, especially as a potential British counterweight to Afrikaner majority in the Union of South Africa, again increased the importance of local administration.

This is a relatively simplistic explanation of a colonial policy that oscillated between more developmentalist “mercenary” administrations and a “missionary” school of paternalistic administrators. “Missionary” administrations have been characterised as having broadly sought to “protect” the Batswana from settlers and their companies and limit the damage of the proposed incorporation into Rhodesia or the Union of South Africa. As described by Parsons “mercenary” administration, on the other hand, broadly sought to encourage British settlement and exploitation of the land and resources (and thereby undermine chiefly authority) with a view to optimising their eventual incorporation.

Before the arrival of Charles Rey, an infamous “modernising” Resident Commissioner of the 1930s, both of these types of administrators were sourced locally. They came either from British Army officers who had served in the region, especially in South Africa and Basutoland for many years, or from long standing missionary families from South Africa and Basutoland. Crudely put, it was the former who tended to the more “mercenary tradition” and the latter who tended to the “missionary”.⁷³ In both cases attitudes to immigration appear to have been informed largely by experiences in other territories and shaped in anticipation of great influx rather than in response to existing influx. For the purposes of discussing the state as it appeared to incoming migrants, the changes in administration over time are most important in the increasingly direct involvement in actually governing the territory. For Indian settlers this oscillation between “mercenary” and “missionary” appears to have impacted first the particular mix of racial protectionist (regarding settler interests) and paternalistic (regarding African interests) anti-Indian sentiments, and second the degree to which Indian immigration and settlement was to be centrally regulated.

1930 was a watershed year in this process. It was in this year that Resident Commissioner Charles Rey came into power. While Rey would best fit into the “Mercenary” category, he

⁷³ Neil Parsons, “Colonial Administration Pages 2: Charles Rey and Previous Resident Commissioners of Bechuanaland,” *University of Botswana History Department*, accessed October 18, 2013, <http://www.thuto.org/ubh/bw/colad/colad2.htm>.

was part of a newer generation of professional colonial administrators recruited out of the Oxbridge system with little local knowledge and few local allegiances. These administrators' focus was on the grand geopolitical interests of Britain which left little patience for the small local spheres in which their predecessors tended to operate. Rey was archetypal. During the transitional period Rey described the Resident Commissioner he was to replace as "the damndest old fool I have ever struck, the most incompetent bungler, and the most pig-headed ass". Parsons and Crowder explain his dispatch to Bechuanaland as an act of investment in the professionalization of the administration in the High Commission Territories on the part of the Colonial Office.⁷⁴ His responsibility in the territory was to make the territory both pay for itself and become desirable enough to settlers such that, on being incorporated into the Union or Rhodesia, it could form a counterbalance to Afrikaans nationalist influence in the region⁷⁵.

It should be noted that the reasoning of British government in dispatching Rey to Bechuanaland was part of a more general global geopolitical outlook that was emerging in Britain in the uneasy years after the First World War. That outlook was one in which, it was felt by some like Secretary Leopold Amery in the Dominions and Colonial Offices in London, Britain could potentially be subsumed by an emerging "Pan-European" power bloc while the emerging economic power in the Dominions would become increasingly independent and become a part of a "Pan-American" economic power bloc. Alternatively, Amery and his supporters (including Rey) believed the Metropole could play a more direct role in the development of the dominions and thus produce a third option in which a British Empire bloc could be secured with dominions becoming profitable outposts, tightly connected to Britain economically and administratively.⁷⁶ In short, the Protectorate was to be recast as a settler colony like Australia, South Africa or Rhodesia. But where those dominions had simply responded to European influxes, professional administrators were to

⁷⁴ Charles Rey, *Monarch of All I Survey: Bechuanaland Diaries, 1929-1937*, ed. Neil Parsons and Michael Crowder (James Currey Publishers, 1988).

⁷⁵ Michael Crowder, *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh: A Tale of Colonial Folly and Injustice : Bechuanaland 1933* (Yale University Press, 1988).

⁷⁶ Rey, *Monarch of All I Survey*. Pages xvi-xvii.

The principle is also touched on in the preface of Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset: Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921* (Methuen, 1970). p ix, and 1-3. Though he deals primarily with the consequences of the process in the 1960s it quickly becomes clear that Beloff, an ex-administrator, was himself a keen adherent to the thinking of people like Amery and Rey.

engineer this into a modernist colonialism. This history of post-World War I colonialism gives us an unusual insight into the contemporary thinking around the nature of settler colonies, their value and how they should be governed. The application of this ideology to a colony like the Protectorate and to the subversion of Indian settlement is even more informative.

This modernist project first required economic development and the settlement of loyal British citizens in order to proceed positively. Making the Protectorate pay for its own way would, in theory, be the secret to further settlement and vice versa – if the territory could be made more prosperous, through mining and increased exports of cattle, it would attract settlers who would develop it further. On top of this, the condition of the world economy and its effects on politics in the Metropole increased the pressure to make the colonies self-sustaining and to liberalise the treatment of colonial subjects. Therefore agriculture needed to be developed and mineral exploration licences were proposed.⁷⁷

The imperial project in Bechuanaland was *defined* by the existence of a territorial border line. For Indian settlers it was the ways in which that border then worked to limit movement (or failed to) and facilitated settlement and business practices which were important. This border line must then be discussed in its own right.

The Nature and Role of the Border

The borders of Bechuanaland and Botswana were absolutely fundamental to the history of that territory. It was for the establishment of those lines on the map that the chiefs called when they sought protection from the British crown.⁷⁸ It was those lines that asserted British claims against Boers from the Transvaal, the German Empire in Namibia and the British South Africa Company in the east.⁷⁹ Moreover, while the border was originally simply a marker of geopolitical control it soon became a tool for raising revenue to fund the

⁷⁷ Rey, Monarch of All I Survey.

⁷⁸ Morton and Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana*.

Neil Parsons, King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain Through African Eyes (University of Chicago Press, 1998).

James A. Robinson and Q. Neil Parsons, "State Formation and Governance in Botswana," *Journal of African Economies* 15 (2006): 100–140.

⁷⁹ Parsons, King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen.

administration and then a tool for protecting revenue inside the territory. It was for this reason that the settlement of Indian traders on the railhead at Ramotswa took place – Ramotswa was a major point of entry for goods to the rest of the Protectorate. The border was far from ideally constituted, however. It split four of the southern Batswana paramountcies – the Bakgatla, Bamalete, Batlokwa and Barolong – causing those populations to straddle the borders for work, land and politics.⁸⁰ White settlers on the South African side in the early 20th century, on the other hand, interacted with the border and its relative porosity as something insecure and threatening on large scale.⁸¹

Similarly, Indian settlers who served the area on both sides came to straddle the border. This is true regardless of the distance of their settlement from it because the businesses of the Indian traders throughout the territory were based on resupply from the larger towns in South Africa (wholesalers would only move into the Protectorate much later). This cross border business took place through the intermediary family and business connections which had brought them to the area in the first place. Moreover, many would send their children to be educated at the Indian school in Zeerust because there were no suitable schools in the Protectorate and they would visit extended family for religious and family occasions. Many of the early families have ancestors buried in South Africa since there was no cemetery at Ramotswa at that time. Moreover some families conducted businesses in a string of towns across the north-western part of South Africa as well as in the Protectorate. What is most interesting about this straddling of the border is that it continued from the relative lawlessness of the 1880s to the increasing centrality and discrimination in the 1930s and after. It has essentially remained central to the nature of the population in question to this day.⁸²

The role of this border and the Indian stores at Ramotswa are probably best illustrated in the works of Herman Charles Bosman's from the Marico district. Oom Schalk Lourens, the

⁸⁰Camilla M. Cockerton, "Less a Barrier, More a Line: The Migration of Bechuanaland Women to South Africa, 1850–1930," *Journal of Historical Geography* 22, no. 3 (1996): 291–307. Morton, R F, "Chiefs and Ethnic Unity in Two Colonial Worlds: The Bakgatla Baga Kgafela of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Transvaal, 1872–1966," in *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884–1984*, ed. Asiwaju, A. I. (C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1985), 127–54.

⁸¹Andrew MacDonald, "Colonial Trespassers in the Making of South Africa's International Borders, 1900 to C. 1950" (PhD, Cambridge University, 2012).

⁸²Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History; AS Dada, Life and Family History, June 2013; Ayoob Khan, Life History; Moorad, Life and Family History; Mrs Khan, Life and Family History.

narrator of many of these tales, makes regular reference to the importance of cattle smuggling to the farmers in the district. He speaks breezily of farmers visiting the Protectorate to trade beads for cattle and skins, visit African chiefs and be scandalised by their neighbours' sexual liaisons across racial and national boundaries. Ramoutsa itself was the closest railway stop to the Marico and the Indian store marks the connection of the very small world of the local farmers to the larger world. The store comes to represent the movement of the world in opposition to the static, timeless bubble of Oom Schalk Lourens' Marico. It is from this store that the finest cloth and clothing comes. It is here that settlers come from around the district to marvel at the new goods and to meet and talk about "politics, and the mealie-crops, and the miltsiekte [anthrax]". It is here that the Indian store clerk, showing his worldly connections in contrast to the parochial Afrikaner farmer, offers to order blotting paper from England for the bemused Oom Schalk. It is at "Ramoutsa" (Ramotswa) too that the Indian storekeeper, set up by the narrator as a cheater who sells "burnt mealies" as coffee and "Kalahari sand" as sugar, threatens to outcompete Oom Schalk as the region's primary story teller. He offered fantastical tales of princesses and decorated elephants, leading Oom Schalk saying "I began to think that there was much reason in what some of the speakers said in the election meetings about the Indian problem." In short, the border, its Indian residents, and the ability to cross it, was central enough in the lives of the people of the Marico in that time to form the core of a series of settler narratives.⁸³

Anti-Indian Sentiments

An unforeseen factor along the border that quickly attracted concern from the Protectorate administration was the immigration of Indians. The problem was that, in spite of their presence in the colonies and dominions, Indians were rarely envisaged as any part of the imperial project of white settlers and economic "development" at all. The result was a need to produce a category distinct from "settler" that could be controlled and managed – hence "immigrant" - whilst concurrently settlers would be encouraged. Such settlers could themselves fall somewhere in between categories, finding themselves managed with some level of suspicion but not discouraged. In Bechuanaland examples include a Cypriot

⁸³ Bosman, *The Complete Oom Schalk Lourens Stories*.

population in the north around Maun who were viewed with some consternation⁸⁴ and Afrikaners along the borders were often accused of being involved with arms and stock smuggling and illicit alcohol sale.⁸⁵ This distinction is central to subsequent racialised policies regarding mobility and settlement in the empire as a whole. The distinction was this: the settler was part of the project of the empire while the immigrant was a potential threat to it. The presumed character of the immigrant/settler defined their categorisation, which in turn was defined by the prejudice of those in charge at a given time. The notion that global diasporas could be threatening to the modernist projects of settler colonial nations has been discussed in depth in the work of Adam McKeown.⁸⁶ McKeown describes how American administrators, developing their own settler project – viewed Chinese immigrants as ciphers of pre-modern degradation. Officials set about monitoring, restricting, and sometimes (as officials believed) ‘protecting’ new arrivals from what they imagined was the demoralization of their compatriots. According to McKeown border controls were designed to incorporate immigrants into the “modern” state system by subjecting them to a process through which they were documented and state-defined logics applied to decide their legitimacy or illegitimacy. The principles behind the implementation of border controls are not simply the desire to keep up with the global systems of “modern” control and use it to differentiate from the pre-modern, as in McKeown, but also more grossly paranoid principles.

In “Drawing the Global Colour Line”, Lake and Reynolds describe a settler-colonial world which was increasingly self-consciously “White” in a kind of backlash against stirrings of independent identities amongst “colonised and coloured peoples... everywhere in revolt” who, if nothing else, constituted a ‘demographic threat’ by the sheer weight of numbers.⁸⁷ This backlash itself was a response to the perceived decline of the centrality of European colonising powers globally in the face of the rise of Asian powers and population movements

⁸⁴ BNA/S 226/2, “Greeks in the Bechuanaland Protectorate” 1939

⁸⁵ Rey, *Monarch of All I Survey*. And in: BNA/S 148/10, “Immigration law in the BP”, “Correspondence 1932”, regarding: “undesirable Europeans living along our border at the Limpopo River, in the Transvaal... not owners of land. These are persons who make their living by poaching and selling biltong... traffic with Protectorate natives in arms and ammunition and, probably, stolen stock... Their presence, even as visitors and occasionally, is a menace to the maintenance of good order”

⁸⁶ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (Columbia University Press, 2013)

⁸⁷ Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. p 2-3

and as such it was a paranoid response to the notion that “Whiteness” may not entail title to the world. The ultimate conclusion of the loss of that primacy in the world would be the loss of primacy in those places designated “white nations”, the “Australians and Afrikanders, Californians and Canadians”.⁸⁸ The face of this terror was the Asian immigrant in those nations and it was this that galvanised reaction. This panic was the same that explained the dispatch of Charles Rey to southern Africa to shore up the centrality a British imperial world.⁸⁹ Many years later this, in turn, would provide the underlying logic of Beloff’s attempt to explain Britain’s “turn to Europe” in the context of its exit from empire.

The specifically anti-Indian sentiment which emerged in Bechuanaland from these imperial conditions was ordinarily justified with appeals to a Asians’ general ‘bad influence’ on, or impoverishment of, “natives” and the damage they were believed to inflict on the interests of the ‘more desirable’ European traders. An analysis of a few specific descriptions in the archive of the “threat” posed by Indian immigrants is instructive in clarifying the often contradictory ideas which defined Indians’ place in the colonial order. While these emerge in various parts of the archive, the occasion of the deputation of 1934 elicited a particularly pointed stream of accusations from the Assistant Resident Commissioner to the High Commissioner regarding “the class of Asiatic” in question. These accusations are informative in part as an insight into the specific justification of the general distaste for Indian immigrants that emerges from the official discourse and also because it is possible that at least some of these accusations, stripped of their emotive character, might be generally true. Thus they provide an unusually specific, though deeply problematic, insight into the nature of business and administration in the Protectorate in the early 20th century.

In the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the major accusations against Indian traders focused on the twin “illegitimacies” of damaging the interests of the “native” population and damaging the interests of the European settler traders. These conform quite closely to the usually competing, though often overlapping, logics of the “missionary” tradition of people like Resident Commissioner Jules Ellenberger and the “mercenary” tradition of people like Charles Rey. On this issue the former were largely concerned with “protecting the natives”

⁸⁸ Ibid. p 3

⁸⁹ Rey, Monarch of All I Survey

Parsons, “Colonial Administration Pages 2: Charles Rey and Previous Resident Commissioners of Bechuanaland.”

from the negative influences of the West and, in this case, the East. The “mercenary” tradition, on the other hand, was concerned with the continued and increasing settlement of the territory and the commercial interests of settlers and companies and ultimately the empire.

One general complaint from administrators and white settler representatives against Indian traders regarded the latter undercutting European traders. Combining paternalistic and developmentalist logic administrators and settlers cast this pricing behaviour on at least one occasion as a conscious monopolistic strategy on the part of those Indian traders. The argument was that once Indians had inevitably achieved monopoly, prices could be raised collusively amongst themselves. Thus tactic used to argue against competition from Indian traders was to invoke a deep racial threat to competitive trade. While no direct evidence for the last part of this statement could be found, on at least one occasion in the 1950s R. Khan and Sons of Manyana laid an objection to the granting of a trading licence in the same village on the grounds of threatened “overtrading”.⁹⁰ This was a rationale, coincidentally, that administrators and white settlers had used repeatedly against Indian license applications over the years. This exclusionary behaviour would tend to make sense in the case of the tiny markets in the Protectorate, especially in the Kgalagadi where the competition could tend to eliminate profit almost entirely. That aversion to competition in turn would have fed into the “leapfrog” model of settlement and expansion of Indian traders in the region.

Another important example of common anti-Indian thinking relates to moralistic discussions emerging out of a general panic about miscegenation at the time. The accusation that “they cohabit with native women and produce half-caste offspring of a type which cannot be regarded as an asset to the territory” is a particular example of that.⁹¹ This is interesting on two fronts: first, that the existence of mixed race children clearly showed up a particularly close interaction between Indians and Batswana, which was considered distasteful, while at the same time suggesting a developing kind of permanence to Indian settlement in the territory. Second, interracial relationships were not mentioned at all in any of the oral testimony collected, while it is something which the literature has tended to describe as

⁹⁰ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

⁹¹ BNA/S 314/9, “assistant Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society” 1934

somewhat of a concern for the Muslim community at the time. Saroj N. Parratt, for example, states that while interracial relationships are generally little discussed within Muslim circles, her records showed that, over three generations, up to two-thirds of marriages involving Indian men were mixed-race relationships. These were largely second wives, while first wives were usually Indians located either in distant towns or in India. This was quite apart from informal “concubinage” and illicit affairs producing illegitimate children.⁹² The immigration proclamation of 1932 spoke directly to this issue, stating that “domiciled” male immigrants’ wives would not be prohibited, *provided* the immigrant was “not already married in the territory according to their religious custom or had offspring in the Protectorate”. Male migrants who were legitimately settled could bring their existing families to the protectorate (and thereby produce the local Indian enclave that the government abhorred) so long as they had not committed the more worrying colonial sin of miscegenation.⁹³ The fear of miscegenation, not coincidentally, was central to South African concerns over Indian settlement and expansion of business activities in that country. Jonathan Hyslop describes miscegenation more generally as a central feature of racial politics in the early 20th century and *the* major issue in the 1938 elections. With regards to Indians this outrage was connected to the growing commercial dominance of Indian merchants in small towns and their control, in many cases, of mounting Afrikaner debt. Thus race politics of the time played off of mounting fear of the economic power Indian traders had over their supposedly superior white debtors and female employees.⁹⁴

Similarly, in Bechuanaland administrators and settlers often express concern about Indians “giving credit illegally” and thereby “getting natives in their grasp”. The starting point of this accusation was the credit laws in the Protectorate which had their paternalistic roots in the notion that Africans had little by way of developed debt and credit system. This, it was felt, meant that they would be fundamentally unable to manage debt, regardless of its potential usefulness as an economic mechanism. Africans were thus expected to be essentially incapable of participating in modern capitalist economies. Rather they were to

⁹² Saroj N. Parratt, “Muslims in Botswana,” *African Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 1989): 71–82.

⁹³ Immigration Proclamation No. 34 of 1932, Official Gazette of the High Commissioner for South Africa, 19th August 1932

⁹⁴ Jonathan Hyslop, “White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: ‘Purified’ Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against ‘Mixed’ Marriages, 1934-9,” *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 57–81.

continue to be only marginally connected to those economies through labour and the sale of stock. Providing credit contributed to the charge that Indian traders were “socially” problematic in relation to “Natives” because it seemed to go against colonial expectations regarding the interface of African lives and capitalist economies. It is likely that this accusation had its basis in fact, given the evidence from the South African passenger Indian business model to which the traders in question were connected. They themselves would be recipients of credit in starting their businesses and would rely on book credit in the supply of their stores.⁹⁵ That said, the system of credit within the process of expansion of Indian trade in the region described by Goolam Vahed was at the very core of the speed and success of that expansion. There were few large merchant houses which had real access to capital outside of this financialised system of supply and, as such, most traders were in great debt and at the same time were creditors. This created a series of credit bubbles in South Africa that popped at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries.⁹⁶ The centrality of credit in the system would in turn structure the relations between Indian traders in Natal and local African populations, making them both co-dependent and sometimes violently conflictual. Interestingly, the issue of provision of credit emerges with a note of pride in some of the oral sources. People state that the stores would “act as banks, before the banks came here,” by converting barter goods into cash.⁹⁷ The “accusation” is thus claimed and recast as a communal good provided to countrymen in need. This reclamation did not deal with the question of rates of repayment or interest, however.

A closely related accusation that was treated separately is “the practice of ‘good-fors’ where the native is compelled to buy at a particular store regardless of price and thus induced to overbuy and become unable to pay taxes”⁹⁸. According to Arellano-Lopez “The good-fors ... was a credit system that encouraged the Tswana customers to add more purchases to [an] account, committing future agricultural produce, cattle and/or wages. Thus, good-fors allowed white traders to place debt obligations on the African population.” It was a system

⁹⁵ Vahed, “An ‘Imagined Community’ in Diaspora.”

Padayachee and Morrell, “Indian Merchants and Dukawallahs in the Natal Economy, c1875–1914.” (Chand, Chand and Khan 2013)

⁹⁶ Vahed, “Passengers, Partnerships, and Promissory Notes.”

⁹⁷ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

⁹⁸ BNA/S 314/9, “assistant Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, Deputation from British Indian Mohammdan Society” 1934

which “could subsidize their lack of capital”. Again, it seems plausible that the ‘good-fors’ was a system used by the Indian traders in Bechuanaland given the literature on South Africa.. As Arellano-Lopez points out, however, it is not a system that was particular to, nor even specifically associated with, Indian traders. It was nevertheless used by the administration as an example of Indians’ *especial* venality, a double standard which suggests that it was actually Indian-ness itself which made Indian immigrants’ business, and presence more generally, so questionable. This is an excellent example of the essentialist logic, as described by McKeown, of immigration laws’ attempts at segregation of “modern” and “pre-modern” peoples. Similarly, Indians were accused by the Assistant Commissioner of selling alcohol to Africans, a crime according to both “tribal” and colonial law. This accusation came with its own caveat that “the Indian” was both “the worst offender and most difficult to detect”.⁹⁹

Some officials and settler commenters tried to shore up this latter logic with the general and relatively common accusation that Indians did not contribute to the economy because of their attachment to their homeland, which meant that they were not emotionally attached to the territory. Included in this accusation is the fact that Indians tended not to deal in African “cattle or hides or kaross”¹⁰⁰. Arellano Lopez claims that this was in fact a function of a refusal by the colonial authorities to grant permits for those kinds of trade.¹⁰¹ Oral sources tend to agree that, at least in the Kgalagadi territories, animal skins were, as a barter good, a central part of the businesses.¹⁰² Regardless, this accusation is interesting in part because it goes back to the idea that “settlers” are by definition more permanent and invested than “diasporas”, who are by definition invested in another location. This was a principle, moreover, which the colonial authorities made real by their own policies, many of which seem designed to make the Indian population less permanent by making their livelihoods and family lives generally more contingent.

⁹⁹ BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society” 1934

¹⁰⁰ For example: BNA/S 314/9, “assistant Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society” 1934; BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

¹⁰¹ Arellano-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.”

¹⁰² Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

Anti-Indian Immigration Controls

The principles governing the distinction between “settlers” and “immigrants” are illustrated in the Protectorate by the immigration laws and policies of the colonial era. Once legislation governing mining exploration¹⁰³ was proclaimed, Resident Commissioner Rey became concerned that the mining would attract immigrants who were “undesirables” and thus an immigration proclamation was needed as soon as possible.¹⁰⁴ An article from the South African Law Journal from 1932, the year of the Immigration Proclamation in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, however, throws a more technical light on this idea than do Rey’s personal diaries. In it, the notion of “nationality” within the dominions is discussed within the context of self-rule. The article proposes that nationality should be defined by legislation that judged certain residents to be citizens. Immigration legislation wherein non-residents would have to prove a right to entry and residency could perform this function well, and in South Africa it had done so for many years. This, however, required that those already resident would have a very good claim to “national” status, while “British Subject” status trumped national status, creating a certain amount of complexity and negotiability for British Subjects from India.¹⁰⁵ The creation of a piece of legislation governing immigration and how this applied to the Indian population was not straightforward however. It was complicated by the ways in which Indian immigrants could mobilise and work within various relevant ideological and political conditions of empire and dominion and the legal conception of belonging in the colonial system, especially the notion of the “British Imperial subject”.

Before 1932, instead of an immigration law, the Bechuanaland Protectorate had a secret informal policy involving a system of entry and residency permits to immigrants. These permits were in existence at least since the policy was officially circulated confidentially by Lord Buxton, High Commissioner and Governor General of South Africa, in November 1916. This was probably largely anticipatory policy making in the face of a very small Indian

¹⁰³ Specifically the Mines and Minerals Proclamation of 1932 which Rey expected to pass in early 1931 but was delayed by the elaborate politicking of the Regent Chief Tshekedi and his allies. Michael Crowder, “Tshekedi Khama and Mining in Botswana: 1929-1959” (presented at the African Studies Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand African Studies Institute, 1985).

Mining had, until then, been limited to relatively small quantities of gold and silver in the Tati Concession in the north east of the country.

¹⁰⁴ Rey, Monarch of All I Survey. p 87

¹⁰⁵ van Pittius, “Dominion Nationality.”

population in Bechuanaland at that time concentrated on the border at Ramotswa and at Moshupa. The documents were not *legally* required but were treated by the administration as though they were and were taken relatively seriously by everyone in the administration from the police to the High Commissioner. The result was a system that relied on the ability to physically refuse entry to immigrants – this was indefensible should the immigrants feel comfortable to challenge them legally. The legal weakness of the system was a carefully kept secret on the part of the administration.¹⁰⁶

The immigration policy, while apparently informal enough to be inconsistently applied, was at its core a tool of racial differentiation and discrimination. The broad dictum that emerged from the policy, which would be repeated throughout the colonial era, was that government was to keep the Indian population at its existing size, allowing entry only as a replacement for those who had left.¹⁰⁷ This policy of replacement resulted in some confusion as there would appear to have been a fair amount of travel between India and the Protectorate, often involving extended stays of multiple years on either end (the standard return permit was for a three year stay).¹⁰⁸ In response, exit permits were granted under time restrictions and on the condition that the Indian government provide new passports to the returnees. This system itself was subject to challenge, however, and re-entry appears usually to have been granted regardless.¹⁰⁹ The confusion seems to have come to a head in the early 1920s when the High Commissioner queried an entry, asking:

“Whether it was ascertained that the wife and children of Cassim Dada and the wife of Suleiman Arbi came within the definitions of section five of the Union Immigration Regulations Act no. 22 of 1913 and the Indian Relief Act of 1922... I am unable to find that the High Commissioner's authority for the issue of permits in those two cases has been given.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64

¹⁰⁷ The 1916 rules are not available on their own but are referred to extensively in related documentation, most clearly in: BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64. The overarching dictum is also referenced a few times, most clearly in: BNA/S 90/7, “Indians in the BP”, 1942.

¹⁰⁸ BNA/S 185/10 “Indians, return of permits and passports issued” 1916 - 1941

¹⁰⁹ BNA/S 185/10 “Indians, return of permits and passports issued” 1916 - 1941

¹¹⁰ BNA/S 185/10, “High Commissioner Prince Arthur of Connaught to Resident Commissioner McGregor” 1916

The response is informative: the High Commission had a set of rules but the rules did not cover certain conditions such as, for example, deciding on the legitimacy of the arrival of the wife and children of a well-known, settled immigrant. More importantly the response stated that it was not clear that the immigration regulations of the Union of South Africa applied in the Protectorate because they had not been ‘proclaimed’ there. This is informative partly because of the lack of clarity provided by these rules but also because they were apparently “framed not only to protect this territory from an influx of Indians but also in some measure to prevent the use of this territory by Indians as a convenient means of making their way into the Union of South Africa”.¹¹¹ The need to have an immigration law of their own to which they could legitimately refer their decisions regarding immigration was becoming evident. That law was Proclamation number 34 of 1932 which was based on the South African immigration law of 1913. Importantly it included a key section on “prohibition of any person or class of persons deemed by the Resident Commissioner with the sanction of the High Commissioner... to be an undesirable inhabitant or class of undesirable inhabitant” – the “deeming clause”.¹¹² This clause could potentially be mobilised as anti-Indian legislation, as it had been in South Africa, and such a declaration was requested on more than one occasion over the years.¹¹³ It was felt, though, that for the time being the confidential rules of 1916 were sufficient to ensure control of the small Indian population of the Protectorate without invoking “deeming clause”. That was to be kept in reserve as a fail-safe should this impression prove false. In fact the Dominions Office, in an official letter to the High Commissioner, stated that “the confidential rules in connection with the entry of Asiatics... might be retained for the present” but the Secretary of State wished to be consulted should it become likely that “a class of immigrant” would be “deemed” undesirable.¹¹⁴ This decision, along with the very confidentiality of the rules involved, are indicative of the treatment of the presence of Indians in the Protectorate – the idea that the racial discrimination inherent in the treatment of these migrants and the thinking

¹¹¹ BNA/OP 33/43, “Deputy Commandant of Police to Government Secretary” 1946

¹¹² Section 2, Immigration Proclamation no. 34 of 1932

¹¹³ BNA/S 314/9, “Correspondence, Deputation from British Indian Mohamman Society” 1934; Correspondence, 1934; BNA/S 7/11, “Kika – Bangwaketse reserve, question of granting trading licences to Indians”

¹¹⁴ BNA/S 314/9 “High Commissioner Stanley to Resident Commissioner, Deputation from Indian community” 1934. And in more detail in: BNA/S 148/10, “Resident Commissioner, High Commissioner and Dominions Secretary” 1932-3

behind that treatment would be exposed in the press, diplomatic circles or the courts was abhorrent to the colonial officials.

The formation of an immigration law in Bechuanaland and the implementation of the policy regarding Indian immigration together formalised the problematic distinction between immigrant and settler – the former being viewed as temporary visitors with roots elsewhere and thus as something that by definition could not contribute to the territory's future. An important result of this legislative action, however, was that it created a tension between the expected liberalism of the administration towards subjects and the desire to limit the entry of those subjects, a tension upon which the Indian traders could play in order to demand the entry of their families or employees.

The Limits of Immigration control

The major effect of the immigration policies was to codify the distinction between settler and immigrant. Yet, their ability to control immigration itself appears to have been severely limited by administrative practicalities and political expedients. This becomes clear when we look at the experience of immigrants and their families and the actual bureaucratic systems of control which were intended to decide on legitimacy of potential entrants. There are two issues in that regard: the ease of informal movement across the border, and the bureaucratic and political spaces for legitimating one's movement into the territory and to maintain one's presence there

The first limitation to immigration controls was informal movement across the borders of the Protectorate. There is a more or less no mention in Botswana's National Archive around informality and illegality in immigration, cross border mobility, trade or even settlement of Indians. The comments in the oral testimony about the policing of the border similarly highlight a surprising silence in the archive. In fact, the official record relied on somewhat overblown suppositions regarding what the state even knew about immigration and the effectiveness of its surveillance. This is unsurprising given the size of the territory and the population. The few references in that archive in which informality is shown to exist on a large scale highlight the silences elsewhere. Where concerns about informal/illegal activities emerge, they appear to usually involve the prohibition on the sale of alcohol in the Native

Reserves by both the Colonial administration and the chiefs. In particular, Arellano-López refers to a demand from European traders that they be allowed to trade in alcohol because their businesses were being damaged by liquor smuggled in from the stores and hotels along the railway line or the South African and Rhodesian borders.¹¹⁵ Another is a claim made by the assistant Resident Commissioner in 1934, against Indian traders in particular, in which he states that, among a litany of sins, the Indian traders were “often the worst offenders against liquor laws and the most difficult to detect”.¹¹⁶ The last point, shows a general suspicion of the Indian traders that cannot be proven, suggesting an inability to police and account for activities in the territory. By far the most significant examples, however, concern the smuggling of cattle to South Africa. Rey’s published diaries describe the smuggling of tens of thousands of cattle across the borders – it was “entirely impossible to stop smuggling over our four hundred mile border”¹¹⁷. Similarly Jeff Ramsay and Fred Morton describe the same massive scale and ease of movement in their *Birth of Botswana*.¹¹⁸

With regard to the national archive’s information about the mobility of Indian migrants there was similar confusion and inconsistency. Census data and statements by the Resident Commissioner regarding the Indian population in the territory disagree quite markedly. In a letter to the High Commissioner, the assistant Resident Commissioner claimed that there were a total of “75 men, women and children” of Indian origin in 1934, Best cites 120 in 1922, the 1946 census report showed retrospectively no data for “Asiatics” in 1911, 52 in 1921 and only 66 in 1936.¹¹⁹ While inconsistency in population statistics would ordinarily rouse little concern, the numbers involved are small and the statements regarding the presence of Indians in the territory are treated with a degree of certainty that would tend to preclude this kind of shift in the numbers. This certainty was partly because of the policy to keep the Indian population static by keeping a record of their presence and ensuring that none were granted entry except to replace those leaving the territory.¹²⁰ Another explanation

¹¹⁵ Arellano-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.”

¹¹⁶ BNA/S 314/9 “Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner” 1934

¹¹⁷ Rey, Monarch of All I Survey.

¹¹⁸ Morton and Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana*.

¹¹⁹ BNA/S 314/9 “Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner”; Alan CG Best, “General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968,” *Economic Geography*, 1970, 598–611; Fanny Sonia Arellano-Lopez, *The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate* (2008)

With these inaccuracies, contradictions and their implications in mind a table of the census results from 1921 to 1964 can be found in Appendix A.

¹²⁰ BNA/S 90/7, “Confidential letter, 1930”.

is that the population in question was unusually difficult to count because they tended to straddle the border, moving back and forth at will. As such, many would be counted in South Africa at times and in the protectorate at others by coincidence or, potentially, as a manipulation of both of the systems. Both of these cases are important for our discussion of Indians in the territory, in part because the gap in the archive is repeated in the limited literature on the matter. In that literature the usual argument is that the Protectorate administration's coercive power was entirely successful at limiting immigration. The possibility that that system may have constituted an imperfect, fluctuating and, importantly, contested and subverted process is not discussed.¹²¹

A report from the oral evidence illustrates limitations in the system of immigration controls well. It refers to a "stowaway" from India arriving in South Africa on the same boat as some of the members of a family based in the Protectorate and Dinokana. That family brought him to safety in Moshupa because he was being harassed by South African police due to his illegal status. "The stowaway" would eventually gain legitimacy through his long residence and go on to own a store which would in turn form the basis of one of Botswana's most important businesses.¹²² Thus the protectorate border system and policing were limited to the point where the territory could provide a permanent refuge for those who did not have the requisite papers and permissions. This was possible because of both the ease of movement and lack of policing and because of the ability of immigrants to wait out their legal status.

Multiple oral sources, moreover, claim a *complete* lack of border controls until the 1960s or 70s, which facilitated the movement of children to and from school and easy access to relatives, though the archival record contains complaints by Indian business people about difficulties with visa requirements.¹²³ Here again oral sources on the matter are generally agreed on the lack of border controls but this contradicts parts of the official documentary record. One likely reason is that people were deciding for themselves whether they needed to go through the process of acquiring documentation depending on the nature of the trip. In

¹²¹ For example in Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate." and Best, "General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968."

¹²² Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

¹²³ Ayoob Khan, *Life History*; Dada, *Life and Family History*; BNA/S 314/9, "Deputation from British Indian Mohammedan society" 1934

the Botswana Archives references to travel documents largely relate to long business trips into South Africa or trips to India. These larger undertakings were more likely to require formal permissions where they could be obtained, while those systems could be sidestepped if the risks were deemed low.

A list of Indians in the Protectorate in the 1940s shows a surprising number who could not show any permit or visa in their passports, and a similarly surprising silence on the matter from the representatives of government.¹²⁴ Lists of issues of permits to leave or re-enter the Protectorate seem to easily accept the explanation that papers were misplaced or destroyed. The only clue explaining this acceptance is that officials commented on occasion that no record of the immigrant could be found but this was not given as a reason to deny that person's rights as a resident.¹²⁵ A letter from 1942 refers to an interview in which it was ascertained that three Indian residents had "been in the country many years and arrived before it was laid down that immigrants had to fill in the recognised forms as they do today" (forms which appear to have existed as early as the 1916) instead being able to show only passports with some sort of temporary endorsements in them. Their legitimacy was subsequently recognised.¹²⁶

On the other hand the limitations to immigration control were not entirely related to the difficulty in actually policing the border. There were also ways to gain legal entry other than through "family" ties. The pattern of Indian settlement and expansion that responded to changing official practices regarding Indian migration did not only rely on offers of employment by already legitimately settled Indian businessmen. While this was one important way to secure entry into the Protectorate, it would appear that many Indian settlers entered the Protectorate not to work for Indian traders but instead to work for European traders and trading companies. It is noteworthy that this of employment to an immigrant also required a £100 surety from the employer for possible deportation costs.¹²⁷ One instance was of a permit granted to a Mahomed Kamroodin. He had overstayed on a trip to India, returning in 1918 a little after the 3 years permitted, and his application for re-entry, following landing in Beira in Mozambique, was refused. He eventually secured work with

¹²⁴ BNA/S 293/1/1 "List of traders in BP and enquiries including turnover" 1949-51

¹²⁵ BNA/S 185/10 "Indians, return of permits and passports issued", 1916-1941

¹²⁶ BNA/S 90/7, "Correspondence, 1930"

¹²⁷ BNA/S 185/10 "Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner", 1919

a Mr Marnoch at Francistown in the Tati district and was granted entry so long as he had employment. On Mr Marnoch's departure for England, Kamroodin immediately secured work at a mining exploration company, again he remained in the Tati district where he had lived before the earlier trip to India.¹²⁸ Thus Kamroodin was able to extend his permit and work towards eventual official acceptance directly through the employ of a person whose official representatives, the European Advisory Council, otherwise more or less consistently demanded the cessation of immigration of Indians entirely. The major distinction between this kind of working permit and the family-related permits is that family businesses could be associated with competing entrepreneurial activities whereas Kamroodin, at least at first, entered entirely as a labourer and thus was less threatening. This distinction would re-emerge as a means by which Indians could work around discrimination in licencing and property rights in the white towns by being 'employed' as "managers" by white proxy store owners, especially in the late 1930s and the 1940s.¹²⁹

Qualitative limitations internal to the way colonial immigration control was run also emerge when the question is gendered. It has been claimed by residents that for many years there was an utter refusal to allow the development of nuclear (and thus settled) families within the population by refusing to allow men to bring in their wives and female children.¹³⁰ The earliest documentary records apparently available in the Botswana National Archive for Indian immigration in Bechuanaland, however, show two women *returning* to the Protectorate in 1920. The High Commissioner immediately questioned the status of the women's permits to which the response was "Khatoo Cassim, wife of Cassim Dada" had left the Protectorate in 1914 and had been living in the territory for several years prior to that.¹³¹ In fact, the example provided in the oral sources emerges in relation to changes in the immigration legislation in the territory in the 1940s that were explicitly aimed at Indians in which "the *prospective* wife of an Indian resident of the Protectorate to enter the territory from Portuguese East Africa via Southern Rhodesia"¹³² (emphasis mine) was rejected. Thus

¹²⁸ BNA/S 185/10 "Indians, return of permits and passports issued", 1916 - 1941

¹²⁹ BNA/OP 33/43 "Immigration- Indians", 1946-64; BNA/S 447/1/2 "Correspondence regarding Abbas Chand"

This practice is also described in: Maano and Haron, "Botswana's Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse"; Amanze, James, "Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966."

¹³⁰ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

¹³¹ BNA/S 185/10 "Indians, return of permits and passports issued", 1916 - 1941

¹³² BNA/S 185/10 "Indians, return of permits and passports issued", 1916 - 1941

the objection of the authorities was to the immigration of women who were not obviously already tied to resident men. This is an excellent example of the limits of the colonial state's balancing act in relation to immigration control. On the one hand it shows again the desire to avoid embarrassment, diplomatic, legal or otherwise while appearing to be protecting the rights of settled British subjects without prejudice. However, when this imperative was overlaid with the actual wish to limit Indian settlement, an essentially arbitrary line was drawn to demarcate legitimate movement from illegitimate. That line could result in little practical difference in immigration or family structure when applied. This could have only a few real effects, for example keeping the focus of much of Indian residents' extended family life in India. It also reinforced the legitimacy of those already settled and married in the territory and supported the pettier elements of the paternal control of the colonial state.

As has been shown, inadequacies of immigration policy emerged in large part out of the inability to police immigrants who had already made their way into the territory. Once inside the Protectorate, settled and trading in an acceptable place, one could claim a certain amount of official legitimacy by playing along with the administrative process. This could be done by obtaining a 'legitimate' permit of entry and trading licence (or claiming to have done and then misplacing them), or by acquiring employment and subsequently, importantly, gaining popular informal "recognition" as a resident. It is not obvious that these were *officially* legitimate statuses but it is clear that this was something that the colonial powers recognised as a potential embarrassment should they decide to challenge them.

Best and Arellano-Lopez both attribute the small size of the Indian population to the success of influx controls. In the face of the evidence of the relative ease in getting around these systems and the limitations internal to the frameworks of control, I would suggest that that is better explained by the Protectorate's desirability in comparison with the neighbouring territories. Without active state encouragement the small size of the economy and the poor infrastructure of the location was the ultimate deciding factor in defining the scale of immigrant settlement. The High Commissioner in 1934 even went so far as to say:

...while I agree that any significant increase in their [Indians] number would probably be detrimental to the interest of the Native inhabitants of the Territory, there

does not appear to have been any tendency hitherto for any large number to seek to enter the Protectorate...¹³³

This quote formed part of an argument holding that the immigration “situation” was not “sufficiently serious” that Indians should be generally prohibited as a “group” which would have been politically and diplomatically uncomfortable.¹³⁴ This not only illustrates the practical limitations of immigration regulation in the territory, it also explains it: the lack of political will to remedy immigration policy at a higher level was caused by the aversion to political scandal around race. This aversion was especially potent in light of the relatively small size of the immigration “problem”. One must add to this a further consideration, however. Oishi has argued that, in the South African and Mozambican context, Indian traders filled a niche in small, unattractive, far flung and isolated areas and brought them into the imperial cash economy, thereby allowing people to pay taxes. The usefulness of this niche meant that colonial authorities were less obstructive to that kind of peripheral Indian settlement.¹³⁵ A similar generalised desire for trade in the Protectorate goes some way to explaining the tolerance to some settlement and trade by Indians in the small and far flung villages, especially in the desert.

Anti-Indian practices inside the Protectorate

Regardless of these limitations on policing immigration, the administration of the territory was subject to their own racialised thinking and pressure from the settler businesses they came to represent. Over the years their private positions continued to be that the presence of Indians in the territory was more or less undesirable and that any presence was likely to beget further immigration. These attitudes were evinced by Resident Commissioner Rey in a letter to the High Commissioner in 1934:

“We most certainly do not want to encourage the immigration of Indians to this territory... The Indian in a native territory is, in my view, worse than the poor white.

¹³³ BNA/S 314/9, “High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner” 1934

¹³⁴ BNA/S 314/9, “High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner” 1934

¹³⁵ Oishi, “Indian Muslim Merchants in Mozambique and South Africa.”

He intermarries with the natives and his standard of life is no better than theirs. His commercial morals are worse and his example is generally deplorable.”¹³⁶

As such, a second set of formal and informal systems emerged which were designed to more generally police Indian settlement and livelihood. These were to make their lives sufficiently difficult so as to materially discourage further immigration and settlement. Immigration control was thus increasingly to take place in the form of the policing of settlement, rather than on the Protectorate’s territorial boundary. For example, a report on a delegation from the British Indian Mohammedan Association on Rey’s behalf by the Assistant Commissioner to the High Commissioner in 1933 stated that:

If we allow the Indian residents of the territory to bring in all their children over sixteen years of age there is no doubt that the Indian population will soon increase considerably... and pressure would undoubtedly be brought to bear to increase the number of [trading] licences, which is most undesirable.¹³⁷

This was directed at families that were already settled in the territory rather than at potential immigrants. Like many internal anti-Indian practices, it was likely to have been particularly painful for the many families split between India and southern Africa at the time. The argument put forward by the delegation hoping to bring their children to join them was that the children were left in India for educational purposes only. It was argued that the children would not be a burden on the state as they would help in the shops and would eventually come to inherit them and thus, so long as they were treated fairly, they would be productive settlers. This responded to the expressed policy regarding immigration: that immigrants would become a burden should their ventures fail, but not the real and embarrassingly racist concern of the administrators that children would make the population ever more permanent.

The 1934 deputation’s comment regarding sending children to India for education was in part a provocation about the exclusionary schooling system in the territory. This was a related discriminatory policy that would have compounded the effects of the attempts to split

¹³⁶ BNA/S 7/11, “Kika-Bangwaketse Reserve. Question of granting trading licence to Indian”, 1933

¹³⁷ BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from Indian community, 1934”

immigrant parents from their children. It is this discrimination which is most clearly remembered in the oral record in relation to the need to interact with the territory's borders as children travelled for schooling. It is also often this that was cited as the prime example of the inequities of the colonial system for Indian settlers.¹³⁸ This is likely because the memories constituting the bulk of the oral record here are the memories of second, third or fourth generations of these families whose major experience of discrimination would probably have been this separation. Moreover, the memory of educational exclusion is a memory that is likely tinged by the widely known history of segregated South African schooling as a singular marker of discriminatory practices. As was stated in interviews on more than one occasion "we had our own apartheid here".¹³⁹

The most ubiquitous method of limiting Indian economic activity and, importantly, location and competitiveness, as hinted at in the 1933 letter quoted, was through the existing systems of licencing of businesses. This was thus both a method of control and discrimination and an end in itself. These licenses were the lynchpin of Indian settlement and immigration: without a trading licence one's livelihood could too easily be challenged and eliminated by officials or competitors. Indian immigrants at this time were, as a rule and by force of policy, alienated from more or less any other source of income within the territory. The standard policy was essentially to deny *new* licences to Indians and certainly not outside of certain specific places in "Native Reserves".¹⁴⁰ This policy position was most clearly and explicitly stated in a 1941 letter from Resident Commissioner Clarke to the High Commissioner in which he quoted a statement made in 1927 by High Commissioner Athlone that:

"Every fresh licence granted means a permanent increase in the number of residents because if it were found necessary at any time to reduce the number of licences any Indian losing his licence would remain in the territory having nowhere else to go

¹³⁸ For example: Ayoob Khan, Life History; Moorad, Life and Family History; Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

¹³⁹ Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History; Moorad, Life and Family History.

¹⁴⁰ In 1941 Resident commissioner Clarke in a letter to the high commissioner stated that "It has generally been found possible to find an adequate reason for refusing the applications by Indians in any area where it was not desired that they should trade without raising the question of possible discrimination against them, and the Indians have until now refrained from any attempt to raise the question in any acute form" – BNA/S 7/11 "Kika-Bangwaketse Reserve. Question of granting trading licence to Indian"

except to India and would look to the administration to provide him a place of residence and a means of livelihood. Further, the establishment of a fresh business by one Indian involves applications for the admission of his assistants and a number of others who also, if admitted, will become permanent residents.”¹⁴¹

Note that in the last sentence the Resident Commissioner himself recognises, without question, that after a certain amount of time any Indian resident simply becomes a permanent resident.

Insecurity over land tenure was compounded by the colonial authorities who specifically acted to keep Indian traders out of the European blocks where they could have owned their own land and thus settled more completely. In such a scenario they could compete directly in the commercial centres of Bechuanaland’s White settler economy and gradually take it over. It was a matter of great worry, in fact, as high up in the administration as the High Commissioner when there was the suggestion that a European farm in the Tuli Block could be bought by a group of Indian traders from Durban. “You will appreciate” he stated “that acquisition by a group of Asiatics of a farm in an area of European settlement in the Protectorate... would probably have awkward repercussions outside as well as within the territory”.¹⁴² This is telling because what is evidently the very first real policy regarding settled Indian traders emerged out of an early policy from Basutoland that stated that Indian traders’ lack of access to land was the very reason for limiting their entry into and settlement in that Protectorate. The idea was that the Indian traders would become destitute and throw themselves on the mercy (and expense) of the colonial government “to provide [them] with a place of residence and a means of livelihood” when the scarce land was eventually redistributed to “real members” of the chieftaincy in question.¹⁴³ This argument hinged on the growing scarcity of land in Basutoland as well as the pure reliance on trade of the Indian diaspora as opposed to the rights to agricultural land that was guaranteed for European settlers by their government. Notwithstanding the irony of justifying policies on the basis that there was a ‘scarcity of land’ for shops in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the British

¹⁴¹ BNA/S 7/11, “Kika-Bangwaketse Reserve. Question of granting trading licence to Indian”, 1925-52

¹⁴² BNA/S 7/11, “High Commissioner Stanley to Resident Commissioner Rey”, 1934

¹⁴³ BNA/S 7/11, “High Commissioner Athlone to Resident Commissioner - quote” 1925

Indian Mohammedan Society deputation to the Resident Commissioner itself applied the same logic. They argued that because trading was their sole source of income, and was thus the only thing that kept them from requiring aide from government, their pleas for easier access to trading licences and easier border controls should be seen as imperative.¹⁴⁴ Arellano-Lopes, on the other hand, argues that the refusal to allow Indians to own land was all a part of a concerted attempt to keep Indians from attaining any kind of permanent status in the country, as were most anti-Indian policies, and thus encouraging them to eventually leave.¹⁴⁵ These immigrants were therefore left in a position in which they were excluded from secure, permanent settlement whilst at the same time being discriminated against for not having that security. In a further irony, the unsettled character of the migrants and their subsequent lack of investment in the territory was one of the key accusations that were levelled at Indian traders by white traders and administrators.¹⁴⁶

These forms of anti-Indian discrimination, in particular the question of the granting of licences, form the core of the documentary record on Indian settlement in the protectorate in general. This is partly because of the centrality of these practices to the protectorate economy and to the government's dealings with Indian settlement. It is also in large part because the broad exclusion of Indians from licensing processes and later schooling and land acquisition were all constantly probed and contested by settled Indians and their families. Thus much of the documentation left by the colonial government depict the history of the Indian presence in Bechuanaland as a constant contest between state restrictions and counter claims by Indian settlers. These contestations relied on a kind of *fait accompli* derived from long and recognised settlement providing a kind of local status that indicated "belonging". This is key to understanding how the Indian population of the Protectorate came to position itself in the colony. Once certain families were settled and "known" well enough to feel confident in their status, they could make demands for further concessions within the system of discriminatory licences, settlement and land ownership. The strategies of this contestation and their implications will form the core of chapters two and three.

¹⁴⁴ BNA/S 314/9, "Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society", 1934

¹⁴⁵ Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

¹⁴⁶ BNA/S 314/9, "Assistant Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner", 1934; BNA/S 447/1/1-2 "Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse Reserve", 1954-60

Conclusion

On arrival in the Bechuanaland Protectorate at the turn of the 20th century, Indian migrants found themselves in a relatively unfriendly environment. It was harsh and sparsely populated and thus could handle little economic competition. In spite of this, they came to think of themselves in the language of adventure and expanding frontier opportunity as “pioneers”. They came, too, as a part of a diaspora with direct links to an Imperial project that had its own ideas about what that territory was to mean. Couched variously in terms of nationalism, developmentalism, racial paternalism, and white supremacy, this was a project which did not generally want Indian subjects to be there. Once there, therefore, administrators certainly did not want Indians competing commercially. Regardless of ideals and sentiments of empire, though, Bechuanaland was under-resourced, strategically minor and entirely subject to the greater force of metropolitan politics and public opinion, as well as of the diplomatic power, within the colonial world, of places like India and South Africa. Indian migrants, moreover, came as a part of a diaspora which predated (and would come to outlast) that imperial project. They were thus subject to their own systems and pressures. The Indian diaspora in that period expanded from points of established settlement and economic security outward into new areas and continued to do so as long as family or connections sought new opportunity. The result was that immigration continued at its own pace regardless of anti-Indian immigration practices. As we will see in more detail in the chapters to follow, it also meant that the discrimination faced inside the territory could be overcome and, in some cases, even made to work for Indian settlers by negotiating the overlapping interests of African populations and leaderships, settler interests, colonial government and global politics. These features of the story of the arrival and settlement of Indians in Bechuanaland would subsequently come to shape changing strategies in the struggle to live in the territory and subsequently the identities of Batswana-Indians.

Chiefs and Indians: Adaptation to Bechuanaland's African colonial politics

A significant number began to settle in another village called Molepolole, which is in the Kweneng district, and I think the chief of the Bakwena there was a bit easier going on the Indian settlers coming in and he didn't mind Indians coming in to settle in some of the villages in the Kweneng district.¹⁴⁷

The chiefs were running the tribal areas and the British were running the non-tribal areas, the towns and the major villages – so in the villages there was no problem, they would go to the chief and get a licence to run etc. They would get it; there was no problem at all. There was a very good relationship – the chief used to come to my dad's shop and drink tea till late, whenever there was a sickness my dad would take people to Kanye, when there was a death etc. So the relationship was great... The paramount chief would come to eat at my family.¹⁴⁸

Introduction

¹⁴⁷ Moorad, Life and Family History.

¹⁴⁸ Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

On moving into the Bechuanaland Protectorate from the 1880s onwards, Indian traders arrived in an area in which there were overlapping and contested forms of official authority. Specifically, they entered into realms of either African or colonial authority. These authorities were defined respectively by chieftaincy under mutable and negotiable “customary” rules and local needs; and by the colonial project and a British legal system underpinned by the notion of imperial “citizenship” and “subject-hood”.¹⁴⁹ What was unusual about the Protectorate was the relative power of African chiefly or customary authority in the face of British domination and the tensions that that produced. The Indian diaspora, however, did not have an obviously defined place in the system, instead sitting somewhere between administrative and political spaces. As the previous chapter discussed, they were not categorised as “native,” nor were they generally considered desirable in relation to “native” life. At the same time, Indians, though British Subjects, were not “European” settlers and not considered desirable in connection with European settlement either. For colonial officials Indian diasporic capital, where acceptable at all, could only be so in providing specialised commercial services in certain instances whilst government dealt with the demands of “European” citizenry and the “needs”, according to imperial ideology, of “Native” subjects. This meant that the nature and location of Indian trade was decided in large part by systems of discrimination and control responding to the changing preferences of colonial authorities and their constituents. The result was that “they were confined to sparsely populated areas of Ramotswa, Moshupa, Thamaga, Manyana, Ranaka and in some areas of the Kgalagadi”.¹⁵⁰

The limitations on Indian trade and settlement, however, prompted Indian traders to develop adaptations to the local economic and political/administrative conditions. These were adaptations to both their trading operations and, more basically, simply to facilitate stable conditions of settlement.¹⁵¹ Specifically these adaptations responded to the need from the African population, the chiefs and the colonial authorities for *some* trade to take place in the

¹⁴⁹ As Mamdani’s *Citizen and Subject* might define the concept for example. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁵⁰ Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966.”

¹⁵¹ Engseng Ho has suggested in his discussion of the Hadrami diaspora that this is part of the nature of diasporas. He suggests that diasporic populations tend to adapt to local conditions in hybrid forms, retaining identities as a diaspora while hybridising them to the required effect with the prevailing conditions of power. This is specifically true of diasporas which are refused the recognition of imperial citizenship that white settlers (another sort of diaspora in the case of Botswana) are granted.

territory, especially in remote locations. African leaders, in supporting applications for trade licences, were effectively disinterested parties, unconcerned with the origins of new traders, in light of the fact that Africans were excluded from licensed trading. The places into which Indian traders were pushed all fell under the auspices of those African chiefly or customary authority and this produced a necessary relationship between them. At the heart of this relationship was the system of 'tribal tenure'. This was a system within the colonial structure in which land was defined as commonage reserved for a particular "tribe" and as such provided rights to that land, where an individual or family's "membership" of the "tribe" was recognised. By extension, once granted this tenure an individual or family's "membership" of the community was presumed. This therefore imparted official "belonging" to residents – a kind of local subject-hood. The process by which one could be granted this membership and tenure were tied, amongst other things, to the provision of certain services and participation in new customs and language practices – in short the development and performance of new local identities.

This system, however, was ultimately a kind of rental arrangement, especially for Indian and white settlers, in which belonging was to be constantly negotiated and which, critically, did not offer the level of security that comes with legal *ownership* of the land. While not a perfectly stable system, this relationship between Indians settlers and chiefly authority created sufficient confidence among Indians that, by claiming residency rights, by the 1940s they were able to challenge their bureaucratic exclusion from zones of colonial authority. Thus Indian traders were able to demand access to locations of trade and settlement outside of the boundaries of chiefly authorities. By transcending that boundary, they were able to build on the legitimacy that the racialised and separated space of colonial Botswana had provided to them. This chapter thus shows the ways in which Indian traders formed mutually beneficial relationships with African authorities to position themselves as residents – and eventually, more strongly, as Batswana-Indians – and thus later claim rights in the greater Bechuanaland as a whole.

It begins by examining the colonial ideology and restrictions on Indian and African trade and settlement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It then moves on to outline African chiefs' response to this, highlighting in particular, how chiefs could gain from Indian traders' presence for local political and economic purposes. It then describes the usefulness of

relationships with chiefly power for Indian settlers, as well as some of the limitations of that usefulness and the challenges that chiefly systems of rule presented for them. In order to explain how these benefits could be obtained and leveraged while the risks were minimised, the chapter then discusses complex the mechanisms of the “insider status” and “tribal membership” in relation to identity politics in colonial Bechuanaland and in relation to Indians in particular. Finally it discusses how these administrative conditions, relationships and identities came together in such a way as to allow dynamic Indian residents to improve and defend their positions and succeed in their efforts to claim rights from the colonial state.

Colonial authorities’ positions on trade

For colonial authorities, control of trade licensing was important for the appeasement of various constituencies but was more importantly central to the entry of precolonial African rural economies into the capitalist economies of empire. It was thus key to the logic of the local colonial project as a whole. For the colonial government specifically, the trader was, first, the lynchpin of the taxation scheme essential to the colonial state. The tax system was fundamental to their ability to administer, to create infrastructure linking the territory to the empire, to extract labour from the populace and to connect it to the authority of colonial legal and political institutions.¹⁵² It was through points of trade that the local population could convert production and savings in cattle, skins or other products into cash with which to pay taxes as well as to procure goods otherwise unavailable in these areas.¹⁵³

Colonial authorities divided up legal trading opportunities in the territory by location and the nature of trading opportunities available in each area. These divisions were based on the size of local markets and availability of infrastructure. For example, the larger markets closer to the railway lines and borders were generally reserved for white traders. Other places that demanded trade were open to broader competition. The resultant racial geography of trade,

¹⁵² This was partially ideologically driven but it was underpinned by economic considerations.

¹⁵³ BNA/S 7/11, “Bathoen II to resident magistrate, Molepolole”; Makgala states that “it was a common practice for tax collectors on duty in the outlying areas to be accompanied by traders who bought items from the people with hard cash to pay tax.” John Makgala, “Taxation in the Tribal Areas of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1899-1957.” P 285

most importantly, decided the authority – chiefly or colonial – under which that trade would take place in each instance.

The colonial government, while recognising the need for trade to expand throughout the territory, generally preferred white traders. Moreover they preferred British settlers in particular, as opposed to the Greeks and East-European Jews who had been settling in the same period. They were able to encourage this, to some extent, alongside the settlement of farms in the European “Blocks”, their towns and the bordering areas as well as some of the more heavily populated reserve area towns like Serowe, Molepolole and Kanye. This produced a white farmer-trader class which formed the core of the Bechuanaland economy before the discovery of minerals.¹⁵⁴

These white farmer-traders were limited in their activities in certain respects. They traded in large part to accumulate cattle and similar goods but they were refused rights to drive those cattle across the borders of different paramountcies.¹⁵⁵ Their standard business practices were thus geographically bounded in multiple respects. They tended to operate either on farms inside the “European Blocks” and towns or near to the railway lines from which they could raise and export cattle and skins. They were also unwilling, being larger businesses and with the freedom of the territory granted by their whiteness, to spread their operations into the smallest and most far flung villages and settlements. The unsettled and informal nature of these far flung settlements, however, were a long standing source of nervousness amongst British colonial authorities. These were representations of the anarchic image of the ‘Dark Continent’ and the potentially insurrectionary natives who were not tied into the ‘modern’, global, colonial economy.¹⁵⁶ Whilst taxation was one way to fix people to a location long before actual colonisation had come to pass, commerce itself, and by extension labour and agriculture, had been imbued with similar power and importance for taming and bringing virtue into African lives through the missionaries – it was already central to white understandings of the African world.

¹⁵⁴Arellano-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.”

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Morton, “Fixity and Fluidity.”

As a result of the prominence of the white trader class, the Indian traders who entered the territory in the 1880s and after were simply not allowed to settle in nor compete with Europeans established in the “European towns” like Lobatse and Gaborones (later to be replaced by a new capital city: Gaborone).¹⁵⁷ Instead they settled first in areas like Moshupa and (especially) Ramotswa – these were small villages under the authority of the chiefs.¹⁵⁸ As Takashi Oishi has pointed out in the case of colonial Mozambique and South Africa, the discriminatory systems of control of Indian traders drove them into areas into which larger European concerns were unlikely to venture. This provided them with a niche market which was, in turn, relatively protected by those same colonial policies.¹⁵⁹ In the case of the Protectorate, I would add to Oishi’s idea the complicating factor of the relationships that the colonial authority had with the chiefs and their subjects in the countryside that will be discussed. That relationship in turn, produced the conditions for Indian traders to carve out a place for themselves between the overarching but distant colonial authority and the various local chieftaincies. Before explaining the Chiefly-Indian relationships we must first briefly discuss the official colonial interaction with Indian traders, in general, which influenced the formation of those relationships.

The complex official explanations given for the policy of exclusion of Indian traders from certain settlements has been discussed extensively in chapter 1 but one explanation is particularly important in relation to this discussion. The High Commissioner Lord Gladstone in 1913 in Basutoland, in forming High Commission policy on the issue, made the argument that the nature of “tribal tenure” meant that the Indian settlers would inevitably be evicted and thrown on the mercy of the colonial state. This was because the traders’ continued residence on the land was entirely at the pleasure of the “tribe” whose primary constituents would drive the Indians out as their populations grew and land became scarce.¹⁶⁰ The colonial authorities presumed that the Indian traders had nowhere else to go nor any savings or alternative income to fall back on and would consequently become destitute refugees too far

¹⁵⁷ BNA/S 447/1/2 “Correspondence regarding Abbas Chand”

¹⁵⁸ “Muslim settlers arrived in Ramotswa during the time of Ikaneng, the Paramount Chief of the Bamalete, who was in power from 1886 to 1896, According to Ishoo Abdulla, Chief Ikaneng, unlike other Batswana chiefs, ‘was a kind person and friendly towards the Indian traders.’ He thus granted them not only permission to trade in his chieftdom but also provided them with some form of protection to trade freely” Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966,” 69.

¹⁵⁹ Oishi, “Indian Muslim Merchants in Mozambique and South Africa.”

¹⁶⁰ BNA/S 7/11, “High Commissioner Athlone to Resident Commissioner”

from their native land to easily return. This was placed in (tenuous) contrast to white traders who would be granted licences where Indians would not because they had other resources to fall back on. This contrasting depiction presumed that the white traders who were awarded licences would be of the farmer-trader sort or at the very least have access to land either locally or in South Africa.¹⁶¹ Thus it was the fact that Indian traders did not qualify for the protection that white settlers did that, nominally, explained the government preference for white traders. This was also part of a colonial rejection of the possibility that a comfortable long term understanding might come to exist between certain chiefs and Indian residents.

Another explanation relevant to this discussion was that the Protectorate had a paternal protectionist responsibility to the *African* population. They were duty bound to protect the population from overtrading or monopolies.¹⁶² This was the same paternal reasoning used to exclude Africans from becoming involved in trade themselves. Paternalistic reasoning was inflected with race in deeper ways still – “excessive competition” was deemed most damaging to African interests if it came from Indian traders. The reasoning was that Indian traders were almost intrinsically less likely to operate in “kind and nurturing” ways due to their “established practices” of clannishness etc.¹⁶³ Failure to keep Indians out of a location produced a settled “foothold” that worried colonial officials because they could not evict British Indian Subject residents for fear of scandal. These ideological positions did vary according to the administrator and period in question but the result was relatively consistent over time: regular attempts to block expansion of Indian trade. Initial targets of this obstruction focussed on expansion of trade from remote villages and regions,¹⁶⁴ and later – reactively – from already established areas of Indian settlement which had proliferated nonetheless. Regardless, all locations to which these actions pushed Indian traders before 1941 tended to place them under the auspices of African authorities.

¹⁶¹ Immigration – Indians, (OP/33/43).

¹⁶² For example: BNA/S 7/11, “The question of granting trading licences to Indians”, 1927, in which the Resident Commissioner officially removed the racial aspect of the policy while leaving scope for the application of racist decisions on these paternalistic grounds.

¹⁶³ BNA/S 447/1/1, “Affidavit of Jean Germond, Divisional Commissioner, Southern Protectorate” 1957

¹⁶⁴ Or those simply not already claimed by white traders. Note, for example, that places like Ramotswa, with the railway and border proximity, would have been ideal for white traders but successful Indian traders’ settlement there was early enough that white traders did not yet have recourse to the activist administration of, for example, the 1930s.

A practical illustration of what this combination of protectionism and paternalism meant for the political and economic relationship of Indian settlers to the colonial authorities and white settlers lies in the records of a 1934 deputation of the “Bechuanaland Protectorate British Indian Mohammedan Society” to Resident Commissioner Charles Rey. The Society representatives were told that competition in general was to be discouraged in light of the foot and mouth epidemic of that time and thus no new licences were being granted. This came with the claim that certain areas were overtraded which, they believed, echoing Gladstone’s 1913 speech, would result in widespread bankruptcies. The Resident Commissioner, nevertheless, informed them that the transfer of an existing licence from a white trader to an Indian on white-owned land was denied because of the great opposition from the other white settlers nearby.¹⁶⁵ Thus the commissioner at the same moment provided a paternalistic statement about the financial wellbeing of the population and an openly protectionist attitude to the white citizenry, who had real rights to representation from that government. While this places Indians in quite a clear position in the relation to the administration and white traders it should be remembered that this deputation was seen, by the deputation as well as the High Commission officials, as more than that. It was not only a request for leniency but a gentle confrontation, a reminder of the diplomatic threat that Indians could pose if obviously mistreated and thus also a defence of the position they were already taking up in the territory.

When warning of overtrading Rey also provided some very interesting information regarding the developing position of Indians in the territory. The commissioner stated that the number of commercial concerns, both Indian and European, had decreased as a result of the foot and mouth crisis, but that the proportion of stores still operating that were Indian owned, had grown. This is particularly interesting in light of Best’s findings that it was in this period that the Indian trader presence began to expand beyond the area of Ramotswa and surrounding settlement.¹⁶⁶ I would argue that what followed was a period in which commercial activity in the region was broadly reorganised. This was characterised in part by divestment on the part of marginal white traders and the relatively aggressive expansion of Indian traders into the resulting void in the markets of the hinterlands. That, in turn, saw

¹⁶⁵ BNA/S 314/9, “Transcript, Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society”, 1934

¹⁶⁶ Best, “General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968.”

a more radically protectionist response from white settlers and colonial officials at a local level. This is in contrast to a statement by High Commissioner Athlone in 1925, who said that while he didn't feel that Indian presence in the territory should be expanded "it would not be fair to hamper those Indians who were established in the Protectorate by imposing restrictions on the sale of their businesses".¹⁶⁷ This idea was to be challenged in subsequent years by the European advisory council and the local colonial state.¹⁶⁸ Thus the records of this deputation reveal both an openly racist government who limited Indian trade and its expansion and a network of Indian traders, many of whom were, nevertheless, able to survive the crisis, defend their positions and expand their operations. They did so in large part through strategies underpinned by securing relationships to chiefly authority.

One final vital point about the colonial authorities' trade policies is that, until 1949, African residents in the territory were refused trading rights beyond the right to sell their own cattle and goods to traders.¹⁶⁹ The argument for not allowing the development of legal African trade was based on a purported fear of informal trade, credit and accounting systems emerging from it. This was backed by distaste for the idea that chiefs would become involved in trade because they were the only Africans with access to capital.¹⁷⁰ This was presumably for fear of the politicisation of local economies as Alan Best similarly states that there was a fear that customers could be coerced into frequenting African shops and thus undermine the value of competition. On a related note he claims that African exclusion was ultimately a response to opposition from competing European traders.¹⁷¹

Neil Parsons, on the other hand, addressed the restriction of African commercial interests from early in the Protectorate's history most directly:

¹⁶⁷ BNA/S 7/11, "High Commissioner to Resident Commissioner", July 1925

¹⁶⁸ Best, "General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968." P 603, also uses the period 1932 to 1949 as a period of change in general dealership in the area though he doesn't think that these changes impact Indians intensively until 1941 he does say that the policy of the European advisory council and the Resident Commissioner was to stop Indians from acquiring licences.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

¹⁷⁰ Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate." P 163-164

¹⁷¹ Best, "General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968." P 603

[Resident Commissioner 1906-1916] Panzera had been behoven to, if not craven before, mercantile interests. He had undermined and forbidden Khama's investment in a trading company – a royal attempt to secure 'tribal' state revenues for the future – at the behest of mercantile interests in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

Thus colonial administration of trade was ambivalent – it sought expansion but qualified the desire with racialised political considerations. This meant that some Indian trade was allowed, at first, in places and ways that were not entirely threatening to their purposes but African trade was prevented outright.

African chiefly authorities' positions on trade

John and Jean Comaroff point out that trade was vitally important to precolonial Tswana societies and that chiefly control, and even monopoly, over trade by was central to their authority. The centrality of that pre-existing trade to early contact between Africans and missionaries, moreover, is in part testimony to its importance in the African chieftaincies, as well as to missionary thinking about their “civilising mission”.¹⁷² In the Comaroffs' words, “any evidence of local trade gave them hope that there existed fertile ground for commerce and hence for civilization.” It was this relationship of trade with chiefly authority in the colonial era, especially in the context of the continued assertiveness of the chiefs, which directed colonial officials to limit African, and in particular, chiefly participation in trade. To limit chiefly control of trade was to limit one aspect of the material role that chiefly authority had so long played. For the chiefs, on the other hand, the need to maintain some influence over the location and expansion of trade was defined in the same terms. It was an adaptive resistance to the colonial erosion of their material roles. The new roles in relation to trade were thus designed for both economic and political ends in response to a colonial, rather than a chiefly, trading order.

¹⁷² Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 161.

The explanations provided above for specific, racialised colonial policies must first be read in light of the power of Batswana chiefs in the colonial era. In most of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the ultimate authority of the state was located in the chiefs (*DiKgosi*), their headmen and the ruling councils (*DiKgotla*). This was generally true outside of the European Blocks and in particular outside of the largest villages. This generally suited both colonial and African needs but there was contestation as to the extent of power and primacy in the colonial relationship. The contestation and decision with regard to ultimate authority over these “tribal reserve” areas by the traditional leadership of the various paramountcies has been described at length by Michael Crowder in his description of the conflict in the 1930s between Tshekedi Khama, Regent of the Bamangwato (the largest of the paramountcies in the region), and the Resident Commissioner Charles Rey. The immediate conflict was about chiefly authority to try white residents in Ngwato territory. The result was the exiling of Tshekedi swiftly followed by his mobilising local, metropolitan British and South African press and political lobbies in protest, which forced the colonial office to return him to power.¹⁷³ This set the stage for continuous contestation over the margins of an unusually muscular chiefly authority against that of the very small and poorly resourced British administration seeking to bring the Protectorate in line with other colonial systems. Tshekedi’s victory is emblematic of the results of these struggles in the long run.¹⁷⁴ Bruce Bennet describes the result: “the British administration in the Bechuanaland Protectorate was minimal, leaving most of the work of government to the paramount chiefs”¹⁷⁵, and with it much of the *de facto* authority. Some of the central issues around which these contestations over authority took place were taxation and the related questions of settlement and mobility (key to the effective collection of taxes) and the regulation of trade through the granting of licences.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Crowder, *The Flogging of Phineas McIntosh*.

¹⁷⁴ As Bruce Bennett has pointed out “The Bechuanaland Protectorate was, as the name suggests, technically a protectorate rather than a colony. However, it is a mistake to attach any great importance to this distinction in explaining the nature of British administration. The distinction was, from the British point of view, an historical and technical one, and did not (at least by the start of the twentieth century) imply any significant difference in administration”. Bruce Bennett, “Some Historical Background on Minorities in Botswana,” *Minorities in the*, 2002. P6–7

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ John Makgala, “Taxation In The Tribal Areas Of The Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1899-1957”; Morton, “Fixity and Fluidity.”

While Africans were effectively excluded from trade, it remained no less important to the unusually powerful chiefs and their people that existing trade expand throughout the territory. The nature of this demand for trade underpins the ways that certain African authorities and Indian traders came to develop understandings around residency and trading.

This demand was connected to the ability of traders to link the rural economies to the capitalist world, which was potentially useful to locals with sufficient cattle and produce in times of plenty, in that it provided an alternative to migrant labour.¹⁷⁷ For others, the local shopkeeper was still important on several levels according to Ayoob Khan (who arrived from Gujarat in the 1950s to join his father in Manyana). Cash was not just about paying taxes or replacing shortfalls in grain production; it was also about access to ordinary everyday goods and to some that developed practical and social importance. For example:

Sometimes, if you were to have a death at night – and you see in that time there were no mortuaries – if a person dies tonight you must bury him tomorrow morning. They used to come, at twelve o’clock and they used to buy the white calico, and they used to wrap him in that cloth and bury him. Sometimes they’d have to come to the house and knock on the window and ask to open the shop to buy 10 metres or 5 metres of calico – ‘we want to bury this man.’¹⁷⁸

Because of various localised pressures, chiefs regularly made very strong demands for the establishment of stores in their territories from at least the 1920s among the Malete the Ngwaketse¹⁷⁹ to the late 1950s in the BaNgwaketse reserve and others.¹⁸⁰ These were not always requests for *Indian* shops but simply for the granting of licences to applicants such that *any* shop could be quickly opened in an area where there was demand. At the same time it would appear that these requests were usually in the form of support for a particular

¹⁷⁷ While these were valuable they also potentially undermined chiefly authority, such that chiefs were intimately concerned with managing the expansion of trade in their realms: see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*.

¹⁷⁸ Ayoob Khan, Life History.

¹⁷⁹ BNA/S 7/11, “Seboko Mokgosi to Resident Commissioner J. Ellenberger”, and, BNA/S 7/11, “Correspondence regarding Applications from Rassool Khan and JT Openshaw”

¹⁸⁰ BNA/S 447/1/1, “Bathoen II in support of application” 1954

applicant. This is well illustrated in the correspondence of the Regent Chieftainess of the Bangwaketse, Ntebogang (1924-1928), and various magistrates and commissioners. She withdrew her support for an Indian applicant in Kika on the border of the Bamalete reserve because that licence was refused, instead shifting her support to a white applicant in the hope that his application would be accepted. The latter application relied heavily on letters from Ntebogang stating that the trading post was necessary in curtailing cattle rustling across the border. This was subsequently challenged by the original Indian applicant because his rejection had been on the grounds of overtrading in the area. Eventually the resident magistrate of the region was able to promote the licencing of the white trader by handing over authority for the decision to grant the licence entirely to Ntebogang and the Kgotla. The full support of African authority for the latter trader could then be cited as the reason for the change of heart and the case closed. This was eventually supported by the High Commissioner on the grounds that “issue of a licence to some person other than the Indian who is already established in that part of the country would create competition that would tend to benefit the Natives”.¹⁸¹ In short, Ntebogang had localised political-economic pressures for a trading post which did not respond to racial divisions and the power to make demands and final decisions in that regard. Colonial officials could tap into those pressures to further their own racial ideological ends and place the decisions under the auspices of the final say of chief. It was this sort of power and negotiability that Indian traders too sought to tap into in competition with colonial authorities.

Indian settlers’ positions on African authority

For Indian settlers appealing to chiefly power was most directly useful in that it could force the consideration of granting a licence to an Indian applicant. In these instances the government would have to give public consideration to the possibility that granting a licence would be in the interests of the “Native population” and thus open themselves to challenge or to a shortage of alternatives.

¹⁸¹ BNA/S 7/11, “Applications of Rassool Khan and JT Openshaw”

The case of an application by an Indian man in the 1950s for the transfer of a licence in Mmathethe in the Bangwaketse Reserve shows the blunt force of the chief's authority but also its limitations. Mr Noor Mohammed Motani's attorney, Mr Fraenkel, questioned a group of competing white traders who had objected to the application. One of his questions was if the objectors had known of the Chief's support for the application and if they had would they have objected anyway. Two important white traders who objected, Thomas Sharp and George Alexander Taylor,¹⁸² responded respectively that:

I didn't know that the Chief had approved of this transfer. I think it would have made no difference had I known. The land belongs to the Chief and the Tribe. They are the landlords and can select the tenants.

and

I do not know that the Chief has consented to the issue of the licence. If the Tribe and the Chief had given their consent to this application I would have objected but I would know that it was hopeless.

The application in this case was rejected on the grounds that the applicant was offering a price higher than he, or any European buyer, could afford in order to secure the shop. He would thus inevitably rely on other Indian traders in the territory who would subsequently form a monopoly. The board agreed with the objectors that Indians were generally insular in nature and would keep control of the shop within their networks and as such appeared to offer little to colonial development plans. Their extremely odd conclusion was that the licence should be withheld because the buyer had offered too much – “more than the shop is worth” – and that this was a “dangerous precedent” because it allowed licences to be transferred in that reserve between Europeans and Indians if the price was right.¹⁸³

¹⁸² BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

¹⁸³ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

In an ironic turn, the widow of one of the men who had objected in that case, Mr Taylor, would attempt three years later to transfer the licence of his store in Kanye to Joosub Joubert Dada and as a result be a part of a precedent setting court case on the matter.

As time wore on Indian settlers who had been resident for a certain period became less and less vulnerable and gained new kinds of advantages from a close relationship with African authorities. This developed out of a principle regarding Indians increasing “insider” status in the eyes of both colonial and African authorities over time. This can be clearly seen in two cases.

First, in the case of Noor Mohammed Motani described above, Mr Fraenkel posed a second set of questions regarding the livelihood of Mr Motani. This referred both to the idea that the licence was potentially a sole source of livelihood and specifically to the fact that it was the livelihood of a person “who had lived in the reserve for 17 years”.¹⁸⁴ The lawyer argued that this nullified the objection to the encouragement of “further infiltration” of “Asiatics” – appealing to the presumption that after a non-specific amount of time a resident would gain localised belonging by virtue of residency. George Taylor maintained his objection to the licence transfer on the basis of race, but also stated that he did not wish to deprive a man of his livelihood under those circumstances.¹⁸⁵

A second case shows that the connection to chiefly authority and the resultant acquisition of a state of “belonging” could come to protect limited business opportunities which had already been acquired by Indian settlers. It was the stated purpose of the licensing boards not only to encourage sufficient competition in the broad “interests of the native” populations but also to identify and discourage the loosely defined concept of “over-trading”. Officials hoped that ‘racial motivations’, would be avoided in official opposition to applications. As such it was a common strategy on the part of both local traders and the government to claim that the population in a given area was too small for *more* trading than was taking place.¹⁸⁶ This was the case on at least one occasion in which the widow of a British trader wished to claim an abandoned shop licenced to her deceased husband. This was opposed by a set of Indian traders on the grounds that the licence holder owned another shop in a nearby village and that there were too many shops in that village already. Finally

¹⁸⁴ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

¹⁸⁵ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

¹⁸⁶ Many examples of this exist from the 1920s to the 1960s in the Botswana National Archive files: BNA/S 7/11, “Kika -Bangwaketse reserve, question of granting trading licences to Indians”, 1925-1952; BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60; BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society”, 1934; BNA/S 90/7, “Indians in the BP”, 1942

they asked that the application be rejected because the widow lacked the means to put a new roof on, or goods in, the dilapidated store. Apart from references to the “level” and “cost of living” these were all mirror images of countless objections submitted in relation to Indian trade. The application was rejected.¹⁸⁷

Indian settlers’ vulnerabilities under chiefly authority

In spite of their mutual benefit, the relations between Indian settlers and chiefly authority were not simple – chiefs were ambivalent themselves and where this is evident it is quite informative. When chiefs refused to allow access to Indian traders, or wished to strip any trader of their licence, the question would be immediately resolved in favour of the chief.¹⁸⁸ For example, there were no Indian traders in the Bamangwato region (the most populous of the paramountcies) at all until after the Second World War, as a legacy of Chief Khama III’s (1872-1923) insistence that all traders be British.¹⁸⁹ Similarly James Amanze claims that “Indian traders were not encouraged to live in large numbers in the villages” and that Paramount Chief of the Ngwaketse, Bathoen II (1928-1969), at least, had sought to control their numbers in places like Moshupa and elsewhere in his territory, if not to ban them outright.¹⁹⁰

This is complicated further, however, because the same Bathoen II was key to the expansion into new areas of many of the Indian traders in Moshupa and, eventually, Kanye by lending official support to the establishment of stores in both the late 1920s and the 1950s.¹⁹¹ Bathoen’s ambivalence is probably best explained by a combination of the expedient of the

¹⁸⁷ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

¹⁸⁸ Crowder, *The Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh*; BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society”, 1934

¹⁸⁹ Arellano-Lopez, “The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.”, P 140

¹⁹⁰ Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966.”, P 77;

Note that Bathoen II had always had trouble with asserting his dominance over the tributary Bakgatla Ba Ga Mmanaana who were in charge of Moshupa at the time. See: Yonah Hisbon Matemba, “The BaKgatla Ba Ga Mmanaana Split, 1934-36: The Impact of British Sub-Imperial Rule in Botswana,” *Botswana Notes and Records* 32 (January 1, 2000): 39–57.

¹⁹¹ For example: BNA/S 447/1/1, “Bathoen II in support of application”, 1954; BNA/S 7/11, “Bathoen II to resident magistrate Molepolole”, 1925

The cases in the 1950s involved families who were already recognised members of the Ngwaketse having been granted tenure decades earlier.

value of Indian stores' services, low prices and late opening times and a gradual acceptance of the fact of a growing Indian commercial population in the Protectorate. Moreover rents could be extracted from the insecure Indian traders in these villages, making them even more attractive. Arellano-Lopez states that "if the chief was in need of cash, he would raise the ground rent or threatened the Asian trader with expulsion from his Reserves".¹⁹² Similarly, with regard to traders in general, Best states that "By 1930 all chiefs, except those in the Bamangwato Reserve, were charging rents which included rights to grazing lands adjacent to the stores. Frequently, traders paid annual rents solely to maintain their monopolies."¹⁹³

Apart from those cases there appears to be little official historical record of the substance of the relationships in question. The relationships' intrinsic insecurity is informative on its own, however, especially the insecurity of tenure. One of the ways in which diasporic populations can stabilise their economic positions is through local investment in the land upon which economic activity takes place.¹⁹⁴ In fact, security of tenure is generally vital to economic activity – land is the most basic unit of productive value upon which all further activities take place. Land, moreover, is a relatively stable form of investment for excess capital that must be reinvested. The "tribal" areas held a particular complication for Indian traders in that the land was subject to "tribal tenure". This was a system fundamental to indirect rule, placing the chief and the Kgotla at the centre of the distribution of land that was held in common by the "tribe". This common land could be neither owned individually nor traded freely but instead was apportioned by "membership" and "custom", itself a negotiable concept. This meant that the traders who operated in these reserve areas would build their shops on land offered to them by the local chiefs only. They would own the stores that they built themselves and their contents but have no real *legal* security of tenure.

In the case of "European" traders of British or South African origin, appeals to imperial power and the rights of the citizen could, to some extent, be relied upon to counterbalance the power of the chief. Similarly, access to land in the "European Blocks", land that the government had already extracted from those local polities, limited the problems of the

¹⁹² Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate." P 209

¹⁹³ Best, "General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968." P601

¹⁹⁴ Engseng Ho speaks about how this investment functions in the Hadrami diaspora to not only stabilise local economic positions but to tie families to the place they have settled in in order to continue to secure that stability. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*.

insecurity inherent in “tribal leases”. The appeal to protection from the colonial government was not generally available to Indian traders the way it was to white traders. This much was made clear by omission in the earlier mentioned 1913 policy regarding Indian residents, which cited the risk of Indian traders’ ‘tribal land rights’ being terminated because they did not, and could not, own land protected by the colonial state. This put Indian traders in a position in which, especially before 1941, they had to secure their own tenure informally through local relationships and chiefly authority. In 1941 at least one Indian settler was confident enough in the security of his “tribal tenure” to challenge racialised colonial settlement and trade policies. The “informal” methods of securing tenure therefore produced the space for the formal challenge. To understand how that came to be we must first discuss how identity, acceptance, belonging and “tribal tenure” were defined and operated together within Batswana “customary law”.

The identity politics of acquiring and defending “insider” status

The advantages of representation as a chiefly subject were granted on the basis of “membership of the tribe”, in colonial legal phrasing.¹⁹⁵ In part, this depended on recognised rights of settlement in a particular area – “tribal tenure”. Membership, granted one access to the institution of the *Kgotla* to air grievances and seek political representation where desired. As Schapera’s exploration of these practices in the 1930s describes, movement from one village to another, or the arrival of “strangers”, involved an application for both rights to land and membership of the relevant chieftaincy at the same time – often involving tribute and the establishment of reputations and credentials over an extended period.¹⁹⁶ This emerged as a central issue for Naseer Chand and Fazlur Moorad. As Mr Chand stated: “when

¹⁹⁵ For example: Native Administration Proclamation (No. 74), Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1934.

¹⁹⁶ Schapera noted that these were common practices in precolonial times too, involving a process by which an individual would preferably be introduced by an existing “member” and then a chief would communicate with a ‘stranger’s’ previous chieftaincy in order to establish the desirability of the individual. Isaac Schapera, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, 4th ed. (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1938). For new Indian immigrants this would have been decidedly more difficult and introductions from older Indian residents would likely have served to cover these considerations.

some people applied for membership of the Kgotla they said ‘...once you’re living in the area you’re a member.’”¹⁹⁷

The function of the *Kgotla* and its official membership rights were famously subject to relatively authoritarian chiefs and related advisers and headmen – the *Kgotla* was largely a way to communicate decisions that had already been made¹⁹⁸ but access to them was nevertheless a marker of nominal “insider” status. This is key for our study because that “insider” status was the main element of the “ethnic” identities which, together, were supposed to form the “Batswana” people. These “ethnic” identities evolved over centuries around the cultural and linguistic practices of residents and “strangers” – migrants and refugees of various kinds over the years – as they were incorporated into political structures and were assimilated into local communities.¹⁹⁹ Localised identities were politicised and “membership of the tribe” for “strangers” would be tied to the possibility of cultural acceptance and assimilation at a later stage. “Membership” was the first stage in a long process of continuing to secure rights as an insider who belonged. This put pressure on individuals to develop local identifications and to perform the cultural and linguistic practices that came with them. It is in this light that we must read Fazlur Moorad’s testimony that: “People had been given tribal rights – as I was born in Tlokwen I am regarded as a Motlokwa, and I can stand in the Kgotla and be recognised as Batlokwa. I feel part of the village”.²⁰⁰ Clearly for Mr Moorad, the issues of representation, membership and identity were closely linked.

Indian residents of the reserve areas were thus under pressure, mounting over the generations, to obtain and perform localised Batswana identities. This identification was at the same time an ordinary result of generations of residence and a way to secure a place within which they could continue to live and from which they might prosper. However, in contrast to these expressions of deep Batswana identities, Indian settlers were often

¹⁹⁷Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

¹⁹⁸Patrick P. Molutsi and John D. Holm, “Developing Democracy When Civil Society Is Weak: The Case of Botswana,” *African Affairs* 89, no. 356 (July 1, 1990): 323–40.

¹⁹⁹See, for example, Schapera’s discussion of the acquisition of new members’ totemic devices as a marker of this process. (Schapera, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*.)

²⁰⁰Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

described as “clannish” and “closed off” by officials, settlers and other Batswana residents.²⁰¹ Indian oral testimony, too, presents a picture of extremely tightly knit communities in which all were known to each other and most were in some way, eventually, related by blood or marriage.²⁰² How, then, do we reconcile these assertions, and what are their implications?

Understanding this seeming paradox requires that we understand that identities are complex, nested and layered. Each of these identities emerges out of social and political economies that are similarly layered. Bechuanaland’s Indians were not seeking to become completely assimilated as “Batswana”. They instead sought an accommodation and hybridisation of their existing identities as traders in local cross-border communities and regional networks that themselves dealt heavily in identity politics – a part of a larger global sphere of shifting Indian and Muslim identities.

The most common broad communal identification that informants provided was “Batswana-Indian”: merging the post-colonial, ethnic-nationalist principle of Botswana citizens as Batswana people and reference to an Indian origin. On probing, however, the “Indian” part of the term “Batswana-Indian” produced some discomfort. “Indian” was largely a shorthand taken from Apartheid-era South African categories that stood in for complex contentions about historical origins that privileged an Islamic identity rather than an Indian one *per se*. Naseer Chand and Fazlur Moorad, for example, both argued that the antecedents of the Indian settlers’ families were themselves erstwhile settlers in Gujarat of Persian and Arabic origin – descendants of Sufi saints or the armies of the Mughal empire. As proof of this disconnection, Naseer Chand added the fact that the common language amongst his family was Urdu and not Gujarati.²⁰³

The centrality of a generalised identification with Islam in communal organisation is not entirely new, however. The first representative body of settlers of Indian origin was the

²⁰¹ As well as in some of the post-independence academic literature on the matter: for example, Makgala, Christian John, “A Survey of Race Relations in Botswana, 1800-1966.” or Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966.”

²⁰² Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*; Ayoob Khan, *Life History*.

²⁰³ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

This is a sentiment which is repeated in recent work by Thomas Blom Hansen and is associated with the rewriting of history as more Muslim and less Indian: Thomas Blom Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom: Social Life in an Indian Township in South Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

“British Indian Mohammedan Society” (which persisted until the 1950s). The Indian community in Bechuanaland also continuously impressed their need to educate the youth in *madrassas* and to have access to religious structures, on colonial authorities.²⁰⁴ This was reinforced by the fact that the few communal gatherings that took place amongst those far flung networks were religious in nature and the importance of social and familial ties to the business practices of many Indian residents.²⁰⁵

In the years which are to be discussed in chapter three, these identities played out in interesting linguistic ways that represent global and regional layers of identities for Batswana-Indians. These could be seen as political goings on in India in the 1940s produced nationalisms that included what would become the movement for partition. In response to that, many Muslims in India began to look to Urdu as the language of a Muslim Indian identity. This had a related impact in South Africa²⁰⁶ and, I would suggest, Bechuanaland, where census data from 1946 showed that none of the 94 “Asiatics” counted in the Protectorate claimed Gujarati as their home language – 55 of them claimed Urdu, 17 “other Indian” only 6 Hindi, and 14 said “other”. Previously the assertions of the Director of Education in the 1930s were that “the general Indian language they used is Gujarati”.²⁰⁷ The rise of identification with Islam rather than India would later morph into a much larger globalised identity in which local Batswana-Indians began to associate themselves with a “purified” global *Ummah* and to prefer Arabic phrases over the regionally bounded Urdu and Gujarati of earlier eras.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴For example: BNA/S 314/9 “Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society”, 1934; BNA/S 457/23/1, “Proposed establishment of school for Indians at Ramoutsa”

²⁰⁵Moorad, *Life and Family History*; Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse”; Parratt, “Muslims in Botswana.” 1936

²⁰⁶ See: Shamil Jeppie, *Language Identity Modernity: The Arabic Study Circle of Durban* (Human Sciences Research Council, 2007); Rajend Mesthrie has also discussed the importance of language and identity to Indian settlers in South Africa, specifically with regard to Islam and Muslim identities see: Rajend Mesthrie, “Language Shift, Cultural Change and Identity Retention: Indian South Africans in the 1960s and Beyond,” *South African Historical Journal* 57, no. 1 (January 2007): 134–52; Rajend Mesthrie, “Subordinate Immigrant Languages and Language Endangerment: Two Community Studies from Kwazulu-Natal,” *Language Matters* 37, no. 1 (2006): 3–15; Rajend Mesthrie, “The Linguistic Reflex of Social Change: Caste and Kinship Terms among People of Indian Descent in Natal, South Africa,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 32, no. 3/4 (October 1, 1990): 335–53.

²⁰⁷Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse.”

It is, on the other hand, entirely possible that the Director of Education in that instance was simply incorrect due to carelessness, assumption and/or misunderstanding and that this is a case of an oral account simply being more accurate than a documentary one.

²⁰⁸Maulana Dawood, *Life History*, June 2013.

Thus Indian settlers produced an identity which allowed them to create and defend a place for themselves locally that was neither entirely Batswana nor White. This identity affirmed connections to global and regional networks of language, ethnicity, religion and values, while also defending access to land and opportunity in the “tribal reserves” of Bechuanaland. The Indian settlers were both a tightly connected community with regional and global economic ties and Batswana “insiders” who could make claims on that basis. Not least of these claims was to the right to operate and live in the European Blocks.

Indian trade from “tribal tenure” to the European Blocks

By 1941 the “member” status of many Indians under “tribal tenure” meant that some Indian traders in the territory felt sufficiently confident to confront the state on the questions of property and trading rights in the European Blocks. They chose to do so on western legal grounds, demanding that the state allow them access to western legal land rights. It should be noted, first, that the notion of Indian land or commercial rights in European Blocks was viewed by the colonial administration with some horror. In 1934, high commissioner Stanley himself wrote to Charles Rey about the mere rumour that a certain Jousse’s farm in the Tuli Block was up for sale and was being looked at by a group of Durban- based Indians. In it he described the possibility as “disturbing” and stressed that, should such a purchase take place, it would have “awkward repercussions outside as well as within the territory”. The response was a diatribe against the presence of Indian traders in the territory like those described in chapter one. This was delivered with the implication that ownership of land in the territory would encourage immigration and would alter the diasporic/immigrant, and thus impermanent, character the existing Indian population. Lord Stanley in turn suggested that if necessary the potentially politically damaging “deeming clause” of the new immigration legislation should be implemented to keep the prospective buyers out.²⁰⁹ This veritable panic at such a high level is indicative of the importance of the location of

Again this is common to the South African population to which those in Bechuanaland were connected: Hansen, *Melancholia of Freedom*; Jeppie, *Language Identity Modernity*.

²⁰⁹ BNA/S 7/11, “Correspondence”, 1934

settlement and the ownership of land in the relationship between Indian residents and the colonial state.

In 1941, a trader by the name of Abbas Chand, a descendant of the first Indian migrants and later settlers, demanded and received permission for a trading licence in Lobatse town. The process by which Mr Chand managed this could be useful in forming a complex understanding of this change in focus for the population. Indians had lived in Lobatse before this, working as shop assistants or possibly as “managers” of various stores.²¹⁰ “Managers” in this case often appears to have referred not just to employees but to *de facto* owners who were not licensed as such and came to informal commercial understandings with the licensed owners.²¹¹ The issue here was the licence to trade in the town – trading rights gave the land most of its value for traders. Chand owned three other stores in Moshupa and elsewhere in the territory and people had come to know the family home as a place from which new arrivals could make a start in the territory.

First Mr Chand and the owner of the licences on the two shops, applied for their transfer. Once it became clear that there was some resistance to that application, Mr Chand quickly bought the premises of the shops without the licences. Being the legal owner of property intended for commercial purposes meant that, should he fail to acquire the licences, he could leave the property unused. This would not only be undesirable for the administration but it would become a public spectacle, a monument to the obvious racial discrimination of the government in refusing the licence. Colonial officials, in fact, argued that Chand’s buying of the shops was a conscious strategy to do just that. That argument was strengthened by the fact that he was known to have paid significantly above market value for them. Thus Mr Chand made it clear that, to him, a foothold in this town was invaluable.

Nevertheless a list of reasons to deny the request was provided, collated in a 7 page letter citing the input of chambers of commerce, the local advisory council representative, the farmers’ association, and various property owners in the area. These were all familiar discussions of the nature of Indian commerce and ways of life such that their presence in a

²¹⁰ Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966”; Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse.”

²¹¹ BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from British Indian Mohammadan Society” 1934

white settlement was especially undesirable on commercial as well as social grounds. Many of these included the localised objection that granting the licence transfer would likely result in “Reduction of the value of landed properties in the area”.²¹² These were delivered, moreover, with the familiar insistence that this should not be understood as mere racial discrimination. Rather it was to be understood as a set of reasoned arguments regarding the fundamental character of people of Indian origin that responded to examples from other parts of the territory and indeed, they felt, the rest of the world.²¹³

It must be understood that this was not a run of the mill objection, however. This episode occurred in the Lobatse European Block, which had always been immune to the competition of Indian traders, much as it had been immune to the authority of African polities living around it. This refuge allowed the business of white trader-farmers to operate and presented a relatively secure location for the reinvestment of the proceeds of business conducted around the territory – the possibility of opening this up to new competition and markets was profoundly disconcerting. As explained in the letter mentioned, this was not the first attempt by Indians to move into the block, but it was the first time a willing seller was available (it was also the first time that the challenge had been strong and direct enough to warrant official records be kept). The key statement was that it had:

generally been found possible to find an adequate reason for refusing applications by Indians in any area where it was not desired that they should trade without raising the question of possible discrimination against them [which, it had been promised to Indian High Commission representatives, would never be the case], and the Indians have until now refrained from raising the issue in any acute form. Mr Chand has now apparently decided to force the issue.²¹⁴

The challenge to the status quo that was represented by Abbas Chand’s request for the licence transfer is interesting for the way in which this challenge was responded to but more

²¹² BNA/S 7/11, “Kika -Bangwaketse reserve, question of granting trading licences to Indians” 1925-1952

²¹³ BNA/S 7/11, “Kika – Bangwaketse reserve, question of granting trading licences to Indians” 1925-1952

²¹⁴ BNA/S 7/11, “Resident Commissioner Arden Clarke to High Commissioner Sir Walter Huggard”, 1941

so in how it was *not* responded to. While there had been, and would be, court cases intended to force the hand of the government regarding these rights, in this case it was the threat of further confrontation that was effective. Chand pre-empted the issue both intentionally and through certain coincidences. He did so first by setting himself up in the local area as a legitimate resident. He did this, importantly, in a way that could result only in capitulation or a clear case of racial discrimination on the part of the authorities. The latter might have produced a scandal that the government decided it could not afford. In particular, his case was to be decided on personally by the High Commissioner, who would have had to deal with the metropolitan political fallout should scandal hit. The time frame is important because, coincidentally, such a scandal would be far too reminiscent of the embarrassments suffered by “successive governments in the United Kingdom in dealing with the decision to exclude Indians from the Kenya Highlands.”²¹⁵ The High Commissioner thus immediately insisted that the licence had to be granted, and with that, the transfer was approved.

This case is indicative of the unusual and often surprising systems of control in place in the Protectorate. Asking for transfer of an existing licence from a willing seller, already owning the properties, being well-established in other businesses in the territory and having the boldness and vision to simply insist on a response, exposed the underlying racism of the settlers and government. This exposure was so obvious that it touched a nerve connected to elusive colonial concerns with respectability and reputation on an imperial, diplomatic stage. These imperial ideals presupposed the paternal responsibilities and liberal ethics central to the defence of empire by many of its supporters in the metropole. These were in constant tension with the substance of the dominant culture of colonial administration on the ground, which consisted of a deeply ingrained racial hierarchy and set of stereotypes combined with the principle that local conditions necessitated real practicalities quite apart from the ideals in the metropole. These were the despotic “means”, as described by JS Mill, to the rights-based “ends” that defined the “liberal empire”, which made many in Britain uncomfortable.²¹⁶ The autobiography of Charles Rey is full of appeals from a few years earlier to the impracticality and ignorance of liberal Britain and the ignorance of the home government when the ‘realities’ of colonial administration were confronted. For example:

²¹⁵ BNA/S 7/11, “Resident Commissioner Arden Clarke to High Commissioner Sir Walter Huggard”, 1941

²¹⁶ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

Natives don't understand anything but an *order*: they like to be *governed*...the more despotically one governs the better. But I wonder what our Socialist friends at home would say!²¹⁷

And, regarding any possible bad news around the plan for incorporation into the Union:

The home government has taken a nasty knock about unemployment insurance, another one about India on account of the volte-face of the Indian princes and a third by reason of a white paper on armaments. A fourth about the Protectorate might bring them down for there is a large body of opinion at home that feels very strongly on these native questions.²¹⁸

An appeal to the principles of “liberal empire” and its related embarrassments easily won Abbas Chand, and subsequently many other Indian families, the right to own land, live and trade in Lobatse. It was against the administrative colonial culture and its “practical” refusal of that right in the name of white settler interests and racism, that that victory was won.

Despite the ease with which Abbas Chand made his way into the Blocks, there continued to be confrontations, often involving costly and drawn out court battles over the right to trade. The case of Abbas Chand in Lobatse serves to illuminate the subtlety of the conditions required in order to prevail in these circumstances. This case was a very particular concurrence of the relative prosperity of the applicant and limited outlets for that capital, the security of that applicant's status as a “national” of the territory, as a member of the pioneer Chand family, who's gambit was timed just as the metropole had had the experience of embarrassment in Kenya. He was possibly also simply lucky that his claim coincided with the brief High Commissionership of Sir Walter Huggard, a judge of the High Commission

²¹⁷ Rey, Monarch of All I Survey. P42

²¹⁸ Ibid. P 185

territories, who possessed a mind more attuned to subtleties of law and seems to have been less tolerant of local racism than his predecessors had been.

Conclusion

Within a handful of years, Lobatse replaced Ramotswa as the centre of Indian life in the territory. Whereas people would congregate in a house in Ramotswa at Eid or on Friday evenings, Lobatse would soon boast the largest Indian population, a mosque and the first Muslim school.²¹⁹ The rapidity of settlement in Lobatse is indicative of the importance of property rights to prosperity and the development of an increasingly localised identity, as well as the increasing permanence of the population. The establishment of the school in Lobatse is a vital point in the history of the Indian population in the territory.²²⁰ The various representative organisations had been trying to build such a school in Ramotswa since the mid-1920s. Having children travel to, and board in, South Africa was becoming increasingly difficult. They had objections to the “conditions” at the schools in South Africa, the cost of sending students to Rhodesia, as many families did, and the rejection of Muslim students from mission schools in the Protectorate. The latter issue is very important because missions, which were the educational backbone of the territory, tended to directly connect educational services to Christian religious practices and thus entrench their role in local lives and local identities.²²¹ This was potentially threatening to the cultural religious fabric of Batswana-Indian communities.²²² The attempts to build a school in Ramotswa had faltered on many grounds, the most pressing of which seems to have been the cost of rent required by the Bamalete chief at Ramotswa.²²³ Owning land changed the dynamics of Indian communal decision-making on such questions. As the opportunity to own useful land in the towns of

²¹⁹ Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966.” P74; Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse.”

²²⁰ Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966”; Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse”; Parratt, “Muslims in Botswana.”

²²¹ For extensive discussion of this see both: Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*; Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution . Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²²² BNA/S 457/23/1, “Proposed establishment of school for Indians at Ramoutsa”, 1936; Moorad, Life and Family History; Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

²²³ Maano and Haron, “Botswana’s Muslims in the Towns of Ramotswa and Lobatse.” P261-263; Amanze, James, “Islam in Botswana During the Colonial Period 1882-1966.”

the 'European Blocks' like Lobatse and later Gaborones (the area where the new capital, Gaborone, would later be built) opened up, many quickly saw the opportunity to cement their presence in the country and to extract rents of their own through purchase of property.²²⁴ The lives of Indian residents in the era of access to Lobatse and, more broadly, to real estate investment, forms a major theme of chapter three.

In coming to the point where Indian residents could access the towns and property markets we have shown how colonial abhorrence of Indian settlement in general was tempered by their need to expand trade in the territory. This ambiguity was compounded by their desire to reinforce their contested political domination of Africans by refusing to allow the latter to carry out that trade themselves. This meant the acceptance of some Indian trade under condition of constant oversight and circumscription. Central to that circumscription was the alienation of Indian settlers from the right to land ownership and the security and stability that go with it.

The informal response of Indian traders to government, in an effort to secure rights to land use, was the strategy of developing ties with the *Kgotlas* and the Chiefs in the reserve areas that is the substance of this chapter. It is not evident, and there appears to be little or no substantial record in this regard, what these relationships actually, substantively consisted of. We know that the chiefs wanted trading stores in their areas, were not in competition with Indian traders and could charge rents. We know that Indian traders would be more beholden to those rents than white traders, given their position. We do not know whether these relationships were generally amicable, though they are remembered as such in the oral record, nor whether the lack of real secure tenure was something that worried these traders daily. According to Arellano-Lopez, Indian traders were always under threat of loss of property and expulsion should they oppose rising rents etc.²²⁵

Indian settlers developed the means, under the auspices of African chiefly authorities, to defend and secure the land tenure which *was* available to them. They did this largely through the formation and performance of localised identities which they then hybridised and merged with existing, evolving communal global and regional identities. With this they formed a

²²⁴ Dada, *Life and Family History*. Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

²²⁵ Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

new kind of resident of the territory who made claims to rights as “Batswana” and as “Indian”. It was these mechanisms which provided the requisite confidence about “belonging” in the reserve areas to challenge Indian confinement to those same areas and to the insecurity and economic constraints that went with them. Thus Abbas Chand was able to secure his position in the reserves through his family’s long residence and relationships with the chiefly authorities such that he was able to challenge for the right to live, invest and trade in Lobatse, which meant that he no longer had to secure his position in those same reserves nor limit his investments to stores in those areas.

Preparing the Road to Independence: War to the Decline of Empire 1939-1966

Introduction

Between the early 1940s and the late 1960s several great changes in the political and economic conditions globally and regionally impacted on the settled nature and the identity of Batswana-Indians and the make-up of the broader population of Indian origin in the territory. The war and its aftermath had important implications for both the South African and the Indian economies – these in turn had political and social implications that reverberated through the diaspora. India gained its independence shortly after the war and this had enormous ramifications, both as an inspiration to colonised peoples and in relation to the status of the Indian diaspora. The subsequent decolonisation of Africa and the emergence of Apartheid in South Africa resulted in increased immigration of, amongst others, South African Indians to Bechuanaland. They came both as economic migrants and, later, as refugees from more direct political oppression.

These global and regional political and economic upheavals, increasingly isolated the Indian population of Bechuanaland from India, physically and legally. This was a function of the dangers of travel in war, new economic conditions and the attempts to produce new Indian and Pakistani nations and citizens, from the colony that preceded them. Indians in both South Africa and Bechuanaland, especially those straddling the border of the two countries, were increasingly alienated from South Africa and pushed into ever deeper connection with, and reliance on, the Protectorate.

The isolation from India and antagonism of South Africa contributed to and coincided with a generally increased embeddedness in Bechuanaland's economy and politics. It is in this period that the experience of the Indian population of Bechuanaland and later Botswana, as one which largely straddled the border with South Africa, becomes increasingly visible in the archival sources. This is in part because of the special economic conditions engendered by the war and later because of the increased South African interest in the control of the movement of Indian and African populations across its borders. This put pressure on Indians to look to the Protectorate as a political and economic home and to invest themselves in its future.

The isolation and the attacks on Indian rights in South Africa resulted in increased nervousness on the part of the colonial government of the High Commission Territories and in Britain. The nervousness was about the impact of immigration from South Africa and the expansion of Indian investment in property and business more generally in the territory. The actions which emerged out of this nervousness were eventually tempered by the response of local Indians asserting their rights as residents with ever greater confidence and the old fears of the political effects that anti-Indian policies might have at home and in the diplomatic sphere.

Connections to and isolation from India: the economic and political impact of war on India

The experience of Batswana Indians in the 1940s was marked by global historical processes as well as local and regional processes more directly connected to them. The foremost global factor was the Second World War and its impacts on economies, communications and the system of empire. The war was costly for Britain causing it to look to its empire increasingly as a source of both fighting men and the resources and goods needed by the war economy. Britain began to import goods, both raw and industrial, at a massively accelerating rate. This created large and growing demand in the colonies, especially those with an already existing industrial base like India and South Africa. The limitations on the transportation of goods

and the redirection of metropolitan industry away from export and into war production also produced a degree of protection for those countries' economies.²²⁶

India received massive orders for industrial goods from the British and as a result saw major growth in manufacturing. These metropolitan orders were paid for in large part with credit, inverting the traditional balance of credit between India and Britain, but also by British printing of money. The results of the mass industrialisation and the mismanagement of monetary policy by the British, was massive inflation which, in turn, meant that the Indian poor, especially those in the countryside, were progressively squeezed out of their livelihoods. In Bengal this, along with other important factors, would lead to devastating famine.²²⁷ These developments would contribute greatly to the Quit India campaign, post-war independence and partition. They paved the way for the period of decolonisation that was to follow and that would in due course include the emergence of the independent nation of Botswana.

The war's impact on the Indian economy and on the lines of communication between Africa and the subcontinent are themselves significant. Economic changes during and directly after the war meant that not only did people again begin to leave the countryside for jobs in the cities, but that some of those with contacts and options overseas began to move there too. Oral evidence suggests a sense of continued connection between Indian settlers in Bechuanaland and India in spite of the difficulties imposed by war. People continued to come from India as family and labour, visit their families in India and retire there. The strength of the connection was such that many Indian settlers simply ignored, or chose to risk, the dangers of shipping in the Indian Ocean during the war. An extremely evocative illustration of the closeness of those transnational connections, which also provides one of the few descriptions of the gendered experience of that period, was provided by Fateema Khan:

²²⁶ Tapan Raychaudhuri, Irfan Habib, and Dharma Kumar, *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (Cambridge University Press Archive, 1983); Dietmar Rothermund, *An Economic History of India: From Pre-Colonial Times to 1991* (Psychology Press, 1993).; C. H. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa: Conquest, Discrimination, and Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²²⁷ Raychaudhuri, Habib, and Kumar, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*; B. R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Rothermund, *An Economic History of India*.

Fateema Khan: My granny went back to India to go and give birth to my dad, my grandfather stayed here. And then he went back to go and fetch them. Her family was there to help look after stuff. They had to travel from Gujarat to Bombay to get the ship, to the port. And my dad's passport – he was a baby, he was a year old – my dad's passport was stolen on the train. So they missed their ship trying to get emergency documents and that sort of stuff. And that ship was actually bombed by the Japanese.

Naseer Chand: there were lots of stories from that time of blackouts on the ships. The minute they would hear a siren they black out the ship. That was WWII.

Fateema Khan: Yeah. So the ship they were supposed to be on was bombed.

They were saved because my father's passport disappeared.²²⁸

Between 1940 and 1943 the colonial government in the Protectorate issued or endorsed for travel to India at least nineteen passports and identity certificates.²²⁹

While these close connections appear to have continued until well after the war for some of the families in the Protectorate with the wives, children, siblings and parents of immigrants still in India, it was a declining trend amongst a swathe of older residents. These strong connections, amongst other things, indicate a certain reluctance to commit to permanent long-term settlement in Bechuanaland by those who had arrived relatively recently. That reluctance would have been encouraged by the attitude of the state both in South Africa and Bechuanaland/Botswana towards the families of immigrants. By the end of the 1940s, however, the trend that appears to emerge is of decreasing migration from India as families were either largely consolidated in the Protectorate or, presumably, people returned to

²²⁸ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

²²⁹ BNA/S 185/10 "Indians, return of permits and passports issued" 1916 – 1941.

Bear in mind that the 1946 census recognised an Indian population in Bechuanaland of only 94. Though that is an unreliable figure, as discussed, it is still an indicator that this was a fairly large number of permits.

India.²³⁰ This is a change from the earlier practice of returning to India for retirement. Naseer Chand, for example, stated that his great grandfather returned to India for retirement and passed his two businesses over to his sons. He was, however, the last member of that family to do so.²³¹

Connections to and isolation from India: independence, official status and passports

Another vitally important development towards the end of the 1940s was the process of the decolonisation and partition of India. The close connection between diasporic Indian populations in the Protectorate and the Indian subcontinent that existed right through the second World War would be further impacted by this development in what would at first be simply administrative but later constitute quite important legal and symbolic consequences. While many of the families of emigrants remained in India and would continue to do so after independence, a few of those who had left before independence to settle in the Protectorate were subject to a new kind of diplomatic status. This appears to have been a fairly confusing time for the administrators of the Empire in that dealing with a diaspora which, though it was generally simply treated as a lower class of subject of the empire, somewhere below European “settlers”—a sort of imperial nuisance—was in fact a legally protected part of the empire’s global system. Thus they faced the task of not only decolonising the physical landmass of British India and its subjects there, but of decolonising its enormous diaspora at the same time. This was because the status of the people that made up the diaspora in various other parts of the world, and in particular the passports which were intended to induct them into a modern global legal structure, were either provided by an Indian Princely State or by the British Raj.²³²

The obvious solution would have been to simply transfer citizenship to either India or Pakistan and have new passports issued. However, this was complicated by the fact that some in the Indian diaspora seem to have been recognised by the colonial governments as

²³⁰ Return migration figures are surprisingly hard to come by in the archives of Botswana and the oral sources tend to focus on people who decided to stay in the Protectorate.

²³¹ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

²³² BNA/S 185/10 “Indians, return of permits and passports issued”, 1916 - 1941

more or less permanent residents. They had combinations of local official recognition and close local ties. Many were born in these territories and were heavily invested in them economically and emotionally and as such they could not suddenly have their status placed in question without danger of embarrassment for the government in question. The former course of action *was* taken for some of the residents who were born in the territory or were long standing residents. In many cases, however, their passports appear to have taken years to be issued while the administration in India re-established itself and ascertained the status of the emigrants in question. This meant that those people who were to receive Indian or Pakistani passports remained essentially document-less and thus, for the purposes of the bureaucracies in question, they were without any kind of official status. This meant that government would be at a loss as to how to govern these people in their state of limbo and, most importantly for the residents, they would be rendered unable to cross international borders legally.

The legislation which governed this question was produced in 1948 and would be central to the replacement by Britain of her Empire with a Commonwealth of Nations. This was the British Nationality Act and it was actually intended as a response to the unilateral passing of a citizenship act by Canada which created some confusion as to the status of the British Subjects who had until that time owed allegiance to the King or Queen as the basis for their claiming rights from the colonial authorities. This law redefined the nature of nationality in the face of decolonisation and would be the basis of mass immigration into Britain itself and the creation of a multi-ethnic society in that country.²³³ People born in India or Bechuanaland were now citizens of the UK and Colonies on the basis of either colonial resident status in Bechuanaland or Citizenship status in India or Pakistan. While this seems fairly simple in principle, it was evidently fairly difficult to deal with in practice

In 1953 the government stated that for people born within the Protectorate, British passports were always provided. For those born in India the responsibility was “a matter for the Indian government” and “as a result of the uncertainty of the position since India became a republic it was not possible at the moment for this government to issue British passports to Indian

²³³ Randall Hansen, “The Politics of Citizenship in 1940s Britain: The British Nationality Act,” *Twentieth Century British History* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 67–95.

nationals”.²³⁴ Eleven years later, in 1964, the Indian government asked the High Commission to provide information about people of Indian origin living in Basutoland, Swaziland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Originally their query was simply related to the numbers and status but the response from Bechuanaland was that most wanted to “register as British Subjects and citizens, UK and Colonies. [But] since it is prerequisite of registration that applicants are British Subjects it is necessary for them to be registered as Indian citizens which they have found impossible to do.”²³⁵ And while some had been naturalised in Bechuanaland “[many] find difficulty in finding the requisite documents such as birth certificates, wives birth certificates, marriage certificates etc.” In response the Commonwealth Office, on behalf of the Indian government, requested “numbers of persons of Indian origin who are citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies by virtue of their birth in the territory or registration as UK citizens on production of proof of birth in what was formerly British India” as well as people born in British India and were “thus British subjects without citizenship, but are perhaps unable to register themselves as citizens of the UK and colonies for lack of birth certificates etc.” and “those born in former Princely states who may well be stateless”.²³⁶ Interestingly the response from Bechuanaland added up to 143 people of Indian origin either born in Bechuanaland or in India whereas the total number of “Asiatics” in the 1964 census was 382.²³⁷ The discrepancy suggests that some residents of Indian origin were not being counted in the report. It is likely that those were either people who had come directly from India in recent years or from South Africa and thus were not deemed deserving of consideration for UK citizenship. In the case of immigrants from India this is not surprising but those coming from South Africa were of concern to the High Commission precisely because of the rights promised them as a result of the British Subject status which they shared with those in the territories.

The fact that this diplomatic administrative confusion had continued over the course of at least 16 years is indicative of the broader confusion and practical inconsistency over government policy and practice with regard to the status of its Indian residents. A key

²³⁴ BNA/S 314/11, “Notes from Deputation”, 1953-5

²³⁵ BNA/S 493/8, “Indians: immigration and emigration”, 1964

²³⁶ BNA/S 493/8, “Indians: immigration and emigration”, 1964

²³⁷ BNA/S 493/8 “Chief Immigration Officer to Chief Secretary”, 1964; Bechuanaland Protectorate, *Report on the Census of the Bechuanaland Protectorate - 1946*, 1952; Bechuanaland Protectorate, *Report on the Census of the Bechuanaland Protectorate - 1964*, 1965.

example of the complexities involved can be found in a file on the trade licencing of Habib Khan. Khan, the immigration officer stated, was provided with a Bechuanaland passport in 1946 because he had been “resident in the Protectorate before 1941 and was issued with a certificate of Identity on the 4th December 1941”. “Before 1941” does not indicate how many years he had been there before he was basically declared permanent in spite of that being the practice required in the relevant legislation – he was simply “known” by various people to be a legitimate resident and held in some esteem by the district commissioner.²³⁸ Mr Khan was evidently not born in the territory but this application had been made before Indian independence and as such his official status was more or less the same regardless of where his passport was issued. A matter of months later India was independent but not issuing passports. Mr Khan’s official status was as a British subject, however, and as such he was able to claim rights he otherwise would have had to wait, possibly more than 16 years, to obtain. The father of Ayoob Khan similarly received resident status in Bechuanaland before Independence. His wife and children were still in India, however, and had to enter Bechuanaland via South Africa with both Indian passports and British promissory documents that claimed them as legitimate residents of Bechuanaland and thus protected British Subjects who only sought passage across South Africa.²³⁹ Ayoob Khan, though he came to the territory as a child and under the auspices of his father’s permanent residency, had to apply for a Bechuanaland identity certificate and passport in 1963 in order to travel in the territory.²⁴⁰

This process of becoming officially disconnected from the now independent India doubtless impacted on the drift towards identification as Batswana-Indians rather than as diasporic Indian immigrants. The India that many remembered and may have identified with in an earlier period was now effectively gone and in its place was a foreign power. This was even more so due to the effects of partition. Whereas most individuals were from Gujarat at some point in their history and were technically of Indian origin, the majority identified more closely with Islam than with what they saw as a Hindu country. It was because of this identification, according to Naseer Chand, that Abbas Chand renamed one of his stores in Lobatse, Pakistan Trading. This was a minor statement of allegiance to the slightly younger

²³⁸ BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

²³⁹ Ayoob Khan, Life History.

²⁴⁰ Private Archive of Ayoob Khan.

generation who tell the story with some degree of humour – a generation who feel much more distant from the India from which their forebears had emigrated. Nevertheless, as mentioned in chapter two, the nation of India and the process of partition has left enough of a mark on the memories of Batswana-Indians that they generally tend to deemphasise the “Indian” part of that identification in favour of Muslim and even Mughal heritage.

Officially, while this passport issue isolated Batswana Indians from India, Bechuanaland passports protected their positions locally. These new passports provided official rights of belonging in the territory which only a combination of African “tribal” tenure and the precarious politics of colonial bureaucracy had secured before. Hence, when independence came, apart from producing any nationalist feeling, it would signify a new era of confidence in the lives of those Batswana-Indians who had qualified for passports.

The closure of South Africa to Indians

In South Africa, the conditions of the Second World War meant that the process of industrialisation that had begun to accelerate in the 1930s, increased further. In the same period the migration of African workers to the cities expanded and became more permanent than it had previously been. This was a major factor in the post-war politics in the country contributing to the success of the National Party in 1948 and the emergence of Apartheid. At the same time the government instituted a system of agricultural price controls and subsidies, with associated import limitations, that would remain in place until near to the end of the century. This had several fascinating impacts on local politics and economics with broad regional implications which became increasingly important in Bechuanaland and, more importantly for us, for Indian traders who straddled the border.²⁴¹

A number of anti-Indian laws emerged in South Africa through the course of the 1940s. These impacted specifically on the ability to do business in certain places and on the ownership of property. They affected two critical parts of the history of permanent Indian settlement in the country and, coincidentally or not, were the very things that the Indian

²⁴¹ Ben Stanwix, “Wheat, Bread, and the Role of the State in Twentieth Century South Africa” (Masters, Oxford, 2012).

population in Bechuanaland had been systematically opening up through political engagement, litigation and the threat thereof. In 1941 a seminal piece of litigation opened up business opportunities in the 'European Blocks' in Bechuanaland and therefore made investment in real estate a viable option. In fact, a key example of Indian political/judicial challenge to the status quo in the Protectorate in the same period, the case of Joosub Joubert Dada in the mid-1950s, was in direct response to the pressure on Indian traders in African reserves. This was brought about by the Apartheid government's desire to more strictly and fully implement the anti-Indian laws of the 1940s and after. Mr Joubert Dada had been operating a store in a Native Reserve area of Bodibe in the Lichtenburg district – one of the nodes of the Dada family's settlement in the region. The store had been there for years but, subsequent to the accession to power by the National Party, pressure had started to mount. In his court case Mr Joubert Dada cites orders from the central government that he vacate the premises and successful attempts to challenge those orders in court. The decision of the court was ignored, however, and the officials in charge continued to return his licence fees to him and insist that his operations were officially unacceptable and that he would be evicted. It was this threat that drove him back across the border and into the Bangwaketse reserve where he was born and could expect to be treated as, as the paramount chief described him, a "son of the soil". In his submission the paramount chief of the Bangwaketse pointed out that "According to the Group Areas Act of the Union government, this applicant can easily be ejected and his only salvation will be to return to his birth country, hence the application. It is unreasonable and illogical to refuse him admission and flatly deny his trading rights".²⁴²

The immigration of South Africans heralded a shift in the balance of trans-frontier mobility as it became increasingly difficult for Batswana-Indians to pass into South Africa and increasingly attractive for South Africans with the right connections to move to the Protectorate. The children of Indian families in the Protectorate were barred from crossing to go to school in Zeerust in 1960.²⁴³ From that time, though a primary school was built by

²⁴² BNA/S 447/1/2, "Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve" 1954-60

²⁴³ Moorad, Life and Family History; Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

the Indian community organisations, teenagers were required to travel for education if they could afford it. Many ended their schooling, however, to work in the family shops.²⁴⁴

One characteristic example of this shift in the balance of mobility was the experience Fateema Khan's parents in the early 1960s. Fateema's mother was officially a Bechuanaland resident, her father's family was from South Africa, where her grandfather had been a famous itinerant Urdu poet called Mehrab Khan who had crossed back and forth throughout the north-western Transvaal/northern Cape/Bechuanaland region since the 1890s. Her mother was engaged to Mr Khan but was consistently denied rights to move to South Africa in order to marry him, as had been the tradition. Mr Khan on the other hand was able to move to Bechuanaland and so he did, soon becoming one of the leading South African immigrant property owners in the territory.²⁴⁵

Marriage and immigration emerged as a question of concern to authorities in a 1957 document regarding a discussion between the divisional commissioner south and the police commissioner was circulated entitled "immigration – Asians". This document, amongst other things, stated that there had been too much "interbreeding" in the Indian population in the territory, but that it was unreasonable to expect the resident Indian boys not to marry. The solution suggested was to engineer the situation such that young Indian women from South Africa would be allowed to enter the Protectorate to marry but not be granted the right to bring in family at any point. This, it was felt, would likely solve the problem while keeping immigration at a minimum and, crucially, "that the link with India should be broken as far as possible".²⁴⁶ Thus the colonial officials not only felt that the rights of resident Indians should be protected even as further immigration was curtailed, but also that Indians from India who might immigrate were significantly different from potential immigrants of Indian origin from South Africa.

Another interesting descriptive example of the shift of the balance of migration that responded to the different systems in Bechuanaland and South Africa was a story about the relations of the Chand family who, having been removed to Zeerust from Dinokana under

²⁴⁴ Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

²⁴⁵ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

²⁴⁶ BNA/OP 33/43, "Divisional Commissioner South to Police Commissioner"

the Group Areas Act, wanted to bring a close family member to join them in the 1960s. The South African government were said to have rejected this request out of hand. The response of the family, was to request that other, more distant, relatives based in Bechuanaland, sponsor the immigration into that territory instead. This thinking regarding immigration is characteristic of the population which for so long had straddled the border of the two territories such that they felt the distinction between the two was relatively minor.²⁴⁷ This solution was not unusual: in the late 1970s the family of Muhammed* similarly wished to move to South Africa to join family in the northern Transvaal (now Limpopo province). That family too was unable to get permission from the Apartheid government to bring the family into the country and instead suggested that they apply to immigrate to Botswana which was just across the border and had a much friendlier attitude at that time to Indian immigration.²⁴⁸

Abdool Rahiem Khan's family moved to Lobatse from South Africa in 1962 as a direct result of his neighbourhood in Potchefstroom being removed under the Group Areas Act. His father had been a travelling representative of a wholesaler based in South Africa whom he had represented in the Protectorate and hence had business and personal connections there. There were very limited business opportunities for them in Lobatse and the family struggled. As a result they sent young Rahiem to Cape Town for schooling at age eleven. He lived there until he was in his mid-twenties when he went to the Netherlands to continue his studies. After studying in the Netherlands he moved in 1982 to Botswana instead of back to South Africa which, at the time, was reaching the height of its political conflict. He was connected in Botswana already and was able to set up practice as a lawyer. He soon began to be involved in representing South African exiles in Botswana. The fleeing of activists from South Africa added to the complexity of the history of Botswana's border-straddling populations.²⁴⁹ Rahiem Khan's family and personal history highlights the changing conditions of life for those Indian families from South Africa in particular who had developed a relationship with the border of Bechuanaland/Botswana – from easy passage of travelling commercial agents, to the scramble to find alternative opportunities following

²⁴⁷ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

*Alias

²⁴⁸ Muhammed, *Life History*, January 2013.

²⁴⁹ Abdul Rahiem Khan, *Life History*, June 2013.

forced removals, to the fleeing of activists from the hands of the security police and the military who would arrest, torture and kill them.

In short, many families who straddled the border became increasingly alienated from South Africa and more closely connected to their place in the Protectorate. South African Indians who straddled the border similarly had opportunities to escape difficulties in South Africa by increasingly embedding themselves in Batswana-Indian society and the social and political economy of the territory.

The increasing embeddedness of Indians' in Bechuanaland

The changes in South African economic conditions during and after the war had a bearing on Indians' connections to the union, as well as their increased embeddedness in Bechuanaland's local economic opportunities. Ashley Jackson argues that in the Bechuanaland Protectorate agricultural war measures were instituted as an extension of earlier attempts to innovate collective farming and storage methods to create food stability.²⁵⁰ The purpose, effects of, and responses to, these war efforts are fairly controversial within the literature but an interesting claim, for our purposes, made by Jackson, is that these measures and their predecessor projects were directed in large part at what was viewed by the colonial government as the 'predatory activities of traders.' In one instance, in particular, Jackson cites a District Commissioner expressing shock at the possibility that a trader might price goods simply on the basis of supply and demand.²⁵¹ This is important in part because production of grain is central to the story of traders in the history of the territory. Traders would buy grain from those who produced surpluses or were simply in desperate need of cash, and sold it, along with imported foodstuffs, to those who had not produced enough, or even back to those that had sold it in the first place, at a fairly large mark up.²⁵² Moreover, the production of grain in Bechuanaland had tended to be very uneven

²⁵⁰ Ashley Jackson, *Botswana, 1939-1945: An African Country at War* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* P 141

²⁵² Isaac Schapera, *Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate* (Lovedale Press, 1943). P 205
Arellano-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Trade in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

and generally fairly small and as a result there was a relatively large proportion of the rural population who were buying expensive grain from traders across the country.²⁵³

The oral sources speak of this period in particularly interesting terms with regard to cross-border trade. The war footing of the imperial and colonial economies provided new niches to be exploited by enterprising traders across the region. One of these was the price controls placed on grain trade in South Africa. According to Jackson the smuggling of grain into South Africa was extremely profitable as, by 1943, grain could be 15 shillings more expensive per bag there than in the Protectorate. Grain from Bechuanaland itself was originally the focus of these smuggling operations but grain production was limited and was being carefully and systematically redirected towards local consumption with storage systems put in place specifically to discourage immediate sale and smuggling.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, profit margins were large enough that, as one informant stated, his father used to travel north to Northern Rhodesia in a truck to obtain grain that he would then smuggle back through Bechuanaland and across the South African border to sell at what was still less than local prices.²⁵⁵ The traders' ability to adapt to changing economic conditions in South Africa in this way was in particular facilitated by their location across the border from South Africa and different kinds of controls with regard to movement and trade. This adaptability is vital to understanding the broader, often difficult, process of immigrating, settling and ultimately making a success of the circumstances that faced people of Indian origin in Bechuanaland.

The continued consolidation of their place in the economy of the territory could be seen in the continued expansion of their trade into areas previously denied to them, as in the case of Joosub Joubert Dada in Kanye. It can also be seen in the increasing domination of trade and, very importantly, property ownership in previously all-white Lobatse. The ownership of property, in particular would come to represent a major concern in the period immediately preceding and following independence, in which Indians from Bechuanaland and South Africa very rapidly bought up stands in the new capital of Gaborone.²⁵⁶ Property ownership

²⁵³ Jackson, Botswana, 1939-1945.

Schapera, Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. P 17

²⁵⁴ Jackson, Botswana, 1939-1945. P 166

²⁵⁵ Ayoo Khan, Life History.

²⁵⁶ This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. BNA/OP 33/43, "Immigration – Indians", 1946-64

in Lobatse, moreover, provided sufficient political stake that Abdulrahim Chand, a major property owner, held a seat in that town's representative council by 1961 and would later be included, as a representative of what were by then deeply embedded Indian interests, in the transitional bodies and the first parliament of the country.

The border with South Africa in the 1960s became more difficult to cross not simply because of the maturation of "high" Apartheid in the declaration of the Republic of South Africa. It was also in response to the Sharpeville massacre, the start of the armed struggle and the banning of the opposition movements in South Africa at the beginning of the 1960s. Almost immediately political figures began to flee the country and many chose to travel to the Protectorate. These were preceded by a large number of baHurutshe who had fought the Native Administration Act in relation to the extension of the pass laws to women and were to be banished with their chief to the hinterland of South Africa. They chose instead to associate themselves with the African National Congress and go into exile in the Protectorate in 1958, thereby setting up an early external presence for the movement. These early exiles themselves straddled the border region in a similar manner to their Indian counterparts and as such their move into the Protectorate would have been a relatively intuitive step at the time.²⁵⁷ As exiles began to enter at an accelerated rate, the authorities became concerned about the "South African Refugee Problem". Part of the concern was with the possibility of the emergence of a regional radicalised nationalist struggle against European domination that would link Bechuanaland's nascent nationalists with existing struggles in Rhodesia and South Africa and possibly eventually the entire continent.²⁵⁸ It has been argued, in fact, that the arrival of refugees from South Africa was the impetus for the birth of a party political system in Botswana, specifically with the formation of the Botswana People's Party in 1960.²⁵⁹ The independent Botswana would be similarly ambivalent about the place of the refugees in their country partly because of the political suspicion of the radical and Marxist element and partly because of the massive economic and political pressure placed on the

²⁵⁷ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, "The ANC in Exile: 1960-1970," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1960-1970*, by South African Democracy Education Trust (Zebra, 2004), 411–78.

²⁵⁸ Brian T. Mokopakgosi, "The 1965 Self-Government Elections and the Transfer of Power in the Bechuanaland Protectorate," *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008): 85–102.

²⁵⁹ David Sebudubudu and Bertha Z Osei-Hwedie, "In Permanent Opposition: Botswana's Other Political Parties," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2010): 85–102; James H. Polhemus, "Botswana Votes: Parties and Elections in an African Democracy," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 1983): 397–430.

country by South Africa, to which they had long been almost entirely economically beholden. The approach of independence in Bechuanaland which followed would serve to increasingly deeply embed Indians in the territory's political, social and economic systems.

Indian residents felt these regional and local political reverberations no less than most other Batswana. The Batswana population which straddled the border with South Africa, including Indians, migrant workers and border straddling chieftaincies, were positioned both to come into regular contact, and sympathise, with the feelings of those coming into exile given their own experiences of Apartheid. Two stories from the Chand family are characteristic of these facts. The first is the story of a young Naseer Chand living in Lobatse in the 1960s:

You know we had a lot of refugees from SA and I was underage so I didn't have a licence or a car so this one guy used to help me out with a lift to go fishing or whatever. At that time we had a lot of spies around, and he gave information, he got money for it but he gave information, and they banned me – saying 'this guy is connected to the refugees'. And I was banned until I got some letters from ministers etc. and there was a guy who found out that there was information given.²⁶⁰

The other story concerned a cousin of Naseer, Samsodien Chand and his wife Hagera who were exiles from South Africa affiliated with the Pan-Africanist Congress, who had settled in a border village. They used their home and shop as a safe house where exiles could be provided with arms, information and money before being infiltrated into South Africa or moving on. In April 1990 a death squad, led by Eugene De Kock, crossed the border on foot, surrounded the house, shot the night watchmen and then killed the entire family, including their three sons. They then placed an explosive in the house, witnesses say on the body of Samsodien, which detonated after their departure.²⁶¹ The rumours inside Botswana are that Samsodien was involved with both the ANC and PAC, suggesting that a factional element

²⁶⁰ Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

²⁶¹ Abdul Rahiem Khan, *Life History*; Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

in their murder, and that he was procuring arms from Libya and Iran for the movements at the time.²⁶² The latter point is particularly interesting partly because of how oral sources chose to shift the focus to the Islamic identity of the community in associating him with the two “Islamic revolutions” rather than simply with a nationalist movement. It is also interesting because it is true that the Islamic organisations in Botswana had a fairly long standing relationship with Libya under Colonel Gadhafi.²⁶³ Samsodien Chand, as emerged in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was recruited by South African Military Intelligence to infiltrate PAC members into South Africa for their own purposes. He was also a source for the police’s Security Branch. The murder was in fact ordered because Samsodien was infiltrating PAC members who were not known to the Security Branch and who were later intercepted by police resulting in a fire-fight in which 15 policemen were wounded and a number of civilians killed.²⁶⁴

Colonial reactions: Indian Immigration from South Africa

The deepening connection to the territory of the Bechuanaland Protectorate that emerged in response to isolation from India and antipathy and belligerence from South Africa did not serve to protect Indian residents from the colonial authorities’ attentions. In fact quite the opposite. The access to Lobatse in 1941 and the consolidation of the Indian settler population in the Protectorate which followed only served to increase British concerns in the years of decolonisation in Africa. In the 1950s and 60s new South African Indian immigrants added to their concerns about the growing local Indian population and its influence. This renewed concern tended to revolve around the same old rhetoric about the nature of Indians, with some new details, but were hindered by the same concerns about diplomatic, legal and political embarrassment and economic pragmatism that had always plagued anti-Indian activism in the government.

²⁶² Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*.

²⁶³ Parratt, “Muslims in Botswana.”

²⁶⁴ *Truth Commission - Special Report - TRC Final Report - Volume 2, Section 1, Chapter*, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reports/volume2/chapter7/subsection4.htm>. De Kock Hearing 1, day 8, on resumption on 04-06-1999, accessed May 6, 2013.

The continued fixation with Indian settlement led to a series of intriguing correspondences within the territory, the region and across Africa, which are the main source of information for this section.

The concern with new immigration is best summed up in this quote from the High commissioner:

“We have... lately been faced with a very great increase in the number of the applications by Indians to settle in High Commission territories. These are a direct result of the Union policy. Indians are seeking ways and means of staying in Southern Africa and yet avoiding the restrictive Union legislation”.²⁶⁵

The correspondence provides insight into the creation of policy and its application²⁶⁶ which began in late 1941 with a request from the High Commissioner for a survey of all Indians in the district:

“about whom there may be any doubt, to ascertain whether they have the necessary permits, or certificates of residence, authorising them to reside in the Bechuanaland Protectorate... Under the immigration laws there should be no difference in the treatment accorded Europeans and Indians, and discretion and tact should be used... With this in mind, it would be advisable, when checking up on Indians, to also check up on Europeans and thus in fact according the same treatment to both... The particulars regarding the Europeans, however, need not be recorded.”²⁶⁷

The survey continued well into the following year but did not result in any deportations or arrests, because the law in use did not allow for the ejection of residents simply on the basis that they were without papers – they were not prohibited and thus would apply for the

²⁶⁵ BNA/OP 33/43, “High Commissioner Baring to the Secretary of State, Commonwealth”

²⁶⁶ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64

²⁶⁷ BNA/S 93/1/1, “Indians in the B.P”, 1942

necessary permits and certificates while in the territory either on the claim of lost papers or as new immigrants.

That set the tone for a series of letters between various civil servants, the Resident and High Commissioners and the Dominions and Commonwealth offices in London about the nature of the immigration law and the politics of altering it. The concerns of some of the resident commissioners was that “deeming” Indian immigrants “undesirable aliens” under the existing law on the basis of race had become ever more impolitic because of the increasingly bad press South African policies and laws had received. This was driven by the public confrontation between the South African and Indian governments over those policies and laws. Britain and its colonies could not afford to be associated with that trend.

The way this correspondence dealt with the issue is telling of how sensitive the British government was to the possibility of being associated with trends in South Africa and how it had to manage its relationships with the colonial administrations. The immediate suggestion of the Resident Commissioners was to extend Basutoland’s immigration law to the other territories. That would allow the Resident Commissioner to discriminate on the principle of “the best interests of peace, order and good government of the territory”.²⁶⁸ This would leave matters at the discretion of the Commissioner and avoid obvious racialization. The Dominions/Commonwealth Office felt that it was too delicate a time to risk people seeing through such a thinly veiled ruse. But they did not seek reform; they only asked that the Protectorate and Bechuanaland wait until the focus from within British politics and from India was diverted before proceeding.

Indian immigration from South Africa remained a concern for the high commission territories in the following years. Added to this was the locally important fact that weak immigration laws were of concern to the South Africans “who could, as they did in the case of aliens [non-British subjects], accuse us of conniving at the entry into the union through the High Commission Territories of undesirables. At present we have no means of checking it.”²⁶⁹ In 1949 the Apartheid government made precisely this sort of claim through the press, stating that they were searching for a number of illegal immigrants who had entered through

²⁶⁸ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64

²⁶⁹ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64

the Protectorate. This caused concern in the High Commission but the Police Commissioner's response was that there was no evidence of such activity and that any illegal Indian immigrants would have to pass through Portuguese East Africa and Southern Rhodesia undetected before entering Bechuanaland and crossing into South Africa, which would be extremely difficult. He suggested that the article was an attempt on the part of the South African government to intimidate immigrants in their country and to put pressure on the High Commission in the direction of the increasingly unlikely incorporation of those territories.²⁷⁰

In the eventual permission to amend the immigration laws in March 1948 the specific pre-requisite was included that no mention be made of 'Asiatics' in any public discussion of the document and that the administration show that they could defend the amendment without reference to Asiatics. The Resident Commissioner suggested that the risk of becoming a burden to the state was a non-racialised reason for exclusion.²⁷¹ He also said that he would declare a desire to keep out "non-natives" who wanted to join family in business in the territory. This presumably meant non-Africans who lived outside the territory – a category including most Indian families straddling the border and migrating from the Union. This targeted racial exclusion was a new development but questions were still being asked about those Indians who were already residents in the territory or who could have family or other workarounds. In particular the question of trading licences and property ownership would come to the fore in the 1950s.

Colonial reactions: Indian property rights and immigration

The concerns of the colonial authorities were larger than simply border control and were entangled in fairly complex ways – especially in relation to property rights. For example, property ownership was concerning in part because of the relationship of those rights to both new immigration and permanent settlement. One of the queries from the High Commissioner regarding property ownership made direct reference to the transnational character of these

²⁷⁰ BNA/OP 33/43, "Immigration – Indians", 1946-64

²⁷¹ This was a stipulation in the law that Indian migrants managed to side-step by ensuring that new arrivals would be looked after and paying a surety in that regard.

families. In particular he was concerned with the possibility that immigration laws would be rendered ineffective if prospective immigrants were to own or inherit land in the territory. This was a combination of concerns about existing Indian residents, who the authorities thought of as fundamentally similar to immigrants, and their increasing confidence in asserting their rights as legitimate residents *and* what this would mean for immigration. As one letter stated: “In my view the acquisition of land in the territory by Asiatics is a prelude to strident demands for permanent residence” and “while... immigration control and land ownership are separate questions I believe that they will be linked to our discomfort if and when our immigration policy is attacked”.²⁷²

Linking land ownership to anti-immigration policies was made more difficult, however, by the fact that the majority of the new immigrants were South African Indians who were being “harried” by the Apartheid government to the point that they were essentially refugees. Any public accusations of their being refused access to the territory, especially if they invested in property locally, would be doubly embarrassing for the Commonwealth Office and the High Commission who would be exposed for “refusing shelter to British Subjects seeking to escape from South African oppression”.²⁷³ Unflattering comparisons to South Africa in relation to property rights was a real concern too; Swaziland had copied South Africa’s “Transvaal law no. 3 of 1885” which refused Indians the right to own immovable property.²⁷⁴ The Indian government had already started to ask questions about that territory. In light of this, the Secretary of State for the Dominions was concerned that the language of the High Commission Territories’ policies should be suitably de-racialised. At the same time he emphasised that those policies were intended to limit and control settlement and economic opportunities of Indians in the territories for “the interests of the natives”. He was simply concerned about how this might come across diplomatically.²⁷⁵

The question of controlling Indian immigration, settlement and property ownership was clearly hamstrung by the need to hide the racial aspects of that control from public and diplomatic scrutiny. Eventually the hopeless desire to develop or enforce such a policy

²⁷² BNA/OP 33/43, “Correspondence, Swaziland and Bechuanaland Resident Commissioners, High Commissioner and Secretary of State, Commonwealth Relations.”

²⁷³ BNA/OP 33/43, “Commonwealth Relations office to Resident Commissioner”

²⁷⁴ Section 2 of Transvaal Law Number 3 of 1885.

²⁷⁵ BNA/OP 33/43, “High Commissioner’s office to Resident Commissioner Beetham”, January 1951

would be made clear by reassurances from the Resident Commissioner to the High Commissioner that there were informal ways that local European business people were able to keep Indian traders from buying shops in their towns, which involved buying them up as quickly as possible. Most interestingly in this reassurance, was the closing note that the future was unlikely to see much increased migration and expansion of the Indian presence in Bechuanaland because of the growing importance of trade to African aspirations, such that the chiefs would keep their Indian populations to a bare minimum.²⁷⁶ Many chiefs, however, continued to support certain Indian business people throughout the 1950s and 1960s on the grounds that low prices and competition were desirable, and that they were members of the relevant “tribes”.²⁷⁷

The new appeal to African trading aspirations was one of the main ways that the anti-Indian and anti-Indian immigration sentiment of colonial authorities changed in this period. After 1949 Africans won the right to trade in the territory in court and the official government policy became to help and encourage the development of an African trading class.²⁷⁸ This policy, I would argue, was an early indication that the British were thinking about the mechanics of some sort of eventual independence for the territory. The Southern Divisional Commissioner, Germond, stated in explanation of his rejection of a trading licence to Mr Joubert-Dada that “in the field of African development, trade is of vital importance” but that “the Motswana is not a natural trader”. He also stated, wrongly, that “it is only since the last war that there has been evidence of a desire on the part of the Batswana to own and run their own trading businesses” but that “it is government’s policy to encourage the beginnings of this African urge to trade... Many have failed but some have survived and slowly but surely interest has been maintained and the African trader can be said to have arrived on the scene.” More important was the idea that it was the government’s paternal responsibility to provide protection from the competition of more established and skilled white and Indian traders. In this particular case the argument was made that the most successful African trader in Kanye village in the area was “Solomon... the reason for his success is years of training he received from Mr Rowland [of the most successful trading firm in the district] and in the benevolent

²⁷⁶ BNA/OP 33/43, “Resident Commissioner Beetham to High Commissioner”, May 1951.

²⁷⁷ Amongst others the cases of Jousub Joubert and Habib Khan: BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954-60

²⁷⁸ Best, “General Trading in Botswana, 1890-1968.”

trading practices of the Kanye trading fraternity”. In other words the all-white “benevolent” European trading community was the secret to the success of African traders, a surprising appeal to the value of collusive trading practices already in place. It was in fact that collusion which led the Chief to remark that “Kanye needs fresh trading blood” and thus to support Joubert-Dada’s application.²⁷⁹

Indian responses to colonial reactions

The attempts to limit Indian participation in the economy and Indian immigration was not a one sided affair and, as in earlier periods, the fears of diplomatic and political scandals were fuelled in large part by direct challenges to those colonial efforts by the resident Indian population. One of the few occasions on which the voice of Indian residents appears in the archival record of the Protectorate comes from an agenda for a deputation from the Bechuanaland Indian Organisation in the 1953. The agenda was very reminiscent of the agendas of the deputations of 1926 and 1934 but the commentary tends to cut more directly to the core of the matters at hand, indicating the increased confidence of that generation of residents. What was specifically in question was the evident existence of a “racial bar against the extension of any trading by Indians” especially with reference to “obtaining occupation for their sons”. The concern was that the Batswana-Indian population was expanding, as was the population in general, and yet the number of licences was remaining constant where Indians were concerned. They were also concerned that the racial oppression in South Africa was spreading to Bechuanaland, saying that this was indicated by there being “no provision of hotels and restaurants for Indians to obtain accommodation or refreshment”. They asked that the government intercede with regards to the difficulty in crossing the border into South Africa “for business purposes or for medical treatment in serious cases”. A general concern was expressed regarding “vested rights”, “the few rights that we even now enjoy within the territory. We should like assurance that these rights will be protected”. The notes from the actual meeting that followed states that the rights in question were in part property rights and that the concern was with regard to possible incorporation into the Union of South Africa at a later stage. Another regional concern was that the Union government was threatening to

²⁷⁹ BNA/S 447/1/1, “Affidavit of Jean Germond, Divisional Commissioner, Southern Protectorate” 1957.

prohibit wives and children from entering the territory and the organisation sought reassurance that the Protectorate would not consider the same prohibition since the residents that they represented were largely born in the territory. A new concern since the delegation in 1934 were the reasons for the delayed issuing of passports by the government.²⁸⁰ As with earlier deputations, the concerns expressed were largely to do with the livelihoods of the members. The issue of “vested rights” and the comparison of the discrimination faced by Indians to Apartheid, as well as the language of ‘colour bars’, on the other hand, suggests a new sense that the Government owed some responsibility to the dignity and lifestyle of the Indian population. These were their responsibilities towards citizens of the territory rather than guests.

The response of the colonial authorities is indicative of the ways in which they would respond to demands by African representatives for, and manage the outcomes of, the Select Committee on Racial Discrimination in 1962/3. Interestingly, that report barely mentions the existence of residents of Indian origin in the territory, in spite of the concern from the government of accusations from specifically that part of the population in previous years. In particular, the government rejected their responsibility to enforce non-discriminatory treatment in private institutions, thus shifting responsibility for the discrimination away from their own administration to private hotels, restaurants, country clubs etc. whose behaviour in this regard was at their own discretion.²⁸¹ The issue of licences was dealt with by the Government Secretary essentially with denials of the status quo. These denials are interesting because of the degree to which they attempted to obfuscate the racial nature of the discrimination by pointing to the existence of transfer and granting of licences in places like Ramotswa and Lobatse. At the same time the Government Secretary claimed that there was no need for new licences as, contrary to Indian claims, the markets were not expanding sufficiently to accommodate new traders. His final comment was that in any case “it was also government policy to encourage Africans to enter into the field of trade”. When it came to concerns over “vested rights” and incorporation into South Africa he simply stated that the issue was dealt with in legislation, specifically the Act of Union UK and South African

²⁸⁰ BNA/S 19/3, “High Commissioner’s visit”, 1926; BNA/S 314/9, “Deputation from British Indian Mohammdan Society”, 1934; BNA/S 314/11, “Memorandum of matters to be discussed”, 1953-5.

²⁸¹ Report of Select Committee on Racial Discrimination of the Bechuanaland Legislative Council. Published 1963; Makgala, Christian John, “A Survey of Race Relations in Botswana, 1800-1966.”

White Papers “on the subject of incorporation”. The response to all the concerns raised ended with the familiarly vague assurance that “Indian residents would continue to receive the sympathetic consideration of the government in all matters pertaining to their wellbeing”.²⁸² None of these responses really dealt with Indian concerns about their status as Indians in the territory and region. Instead they were responses that the government could be fairly sure would not embarrass them should they become public while at the same time firmly assuring the delegation that they held no sway over the workings of government.

The results of this deputation were thus to produce a kind of stalemate for Indian residents and immigrants. They could not make major changes to official policy until independence but, because of their growing solid positions as major property owning settlers with recourse to political and diplomatic power, they could avert or challenge any new or obvious attacks on their status.

Conclusion

The combination of the shrinking of connections to India (legal, physical and emotional), isolation and hostility from Apartheid South Africa and growing attachment to local structures, property and identities, placed Batswana-Indians in an unusual position by the time of independence. In this period existing localised identities were soon attached to economic and legal ties to the territory through property ownership and passport provision. To those ties were added the dual concerns about the influence of Apartheid South Africa in the Protectorate and sympathy with its victims. That produced a necessary commitment to the future of Bechuanaland and thus to it's the politics in the lead up to independence. These developments were very worrying to colonial authorities, especially the related increased immigration from South Africa. The momentum of the movement of Indians towards rights of citizenship of the territory, however, and the global and regional political climate of the time meant that the *fait accompli* of Indian presence, expansion, consolidation and continued immigration into the territory would come to be almost entirely solidified.

²⁸² BNA/S 314/11, “Minutes, deputation of Bechuanaland Indian Organisation”, 1953-1955

When the independence process began, Indians were represented in the official colonial programme of action with a seat reserved in the transitional decision-making body. The negotiations around passports which had followed India's partition would mean that those who had taken on a local diplomatic status would be granted citizenship immediately and that their rights as Batswana – citizens of the Botswana nation – would be guaranteed. The struggles of the colonial era would more or less come to an end for them. New immigrants from India, however, would have their own difficulties in carving a space for themselves in the country.

Diamonds and development: Indian immigration in independent Botswana

Introduction

In the years leading to 1966 and independence for Botswana, it faced new administrative-political and economic conditions that would rapidly change in the coming decades. The first of these were the last actions of the departing colonial authority attempting to stage-manage that independence. In the process they would attempt, one last time, to stop the “negative effects” of India immigration and property ownership in various forms whilst, with the old ambivalences and fears of diplomatic and political scandals, finally offering official recognition to Indian residents as citizens.

Those dying acts of imperial domination would not be the end of the anti-Indian rhetoric that permeated previous decades. The nationalist project’s policies were, at first, seemingly directly drawn from the same racialised principles that had characterised colonial thinking, especially with regard to property ownership and the control of local commerce. The depth of this concern was such that the distinction between immigrants and Botswana-Indian citizens was often blurred.

It soon became clear, however, as it had to colonial governments, that economic practicalities required new thinking about the principles governing immigration policy. Specifically, it became clear that development policy would not be feasible without more open immigration policies because Botswana was not producing numbers of professionals or attracting enough investment. While this shortage had briefly been filled by British and South African expatriate experts these were limited and expensive solutions to an ever-increasing problem.

This was particularly so after the mid-1970s which saw the beginning of a remarkable, extended economic boom in Botswana based on mineral revenues, especially diamonds. This, in turn, saw growth in government employment and investment in development projects and new businesses, all of which demanded ever-increasing numbers of skills. This demand coincided with a period of great emigration from a struggling India, notably of highly skilled and educated professionals to, amongst others, the United States, Canada, Great Britain and the Middle East and emerging African economies.

Skilled professional employees represented the first category of major post-independence Indian immigration to Botswana. The second category, which emerged from the first, was of skilled professionals who, seeing the opportunity and the limited competition in Botswana, turned their hands to entrepreneurship. Of these, the most notable case study is probably the Choppies Group of Companies – a successful retail-based group which highlights the merging of dominant Botswana-Indian business interests and the professionalism and global outlook of Botswana's new immigrants. These entrepreneurs began to feel the dearth of professionally trained human resources and inflated cost of services. They turned to recruitment of a further set of professional immigrants from India. This, along with changes in global conditions and local political context, produced a third category of more internationally transitory professional employees who generally stayed only long enough to complete a contract. The boom in Botswana's economy also saw massive investment in the country from expanding Indian multinationals, especially in the 2000s. These brought a subcategory of the employees who were similarly transitory but circulated not only between employers but within the multinational space occupied by their existing employers.

Each of these categories of immigrant has its own set of identity and integration issues but they share the characteristic of being global citizens first. Popular opinion has seen growing suspicion and xenophobia and government action has shown a concerted effort to make immigration less secure. The rapid and valuable immigration and investment by Indian expatriates has been complication for policy and governance, though. Anti-immigrant policy has again been tempered by the need to encourage investments that pay, like those of the Choppies Group and large multinationals, and those investors' desires to operate according to their own business models.

Managing independence

The Independence of Botswana was preceded by an extended management process on the part of the British. It is evident in archived correspondence, that Britain had a fair amount of experience in these management processes by the mid-1960s. In particular, the correspondence refers to experiences in East Africa and the Caribbean, especially with regard to Indian communities and their place in independent Africa.²⁸³ First the European and Native Advisory boards of the Protectorate would be combined to form the Legislative Council. This, with related structures, would contribute delegates to a conference where the independent republic's constitution would be drawn up. This was organised to guarantee disproportionate representation for British, Afrikaner and Indian settlers and officials. Six special positions were reserved for white residents and one for an Indian representative. The latter was Abdulrahim Chand who was, by that time, a major businessman and property owner who had been a representative in the Legislative Council since 1961. The African population were to have three representatives from each of the three main political parties and three independent chiefs – there was no popular election for these positions. The decision to include Indian and European representatives in disproportionate numbers ensured that their interests were not damaged by African aspirations. It also placed whites and Indians on the same team regarding the common cause of property ownership. Some argue that the process was stage-managed to the point that the ruling BDP, and Sir Seretse Khama himself, were placed in positions of power at independence because of their friendliness towards colonial government and economic structures.²⁸⁴ The 1961 constitution, too, would provide disproportionate representation to whites on the basis of their economic interests. African representatives like chief Bathoen II and K T Motsetse, the president of the first political party, the Bechuanaland Peoples Party, criticised this process, the latter specifically focussing on the entrenchment economic disparities.²⁸⁵

Regardless of questions of representation, the period of preparation for independence maintained the tone of anti-Indian sentiment amongst civil servants on more systemic

²⁸³ Especially but not limited to: BNA/S 493/8, "Indians: Immigration and emigration", 1964, and, BNA/OP 33/43, "Immigration – Indians", 1946-64

²⁸⁴ Elmon "Comrade Moore" Tafa, "The BDP and Botswana's 'False Decolonisation' Part 1," Mmegi Online, March 5, 2012.

²⁸⁵ Mokopagosi, "The 1965 Self-Government Elections and the Transfer of Power in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

questions. Included were some of the seeming contradictions in policies regarding Indian settlement and trade. An agenda note from the Government Secretary of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, in oddly euphemistic style, “International relations: immigration”, is particularly informative in this regard. Repeating the generic reasons for the desire to limit Indian immigration, opting to use the clumsy “a racially non-indigenous group” in place of actual racial categories, the note stated that the policies involved needed to be careful to avoid short sightedness. It stated that while the “non-integration” and monopolistic tendency etc. of “that group” might be undesirable it was marginally more important that the overall economic development of the territory be kept in mind.

“whether stores which come up for sale from time to time, are likely today to be bought by members of the general trading community, or whether at this stage of the territory’s history they will be bought only by members of the particular group mentioned... If the only buyers likely to come forward to purchase Bechuanaland protectorate businesses are from a particular group then the Immigrants Selection Board presumably must allow in more members of this group, even in the knowledge that this is prejudicial to the development of indigenous traders, because a situation cannot be allowed to arise in which businesses cannot be sold, and in which the needs of the consumer cannot be provided for”.²⁸⁶

It is this attitude, in various forms, which permeates the entire history of Indian settlement and economic activity in the territory whether on the part of the chiefs or the government or simply as an unstated assumption in the treatment of licencing issues over the years. Trade had to continue, even under distasteful circumstances.

A prime example of this ambiguity in the years leading up to independence related to property ownership. Before independence could be granted, a capital would have to be built for the new nation. One of the more bizarre features of colonialism in Bechuanaland had

²⁸⁶ BNA/OP 33/43, “Agenda notes for Executive council”, 1962.

been the existence of its administrative capital outside of the territory itself.²⁸⁷ The new capital was to be built at the site of a small railway-siding called Gaborones just north of Tlokweng village. Within two years of this decision an Indian family, the Angamias, bought the only garage in the town.²⁸⁸ Many other Indian property owners, limited until then to investment in Lobatse and Francistown, quickly began to buy plots off-plan in the new capital. A large proportion of these property owners, were part of the South African and Indian immigration that had been increasing in recent years.²⁸⁹

Government officials responded by seeking stricter immigration controls and ways to discourage prospective foreign Indian investors who might see investment as a way to secure residency permits. The suitably de-racialised decision that was made was to curtail ownership of certain types and values of property where buyers were not residents.²⁹⁰ It was understood, however, that this was limited by two factors. One was the possibility that Indian immigrants and residents might make such a policy public and embarrass the administration. The other was the need for investment in the soon-to-be independent nation and the new capital, in particular. The government felt it was unlikely that the necessary investment would be forthcoming from non-Indian traders, if Indian investments were limited artificially.²⁹¹ The latter point is partly connected to the exodus of European business owners in the years leading up to the 1960s. One explanation for that exodus was the pending independence process which might spell changes in the protected rights of white settlers, but another, proposed in the mid-1950s by Mr Solomon, was that the competition from Indian traders was damaging the profitability of trade in the territory for established white traders.²⁹²

The concern over the proportion of the properties owned by Indian immigrants, continued into the period of independence. The local government claimed in 1966 that of the commercial properties available in the Main Mall in central Gaborone, 80% were either owned, or under option, by Indians, which was “concerning”. A list of owners and option

²⁸⁷ Morton and Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana*.

²⁸⁸ Sandy Grant, “A Preliminary Chronology of Modern Gaborone,” Botswana Notes and Records 38 (January 1, 2006): 182–94.

²⁸⁹ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946–64

²⁹⁰ BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration – Asians”, 1966

²⁹¹ BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration – Asians”, 1966

²⁹² BNA/S 447/1/1-2, “Application for trading licences in the Bangwaketse reserve” 1954–60

holders that followed showed that a majority of title holders were based in South Africa in one way or another, though many had set up local holding companies with local partners.²⁹³ Officials – many of whom were colonial bureaucrats turned expatriates - wrote that the situation was “concerning” due to the preponderance of Indian families involved and the likelihood that this would discourage African investment as well as the vague feeling that it would probably involve the expatriation of profits.²⁹⁴ All of this discussion was characterised as the “risk of a ‘Nairobi type’ trading pattern developing” in an echo of decades of concern about East African precedents. This correspondence is made more interesting because, at least until 1965, the number of Indian traders in the town was much smaller than the number of White traders²⁹⁵ and much of the farmland around Gaborone was owned by White South African farmers at least into the 1970s.²⁹⁶

The response of the local authorities was to concentrate their efforts on the provision of commercial properties in other areas aimed at developing local African traders. In particular, the development of the second “mall”, the African mall, was to begin. National government, however, still expressed concern that they should not try to curtail investment unless there were competitive offers. They qualified this with earlier experiences in which many African property holders struggled with the costs that came with the demands of doing businesses in compliance with the town planning scheme.²⁹⁷

Immigrants and citizens in independent Botswana

The participation of an Indian representative in the drafting of the constitution and the independence process raises the question of the nature of citizenship for Indian residents after that process. Most had held Bechuanaland Protectorate passports and identity papers but this did not exactly denote “citizenship” before independence. Rather, these documents came with UK and Colonies citizenship, granted due to the holding of local, British Indian

²⁹³ BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration – Asians”, 1966

²⁹⁴ BNA/OP 33/36, “Town Clerk of Gaborone to Office of the President”, 1966

²⁹⁵ BNA/OP 33/43, “Immigration – Indians”, 1946-64

²⁹⁶ Alan C. G. Best, “Gaborone: Problems and Prospects of a New Capital,” *Geographical Review* 60, no. 1 (January 1, 1970): 1–14.

²⁹⁷ BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration – Asians”, 1966

or Indian Princely State birth certificates or similar, which lost all meaning as the Empire crumbled. Indians, moreover, still did not fit completely into the thinking behind “national” decolonisation. In Kenya, earlier in the decade, experience had shown that the granting of independence before the status of Indian residents was properly agreed upon had resulted in the refusal to grant Kenyan citizenship status for years after independence. This left Kenya’s Indian residents in limbo, unsure of their future in the territory and eventually resulted in their decamping, *en masse*, to Britain under their UK and Colonies citizenship. This had caused serious concerns for British politicians and would result in the famous abandonment of the obligations to these citizens, the “detritus of empire”, in 1968, which left hundreds of thousands stateless.²⁹⁸ In Botswana, the new constitution had a whole chapter (chapter 3) dedicated to the question of citizenship and immigration. It stated that “Every person born in Botswana on or after 30th September 1966 shall become a citizen of Botswana. . .” and “Any person who has been ordinarily resident in Botswana (including the former Protectorate of Bechuanaland) for the period of five years immediately preceding that person's application... shall be entitled... to be registered as a citizen of Botswana.” Indian residents could register, given the correct documentation, for citizenship of the territory in much the same way they would have registered for UK and Colonies citizenship in the preceding years.²⁹⁹ The residents in question could technically alternatively still choose Indian/Pakistani citizenship or retain the UK and Colonies citizenship. By 1966, though, the British government was controlling commonwealth immigration with a quota system, leaving those with UK and Colonies citizenship in more or less the same position before and after independence. According to oral sources most of the residents of Indian origin who qualified received citizenship, and all the concomitant rights, in Botswana.³⁰⁰ Not least of those rights would be the “localisation” policies of the government in later years, in which certain deals and jobs would be earmarked for citizens rather than the expatriates who had dominated immediately after independence.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Randall Hansen, “The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968,” *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 809–34. P 810

²⁹⁹ Constitution of Botswana 1966

³⁰⁰ Dada, *Life and Family History*; Chand, Chand, and Khan, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*; Ayoob Khan, *Life History*.

³⁰¹ Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

Regardless of these legal developments, however, independence did not entail a sudden shift in the attitudes of the civil service towards either Indian immigration or the place of Batswana-Indians in the territory. In fact, in many cases, it would appear that officials tended to conflate immigrants and Batswana-Indian citizens in considering their place in the new nation. As shown, the concern about property in Gaborone is informative in this regard. The government would use information about non-resident ownership of land to justify the proposal that “a general embargo on Asian immigration be imposed forthwith” – effectively setting aside its own use of the distinction between resident and non-resident. Vitally, this embargo was itself typically ambivalent: it was not to apply to “professionally qualified Asians” who wished to pursue opportunities in Botswana.³⁰² The sentiment in this memorandum was probably fairly mainstream – the correspondence that followed it, attributed it to the president of the country (Seretse Khama). One follow-up letter from the Finance Secretary suggested it was an inhibition to development that the majority of property owners were “Asian” because it meant that non-Asian investors would be “prevented from taking up ground and developing”. No explanation for why that might be the case was proffered, other than the conspiratorial note that

...it would be interesting to learn how it came about that most of this property has been disposed of to Asians and how many other South African or local investors have been turned down and whether any preference has been given to the Asian community.³⁰³

Part of the concern regarding the conflation of Indian citizens and immigrants appears to have been the ‘border-straddling’ nature of the population which has been of such interest to us. The cross-border relationships were suspicious to Botswana’s government because they assumed that citizen or immigrant Indian traders were receiving financial backing from, or in business relationships with, interested parties outside of the territory and thus, by extension, facilitating the expatriation of capital.

³⁰² BNA/OP 33/36, “Cabinet Memorandum”, 1967

³⁰³ Note that the secretary presumes that people of Indian origin are intrinsically non-“local” and non-“South African”. BNA/OP 33/36, “Financial secretary to permanent secretary Home Affairs”, 1966

The government also assumed that Indian investors would try to keep the control of the businesses in their families and community forever. Importantly, the fact that the government *did* generally consider foreign investment extremely desirable did not alter this concern much, because it was felt that foreign investment other than Indian investment would be fundamentally different for reasons that were more or less mirror images of the bigoted thinking of the colonial era. With reference to the questions on Gaborone property they thus felt that the municipality should have sought out alternatives before agreeing to Indian investment, or possibly that they should *only* have allowed alternative sources of investment.

One example provided by government of what they felt were just such problematic Indian businesses, was the rapidly expanding interests of the Essack brothers. It was said that

Virtually every trading licence in the Northern Tuli Block... a weekly transport service... and various postal agencies have been taken over by the Essack Brothers who, I understand, are backed by a syndicate of wealthy Indian traders in Potgietersrust (sic) and Pietersburg...³⁰⁴

In this case the commissioner of police was concerned with the security of the country should racial tensions eventually mount because an “Asian stranglehold on commerce” had developed “...as had happened in Kenya and Tanzania”.³⁰⁵ It should be noted that the new concern about Indian traders was related to an accelerated rate of investment and the related accelerated transfer of licences – the traditional forum of control in colonial times. This may suggest that independence, in spite of the bigotry that still clearly pertained, was creating an opening up of opportunities for Indians. It suggests a receding of the practical elements of the discrimination which preceded it, in favour of the benefits of investment. The concerns shown by government were basically a kneejerk reaction to the attitude that investment was positive for the country regardless of its provenance.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ BNA/OP 33/36, “Commissioner of Police to Office of the Presidency”, 1967

³⁰⁵ BNA/OP 33/36, “Commissioner of Police to Office of the Presidency”, 1967

³⁰⁶ BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration- Asians”, 1966

This resulted in a Presidential Directive on Asian immigration which came through the Ministry of Home Affairs. It called for specific conditions under which residence permits would be granted to Indians and Pakistanis (this seems to have been applied to Indians of South African origin too). Those conditions were: “compassionate cases”, “an expert provided by the British Ministry of Overseas Development” or “when directed by the president”. Importantly, in an echo of colonial concerns, “unsuccessful applicants should not be told that immigration into Botswana was closed to Indians and Pakistanis, but should receive the same letter sent to all other unsuccessful applicants”.

The policy included informing already existing non-resident property investors that the acquisition of property or trading licences was not a means by which to obtain residency in the territory. The memorandum ended with the request that the “Minister of Commerce, Industry and Water affairs should investigate... the stranglehold which the Indians and the Pakistani community threatened to take on the commercial life of the country”.³⁰⁷

Together these suggestions meant that the minister of Home Affairs would personally oversee the applications of all people of South Asian origin where the president’s office had not specifically intervened. These personalised powers resulted in several very questionable decisions regarding residents who wished to stay in the territory but who the minister deemed undesirable, in large part on the basis of their race. Two examples in particular are indicative. First is the case of Dorothy Khan who was from Rhodesia and worked for the Botswana National Airways, which wished to sponsor an application for a residency permit for her. Minister of Home Affairs Dambe’s first query was whether she was, in fact, Indian. The response he received led him to state that

Although her father is an Asian [and her mother Coloured] she does not live or mix with the Asian community. She is a Roman Catholic by religion and she will not participate in the Asian endeavour to obtain a stranglehold on Botswana’s

³⁰⁷ BNA/OP 33/36 “Asian immigration, memorandum” 1967

economy... It is recommended that she be regarded as a non-Asian for immigration purposes.³⁰⁸

The second example concerns the previously mentioned Essack Brothers who had lived in and around the territory for many years and had such worryingly heavy investments there. They were expelled from Botswana in 1968 on the basis of the elder brother Solly Essack's failure to disclose a conviction in South Africa for trading in unwrought gold. The fact that officials had discovered this in 1962, and that he had already been fined for it then, did not have any bearing on the matter. Similarly the younger brother's position as "no more than his elder's assistant", rather than mitigate matters, meant that he too was deemed 'undesirable'. The government made it clear that they chose this course of action because the brothers' business was expanding in the Central District such that it threatened to produce, in the now repetitive phrasing, "a stranglehold in this sphere".³⁰⁹

Practicality and immigration in the independence era

Solly Essack, though undesirable, was allowed to enter the territory for 7 days at a time to oversee the businesses which he still owned there. Government thereby, ironically, forced him to expatriate his earnings from Botswana to South Africa. The Ministry of Commerce levelled heavy criticisms against Home Affairs on the basis of this point and the more general point that residency permits were a counterproductive way to regulate monopolistic behaviour. They added force to these complaints by decrying the obvious racism of singling out Indian traders for this treatment. The response of Home Affairs was to deny any interest in controlling monopolies and turn to ever more bigoted language. The issue at hand, Minister Dambe argued, was that of Botswana's "determination of race patterns". He argued that

These basic facts remain:

³⁰⁸ BNA/OP 33/36, "Immigration – Asians", 1966

³⁰⁹ BNA/OP 33/36, "Cabinet memorandum, Home Affairs Minister Dambe"

- a) Asians remain unassimilable, clannish and put nothing back into the economy...
- c) ...While resident in the country citizen Asians are in all respects treated completely non-racially but that the government reserves the right to prevent further immigration...
- d) Asians cannot at present be prevented from acquiring businesses and land in Botswana
- e) as long as this is the case, it is inhuman and unjust to prevent them living with and managing their businesses
- f) it is nevertheless imperative to prevent them acquiring such a status that they cannot at some time reasonably be told to go, e.g.: when Botswana acquire capital and qualifications.³¹⁰

Detractors again challenged the overt racism in the arguments and policies emerging from the Home Affairs department and the inefficiencies they would entail. As a result of this internal confrontation, it was eventually agreed in 1970, four years after independence, that “it would be possible to phrase a policy which was not racial”. That is to say it was agreed that the problem of the slow transfer of business into local African hands was not actually a problem of the race of immigrants, but rather of commercial policies regarding immigrating foreign investors. In 1970, the government began to accept the possibility that race was not a legitimate category for governance and that immigration policy should be informed by concerns for economic growth and development.³¹¹

That the shift in immigration policy began in 1970 is not completely coincidental. It was around this time that the extent of Botswana’s diamond riches was beginning to be realised. The impact of those riches on immigration in Botswana was enormous and must be discussed before returning to official responses to the changes they entailed.

³¹⁰ BNA/OP 33/36, Cabinet memorandum, “Home Affairs Minister Dambe.”

³¹¹ Various memoranda in: BNA/OP 33/36, “Immigration – Asians”, 1967-70.

Growth, development and immigration

In the late 1960s and 1970s Botswana saw the beginnings of a sustained economic boom emerging out of the advent of the local diamond industry in particular, as well as of other mineral industries and increased beef exportation. This would eventually produce one of the world's most impressive long-term growth rates, averaging 9% per year from independence and 13% between 1980 and 1989.³¹² The diamond boom importantly included a share of profits to government, first 15% and later, under a 1975 agreement with De Beers, 50%, which resulted in major public investment.³¹³ This had two connected impacts. First, it produced increased buying power in those with access to government employment or money.³¹⁴ Second, the early part of that sustained boom took place in a very poor country with very little infrastructure and a very small, low-skilled population, hence it required foreign expertise.³¹⁵ Moreover, for sustainable development Botswana needed to reinvest and manage its earnings, which again required skilled professionals. Many of these skills would come from India.

Immigration into Botswana directly from South Asia between 1966 and the early 1970s continued in the form of small numbers of relatives of citizens and smaller numbers of specialist professionals. According to the archival sources from that period the professionals appear to have consisted mostly of doctors and scientists.³¹⁶ In the 1970s, however, development and immigration policy began to come together with the economic boom. In Zambia and elsewhere, similar booms had involved the importation of human resources from India. Botswana would soon follow suit.

The fact that the necessary human resources were to come from India, had more to do with South Asian, especially Indian, supply, than with local demand. India had been producing large numbers of graduates, but the economic climate at the time was straitened and the job

³¹² Ellen Hillbom, "Diamonds or Development? A Structural Assessment of Botswana's Forty Years of Success," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 191–214.

³¹³ Christopher Colclough and Stephen McCarthy, *The Political Economy of Botswana: A Study of Growth and Distribution* (Oxford University Press, 1980).; Ian Taylor and Gladys Mokhawa, "Not Forever: Botswana, Conflict Diamonds and the Bushmen," *African Affairs* 102, no. 407 (April 1, 2003): 261–83.

³¹⁴ In which a third of the formal workforce of the country worked for government in one way or another in 1990: Molutsi and Holm, "Developing Democracy When Civil Society Is Weak." P328; John D. Holm, "Botswana: A Paternalistic Democracy," *World Affairs* 150, no. 1 (July 1, 1987): 21–30.

³¹⁵ Colclough and McCarthy, *The Political Economy of Botswana*.

³¹⁶ Applications for entry and Extensive cabinet correspondence regarding immigration policy appear in: BNA/OP 33/36, "Immigration – Asians", 1967-70.

market was extremely competitive, even for qualified professionals. Thus many were looking at alternative locations for employment. The luckiest tended to end up in the United States, Canada or Great Britain or in relatively senior positions in the Middle East. That set of elite emigrations has a fairly extensive fictional³¹⁷ and academic literature looking at a range of topics, including the market for skills and the economics of emigration,³¹⁸ remittances and influences in India, new and old identities, connectedness, mobility and belonging.³¹⁹ There is very little corresponding literature on the contemporaneous emigration into African countries. However, those aspiring émigrés who did not end up in the global north or Middle East began to consider their options more broadly. The result was that a fair number were willing to take a risk on experimental contracts in southern Africa. For those emerging African economies the expected salaries of South Asian experts were much more affordable than those of experts from western countries.

Botswana was first able to encourage a small group of Indian accountants from Gujarat and Gujaratis from East Africa to move to the country as employees of larger firms.³²⁰ Groups of Indian professionals then employed in a similar scheme in Zambian parastatals and the private sector followed, because of Zambian economic woes in the 1980s after the copper price collapsed. They began to seek out new opportunities in the concurrently booming Botswana.³²¹ Around the same time, the story goes, an accountant from Kerala, whilst working for a UN developmental advisory mission in Botswana, advised the Botswana government to employ greatly increased numbers of accountants in general. He suggested that the best way to do this was for the state to change colonial-era policies which only recognised certification from the UK, to recognise that from commonwealth countries generally. An accounting firm from Kerala, based in the same part of Kerala from which

³¹⁷A notable example is M. G. Vassanji who most vividly captures the movement between places of diaspora and its variously desperate, hopeful and aspirational characteristics. For an excellent example: M. G. Vassanji, *No New Land* (Random House LLC, 2012).

³¹⁸A Aneesh, "Rethinking Migration: High-Skilled Labor Flows from India to the United States," 2000. Madhavan, M. C., "Indian Emigrants: Numbers, Characteristics, and Economic Impact," *Population and Development Review* 11, no. 3 (September 1985): 457–81.

³¹⁹Johanna Lessinger, "Indian Immigrants in the United States: The Emergence of a Transnational Population," in *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora*, ed. Bhikhu C Parekh, Gurharpal Singh, and Steven Vertovec (London; New York: Routledge, 2003). Amongst other chapters.; Sandhya Shukla, "Locations for South Asian Diasporas," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 551–72.

³²⁰Mr Soni, *Life and Community History*, April 2013; Arvind, *Life History*, April 2013; Ramachandran Ottappath, *Life History*, 2013.

³²¹Many of the latter appear to have been of Punjabi origin: Mr Soni, *Life and Community History*; Arvind, *Life History*; Ashok, *Life History*, June 2013; Nayan, *Life History*, November 2012.

that UN advisor came, chose to open a Gaborone office to take advantage of this new situation (supposedly on his advice).³²² The willingness of professionally trained and ambitious immigrants to subsequently experiment with African immigration would form the basis of a new population of “pioneer” immigrants, after whom relatives or professional contacts would follow.

Professional-to-entrepreneur migrations

A second category of immigration emerged out of the immigration of professionals to Botswana in the boom period. In order to understand this second category, two Punjabi families who originally settled in Zambia and moved to Botswana in the 1980s, are interesting case studies. The first is the case of the family of Nayan, whose father, an accountant, was recruited to work for a large parastatal in Zambia. In the late 1980s the parastatal began to struggle due to the weak copper price and Zambia’s reliance on that source of income. In response, the family began to look around for new opportunities, first moving from job to job in Zambia but eventually, having come into contact with the booming Botswana economy, they applied to move there. Although they came to the country as professionals they eventually saved enough to start a medium-sized clothing business. The family almost immediately set about forming a network of Punjabi immigrants that became known as the “group of ten”. This was a close-knit group of immigrants that Nayan remembers spending most of his childhood with but whom he described as often frustratingly disconnected from their place in Botswana. Nayan, of a younger generation who grew up in Botswana, feels a relatively close tie with the country in spite of the fact that he studied outside the country, as did many of his contemporaries, and has lived and worked in the United States, India and South Africa since. Interestingly, his family instructed him to apply for a Green Card while living in the US in order to ‘keep his options open’. This is a mentality he refers to as “Uganda syndrome” where immigrants feel intrinsically insecure, non-local and ultimately unwelcome and thus fear that they may, eventually, be

³²² Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History.

expelled.³²³ Similar family stories emerge out of the Gujarati community and there is some overlap with the Punjabi and other regionally defined groups through religious institutions.

Another family that emigrated from Zambia was the Chauhan family. This family is well known in Botswana because the two brothers who are the patriarchs of the family are amongst the most successful businessmen in Botswana. Mukesh Chauhan came to Botswana from Zambia in 1983 as a computer technician. He was born in Zambia but studied and lived in the US and Europe. Returning to Zambia he worked for a computer company in Lusaka which then opened a branch in Gaborone. He was “offered a short stint to install a computer system in the American embassy here [Gaborone]. That was in 1983 and I never left.” The company he worked for sent him for various kinds of training overseas which eventually involved him acquiring the skills and contacts to start his own business. The business he started with an American friend, was the official African distribution for Apple Computers. He farmed out further distribution to various regional subcontractors and then took control of the southern African portion of the distribution area based in Gaborone. His main market was Apartheid South Africa and as such his contract was essentially a means by which Apple could break sanctions by trading under the umbrella of the distribution company, which imported into Botswana directly.³²⁴ He was soon able to diversify his business portfolio along with his brother, who runs a very large holding company, Sefalana Holdings, that owns supermarkets, grocery wholesalers and large-scale grain storage and processing businesses, and they now own furniture businesses and real estate amongst other things.³²⁵

This shift from professional, highly skilled immigration to entrepreneurial activity is seemingly fairly common in this period of immigration. It appears to have been the result of the incredibly rapid economic growth in Botswana over the period, coupled with the dearth of local individuals with the skills and capital, as well as the contact with global and globalising economies, that these immigrants were able to muster. It is not monolithic, however, and many immigrants stayed in professional positions in the country whilst others, more recently, have settled more illicitly and set themselves up as small-time entrepreneurs

³²³ Note that Nayan’s relatively unsympathetic reference to “Uganda Syndrome” in his parent’s generation was not at odds with his request that his identity be protected for fear of repercussions for his family. (Nayan 2012)

³²⁴ Mukesh Chauhan, Life History, June 2013.

³²⁵ Ibid.

from the outset.³²⁶ Professional-turned-entrepreneurial migrants are the main focus of this chapter, however, for two reasons. First, they appear to represent large investments from a large number of investors. This was made evident on a tour of the “new Central Business District” of Gaborone. This is an unusual space north of the railway line that defined the northern edge of the old central city. It is unusual in that much of it appears to have been empty land until very recently. Following threatening statements by the central government about taxing owners who did not develop urban land, über-modern skyscrapers have shot up amongst the dusty fields. These are much larger, taller and glossier than their counterparts in the “old” business district and many appear to still be empty. The tour revealed that most of these new buildings belonged to business people connected to India (including a family rumoured to have paid for one multi-storey office block entirely in cash) and that many in this population are well acquainted with each other on a personal level.³²⁷ The second reason for this focus is that the transitional nature of the history of migration and settlement of this group is important in explaining the nature of “pioneer” immigration. In many ways it is this pioneer immigration which explains the existence of continued immigration as a whole. The prototypical example of this role for “pioneer” immigrants in the history of professional-turned-entrepreneurial immigrants can be found in the case of the Choppies Group of Companies.

The Choppies Group

The story of Choppies, the prototypical pioneer-entrepreneur shift after independence, actually starts in the early 20th century with the immigration of the first member of the Chopdat family from India. Mr Chopdat had worked as an assistant in the shops of the Chand family in Moshupa and in Lobatse. The story is that he stowed away on a ship to South Africa as a young man. There he came into contact with some Chand family members who were coming to visit their relatives. In order to evade the South African police he used those contacts to move to Bechuanaland where he could hide and work.³²⁸ Later he used this

³²⁶ Mr Soni, Life and Community History; Ranjith Ravindranathan, Life History, 2013; Muhammed, Life History.

³²⁷ Nayan, Life History; Mr Soni, Life and Community History; Muhammed, Life History; Ashok, Life History; Arvind, Life History.

³²⁸ Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

position to save for, and eventually come to own, his own general dealership in Lobatse, known to many as Choppies' (short for Chopdat) Store, which was passed down through the generations.³²⁹

In the early 1990s this shop began to struggle financially. Farouk Ismail, the owner (the name Chopdat seems to have fallen to the tradition of taking the father's name as the last name of the child), decided to seek help from an accounting firm which was based in Kerala. The accountant assigned to work at Choppies' Store was Ramachandra (Ram) Ottapath. He came from the same area in Kerala as the previously mentioned UN advisor and had left India in response to the economic crisis. The relationship between Ram and Farouk and the Choppies store itself, grew as Ram instituted professional systems of management, created savings and helped to bring the shop out of debt. In the process Ram had gauged that supply and demand in Botswana were out of sync, in spite of the tiny population, particularly in comparison with the rest of the world. As a result he left his job and began to work full-time at Choppies, becoming CEO of what would be the Choppies Group.³³⁰

Within a few years the business had transformed from a single general dealership in Lobatse into a fully-fledged supermarket, and soon, a chain of supermarkets. At the same time Ram began to bring in family with the relevant training, including his accountant wife, who could run the various elements of the business as it expanded and required more and more staff. Ram's cousin, Narayanan, came in 1992 as a buyer for the wholesale element of the original store, which was still operating at that time, and would stay on to become the head buyer of the group.³³¹ By 2013 34 members of Ram's extended family worked for this publically traded company. This approach to filling skills gaps in the company, reminiscent of early immigrant strategies, would form the basis for the successful expansion of the supermarkets throughout the country and into South Africa – probably the first Botswana firm to make that transnational expansion on a large scale. At the same time it created the beginnings of a large new immigrant network with India, especially Kerala. This is because central management could not keep up with large-scale needs for systems of good in-store management and oversight. Instead they needed the stores themselves to be managed by

³²⁹“Choppies Website, History Page,” *Choppies.co.bw*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.choppies.co.bw/content.php?menu=1&page=8>. Ramachandran Ottapath, Life History.

³³⁰ Ramachandran Ottapath, Life History.

³³¹ Narayanan, Life History, June 2013.

skilled independent management that they could trust. This Choppies experiment with imported skilled labour resulted in the company holding the single largest market share in Botswana in 2013 (between 30% and 35%). Thus 30-35% of the retail market in Botswana currently relies on the continued operation of the network of immigration that Choppies has produced.

Choppies recruits accountants and MBA graduates from universities and businesses in India and, in some cases, Dubai. The accountants are put to work in the financial office of the Group, while the MBAs are posted to management of individual stores in the chain – a qualification unheard of in other supermarket storefronts in southern Africa. The numbers of Indians with tertiary qualifications are important here, but it is apparently the ability of Ram and his Chief Operating Officer, Ranjith Ravinjanathan, to understand the relative values of different certifications from India that makes this possible.³³² The whole process of recruitment is facilitated by the transnational presence of Ram and others who have come to work at Choppies previously. This has resulted in the recognition of the Choppies brand in the part of Kerala from which Ram hails and hence the willingness of new recruits. It is still relatively difficult for Choppies to recruit from business schools and universities outside that area, though they have made attempts to do so.³³³ Once these recruits have been employed, however, the company must deal with immigration procedures. Engaging with immigration policy and processes is thus central to the whole Choppies business model, much as it was for many early 20th century Indian businesses.

Choppies facilitates this by a combination of a close relationship with the Botswana government and a practiced adeptness at managing the shifting protocols of the immigration system. This closeness is indicated by the fact that the former president of the country, Festus Mogae, is chair of the board of directors.³³⁴ One reason that this relationship with the government has facilitated the employment of non-Batswana is that the position of the managers, in particular, is treated as a training process in which new managers are training their eventual Batswana replacements. For Ram, this training, in particular, requires suitably educated store managers because they need to understand the still evolving management

³³² Ranjith Ravindranathan, Life History; Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History.

³³³ Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History.

³³⁴ “Choppies Website, Ownership Page,” *Choppies.co.bw*, accessed September 10, 2012, <http://www.choppies.co.bw/content.php?menu=1&page=8>. Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History.

systems well enough, and quickly enough, to develop, adapt and implement them at the same time as teaching them.

None of this seems like a good enough reason for the presence of these managers, however, and it would seem that there is an inherent tension in the system. Mr Ravinjanathan describes the systems of control and oversight in place at Choppies as incomplete and in development because they currently rely on trust between the central management and the stores. Specifically, there are systems in place in most large chain retailers to avoid “shrinkage” (goods disappearing through fraud, theft and mismanagement). Choppies did not need such systems until it became very large and hence they are still in development. The managers, in general, have no local business or family connections other than their relationship with Choppies, and a particularly tenuous visa status. They rely entirely on the Choppies group for the duration of their stay. As a result, by design or not, Choppies can expect trust and diligence with relatively little oversight.

These human resources, while vital, are but one part of the success of the Choppies Group. Other aspects rely similarly on the global outlook of the management, in particular their relationship with India. Choppies will almost always choose from a wide variety of global suppliers rather than relying on old established social and business networks of wholesalers as was once the case. The shelves of the supermarkets are stacked with relatively cheap goods from all over the world, not least Indian goods. Similarly the global outlook has meant that the company has expanded into South Africa, sticking close to the Botswana border and to the main depot at the head office in Gaborone, for now, and focussing on the under-served but growing lower middle class in those areas. Ram has also said that he has looked into the possibility of expanding into Tanzania.³³⁵

The case of Choppies Group’s human resources system would appear to suggest a smooth and regular flow of professionals and entrepreneurs from India to Botswana. Choppies has encountered a particularly informative problem, however. Though they are able to recruit, as described, they are often unable to convince recruits to sign up for second or third three year contracts and few will commit to longer terms of service even if offered greater remuneration. The employees have valuable skills and tend to view the opportunity,

³³⁵ Ramachandran Ottappath, *Life History*.

according to management, as a means by which to acquire experience and then seek employment in India or elsewhere in the diaspora. This problem is related to their difficulties recruiting outside certain networks. According to management this is because of perceptions of Africa as extremely foreign and therefore possibly dangerous. This produces a status problem for émigrés. For example, those who visited home during their contracts would apparently say that they worked in South Africa because people at home would recognise South Africa, unlike Botswana, from international cricket, Indian Premier League and the FIFA World Cup.

Those who do stay, are likely to have higher status jobs with possibilities of advancement and, importantly, probably have established families who they have brought to Botswana. This together suggests that the majority of the relatively recently immigrated Indian population of Botswana is in fact there not by virtue of the direct attraction of individuals to the opportunities it represents. Instead their presence in the country is related directly only to the handful of business people who, themselves seeing that opportunity, have come to run companies which tap into an alternative pool of relatively temporary Indian labour. Thus Choppies introduces a whole new category of Indian immigration to Botswana. These are erstwhile and relatively disconnected employees of some skill; often professionals who were brought in by the existing enterprises of the “pioneers” in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. This large population, given its connections to major businesses, poses a particular quandary for Botswana’s immigration policies. To illustrate the impact of this question, one must look at even larger Indian investments in Botswana with similar hiring practices.

Large investments

Much as they do not make up the largest proportion of the immigrant population, it is unlikely that the professionals-turned-entrepreneurs, from which the Choppies Group emerged, provide the largest portion of investment in the country either. Instead one must keep in mind the large-scale corporate investment in the country that emerged out of the state’s courting of foreign investment. These corporates tend to focus on primary resources and related industries in Botswana and though they bring in a fair number of expatriate staff, their numbers are uneven, as is the permanence of their positions in the country. The employees of these companies, therefore, represent a subcategory of immigrants from India

related to those who work for Choppies. The scale of the relationship between Botswana and multinational Indian capital must be addressed in order to understand the relationship of Botswana to the world and thus to its globalised immigrant populations.

De Beers' diamond trade is in the process of being moved entirely to Gaborone, bringing with it sorting and valuing systems and skills from the UK. This has been followed by the setting up of banking systems and local offices for De Beers' Diamond Trading Company (DTC) sight-holders (amongst a handful of companies licensed to buy diamonds from De Beers).³³⁶ Four Indian diamond cutting and polishing companies have also set up shop in Botswana as DTC Botswana Sight-Holders. One of these sight holders is the Shrenuj Group which is (unusually) a highly integrated diamond industry on its own, including polishing and cutting divisions and jewellery brands under their umbrella. Given the nature of the diamond trade, the expediting of the processing of the stones into marketable jewellery is a major pressure. Given the investment conditions in Botswana, moreover, Shrenuj has elected to bring much of the beneficiation process, including both processing and jewellery manufacture for export and local consumption, to Botswana, along with skilled technicians from Gujarat. This operation employed 175 people in 2010 and had plans to expand to 300 by 2011.³³⁷

The activities of De Beers in Botswana are partially taking place in response to the fast approaching end of the half-life of the global diamond industry's profitability. Botswana itself is looking beyond the decline of diamonds and hopes to develop a widely diversified economy on the basis of, amongst other things, untapped coal reserves. Estimates for the size of the reserves vary, putting them between 210 billion tons, amongst the largest in the world, and a "modest" 33 billion – more or less all untapped.³³⁸ Jindal Steel and Power has bought the rights to one of the larger coal fields at Mmamabula by acquiring the Canadian firm CIC Energy for \$116 million for that purpose. This purchase followed a failed attempt at purchase by JSW Energy, another part of the umbrella OP Jindal Group, after that

³³⁶ "De Beers - Diamond Trading Company," accessed February 9, 2013, <http://www.debeersgroup.com/en/Operations/Sales/Diamond-Trading-Company/>.

³³⁷ Brian Benza, "First Diamond Jewellery Plant to Open," *Mmegi Online*, November 5, 2010.

³³⁸ Ray Ndlovu, "Botswana's Coal Data in Question," *Business Day Live*, accessed December 1, 2013, [http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/mining/2013/05/02/botswanas-coal-data-in-question](http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/mining/2013/05/02/botswanas-coal-data-in-question;).; Roman Grynberg, *Coal Exports and the Diversification of Botswana's Economy* (Gaborone, Botswana: Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis, 2012).

company had licencing and power purchase agreement problems in Botswana. Jindal Africa has since unveiled a \$2 billion investment plan involving 2 power stations on site intended for the sale of power to both South Africa and Botswana, as well as infrastructure plans for the export of much of the coal to steel plants, power stations and other users. Gasification or coal-to-fuel technology plants are being considered for the area as well.³³⁹

Other areas of investment have involved the manufacturing sector on various scales for both local and export purposes including everything from biscuit factories to window and door fittings and chemical plants. Interest from large Indian leather and glass manufacturing companies, Model Tanneries and Hindusthan National Glass & Industries amongst them, has been reported in the press.³⁴⁰ The leather production question is interesting because Botswana has long been renowned for its enormous beef herd but not leather manufacturing on any significant scale. The country has many of the raw materials required for making high value glass too. These investments have been facilitated in part by the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority (*BEDIA*) and various special tax and other deals that they have made available to manufacturers considering investment. Manufacturing investment in Botswana, with a population of 2 million, is a particularly interesting case because it relies heavily on the possibility of export markets regionally and globally. Similarly, the state has invested greatly in encouraging investment in the financial services sector which is relatively well developed for the region. The Bank of India, State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda all operate in the country alongside local and other international service providers, many of which appear to be setting up shop in order to service the diamond Sight-Holders.³⁴¹ One of the more interesting and promising investments of this kind is linked to the Multi-Commodity Exchange of India (MCX), which has decided to establish

³³⁹ ET Bureau, "Jindal Steel Arm Acquires Canada's CIC Energy for about \$115 Million," *The Economic Times*, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/16278986.cms>. "Jindal Africa - Jindal Group Acquires CIC in Botswana," accessed June 9, 2013, <http://www.jindalafrika.com/jindal-group-acquires-cic-in-botswana>; "Jindal Africa - Mmamabula Coalfield," accessed June 9, 2013, <http://www.jindalafrika.com/mmamabula-coalfield>; "Jindal Africa - Domestic Power Project," accessed June 9, 2013, <http://www.jindalafrika.com/domestic-power-project>.

³⁴⁰ Wanetsha Mosinyi, "Indian Investors Eye Glass and Leather Prospects," *Mmegi Online*, April 25, 2009. Brian Benza, "Indian Investors Show Keen Interest in Botswana," *Mmegi Online*, January 12, 2010.

³⁴¹ Brian Benza, "Indian Banks Set to Open Shop next Month," *Mmegi Online*, May 13, 2013.

an African commodities exchange in Botswana (MCX Africa now known as Bourse Africa).³⁴²

Social organisation

The fact that the various waves of immigration came from India broadly, and in similar time frames, does not imply an homogenous immigrant population. While early immigration to Bechuanaland had largely centred on networks of Gujarati Muslims, post-1970 immigrations involved more geographic and cultural diversity. New immigrants began to form new social and professional networks around common languages and, sometimes, around common religious practices. For example a temple of the Swaminarayan movement was built, is run and largely frequented by Gujaratis.³⁴³ Similarly Punjabi immigrants produced a very tight-knit circle of ten early settling families who would spend much of their free time together and often worked together.³⁴⁴ Keralan immigrants have formed social structures which revolve around Malayalam linguistic and cultural commonalities. Ranjith Ravinjanathan describes the move to Botswana as relatively easy in part because he was able to enter directly into Keralan social circles. This entry was facilitated by his family's involvement in Keralan industry and the fact that his father and brother have produced and starred in Malayalam films since the 1970s. The Keralan social circles are of particular interest because of the preponderance of Keralans recruited into Botswana by, and who work for, the Choppies Group. Their long hours of work mean they are likely to quickly integrate into limited circles.³⁴⁵ Similarly, there is a Sikh population sufficient to warrant the building of a Gurdwara.

While many of the post-independence immigrants are Hindu, a category of Muslim migrants from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have, to some extent, connected to local institutions through mosques and other Muslim organisations to find a place in the country.³⁴⁶ This multinational influx of Muslims is a major part of the reform that has been taking place at

³⁴² Wanetsha Mosinyi, "Young Indian Billionaire Courts Botswana," *Mmegi Online*, May 26, 2008.

³⁴³ Arvind, Life History; Mr Soni, Life and Community History.

³⁴⁴ Nayan, Life History.

³⁴⁵ Ranjith Ravindranathan, Life History, 2013; Narayanan, Life History, June 2013.

³⁴⁶ Muhammed, Life History; Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History; Moorad, Life and Family History.

the Botswana Muslim Association's main mosque in Gaborone. That mosque increasingly refers back to the transnational *Ummah* in relation to the move to "purify" local Islam – removing old elements of Sufist practice and the Gujarati or Urdu languages.³⁴⁷

Immigration laws in the diamond era

As had been the case in the years leading to 1970, the current authorities in Botswana appear to have a somewhat schizophrenic attitude to immigration. This is in part a response to the immigration of Zimbabweans and South Africans since the 1970s and especially subsequent to Zimbabwe's economic woes, since the late 1990s. The laws of 1982 and 1984 that emerged from feelings related to those immigrations were cast in deeply gendered fashion, making citizenship a right of descent through the male line rather than of birth in the country. This sparked the birth of a strong women's movement and was eventually successfully challenged in court in a precedent-setting case.³⁴⁸ It is also likely that the systems in question are exacerbated by the growing xenophobia and discomfort regarding Indians present in popular opinion, as will be discussed.³⁴⁹ On the other hand the boom that brought the immigrants there continues, as does the developmentalist logic which first defeated the anti-Indian immigration concerns in the 1970s. Moreover, economic pressure on government has been multiplied by the success of some of the businesses that the Indian immigrant residents have managed to build– there is no economic logic to chasing away either Choppies or Jindal.

These tensions mean that, while the Choppies executives say that they have had little trouble with immigration laws in Botswana, it is becoming increasingly complicated to manage, as

³⁴⁷ Maulana Dawood, *Life History*.

³⁴⁸ The details of this, especially the deeply gendered nature of the process can be found in: Judith Van Allen, "'Bad Future Things' and Liberatory Moments: Capitalism, Gender and the State in Botswana," *Radical History Review* 2000, no. 76 (December 21, 2000): 136–68.; Judith Van Allen, "Organizing Emang Basadi: Women's Rights, Citizenship and South African Refugees in Botswana, 1980-1995," in *24th Biennial Conference of the Southern African Historical Society* (University of Botswana, Gaborone, 2013).; "Botswana's Changing Migration Patterns," *The Migration Information Source*, accessed October 10, 2013, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=246>.

³⁴⁹ Eugene K. Campbell, "Attitudes of Botswana Citizens toward Immigrants: Signs of Xenophobia?," *International Migration* 41, no. 4 (2003): 71–111; Francis B. Nyamnjoh, "Local Attitudes towards Citizenship and Foreigners in Botswana: An Appraisal of Recent Press Stories," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 755–75.

the system is by no means generally friendly to immigration.³⁵⁰ This includes the citizenship act of 1998 which alters the right to citizenship by virtue of birth in Botswana to require that at least one parent already be a citizen of the country. This basically requires immigrants to naturalise before their children can be offered citizenship. Some long-time, non-citizen residents pointed to the removal of *jus soli* for their children, the right of citizenship by birth in the country, in the 1982/84 and 1995 laws, as a marker of a regime of surveillance and xenophobia connected to a larger, specifically anti-Indian, tendency.³⁵¹ One informant suggested that the anti-Indian sentiment in the state has resulted in security legislation which encourages people to inform on the conversations of non-citizens who may be critical of government, leading to deportations.³⁵²

This belief is presumably linked to the power of the new Directorate of Intelligence and Security in the presidency. Famously, the government used these powers to expel Professor Kenneth Good after he wrote a damning article about presidential succession.³⁵³ Another famous case was that of Sayed Fakhar Abbas Shah, an Indian businessman who was said to have insulted the president's sexuality and was quickly declared a threat by the security apparatus. Such a declaration is not subject to judicial appeal under Botswana law. In fact, deportation has become a relatively common punishment for those who are deemed undesirable, sometimes even circumventing the need for prosecution of serious crimes like murder.³⁵⁴ A reason proposed by one member of an immigrant Indian family for this increased reactivity is that Ian Khama will be seeking to have his presidency extended for an extra term, and that his placing of loyal military officials in cabinet posts is a sign of this.³⁵⁵ This speculation about the generally anti-democratic tendencies within Botswana's

³⁵⁰ Ranjith Ravindranathan, Life History.

³⁵¹ Muhammed, Life History. As Allen has pointed out was not specifically aimed at the small Indian population, rather relating to threatening forms of neighbouring African immigration.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ He was known to be writing an even more damning book about diamonds and land dispossession at the time which is thought to be the real reason for expulsion. "Southern African Migration Project (SAMP)," accessed August 5, 2012,

[http://www.queensu.ca/samp/migrationnews/article.php?Mig_News_ID=2125&Mig_News_Issue=12&Mig_News_Cat=3](http://www.queensu.ca/samp/migrationnews/article.php?Mig_News_ID=2125&Mig_News_Issue=12&Mig_News_Cat=3;); "Good v Botswana," | *InterRights*, accessed August 5, 2012, <http://www.interights.org/good/index.html>.

³⁵⁴ Dithapelo Keorapetse, "'Monopoly Politikos': An Account of a De Facto One Party State and Lack of Regime Change in Botswana," in *Regime Change and Succession Politics in Africa: Five Decades of Misrule*, ed. Maurice Nyamanga Amutabi and Shadrack Wanjala Nasong'o (Routledge, 2013).

³⁵⁵ Muhammed, Life History. Similar observations have been made in South African media: Yvonne Dithase, "Khama Inc: All the President's Family, Friends and Close Colleagues," *The Mail and Guardian*, November 2, 2012.

executive is not limited to Indian immigrants but it is interesting to note how, as vulnerable non-citizens, informants have read the issues as focussed directly on them. This reading serves to re-emphasise for the immigrants the need to maintain international links and exit strategies – the “Uganda Syndrome”.

While the treatment of some of the immigrant families gives some credence to this “Uganda syndrome”, the comparison with Uganda is informative largely in the ways that it is *not* accurate. On posing the question, some Indian immigrants pointed out, in particular, that Botswana does not have exchange controls like Amin’s Uganda. That fact creates some measure of confidence amongst immigrants because it suggests that the state would not jeopardise immigrants’ position for fear of losing all of the capital invested locally. This, it would appear, is a policy designed by government to create confidence amongst potential investors. That it may encourage immigrants to stay for extended periods is most likely a surprising by-product that is unlikely to please those behind the increasing difficulty in attaining residency permits for immigrants.³⁵⁶

The immigration policies and laws relating to them both shape and respond to the differentiation of categories of post-independence Indian immigrants in Botswana. The policies are designed to make the employment and immigration of foreigners more difficult but respond to the global connections of foreign entrepreneurs and multinational investment. Thus, while it is increasingly difficult, the employment of foreign staff is still manageable for companies like Choppies, who want it badly enough. At the same time the policies and actions of government generally discourage longer term settlement and the already minimal localisation of identities, by actively making immigrants’ official status in the country insecure. While this is true, the country has held onto policies which make the country attractive to investors – most specifically the lack of exchange controls. In short, the policies encourage the category of successful, possibly temporary, entrepreneurial/investor immigrants, and in turn the, increasingly temporary, employees that they bring in.

Local attitudes and types of integration

³⁵⁶ Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History; Mr Soni, Life and Community History.

The methods involved in Choppies' expansion are the sorts of activities that are likely to produce dissatisfaction and mistrust in Botswana. The core practice of bringing in managers to run the stores is precisely the practice that produced the most long-lasting source of suspicion in government officials from the colonial era into independence. This practice has suggested to observers that owners intended to keep the business within a racialised clique and not to invest in the long-term development of the country. While Choppies does attempt to allay these fears with assurances that the expatriate managers are primarily trainers of future local management staff, this does not do away with the suspicions easily.³⁵⁷ Conversations conducted on the street in Gaborone in 2013 suggested that many people believe that the managers who are brought in are recruited because they work long hours for very little pay; that because of their status in the country and its relationship to the company, they are a docile workforce who have few choices. They become, in popular imagination, a sort of latter day, highly skilled, indentured labour, echoing what has been reported from parts of the Arabian Peninsula.³⁵⁸ This suspicion emerges in the media as well, with several "exposés" and reports on the conditions of the stores, the goods therein and the possibility of the formation of a monopoly emerging with relative regularity.³⁵⁹ Popular attitudes towards immigrants in general have progressively hardened since the 1980s. According to Eugene Campbell, this attitude is most intensely directed against Asian immigrants, especially South Asians, and in turn extends onto Botswana citizens of South Asian origin³⁶⁰ (as some citizen informants suggested³⁶¹). The tone of this hardening attitude has a direct relationship to the country's growing prosperity and the uneven distribution of the proceeds of that prosperity.³⁶² It tends to be cast in terms of the dividends of insider Botswana

³⁵⁷ Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History.

³⁵⁸ Kunniparampil Curien Zachariah, Kappadath Parameswara Kannan, and Sebastian Irudaya Rajan, *Kerala's Gulf Connection: CDS Studies on International Labour Migration from Kerala State in India* (Centre for Development Studies, 2002); Myron Weiner, "International Migration and Development: Indians in the Persian Gulf," *Population and Development Review* 8, no. 1 (March 1982): 1. J. S. Birks, I. J. Seccombe, and C. A. Sinclair, "Labour Migration in the Arab Gulf States: Patterns, Trends and Prospects*," *International Migration* 26, no. 3 (1988): 267–86.

³⁵⁹ Lucas Modimana, "Will the Choppies Success Story Be a Fact or Fiction?," *Botswana Gazette*, n.d. Lawrence Seretse, "The Choppies Deception," *Mmegi Online*, February 15, 2013; Mbongeni Mguni, "Choppies Offer Was Sweetest For Supasave," *Mmegi Online*, n.d., accessed February 10, 2014.

³⁶⁰ Campbell, "Attitudes of Botswana Citizens toward Immigrants: Signs of Xenophobia?"

³⁶¹ Moorad, Life and Family History; Chand, Chand, and Khan, Life and Family History.

³⁶² Campbell, "Attitudes of Botswana Citizens toward Immigrants: Signs of Xenophobia?" Nyamnjoh, "Local Attitudes towards Citizenship and Foreigners in Botswana: An Appraisal of Recent Press Stories." Nyamnjoh disagrees that Asian immigrants are most unwanted stating instead that African immigrants are further down the pecking order. His study, however, is of depictions in the media rather than of popular opinions on street level.

belonging, of the broad national project (regarding which other local minorities are also often unwelcome)³⁶³ into which foreigners are thought not to pay but from which they extract and expatriate benefit.³⁶⁴ Again, this is reminiscent of the colonial attitudes towards Indian traders that prevailed for several decades.

South Asian immigrants have not obviously dealt with this suspicion by integrating into the local populations where they settle such that real communication can take place. None of this set of immigrants interviewed, for example – with the exception of Ramachandra Ottapath who was taking lessons – had bought into the Tswana ethnic nationalist project of the country and learnt the language. Learning the language was a key condition raised by some of the Batswana-Indians for acceptance and belonging.³⁶⁵ In their case there was great pressure to learn it in order to succeed in the “reserve areas” of the colonial era. Some immigrants stated that there is a test for Setswana proficiency in the naturalisation process but that the “difficulty” of learning the language, alone, was enough to discourage many from seeking citizenship.³⁶⁶ Thus, though integration may still occur, there are several inhibitions. The apparently narrow social networks are a first, soft, inhibition for some. A second is the fact that many remain in Botswana only until their contracts run out or opportunities elsewhere emerge. Failure to deeply integrate is, therefore, not really a barrier to urban-based Indian immigrants’ hopes of success – they are not likely to go to the Kgotla as earlier generations did. These factors suggest that only the most committed of the later generations who grow up in the country will feel the need to learn the language and develop important social relationships outside of their existing circles.

Integration into the local population where South Asian immigrants settle is made less likely because the younger generations tend, often under social and familial pressure, to migrate out of the country for some period. Most of those interviewed stated that they, their children and the children of other immigrant families were likely to, at the very least, be sent overseas for tertiary education. This is partly an effort to ensure continued upward mobility, essentially a status symbol, and also to move in the direction of securing alternative locations

³⁶³ Jacqueline S. Solway, “Navigating the ‘Neutral’ State: ‘Minority’ Rights in Botswana,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, no. 4 (December 2002): 711–29.

³⁶⁴ Campbell, “Attitudes of Botswana Citizens toward Immigrants: Signs of Xenophobia?”

³⁶⁵ Dada, *Life and Family History*; Moorad, *Life and Family History*.

³⁶⁶ Ramachandran Ottapath, *Life History*; Mr Soni, *Life and Community History*. Note the narrow ethnic Tswana cast that the national project shows in this process.

for residency (a symptom of the aforementioned “Uganda Syndrome”).³⁶⁷ On completing tertiary education many will be expected to seek out employment in those countries or, at least, to seek employment in South Africa.³⁶⁸ At the same time these families tend to have an intimate relationship with their families in India, East Africa and elsewhere. All of this means that they tend to straddle the transnational space, not just between South Africa and Botswana, but also with many other places around the world from the US to New Zealand. This is true in a very intimate sense such that many are travelling to South Africa and abroad on a regular basis in order to visit children, grand-children, mothers, fathers, uncles and aunts, sometimes more than once a year.³⁶⁹ This intimate relationship with the wider world includes those managers and administrators who are brought in on the relatively short contracts offered by the Choppies Group. This group also have a regular visit to their families in India specifically included in their contract in an attempt to attract more applicants for the positions.³⁷⁰

In the age of jet travel it is much easier to manage this transnational existence than it was for the earlier families who settled in Bechuanaland. The latter had to travel to the border in ox-wagons and to India by ship, and risk Japanese torpedoes and bombs during the Second World War, in order to do the same. This does not mean that they did not keep some sort of connection for many years, and some still maintain contact. Instead the argument is that this was so much slower and more difficult, that there was a greater likelihood that families would develop close ties with the place where they derived their living. The wild desert full of lions where they made their homes and where they developed fundamentally important relationships with local people, whether pragmatic or personal or both, was *more* likely to produce connectedness. Chandra Jayawardena many years earlier, made a similar statement about the “Indian communities overseas” in general. He stated that “Consideration of distance leads to... the extent to which ties with the homeland were maintained” and “Distance is relative to the economic circumstances of the emigrant, the villages of South India being as far away for a labourer from a Ceylonese plantation, traveling by boat and

³⁶⁷ Nayan, Life History.

³⁶⁸ Ashok, Life History; Arvind, Life History; Ramachandran Ottappath, Life History; Mr Soni, Life and Community History; Muhammed, Life History.

³⁶⁹ Arvind, Life History; Mr Soni, Life and Community History; Nayan, Life History; Narayanan, Life History.

³⁷⁰ Ranjith Ravindranathan, Life History.

train, as the villages of Gujarat are for a Kampala businessman flying home”.³⁷¹ In short, the relative and progressively intensifying disconnection from India, the rest of the world and even to some extent South Africa, meant that earlier immigrant settlers came to identify themselves as Batswana-Indians, or simply Batswana, first and foremost. The younger generations of South Asian immigrant families in Botswana do not face the isolating conditions of the earlier period. They have relatively easy access to the world. This is not to say that they do not think of Botswana as home. On the contrary Nayan, at least, is extremely clear about wanting to “be cremated in Botswana after I die”.³⁷² Instead it is a function of the realities of their lives – by and large a part of a particularly globalised world.

Conclusion

In the period immediately preceding independence, the colonial authorities of Bechuanaland continued to try to exclude the existing Indian population from the political, economic and social developments in the territory. The same factors which had always limited that project, in particular in relation to the oldest families in the community, would come to undermine these attempts too. Eventually political and diplomatic developments in Britain, decolonising Africa, South Africa and India meant Batswana-Indians had to be recognised as a constituency that required a voice in the decolonisation process and, later, the option of citizenship in the new country.

This did not entail a practical departure from the attitudes to actually governing the territory and its Indian population. In fact the economic aspects of the decolonisation process and immediately after – especially regarding the questions of African businesses, property ownership and immigration – meant that there were now new arguments for old anti-Indian attitudes. These were attitudes which would, more importantly, find their way unedited into the language of post-colonial officialdom and policy discussions – this time without the intercession of metropolitan or diplomatic pressures.

³⁷¹ Chandra Jayawardena, “Migration and Social Change: A Survey of Indian Communities Overseas,” *Geographical Review* 58, no. 3 (July 1968): 426.

³⁷² Nayan, *Life History*.

Instead it was economic pressures that would limit anti-Indian language in Botswana. The discovery of diamonds and their exploitation for the enrichment of the country could not yield its full benefit if there was to be no broader development and investment programme to go with it. Such plans needed skilled professionals to work and those were to be found in great numbers, and at little cost, in India.

The resultant influx was not only of economic importance for the skills that immigrants brought with them but for their desire to participate in Botswana's boom as investors and entrepreneurs too. This, in turn, produced both major new investments and revenue sources for Botswana and new networks and types of Indian immigration, as exemplified by the Choppies Group of Companies. The way that they operate forms a part of larger adaptations to both the dearth of local professional skills and to the government's immigration policies, rhetoric and practice. The example of the success and value of such investment, moreover, has in part led to official government efforts to entice investment from large Indian multinationals, which follow similar models of human resource management. These factors have led to a relatively large, economically important and diverse set of Indian social and business networks which serve to reproduce themselves and their immigration patterns and also to maintain vital links to India and the global Indian diaspora.

Much as in previous generations, all of these new immigrations and the social and business systems that they entail, have been viewed with great suspicion by many in government and the public. Economic imperatives, again, would repeatedly stay the anti-Indian hand, but the result is a schizophrenic combination of petty marginalisation and victimisations and the continued encouragement of investment. These manage only to alienate immigrants, leaving them in a state of constant insecurity, even while their economic impact continues to grow.

Conclusion

Batswana-Indians and more recent South Asian immigrants to Botswana form an outlying node of a branch of the history of emigration from the subcontinent and the global networks it produced. As a location of settlement and immigration the country seemed to hold little economic promise before the 1980s, especially in comparison to its neighbours. Instead coincidences in the location of diasporic networks in the region and the administrative conditions in the territory produced the marginal niches necessary to drive that immigration over time. In order to take advantage of the niche produced by these conditions the immigrants/settlers had to negotiate the attitudes of the local state and white settler population. This negotiation was one that took place in various forms across the diaspora and dealt with common themes of antagonism across the Empire and the settler colonies and into the independent post-colonies. It is this changing process with which we have largely been concerned in this history. Specifically the process was accomplished by means of a series of adaptive economic, political and social systems. These were either brought to the territory from the global diasporic experience and mobilised for, or adapted to, localised conditions, or invented in situ according to shifting demands and opportunities. Regardless of their origin, however, these were systems which operated within, and often embraced, territorial colonial categories just as people operated across them. They illustrate both a global diaspora and intensely localised groups of individual Indian settlers connected to it.

The story started in the 1880s – the beginning of the major moves in the nearby Boer Republics and Natal (as well as in Canada, Australia and the USA) to really limit movement, especially of Asians and poor Europeans, across their borders, and settlement within them. In the nascent Protectorate these concerns had yet to emerge in any documented, effective fashion – instead immigrants crossed the border, a line in the sand, from the Northern Cape

and settled in places like Ramotswa and Moshupa before there was a colonial administration to speak of. The result was that the development of official concerns about the presence of Indians and their mobility started out on the back foot, responding to existing settlement at least three decades old by the time of the first documented objections in the 1910s.

The fact of existing settlement of increasingly long standing was central to the responses developed by Indian settlers to official and settler lobbyists' discriminatory propositions. This fact interacted with another set of central conceptual and ideological conditions to produce a *fait accompli* that applied not just to the very first families and their relatives. It was at various points renewed in reference to people who had settled but gone unnoticed or un-harassed for many years – people to whom the latest regulations that emerged from time to time could not be said to apply or whose presence was popularly considered legitimate by virtue of its age. In short, being present for a nonspecific amount of time could itself protect one from ejection or some degree of discrimination. This set the groundwork for future adaptations.

The moments where Indians defended or extended these *fait accomplis* rights point us to the central issues which informed colonial administrators and their white settler lobbyists from the start. They fall into two main categories: political/ideological and practical/administrative challenges. The central ideological issue was that the “undesirable” Indian immigrants in question fell under the category of British Indian Subjects and as such were technically entitled to certain protections, especially of generalised freedom of movement and particularly within the Empire. Any policy or action which would seem to do them or their freedoms harm, financially or physically, would be subject to sanction from various entities and people in both the metropole and India itself. While the Government of India would themselves soften some of these demands at times, for example with the institution of the Indian passport in 1917, the basic expectation that these were documents to *protect* Subjects' rights remained. These were intra-colonial political and diplomatic considerations in which the poor and uninfluential Protectorate administration could not afford to become entangled. However, another political/ideological consideration, the settler colony or Dominion category, pushed administrators in the opposite direction under pressure from lobbyists and its neighbours, as well as their own pre-existing anti-Indian ideologies. This pressure would take on increasing importance as the intention to incorporate the

territory into its neighbours became connected to the larger geopolitical and ideological questions of post-World War I Empire in Africa.

Practical issues also tended to revolve around the resources and prestige of the territory. Thus the poverty of the territory meant that the administration would always remain tiny even while it attempted to produce conditions which the much larger settler civil services had in South Africa and Rhodesia. It is evident that, for example, it was simply not possible to police the movement of people across the border – hence the renewed conditions of *fait accompli* mentioned. Similarly, the territory's economic conditions relied on trade as a vital source of income, but it could not easily attract traders in large enough numbers, especially to the poorest, most far-flung areas. Thus the presence of traders of Indian origin willing to trade in those areas, especially before the 1930s was, more or less, an economic necessity.

These starting conditions of both immigration and the responses to it, were intensified in the 1930s by ideological and political concerns characterised by the energetic and famous Resident Commissioner Charles Rey. The concerted will of the Dominions Office to regain its Victorian global influence under perceived threats from Asia, America and Europe drove forward with new vigour the project of incorporation of the high commission territories into South Africa or Rhodesia. The related “development” plans involved the professionalization of the administration and intensification of its authority – especially over African chieftaincies – building infrastructure, promoting a mining-oriented economic agenda and encouraging loyal white settlers. This plan was intended to reform the southern African region into a larger Dominion with a more British orientation. The presence and continued immigration of Indian settlers did not fit that plan. First there was a political-economy issue: Indians were in direct competition with the important white settler constituency that, while it expanded, sought new markets and opportunities. Related to that were popular racist concerns about the intrinsic nature of Indians in their commercial, social and physical relationships with African and white people that existed across the “white world” at the time. The relationship with the increasingly anti-Indian South Africa, the target of the project being executed, contributed to these concerns. It was in this period that the territory received its first immigration legislation to complement existing “confidential rules” regarding Indian settlement. All of these, importantly, were basically anticipatory concerns in light of the tiny Indian population. They looked forward to the fruition of their settler colonial project in the

same way as they did to the ways this would bring in massive waves of Indian and other immigrants. The existing local Indian population was at this point seen as something of a bridgehead at the border crossings.

While these developments of the 1930s unfolded, it needs to be borne in mind that the independent success of Indian traders up to that point had also played a part in the conflict that emerged. Indians were clearly expanding at this time into some of the larger, more important locations of trade in the country. They were seeking out the competition that was causing concern at a time when the administration was attempting to assert new authority over the territory and when foot and mouth disease had been shrinking markets and causing increased competition in the economy generally. The confidence with which this population was expanding in this period was, in part, an adaptation to the difficulties they faced economically. The hardened colonial response to this was adapted to in a handful of ways. First there was communal organisation, often around Islamic more than Indian identities, in order to facilitate direct unified confrontation with the state. That confrontation in the 1920s and again in the 1930s gently threatened diplomatic scandal, a threat which was always hovering in the background of this relationship. This dealt with both questions of immigration and of the rights of residents to trade and expand trade. Other adaptations involved sleight-of-hand in the movement of people across borders to establish themselves as “assistants” or as “new traders”, the acquisition of trading rights through white proxies, and the “loss” of passports and other identity documents. Commercially, Indians in Botswana had from the outset stabilised their positions with relationships to overlapping familial, social and business networks on both sides of the border. These were formal and informal relationships of credit, investment, wholesale and retail that connected marginal businesses in the Protectorate to more stable, global diasporic economies. As the years of South African racial segregationism and then Apartheid wore on, however, these advantages would prove double edged. The most interesting adaptation which pertained to this flexing of colonial muscle was the longstanding and ongoing relationships with the alternative authority of African chieftainships.

The power of African chieftainship in Bechuanaland was one of the more unusual features of the Protectorate in comparison to its neighbours. The chiefs there were very quick to participate in the legal, political and ideological systems which governed the Empire into

which they had brought themselves. Because of this, and the minimal colonial administration anyway ensured by the poverty of the territory, chiefs were basically the ultimate authority over all things within their respective territories. This included influence over the decisions of whether or not to grant trading licences to individuals. One of the limitations of chiefly authority was the preclusion of Africans from acquiring those rights themselves, but the desire to have stores open trade in various parts of their territories was no less acute than the desire felt by the government. This set the stage for an alliance of sorts between the Indian traders willing to trade in small and far-flung places at low cost, and those chiefs and Kgotla who saw advantages of various kinds in supporting that. The location of an Indian shop within a “tribal reserve area”, meant that the settler in question could automatically expect to speak at the Kgotla – to be a Subject. The security that this provided, while not complete and still subject to chiefly despotism, was such that increasingly residents would challenge the state on questions of their rights to trade as both British Indian *and* Batswana Subjects. This was not just a material relationship. Customary authority was not about sets of written laws but about understanding evolving “cultural” expectations, participation in which required at least some understanding of the language and immersion in the population and its identity. This adaptation to local conditions thus required a fairly large investment in localised identity, which then had to be connected to the larger and also evolving identities of the Indian subcontinent and of the Muslim world.

This relationship between the Batswana authorities and Indian residents characterised the opening move of Indian adaptation from the 1930s into the 1940s – the direct challenge to colonial authority over trading rights in reserved *settler* territory in 1941. This is the ultimate example of the use of a combination of challenges to, and manoeuvres around, colonial authority. These included sleight-of-hand adaptations involving the use of white proxies to “manage” stores and the quiet purchase of private property separate from trading activities. These facts produced a kind of legal groundwork to be leveraged into a demand for legal rights to trade, backed by the threat of direct legal action, specifically aimed at the racial discrimination which underpinned the issue, which authorities did not want to be made public. Beneath all of this was the economic and political position of Abbas Chand, the challenger, made secure by generations of relationships with various chieftaincies and consequently a large, longstanding network of stores and familial, social and commercial relationships.

The Second World War period provided an important context into which the challenge of Indian residents to colonial power in Bechuanaland fell, for several reasons. These reasons fall into a combination of economic and political types, each related to regional, local and global impacts. Regionally this was a period of economic growth, especially for South African industry. This created a growing regional market (especially for those not averse to smuggling) for things like grain, the sale of which had been placed under state control in South Africa. It was also a period of great political development regionally with increased African urbanisation and the mobilisation of African soldiers to serve in distant lands – the Atlantic Charter would explicitly state the implications of this to colonised people everywhere. The latter emerged as a particular global phenomenon following India's post-war independence and the influence this had on the rest of both the colonised and metropolitan worlds. The new India would prove even more muscular in its defence of People of Indian Origin in the other colonies and post-colonies than had their colonial forebears. The partition of India too had an impact on the Muslim world and in the diaspora, the Batswana element of which was Muslim, this was no exception.

In South Africa this process would be marked by the emergence of Apartheid in 1948. It would soon involve such intense pressures on local Indian populations as to encourage emigration to the High Commission territories (for those with opportunities in those places) that would continue with every forced removal over the following decades. By the end of the Second World War Bechuanaland's incorporation was looking dead in the water for many reasons, but after 1948 it was clear that this was no longer an option at all. In other parts of Africa with Indian populations, independence movements often focused on those populations as markers of colonial economic domination, producing a global concern about the place of potentially stateless South Asians in the diaspora.

While these rumblings were felt in the Protectorate too, they were characteristically more diplomatic, slower and generally easier than in other parts of Africa and Asia. At the height of the calls for decolonisation in Africa in the 1950s, officials on the ground were still attempting to block Indian residents from certain trading rights – this time adding the newfound desire to encourage local African business development. This was finally and thoroughly struck down in the Supreme Court, after an ultimate assertion of legal rights by much more muscular and embedded Indian residents mobilising both legal resources and

their status as local chiefly subjects, property owners and business people. The slow pace of independence politics also meant that when it arrived in 1966 it had been fairly carefully stage managed by departing colonial officials, many of whom would stay on as expatriate employees for years afterwards. The result of this process was in many ways typical of colonial practice elsewhere, in that it took on the desire to avoid embarrassment and specifically proffered citizenship to all Indian residents – a last Indian *fait accompli* in Bechuanaland. It also involved a continuation of the same colonial anti-Asian language into the Nationalist project, which was at the time still defining its insiders and outsiders.

The post-colonial period was marked by an anti-Indian, anti-immigration racialization from the very beginning. That racialization not only took on the old, essentialised colonial tropes regarding Indian business practices and “cultural” proclivities, but also attached itself to concerns about the production of what at the time would have been thought of as a new national bourgeoisie. These concerns with the influence and power of the Indians in the economy of the new local colonial project, this time a decolonisation project, came to leave a permanent mark on the principles defining membership of the new nation. This is because the first issues around immigration into the newly independent, but still impoverished, nation dealt with people from South Asia. This was partly because *non-Indian* immigration was often still viewed as developmental in nature and generally desirable, as it had been under colonialism, as opposed to the common sentiments regarding Indians. It was also because of the existing connections with Indian networks and the poverty of the country. One feature of the new country was that, with the departure of much of the colonial expertise and the drive to develop a free-standing local economy, skills and investment that pushed back against the prevalent bigotry, were required. Thus Indian immigration would shape Botswana’s access control politics in which the need for skills and investors struggled against official and popular distrust and xenophobic sentiment in a constant negotiation. Both the negotiations and the rate of immigration would increase in intensity as the country began to grow rich from mining and thus as opportunities and skills shortages multiplied. The result was that the state would grudgingly allow many to immigrate officially, many others being rejected or staying more informally, through an entirely new set of networks and investments that would take root in the country. Those, in turn, would require new adaptations to economic and administrative local conditions while retaining a global presence in order to flourish. Thus, fittingly, it is through the hard, simplistic colonial

categories applied to subject peoples, their subversion of those categories through mobility and interrelation and the responses of colonial power to that subversion in turn, that post-colonial nationalist systems of control emerged and were similarly subverted and reformed.

Further research to be done

This is far from an exhaustive study and constitutes a preliminary material history of the migration and settlement of people of South Asian origin in Bechuanaland and Botswana. As such it makes limited reference to, for example, the deep cultural history of this population or the dynamics of the home. Similarly elements which make up chapters in this piece could form the core of much deeper studies in future – for example the dynamics of the relationships between Indian subjects and chiefly authority or the question of language and ethno-religious identity. It is hoped that these will be explored by future research into this important topic.

Appendix A

Census data on “Asiatics” in Bechuanaland protectorate.

Year	Total	Men	Women
1921	52	47	5
1936	66	55	11
1946	94	63	31
1964	382	197	185

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