

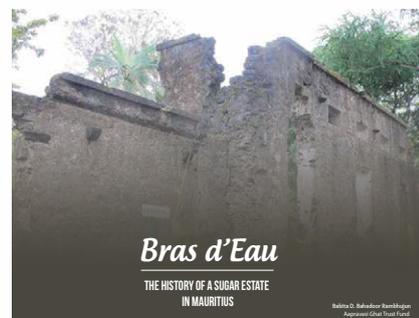
Magazine - Vol. 4 - 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019

# Aapravasi Ghat

185<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius



- Trianon Conservation Project
- Visit of the President of the Republic of Madagascar, Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019
- Visit of the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019
- Contemporary Art Exhibition: "Visions of the Past"
- Publication on Bras D'Eau Sugar Estate



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Aapravasi Ghat  
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006



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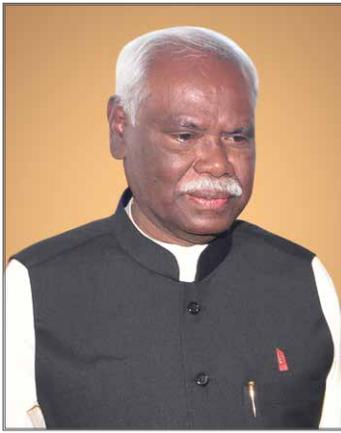
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# Editorial

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 marks the 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius. Those brave and valiant pioneers who arrived in Mauritius on the ship the Atlas on

2<sup>nd</sup> November 1834 were the precursors and trail-blazers of almost half million immigrants who eventually called this small Indian Ocean island their home. Therefore, this singular event, which we commemorate each 2<sup>nd</sup> November, ushered a new period in our country's history that forever altered its demography, economy and politics.

There is a long and rich tradition of commemorating the history and the accomplishments of the Girmityas in Mauritius. This process of commemorating the making of our history and of the Girmityas may be traced back to October 1984 and February 1985, under the first government of Sir A. Jugnauth, the then Prime Minister of Mauritius, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the indentured labourers and the abolition of slavery were commemorated for the first time at a national level. A few years later, in April 1987, the Aapravasi Ghat was recognized as a national heritage for the first time.

In November 1989, in order to pay a better respect to the memory of Girmityas, the name of Coolie Ghat was changed forever to Aapravasi Ghat. Several years later, in 1996, the Aapravasi Ghat Promenade Project was initiated by the Government of Mauritius. In 2001, after much debate, the Government of Mauritius decreed the 2<sup>nd</sup> November as a national holiday to remember and pay tribute to the Girmitya. The first official national commemoration was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2001. In 2002, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund was set up to preserve and protect the site and with a view of remembering and promoting the memory of the Girmityas of Mauritius.

In October of the same year, during a visit to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, our former Prime Minister Sir A. Jugnauth made the official request, on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius, for the World Heritage Centre to begin the inscription process of the Aapravasi Ghat. This led to the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site in July 2006. It was under criterion 6 of the UNESCO guidelines or the memories and achievements of the Girmityas of Mauritius that this site is bestowed this international status.

Over the past three decades, these are some of the tangible gestures by the Government of Mauritius which considers

this site and the memory and legacy of the Girmityas in Mauritius as being one of the pillars of our national heritage along with the Le Morne Cultural Landscape. During the past five years, as Chairman of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, with the collaboration of Hon. P. Roopun, the Minister of Arts and Culture, Hon. Sir. A. Jugnauth, the former Prime Minister and Mentor Minister, and of course the Right Hon. P. Jugnauth, the esteemed Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, much has been accomplished.

In 2015, the Indenture Immigration Archives of the Republic of Mauritius linked with the history of the Girmityas in Mauritius was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. During the following year, Geet Gawai which is associated with the oral traditions of the Girmityas was inscribed on UNESCO's list of Masterpieces of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2017, the first International Scientific Committee of the Indentured Labour Route Project was held in October in Mauritius and which was a success. The Secretariat is currently based at AGTF. Earlier this year, after several years, the conservation works on the Old Labourers' Quarters at Trianon were completed.

Between 2016 and 2019, commemoration ceremonies with cultural programmes were held at Antoinette, Forbach, and Belle Mare with a view of valorizing these important indenture sites. During the past, AGTF launched several publications such as on the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, the life-stories and experiences of the indentured workers, Flat Island, and Bras d'Eau which has placed it on the national and international map of indentured labour historiography. Over the past 5 years, the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site has received an estimated 300,000 visitors, such as school children, university students, elderly citizens, tourists, scholars, and many others.

On a more personal note and as I conclude, I would like to pay tribute to my ancestors and to those 462,800 brave and valiant indentured men, women, and children who climbed up the emblematic sixteen steps of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. Today, we are their descendants, we carry their names, their blood flows through our veins, and our history is a continuation of their history. Therefore, it is appropriate and noteworthy that we carry out our *devoir de memoire* on this historic and special 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019 by honoring the accomplishments, resistance, toils, and sacrifices of our ancestors.

**Mr. Dharam Yash Deo Dhuny,**  
Chairman, Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund,  
2<sup>nd</sup> November 2019



Republic of Mauritius

## ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

### MESSAGE



Between 1834 and 1924, more than 454,000 indentured labourers were recruited in India and brought to Mauritian shores and passed through the Aapravasi Ghat.

When our forefathers came they brought with them their traditions and their sacred scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana. The values that governed their lives were the values of simple working people everywhere, such as the preservation of their culture and language.

They were greatly inspired by the Ramayana which depicts characters that we should aspire to be like, such as the ideal father, ideal son, ideal brother, ideal leader, ideal spouse, etc.

They not only preserved their culture, traditions and language but they also gave them new wings to flourish. Their sacrifice, their determination to preserve their cultural roots, and their will to succeed against all odds have shaped the generations of descendants in Mauritius.

Rabindranath Tagore had inspired us to dream of a land where the mind is without fear and the head is held high. It is that heaven of freedom that we are duty bound to create and preserve. Our ancestors, despite all hardships, have followed that dream by preserving their culture, traditions and languages.

Aapravasi Ghat stands as a symbol of perseverance and ambition in the face of all odds. It reminds us of the immense courage and determination shown by our forefathers to make of Mauritius what it is today.

Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, G.O.S.K.

Ag. President of the Republic of Mauritius



Republic of Mauritius

## PRIME MINISTER

### MESSAGE

I appreciate the opportunity given to me by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund to share my thoughts on the occasion of the 185<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat has played a pivotal role in Mauritian history. Constructed in 1849, it served as immigration depot for indentured labourers who came mainly from India but also from China, South East Asia, Madagascar and East Africa.

This historical site is an important symbol of Mauritian identity, since the ancestors of more than 70% of today's Mauritian population arrived on the island through this immigration depot.

The Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne Cultural Landscape have both been deemed World Heritage sites by UNESCO. They are an irreplaceable legacy which the global community has decided to protect. Both sites are considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.

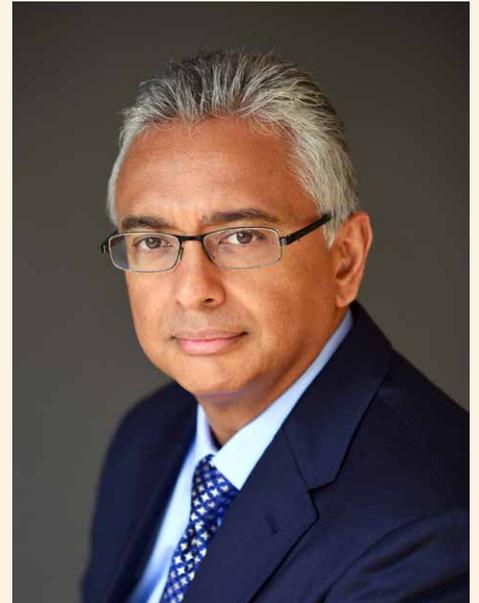
Indeed, World Heritage sites are so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries. They are recognized by UNESCO for the unique perspective they offer on several decades of history that impacted on the shaping of the modern world order.

Since its inscription on the World Heritage List, the Aapravasi Ghat has contributed to promote a part of history that was hardly known to the world. The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre also has helped to raise awareness on the experience of indentured labourers and the key role of Mauritius in the process of indentureship.

Indenture started as an experiment in 1834, but later it became a universal phenomenon. In the last century, the Aapravasi Ghat was the focal point for the massive immigration of indentured labourers to British colonies in other parts of the world. This resulted in the creation of multicultural societies with whom we share a common heritage.

When our forefathers were climbing the flight of steps at the Aapravasi Ghat, little did they know that their patience and perseverance would inspire generations around the world.

I congratulate the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, its Board and Staff members for their achievements throughout the years and wish them success in their future endeavours.



Pravind Kumar Jugnauth  
Prime Minister



Republic of Mauritius

## MINISTER OF ARTS AND CULTURE

### MESSAGE

The 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commemoration of the arrival of the indentured laborers in Mauritius, is yet another opportunity to pay tribute to the 'girmitiyas', the nearly half a million Indians who arrived in Mauritius in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to work in the sugarcane plantations.

None had imagined the immense suffering that they would have to undergo. Yet, the very first footsteps of these men, women and children went on to change the course of history. With their sacrifices, hard work and determination, they transformed Mauritius into a model of socio-economic development. In addition, despite those moments of hardships, they never let go of their culture and traditions. The rich Indian cultural heritage of the indentured laborers was preserved and survived the oppression and exploitations of the colonial rulers.



On this important day, I would like to pay a special tribute to the female Indian immigrants. It is estimated that between 1834 and 1910, among the 452 070 Indian laborers who were brought to Mauritius, 106 500 were females or more than 23.5%.

Though rarely acknowledged, their presence had important and far reaching implications to socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the settlement process. Their involvement in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is both central and vital. They are the one who had a principle role in the upbringing of children, through which the transmission of values, beliefs, customs and traditions were preserved and perpetuated through generations.

As custodians of intangible cultural heritage, their role was of particular significance to building and maintaining our cultural identity. Today, the government is determined to continue the long and arduous task of preserving the legacy of our ancestors for posterity.

On this symbolical day, I will invite everyone to commend the role of the female indentured laborers in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage in the society.

P. Roopun  
Minister



## THE LORD MAYOR

### MESSAGE

It is a great pleasure for me to be associated with the publication of the commemorative magazine on the occasion of the 185<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius.

The Aapravasi Ghat is a key symbol of the Mauritian identity since most of the ancestors of the present-day population landed on this island through this Immigration Depot.

It is a great honour and prestige for Mauritius to be placed on the International Cultural Heritage Map through the inscription of the Aapravasi Ghat as a World Heritage Site.

This site is a vivid testimony of the tribulations of our ancestors to shape our modern, multi-ethnic and peaceful society. They are the builders of our nation and are at present at the helm of all walks of life of our society.

It is a duty of remembrance for all of us to continue to pay tribute to them. The Aapravasi Ghat is an important '*lieu de mémoire*' for the Mauritian nation.

I take the opportunity to congratulate the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund for its remarkable work to disseminate the historical facts on the arrival of indentured labourers and the various facets of their culture, language, living conditions and their arduous struggle for justice and a better future.

I sincerely wish you all the best in your endeavor to preserve the World Heritage Site and making it an inspiration for the present and next generation to come.



Mahfooz Moussa CADERSAÏB

Lord Mayor

29 August 2019

# AGTF PROJECTS

## 2019/2020

*Dr Corinne Forest - Head Technical Unit*

As a research and heritage institution, the AGTF pursued its efforts to document the scope and extent of indenture in the world. Several topics of research were set as objectives in the action plan voted in 2017 for the Indentured Labour Route project (ILRP). As part of this overarching project, the staff concentrated on three key areas:

1. The preparation of a photographic database;
2. The preparation of an inventory of sites related to indenture;
3. The preparation of a database of scholars working on indenture.

Research on indenture also included extensive studies on the transition period from slavery to indenture, on Flat Island and the quarantine system in Mauritius as well as on Bras d'Eau which offered the opportunity to explore the functioning and interrelations on a sugar estate in Mauritius from the end of the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Furthermore, in line with the World Heritage Status of the site, the AGTF developed documentation on Intangible Cultural Heritage and collected testimonies via Oral History in order to document further the experience of indenture. These two aspects are particularly important as the World Heritage Site was inscribed under criteria vi underlining the significant role played by intangible heritage and memories in demonstrating the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site.

In correlation with the data on heritage, research in history and on intangible cultural heritage provides a global understanding of the attributes of the World Heritage. These attributes were the focus of attention when a master plan was being developed for the buffer zone in June 2019. This Master Plan addresses the need for the enhancement of the zone which includes a section on the waterfront where most of the historic buildings listed as National Heritage are located.

This particular attention given to the development of the area was important to foster the upgrading of this prime land located in the core city centre

along the sea. UNESCO underlined the strong potential of this area with the World Heritage Site, and its connections with the sea and the city centre, as a unique opportunity to highlight the specificity of Port Louis.

With the development of a Master Plan for the buffer zone, Mauritius was congratulated for the efforts made to preserve and enhance its heritage. This will receive particular attention during the periodic reporting exercise which has started for the Africa Region in July 2019 with the view to undertake an assessment of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in countries and of the situation at World Heritage Sites.

The Periodic Reporting Exercise is a statutory requirement of the World Heritage Convention. It is a global conservation monitoring activity, based on a process of self-reporting both at national government and World Heritage Property levels.

Since the launch of the First Cycle of Periodic Reporting in 1998, the Africa Region has reported twice respectively in 2002 and 2011. The Third Periodic Reporting Exercise for the 46 African State Parties will run from 2019 to 2020 followed by a year of examination of Regional Reports by the World Heritage Committee in 2021.

This process also required that the Management Plan for the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site property be updated to reflect the changes that occurred in the last five years. Hence, the Management Plan was reviewed and updated in order to design an action plan from 2019 to 2023 which provides the strategy at the World Heritage Site for the next five years and, promises further research and documentation on heritage associated with indenture.



# PREPARATION OF A MASTER PLAN FOR THE BUFFER ZONE

*Dr Corinne Forest - Head Technical Unit*

The Government of Mauritius has recently launched a number of large-scale projects with the view to revitalise Port Louis' city centre. These projects are located in the buffer zone of the World Heritage Property and include:

1. Port Louis Waterfront Phase 2, Cultural Heritage District, by Landscape Mauritius Ltd;
2. Immigration Square Urban Terminal by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport;
3. The Metro Express project by Metro Express Ltd and an end station at Immigration Square;
4. The Intercontinental Slavery Museum by the Ministry of Arts and Culture;
5. Galerie d'art national;
6. Beekrumsing Ramallah Interpretation Centre – Phase II.

Considering these large scale projects, the Government of Mauritius called for a joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) / ICOMOS\* Advisory Mission to the Aapravasi Ghat from 14 to 18 May 2018 in line with section IV.A. 172 of the Operational Guidelines for the World Heritage Convention.

In its report submitted in July 2018, the Advisory Mission recommended that these development projects be conducted

in an integrated manner. To do so, the State Party was invited to develop an overarching vision and a master plan addressing the need for connections and synergies between the proposed developments. To this end, the Ministry of Housing and Lands in collaboration with the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the National Heritage Fund developed an Action Area Plan, the equivalent of a Master Plan.

The Action Area Plan makes provision for the integration of the large-scale development projects into the urban context of the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. The Action Area Plan is therefore providing:

- an overview of the World Heritage Property's attributes;
- guidance for the enhancement of these attributes;
- guidance in ensuring the integration of the new development projects into the larger context of the buffer zone covering Port Louis' historic centre.

The Action Area Plan (AAP 01) was completed in June 2019 and was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for technical review by the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

\*The International Council on Monuments and Sites is an advisory body to UNESCO for cultural heritage.



*View of Port Louis.*



# TRIANON CONSERVATION PROJECT

*Ashvin Nemchand - Research Assistant*

The Trianon Barracks also known as the “Old Labourers’ Quarters” formed part of the Trianon Sugar Estate, which was established by Martin Monchamp in 1803. Trianon was a large estate comprising of the sugar mill, the owner’s house and the camp for the labourers and sugar cane fields. Prior to indenture, the labour force on Trianon Sugar Estate consisted mainly of slaves. Following the abolition of slavery, indentured immigrants were introduced. By the 1870s, Trianon would become one of the most important sugar estates in the Plaine Wilhems District employing more than 500 indentured labourers.

As a key part of the indentured labour system, sugar estates significantly depict the way of life, hardships and the day to day undertakings of indentured labourers. The Trianon “Old Labourers’ Quarters” and surrounding chimneys, temple, and other buildings are vestiges of a bygone era. They reflect the knowledge, beliefs and traditions of the diverse and rich cultural background of the indentured labourers who came to Mauritius. They provide insights into the day to day lives of the indentured labourers who lived and worked on the sugar estates of Mauritius and the architectural knowledge of past artisans who built these buildings. As such, the Ancient Monuments Board decreed the Trianon Barracks as National Monument through Government Notice No. 666 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1974.

Between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, this structure has played a central role in the daily lives of Indian workers and their families who lived on Trianon Sugar Estate. It is therefore of foremost importance to conserve and restore this historic building as it is directly and tangibly linked with the way of life in the sugar camps.

The Trianon barracks was in a state of abandonment since the 1970s. Time, nature and human intervention - not always considerate of the conservation of the building, have further added to the degeneration of the structures. The growth of plants and the proliferation of roots above the vaults, on the walls and floor of the barracks have contributed to the major deterioration of the structures.

Structural cracks were glaring in a few chambers. Moreover, the accumulation of rain water in the closed apertures of the barracks is another cause of rapid structural weakening. It not only contributes to the fast growth of flora but also enfeebles the structure and the basement of the building. The water retention in the walls has accelerated surface algal and fungal development thus leading to the deterioration of the lime mortars and lime layers.

The Trianon Conservation Project was initiated by the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund in 2011. A Conservation Plan was devised by the Conservation Architect and consultant to the AGTF, Mr. Pandit. The main elements affecting the sites were identified and provisions for intervention measures necessary to the restoration of the building in its original state was made. The major interventions as formulated in the Conservation Plan were completed as indicated below:

- Archaeological investigation was conducted by external consultants prior to the conservation works;
- All intrusive vegetation was removed from the inner parts and outdoor sections of the building;
- A stone-to-stone documentation of the building was made;

- Detailed documentation of the inner part of 15 chambers as well as that of the exterior walls of the building was completed;
- The inner parts of the 15 chambers were entirely restored;
- The fifteen roofs were reinstated and restored as per the traditional technique including the stone arches;
- Original plasters were consolidated wherever necessary.

However, the restoration of the roof's of Trianon barracks was time consuming due to the complexity of the interventions.

The restoration of the roof of chamber 8 as depicted in the illustrations below gives an indication of how complex the restoration of the roof was. Compared to the other chambers of the barracks, half of the roof of chamber 8 had crumbled down and lots of stones were missing. Some had to be cut and replaced.

After the removal of the cement plaster, a visual inspection was carried out during which it was noted that small roots had proliferated in the lime concrete which caused part of the roof to crumble. This made the restoration process more complicated and time-consuming. All the roots were carefully removed with trowels. All the missing stones were cut accordingly and fixed on the arch. Some were let to settle and strengthen for 3 days before further interventions.



*Part of the roof of chamber 8 had collapsed due to proliferation of roots*

A first layer of fresh lime concrete (NHL 5) with a ratio of 1:1: 2 (one part lime, one part sand and 2 stone chips 12mm-15mm) was filled in the patch. Stone chips which were recovered from the damaged concrete of the roof were washed with fresh water and used in the lime concrete.

After the consolidation of the roof with lime concrete and wire mesh same was allowed to settle and strengthen for 3 more days before fresh lime mortar was laid.



*Consolidation of roof with wire mesh*



*Laying of fresh lime mortar*

The restoration of chamber 8 was completed by fixing the stones on the arches of the chamber. It took the AGTF team about 2 weeks to complete the restoration of the roof.

The Conservation Project of the Trianon barracks was completed in May 2019. Having completed the project, the AGTF proposes to implement a development project in the long run to allow access to the public, develop cultural tourism and create awareness on the importance of this heritage site as a component of the wider Mauritian Heritage.

In a near future a fully restored "Old Labourers' Quarters" may even form part of a local Mauritian Indenture Labour Route Project which now includes the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Vagrant Depot.

To attain this objective, the AGTF proposes to set up infrastructure for visitors. The aim of the project is to create a sense of awareness and belonging for heritage sites in Mauritius and sensitize the youth on the importance to preserve and promote culture, history and heritage through leisure activities and informal learning.



## VARSIK PARAMPARA DIVAS AT BELLE MARE OLD SUGAR MILL

Indira Gyaram - Programme Coordinator

In December 2016, *Geet Gawai* an element of our Intangible Cultural Heritage brought by the Indian indentured labourers received international recognition and was inscribed on Unesco's representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. As per its Act, the AGTF is mandated to safeguard, promote and conserve Heritage associated with indenture. In this context the AGTF operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, organises the *Varsik Parampara Divas* every year to celebrate this Intangible Cultural Heritage. The event was organised in different regions of Mauritius namely, at Forbach Old Sugar Windmill at Cottage, Gokhoola one of the oldest temples, Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, and Antoinette Phoolyiar where the first group of indentured labourers were sent to work.

This year *Varsik Parampara Divas* was celebrated in collaboration with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, the High Commission of India, the District Council of Flacq, the National Heritage Fund, the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture, and Constance La Gaïeté Company Ltd. It was held on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at the site of the Old Sugar Mill in Belle Mare. The programme of the day started with a welcome song by artistes of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture. Mr D.Y.D Dhuny, the Chairman of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund Board, delivered his welcome address followed by a powerpoint presentation on Belle Mare Old Sugar Mill by Satyendra Peerthum, Historian at AGTF. Mr Jay K. Hurry, Public Relations and Human Resource Officer of Constance La Gaïeté Co Ltd, Mr Teeruthraj Hurdoyal, Chairman of the District Council of Flacq, the Deputy High Commissioner of India, Hon Jayeshwur Raj Dayal CSK, QPM, PDSM, Hon Rajcoomar Rampertab (PPS) and Hon Prithvirajsing Roopun, Minister of Arts and Culture, were among the eminent guests.

The cultural programme comprised of songs and dances from artistic groups:



1. *Jatsar*, presented by the Ramayana Sewa Sadan Group,
2. *Hamd & Naat* by Mr Mohammad Aslam Peerbaccus,
3. Folk dance *Bathakamma* by the Kuchipudi School of Dance,
4. *Gondal* dance by Kosmix School of Arts,
5. A song in Tamil by the Indo Mauritian Catholic Association,
6. *Lalna* by Gyaneshwari Stree Mandli of Belle Mare,
7. *Geet Gawai* by the Sebastopol Group

A presentation of gifts to the eldest persons of Belle Mare village and *Samman* to VIPs were part of the programme. The guests present were then invited to visit the exhibition on Indenture.

The aim of the activity was to honour indentured labourers who lived, and worked at Belle Mare Sugar Estate as well as to encourage the local community to participate, celebrate and showcase the different cultures and values that flourish and co-exist in Mauritius.

Cultural activities such as *Varsik Parampara Divas* lay emphasis on the need to involve the local community in the conservation of *Geet Gawai* and hence guarantee the sustainable safeguarding of our Intangible Cultural Heritage and its transmission to future generations.

# ROVING EXHIBITION: “INDENTURE IN MAURITIUS: HISTORY AND HERITAGE”

ABOUT 2,000 VISITORS BETWEEN OCTOBER 2018 AND APRIL 2019

Maurina Soodin Runghen - Researcher

The Roving Exhibition: “Indenture in Mauritius: History and Heritage” was organised in the context of the 184<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018. It aimed at presenting the salient features of indenture in Mauritius through archival documents and heritage. The purpose was to disseminate knowledge about the history of indenture and its related heritage. This project was initiated in line with the mandate of the AGTF to “create public awareness of the history of indentured labour” and “to promote the social and cultural aspects of the Aapravasi Ghat and related sites”.

The Roving Exhibition was conceptualised by Dr Forest, Head Technical Unit and Mr Mugon, Heritage Interpretation Manager. It consisted of 15 stand-alone roll-up banners accompanied by a clip on indenture prepared by the Mauritius Film Development Corporation. The exhibition was accompanied in most locations by various staff of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund who provided information to visitors and answered their questions. The following staff members were involved: Maurina Soodin Runghen, Researcher; 3 Research Assistants, namely Mrs Babita Bahadoor Rambhunjun, Mrs Kiran Jankee Chuttoo and Mrs Natasha Kheddo Ramcharitar; Mrs Indira Devi Gyaram, Programme Coordinator; Mrs Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur Poteah, Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer; Mrs Aartee Pydatalli, Field Guide and Ms Lovisha Veerabadren, intern, with the support of Mr Deva Pauvaday and Mr Rishi Teerbohun, drivers of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund. Officers of the Centre

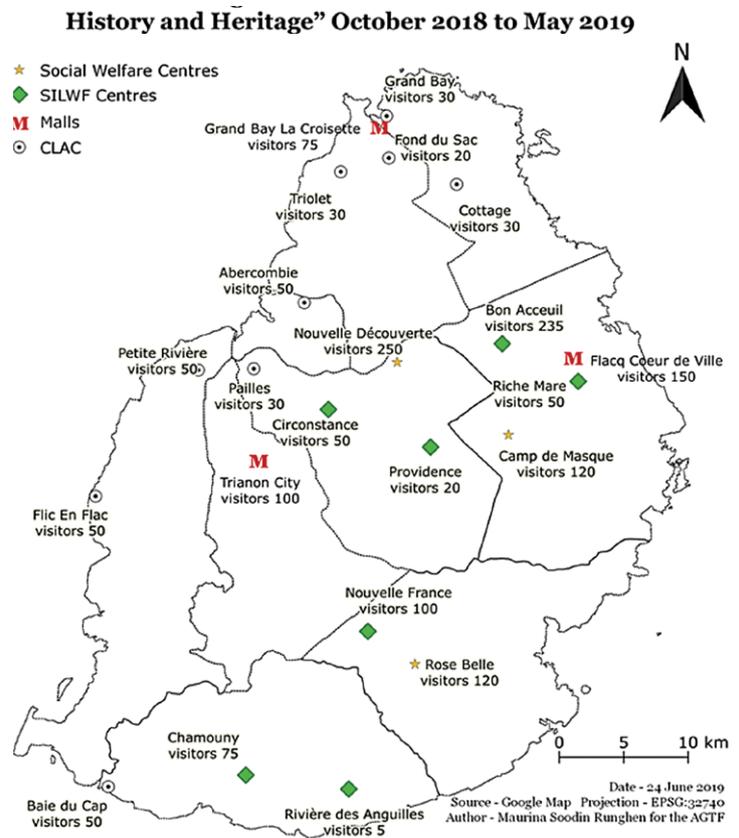


Photo courtesy: Maurina Soodin Runghen

de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle also contributed by providing information to visitors.

## Collaborators

The Roving Exhibition was launched on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes by Hon. P. Roopun, Minister of Arts and Culture. It was organised with the collaboration of the

- Ministry of Arts and Culture
- Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes
- National Archives Department
- Mahatma Gandhi Institute
- National Library
- Mauritius Film Development Corporation

Further assistance was provided by the following institutions and bodies who accepted to host the Roving Exhibition throughout the island :

- Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Social Welfare Division
- National Archives Department
- Mahatma Gandhi Institute
- Mauritius National Library
- Les Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle
- Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund
- Flacq Coeur de Ville
- Grand Baie La Croisette
- Trianon City

## Visitors' appreciation

### Venue: Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes

Date: 26 October 2018

Hon Roopun, Minister of Arts and Culture: I commend the initiative of the AGTF along with the National Archives, the

MGI, the National Library, the National Heritage Fund and the MFDC. My thanks go to the Municipality of Quatre Bornes and other stakeholders who have agreed to host this roving exhibition.

### Venue: Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes

Date: 26 October 2018

Soolekha Jepaul-Raddhoa Mayor of MCQB: Very instructive hence it is important to bring this exhibition around the island so as many people can take and seize the opportunity to learn more about Indentured labourers' arrival and story in Mauritius.

### Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Institute

Date: 22 November 2018

L. Burthun from Royal Road, Quartier Militaire: Thanks to our forefathers for their hard work and sacrifice. We can't forget them.

### Venue: Flacq Coeur de Ville

Date: 06 December 2018

Rita Ramparsad from Laventure: It is a very good initiative and especially for young generation to know about their history and ancestors who came to Mauritius.

### Venue: Nouvelle Découverte Social Welfare Centre

Date: 17 January 2019

Bamma Vidya from Nouvelle Découverte Government School: Very interesting visit. Traditions and culture are revived.

### Venue: Circonstance, St Pierre SILWF Centre

Date: 18 February 2019

S. Runghen from L'Agrément, St Pierre: Very interesting to know about our ancestors.

### Venue: Rivière du Rempart Youth Centre

Date: 26 March 2019

Sreekissoon Gobin from Temple Road, Belle Vue Maurel: Emotional, historical, valuable and memorable.

### Venue: CELPAC, Baie du Cap

Date: 19 April 2019

Santhanah from Choisy, Baie du Cap: Très motivant de connaître la culture mauricienne.



Photo courtesy: Maurina Soodin Runghen



**Site visit at St Paul Ruin to assess the architectural conservation and management of visitors**  
(Photo courtesy: Natasha K. Ramcharitar)

## TRAINING ON MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY IN CHINA

TRAINING COURSE BY ICCROM, 08-21 OCTOBER 2018

**Natasha Kheddoo-Ramcharitar** - Research Assistant

The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) was set up in 1956 for the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage through training, information, research, cooperation and support programmes across the world. Its main aim is to enhance the field of conservation as well as restoration and promote awareness concerning the importance and fragility of cultural heritage. ICCROM has supported its Member States over the decades in preserving all forms of cultural heritage.

In 2018, ICCROM along with other organizers programmed a training course from 08 to 21 October on *Monitoring and Management of World Heritage Property with special reference to the Historic City of Macau, China*. The course was a follow-up to three successive courses on "Management and Monitoring of World Heritage Sites with special reference to China" organized and implemented in 2011, 2016 and 2017 at the invitation of China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH).

The main objectives of the training course held in October 2018 was to provide participants with contemporary thinking, trends and approaches to the management of Cultural World Heritage Properties, focusing particularly on the monitoring of urban heritage. Participants from China, Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, India, Mauritius, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland and Sri Lanka were selected for the course principally those dealing with the day to day management and challenges of cultural properties located in an urban context. The training and lectures were delivered by heritage professionals from ICCROM, UNESCO and ICOMOS. Case studies were taken from China, Istanbul and Poland to be able to better appreciate the challenges and best practices of urban heritage. The course contents were primarily focused on the following topics:

- World Heritage Convention and its management requirements;
- Monitoring World Heritage Sites: Periodic Reporting and Reactive Monitoring;
- UNESCO's recommendations on Historic Urban Landscape;
- Developing a Monitoring Plan for urban areas;
- Conservation and Management of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of World Heritage Sites;
- Cases of previous reactive monitoring missions: with special reference to historic urban areas.

The historic city of Macau was inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 2005 on the basis of criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi). It comprises of 12 historic monuments:

*A-Ma Temple, Moorish Barracks, Mandarin's House, St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Dom Pedro V Theatre, Leal Senado*



**A-Ma Temple** (Photo courtesy: Natasha K. Ramcharitar)

Building, Holy House of Mercy, Ruins of St. Paul's, Na Tcha Temple, sections of the Old City Walls, Mount Fortress and Guia Fortress. The monuments signify the oldest, most complete and richest European architectural legacy standing intact on Chinese territory at present, and are legally protected by Buffer Zones. Surrounded by historic streets, residential, religious and public Portuguese and Chinese buildings, the Historic City of Macau is today frequented by thousands of tourists daily. The unique aesthetic, cultural, religious and architectural values of these heritage attributes are cherished by all visitors. Along the Core Zone and the Buffer Zone are found clusters of buildings (traditional shop-houses, churches and chapels, noble mansions, small Chinese shrines, traditional Chinese pawnbroker shops and Art-Deco vernacular architecture) listed heritage sites, illustrating a strong interaction and fusion between the Western and Chinese cultures.

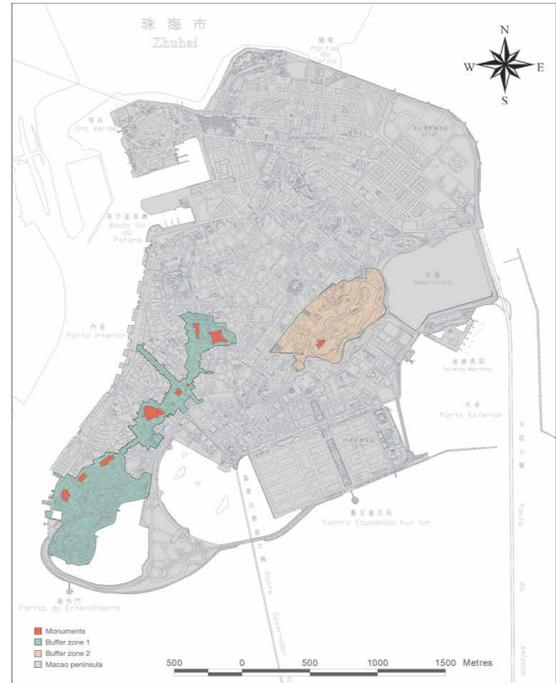
The Cultural Institute of Macau was created in 1999 by the Government to preserve and revive the historic, cultural and architectural heritage of the territory. Considering the influx of visitors to these sites, regular monitoring and conservation exercises are carried out to elude any possible negative impacts.

Macau is the world's 83<sup>rd</sup> largest economy. Its financial resources are largely based on casino gaming and tourism, giving rise in development pressures to build more and more skyscrapers in the environs of the Historic Centre. In 2014, the State Party adopted the *Cultural Heritage Protection*



**Leal Senado Building** (Photo courtesy: Natasha K. Ramcharitar)

*Law, Urban Planning and Land Law* to further strengthen the legal and planning framework of the city and regulate urban development in a transparent way. Despite efforts to control development in the Buffer Zones, the City is still threatened by potential development projects, such as the Macau Fisherman's Wharf and Metro projects and constant issues pertaining to land reclamation and height restrictions affecting the visual corridor of the city.



**The boundary of the Buffer Zones of the Historic City of Macau** (Source: Nomination file of Macau)

It is worth noting that the local community comprising mostly of residents and business owners are very much attached to the unique historic structures and their associated intangible heritage. Regular consultations are thus held with the local community to obtain their views regarding large-scale projects. In order to avoid any possible negative impacts on the OUV and visual integrity of the heritage properties, the Government ensures that the local community is consulted prior to giving green light to any major development project in the Buffer Zones of the city.

Notwithstanding that Macau has developed into a sturdy metropolitan city, still every historic structure in the Core Zone and Buffer Zones has succeeded in maintaining its integrity and authenticity. The challenges encountered by the Historic City of Macau are to a large extent similar to those in the surroundings of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Property. Both properties are located in an urban area with constant development pressures occurring due to port and commercial activities. In terms of night activities, a disparity is certainly noted between the two cities. The Historic City of Macau is vibrant and safe even after normal working hours whilst the city of Port Louis offers hardly any activity in the evening.

# THE 4<sup>TH</sup> AFRICAN WORLD HERITAGE REGIONAL YOUTH FORUM

*Vijaya Beejadhur Poteah - Heritage Guide/POO*

In 2016, I was selected to represent the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site (AGWHS) for the First African World Heritage Regional Youth Forum at Robben Island World Heritage Property in Cape Town. The 4<sup>th</sup> African World Heritage Regional Youth Forum was implemented from 29<sup>th</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> May 2019, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the theme of the Youth Forum was *"harnessing youth creativity and innovation for safeguarding and promotion of the African World Heritage"*. The 2019 Forum followed the previous gatherings respectively for Anglophone countries in 2016 (Robben Island, South Africa), Francophone in 2017 (Loropeni Ruins, Burkina Faso), and Lusophone in 2018 (Island of Mozambique, Mozambique). They consisted of debates, fieldwork and hands-on exercises on the increasing use of technology for the conservation, legibility and visibility of heritage places. The forum provided a platform to formulate a Declaration on the Promotion of World Heritage in Africa and concluded with the official celebration of the African World Heritage Day on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

Thirty-two young professionals from different African countries, participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> African World Heritage Regional Youth Forum. During the forum, we were actively involved in discussions with heritage experts in workshops and practical activities. Most importantly, we were engaged in the elaboration of the final evaluation of three editions of the

African World Heritage Regional Youth Forums (2016-2018), the Action Plan for Youth Engagement with World Heritage in Africa and promotional material for the celebration of African World Heritage Day (5<sup>th</sup> of May).

The participants also had the privilege to attend the opening ceremony of the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2019 that took place at the African Union in Addis Ababa on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 and we advocated for more media coverage in heritage preservation and promotion.

My participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> Youth Forum in Addis Ababa was enriching, experiential and memorable. Young heritage professionals from different African countries gathered to share their passion for heritage promotion and preservation. The increasing role and importance of digital media and new technologies in heritage preservation and promotion were highlighted. Being a Heritage Guide/Public Outreach Officer at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, I passionately elaborated on how digital media and new technologies help to support visitors' experiences and the day-to-day running of AGWHS. Also, the experience acquired from that forum helped me to understand the increasing importance of youth involvement in African World Heritage preservation and promotion emphasising the role of the youth as guardians of heritage.

*Opening ceremony of the 4<sup>th</sup> Youth Forum on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019*



# TRAINING-SEMINAR : « MISE EN RÉSEAU DES PATRIMOINES ICONOGRAPHIQUES DE L'Océan Indien »

*Babita D. Bahadoor-Rambhujun - Research Assistant*

A training-seminar entitled, « Mise en réseau des patrimoines iconographiques de l'Océan Indien » was organised by the Iconothèque Historique de l'Océan Indien (IHOI) – Département de La Réunion with the support of the European Union (EU) and the Indian Ocean Commission which took place in both Mauritius and Réunion Islands respectively. The training-seminar combined both theory and practical sessions, and was conducted in 2 phases: the first one entitled, « Formation aux enjeux de l'image et aux techniques de numérisation » took place at Holiday Inn Mon Trésor, Plaine Magnien between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November 2018 whilst the second training-seminar, « Formation aux enjeux du traitement documentaire et de la valorisation des fonds iconographiques » took place at the Bibliothèque Départementale and Archives Départementales de la Réunion between 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

## Objectives of the Iconothèque Historique de l'Océan Indien (IHOI)

Portrayed as an image library, the IHOI aims to:

- Permanently promote the Indian Ocean iconography;
- Offer tools for knowledge, study and creativity to everybody;
- Renew the relationship between research, art and culture;
- Prioritize a rigorous scientific approach;
- Overcome geographical distance;
- Encourage the best access to information;
- Develop a wide network of exchange;
- Bring together partners from public and private institutions in France and internationally on a single platform.

## Participating countries of the Indian Ocean

Six countries of the Indian Ocean took part in this seminar,

- Comoros islands: Centre de la Documentation et de la Recherche Scientifique Archives ;
- Madagascar: Bibliothèque Nationale de Madagascar ;
- Mauritius: The Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and The Blue Penny Museum
- Mayotte: Archives Départementales de Mayotte ;
- Mozambique: Arpac – Instituto de Investigação Sócio-

Cultural and Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (Archives Historiques du Mozambique) ;

- Seychelles: Archives Nationales des Seychelles

## Profiles of Trainers

The trainers were:

- Mr David Gagneur, Chef de Mission, IHOI;
- Mrs Odile de Filippi, Documentaliste et Formatrice de la société Armadillo;
- Professeur Pascal Puig, Professeur des universités;
- Professeur Franck Maindon, Coordonnateur de la spécialité Photographie;
- Professeur Jean-Gabriel Lopez, Conseiller en conservation préventive et en numérisation du patrimoine.

## Objectives of the training-seminar

The main objectives of the training seminar were to:

- Help trainees identify and be acquainted with the types of pictures available at the archives and in secondary sources in their respective countries;
- Present techniques of conservation and restoration of photographs;
- Understand the main photographic processes and alteration mechanisms;
- Understand the factors regarding the conservation of pictures;
- Collect, preserve and promote the iconographic memory with the establishment of a network of iconographic heritage of the Indian Ocean (Mise en réseau des patrimoines iconographiques de l'Océan Indien);
- Create a collaborative project with participating countries for the creation of an iconographic database for the Indian Ocean to be managed by the IHOI;
- Make trainees become acquainted with the software called Armadillo which is a photographic database including an online server for updates;
- Make participants aware of legislation regarding Intellectual Property Rights and rights to images and the Berne Convention.

## Last day of the Seminar

### Signature of Convention

The closing ceremony of the training-seminar took place at the Lazaret de la Grande Chaloupe on the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019 by a signature of convention between the Iconothèque and participating countries.

### Iconotouch and debate

The last day of the seminar consisted of a demonstration of the 'Iconotouch', and a debate on the challenges regarding the dissemination and promotion of images including discussions with professionals in the field of heritage, arts and education. As far as the 'Iconotouch' is concerned, it is a large mobile touchscreen which holds about 10,000 pictures from the collections of the Département de La Réunion. It is easy for people to view different images with a simple touch. The 'Iconotouch' can also be used for quiz in schools.



- Cimetière Marin de St Paul (The cemetery was created in 1788 near the bay of St Paul where the first French settlement in Réunion Island took place. Former colonial settlers of Bourbon island, pirates, rich landowners such as Desbassyns family, indentured Indian and Chinese labourers, sailors, politicians and famous poets like Leconte de Lisle are buried there);
- Cimetière des esclaves oubliées (Next to the Cimetière Marin, near the seaside is the Cemetery of forgotten slaves where bones were discovered after the passage of Cyclone Gamède in 2007. Following same, archaeological excavations were carried out in 2011 which revealed that more than 2000 slaves were buried in the sand. The presence of certain skeletons with carved teeth corresponding to African rituals in southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique determined the origins of slaves buried there);
- Bibliothèque Départementale de la Réunion ;
- Archives Départementales de la Réunion (Visit at the conservation laboratory);
- Musée Léon Dierx (The museum of Léon Dierx is housed in the former bishop's palace which was built in 1845, and displays Réunion's most important collection of modern art).

## Site visits in Reunion Island

The training-seminar also comprised of site visits at key heritage sites including:

- Piton Maïdo (is a natural site at an altitude of 2,200 metres above sea level which offers a scenic view of the Cirque de Mafate and the west coast of Réunion Island. The Cirque de Mafate forms part of the National Park of La Réunion, which is a World Heritage Site) ;
- La Maison du géranium, Maïdo (traditional family distillery manufacturing products such as essential oils, perfumes, massage oils and beauty products made from the local geranium rosat plants);
- Musée Historique de Villèle (Villèle was a former sugar estate comprising a house, a slave hospital, kitchen, sugar factory and chapel (La Chapelle Pointue) owned by the Desbassyns family described as rich creole landowners. The house of the Desbassyns family has been converted into a museum depicting the life story of the owners. The grave of Mrs. Desbassyns, immortalized in marble, is found inside the Chapel. On entering the slave hospital, a small building not far from the museum, one can see the names, age, functions and ethnic origins of slaves engraved on the floor tiles;

## Conclusion

This was indeed a challenging but enriching experience for participants and professionals in the field of heritage from countries of the Indian Ocean. We acquired a rich knowledge about the techniques of conservation and restoration of photographs, and laws regarding the rights to images. This seminar also allowed an exchange of views among professionals regarding existing historical collections found in their respective archival repositories.

# AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE AT BRIC IN 2019

*Brinda Moonien, Bhavna Devi Rama & Kogila Pillay Rungien,  
AGTF Trainees*



*Darini, Bhavna and Brinda (from left to right)*

We are three students from different learning institutions (MOONIEN Brinda: Ecole Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval, RAMA Bhavna Devi and RUNGIEN Kogila Pillay, from the University of Mauritius). We had the privilege to undergo our internship at the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre (BRIC) and Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. We have encountered various experiences that have structured our lives while seeking to meet some of our academic goals.

Our experiences have helped us to better understand the importance and significance of Mauritian History. Reflecting back on the knowledge that we acquired, we learnt that 70% of the actual Mauritian population are descendants of indentured labourers. Thanks to their permanent settlement in Mauritius, we are fortunate to live in a rainbow nation.

During our internship, we interacted with visitors of various profiles. The guided visits we carried out as part of our training, helped us to develop qualities such as self-confidence and

as we had to face different situations which prepared us for future endeavours.

During those few months, we got acquainted with the roles and responsibilities that we could perform as interns such as reservation for guided visits, visitor orientation and visitor management. With the help of our supervisors and the manager, who have had years of experience in the field, we felt more confident and supported. We also managed to learn different types of skills, from learning to communicate to dealing with various types of visitors.

The few months we spent at the Aapravasi Ghat were immensely eye opening in terms of individual growth and personality development. We would like to express our gratitude to our mentors who helped us to accomplish our internship and we commend the wonderful working environment and group commitment of this organisation.



*Guided visit by trainees*

# CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION “VISIONS OF THE PAST”

From 2<sup>nd</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund held a contemporary art exhibition in the context of the 184<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers in Mauritius and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius.

As an emblematic place for Mauritian history and heritage, the World Heritage Site presented the art installations of the following Mauritian artists:

- Nirmal Hurry - “Roche bondieu” (first prize)
- Nalini Gopaul – “Reminiscence” (second prize)
- Sultana Haukim– “Uprooted, transplanted...rooted” (third prize)
- Mala Chummun
- Alikhan Khodabaccus
- Neermala Luckeenarain

Prizes were awarded to the three best works of art during the National Commemoration of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018.

## Title: “Roche bondieu” Art installation

Materials : basalt stone, sugar, sugarcane leaves

Dimensions : 200 x 200 x 45 cm

*mone révé éna bondieu dans roche  
taille-taille roche pou rode-rode bondieu là  
prièr-prièr roche pou cause-cause are bondieu là  
to croire to pas croire, commence trouve roche bondieu partout  
roche terre, roche noire, plaine des roches, roches bois, roche qui  
pleure,*

*roches brunes, mont roches, gros cailloux, rivière des galets  
tous ça roche là trouve dans ène l`île dans l`ocean indien  
à côte “Marisch, the golden deer” dans ramayan fine fanne tout  
so l`or quand line mort.*

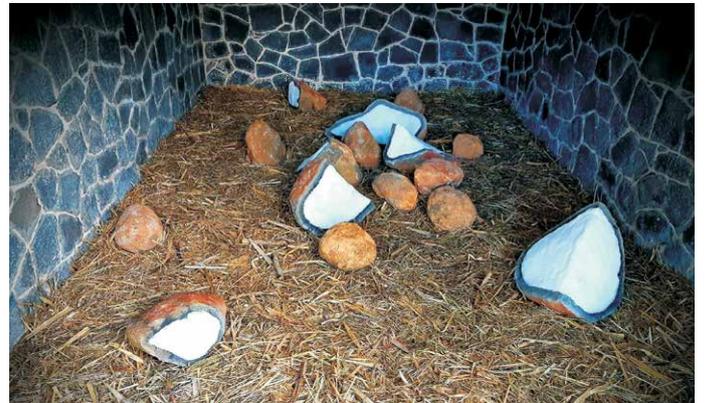
*monne decide alle vire vire roche pou ramasse l`or Marisch dans  
Maurice*

*vire vire roche monne commence casse le rein  
plaingne-plainer monne commence chante séga “viré, viré  
mama” “dalma dalma” “nisha la monté”, “agal bagal canne, bich  
mein captan”*

*jusqu`a disang monte dans mo la tête  
dans nisha monne vire tous roche dans la ville, dans village, dans  
bois, dans carreau*

*jusqu`a ne plis éna roche pou viré  
quand mo sommeil cassé*

*mo trouve moi baigne dans du sucre salé  
tandis qui l`or blanc dans la main blanc  
la sanne moulin faire mo la main noir  
pour ramasse bagasse avec mo carcasse*



Group photo of Prize winners



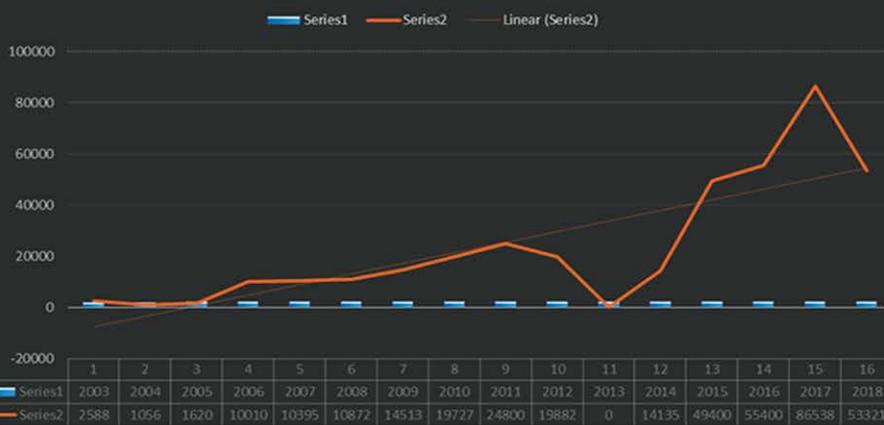
# VISITS AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Vikram Mugon - Heritage Interpretation Manager

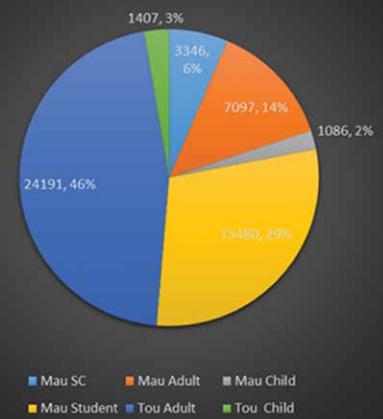
The past five years have seen a constant increase in the number of visitors with an average of 50 000 visitors annually for the period 2014-2019. The Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre has in a short time span contributed to increase the visibility of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site at the national level as well as the international level.

Besides highlighting the Outstanding Universal Value of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, both local and international visitors feel that a visit to the Interpretation Centre is a must to allow one to have a better understanding of the unique history and cultural identity of Mauritius.

Visitation by year since 2003



Yearly Visitor profile



DATE	VISITOR'S NAME	COUNTRY	COMMENTS
31-Jan-19	Ayenda Woji	Cape Town, South Africa	"Well interpreted and maintained/conserved"
12-Jan-19	Sheetal Rajput	India	"This place has been managed very beautifully with excellent staff and is very much impressive"
05-Mar-19	Marab M.Mell	Brazil	"Amazing museology and architecture"
07-Mar-19	Tim Wicks	Australia	"Very interesting, lots of info and cool artefacts. Love the little model building"
21-Mar-19	Coubat Jean Luc	France	"Superbe exposition sur l'origine de Ile Maurice actuelle"
04-Apr-19	Kenny Dada	United Kingdom	"This is one of the best museums that I have been at. I learned so much. Thank you"
05-Apr-19	Evelyn Lemouel Eddie Mercredi	Canada	"Very interesting and informative tour. History in the making"
28-Apr-19	Denise Lan	Mauritius	"Felt the presence of my ancestors. Interesting and very informative and well kept"
06-Aug-19	Maltie Gowrising-Gahar	Amsterdam - Netherlands	"This is a very good exhibition to visit. It is educational and very interesting"
08-Aug-19	S & W Koge	Germany	"An impressive reconstruction of an important part of global history"



"The moment we came here we simply got lost in history. It was a moment of reflection. The residual tells the story of the miseries and sufferings of our forefathers must have undergone. Really hats off to our ancestors who made Mauritius a heavenly nation out of this small island.

Thanks to the Aapravasi Ghat Trust for the perfect management and upkeep of this historical site. All the best "

**Hon Vijay Kumar Choudhary, Speaker, Bihar Legislative Assembly and President of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Bihar Branch, Republic of India**

29/10/2018



"An amazing experience into the Nation's past"

**The President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2019**

"Je veux saluer l'extraordinaire travail de recherches et de partage sur l'histoire de ces travailleurs engagés qui ont quitté leurs pays et façonné la République de Maurice. Leur courage, leur dignité, leur parcours font notre admiration.

L'Unesco, Maison de la mémoire, de l'histoire et du patrimoine immatériel est fier de vous accompagner."

**Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO**

26 /11/2018



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Sadna Ramlallah



Cher peuple Mauricien,

Une fois encore, nous sommes face à l'évidence. Nos destins sont liés par une histoire commune.

Nous sommes présents en ce lieu pour rendre hommage aux travailleurs libres qui ont foulé la terre d'Aapravasi Ghat en quête d'un meilleur avenir tout en permettant le développement de la culture de la canne à sucre à l'île Maurice.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons un devoir de mémoire et un devoir de solidarité envers eux. N'oublions pas leur combat. N'oublions pas leurs histoires.

Ce qui est certain, c'est que Madagascar et l'île Maurice, se lèveront toujours, côte à côte pour protéger leurs peuples et défendre leurs droits ainsi que leurs libertés.

Je fais le vœu que nos liens d'amitiés séculaires se raffermissent davantage, que nous agirons toujours dans un processus d'amélioration continue et que nos décisions soient toujours prises dans le souci de léguer un monde meilleur pour les générations futures.

Longue vie à nos deux nations.

Longue vie à l'île Maurice et à Madagascar.

**Andry Rajoelina, Président de la République de Madagascar, le 12 mars 2019**

## ***In Memory of Sushma Swaraj, Former Minister of External Affairs, Republic of India***

*T*he AGTF would like to express its deep sorrow over the passing away of the Former Minister of External Affairs Smt Sushma Swaraj. Smt Sushma Swaraj, who passed away this August, was the chief guest for the commemoration of the 180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers at the Aapravasi Ghat on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014. She inaugurated the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site, where she wrote:

*'It has been an immense honour and privilege for me to pay homage at this beautiful shrine to the memory of the pioneer Aapravasis who landed on these shores 180 years ago. It is the struggle and sacrifice of these brave souls that converted extremely harsh circumstances into the prosperity and freedom enjoyed in this rainbow island today.'*



# INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES WEEK 2019

**Hansawtee Hurnaum**

Senior Archives Officer, National Archives Department of Mauritius

**"**Archives record decisions, actions and memories. Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions. They play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory.

*Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life."* - Universal Declaration on Archives, adopted at the General Assembly of the International Council on Archives, Oslo, September 2010.

The International Council on Archives was established on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1948 in Paris. The purpose of its establishment was to strengthen relations among archivists of all nations, to promote the use of records, and to advance the documentation of human experience. Thereafter, the International Archives Day was established in 2008, to raise awareness among the public on the importance of archives. Since then, archives around the world celebrate this day on the 9<sup>th</sup> June, by hosting events and activities to showcase their collections and work.

This year, the International Archives Day campaign theme was 'Designing the Archives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'. The objective of the campaign was about providing and designing

opportunities to the community. To celebrate this day, the National Archives Department of Mauritius organized a workshop on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to discuss about the challenges faced by the Archives Cadre and researchers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the Hennessy Business Park Conference Room at Ebène.

Mrs. Hemlata Devi Ramkalawan, the Acting Director of the National Archives Department, opened the workshop and a documentary on the National Archives produced by the institution was projected. The Chief Guest was Mr. Islam Bhugun, Director of Culture, Ministry of Arts and Culture.

The workshop was divided in two parts. The first part consisted of presentation of papers from researchers namely; Dr. A. Janoo, Lecturer from the University of Mauritius, Mr. Raj Boodhoo, Historian, Mr. J.M. Huron, Secretary of the Société de l'Histoire de l'Île Maurice, Mr. S. Peerthum, Historian from the AGTF and Mr. V. Govinden, Senior Lecturer at the MGI. The presentations aimed at sharing experiences as researchers and at the same time highlight issues regarding the safeguard of the precious heritage we hold, and about the services of the National Archives.

For the second part, a round table was organized on the following themes:

- What changes are needed to improve conditions and to ensure long term preservation of Archives collections and



*Souvenir photo of members of the National Archives and the participants during the workshop. Courtesy of the National Archives Department of Mauritius, 2019.*

restoration of records?

- Digital Archives and Access and the role and importance of Archives in promoting Cultural Heritage and Unity.
- Archives in the educational system: Promoting Mauritian History among youngsters.
- National Archives as a preserver of the National Documentary Heritage for future generation: How to promote the Archives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- Expectations of Archives stakeholders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and role of Archives institutions to sustain research and publications.
- The paradigm shift from physical archives to digital archives.

The National Archives wishes to thank the various participants for their fruitful contributions and recommendations to help strive for a better service and meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## Obituary

The staff of the National Archives Department of Mauritius takes this opportunity to pay homage to Mr. Dharmendra MUKOOL who passed away this year in July. Mr. Mukool joined the National Archives in 1993 as an Assistant Officer and was later promoted to Senior Archives officer in 2000 and Principal Archives Officer in 2019. Mr. Dharmendra Mukool has been an exemplary, dedicated and supportive officer throughout his years of service. His contribution to the National Archives Department is undoubtedly remarkable and his abrupt passing left us astound. He touched our lives with his kindness, friendship, guidance and amazing sense of humour. He was always so enthusiastic about everything in life and had a wonderful influence. He will be deeply missed; words cannot express this sudden sorrow.

Pray that you rest in peace, until we meet again.

*From colleagues and friends*

# ART EXHIBITION “VOICES” BY FRANZISKA GREBER



The Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Cerne Docks in collaboration with the National Women's Council welcomed the Art exhibition of Mrs. Franziska Greber from Switzerland during the month of August 2019. The Art Works of Mrs Greber are based on a variety of media including installations, photography, videos and texts and have been showcased in several countries including India, China and Switzerland.

The art exhibition entitled *Voices* focuses on Women's Rights and is part of an international art project entitled *Women in the Dark*. *Voices* portrays the experiences, and aspirations of Mauritian women. The choice of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site and the Cerne Docks as venue for this exhibition was obvious to the artist. It provided the meaningful historical background for the comprehension of the specificity of the Mauritian Woman.

# REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FORCED LABOUR AND MIGRATION

Farzana Gounder, Ganesh Chand, Robin Nair

The three-day conference was held at the University of Fiji, Lautoka campus, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2019. Participants came from South Africa, India, Portugal, Netherlands, Trinidad, Suriname, Guyana, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji.

There were also exhibitions on indenture and blackbirding from the Fiji National Archives and Fiji National Museum.

The Conference and GGI's (Global Girit Institute) fundamental ethos stands for the equality of people without privileging race, religion, caste or other social markers, which have the potential of oppressing and subjugating people. Through the discussion of prior acts of forced labour and migration, the Conference stands against any present and future attempts at colonization and subjugation of peoples and cultures.

Sir Anand Satyanand, former Governor General of New Zealand, and grandson of *girmitya* on both sides of his family gave a special address at the opening of the Forced Labour and Migration Conference at the University of Fiji, Saweni Campus. Addressing the 200 delegates, he complimented the organisers, and in particular Dr Ganesh Chand and Dr Farzana Gounder in bringing together, for the first time, three streams of academic consideration previously kept separate – slavery, blackbirding and *girmitya*, into one landscape for attention. He made reference to the scholars present from the Pacific, the Caribbean, India as well as Australia and New Zealand, most physically present, but some contributing live by Skype. Also meriting attention were many streams of individual attention like health and gender, and literature alongside history and politics. Sir Anand made four points, first paying respect to the *girmitya* migrants and their struggle accompanied by resilience and optimism that had led to better days for their descendants, secondly underlining the benefits that accrue from sharing knowledge from different quarters, as was occurring at Saweni, for example with reference to Dutch and Portuguese colonial practice as well as British. He thirdly made reference to change in government policies, for example in the case of India that now encourages diaspora in a way that did not occur until the present century. Lastly, he made a strong plea, in the interests of children and grandchildren of the present day, that the scholarship emerging about migration should retain balance. His remarks were received warmly by the audience.

The conference was opened by the Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts, Honourable Rosy Akbar. In her speech, Minister Akbar referred to the Prime Minister, the Hon



Exhibitions on indenture and blackbirding. Photo courtesy of the Fiji Museum.

Voreqe Bainimarama's address to the nation on Fiji's 140<sup>th</sup> Girit Commemoration last May. The Prime Minister had paid tribute to those who have recorded the Girit experience and its legacy.

## Minister Akbar highlighted the Prime Minister's tribute:

*"Thanks to the hard work of descendants, activists and historians, and first-hand accounts of girmityas, that history has been recorded for all to read and is forever preserved in books and on the internet..., to truly get a feel for what life was like at the time -- to see through the eyes of the girmitya. I encourage all Fijians, regardless of age, ethnicity or background, to take the time to read them. While these stories of suffering serve as a permanent reminder of the scars of colonialism that we must never forget, they are also a beacon of hope. They have within them lessons that we all can learn from; lessons of strength, of perseverance, and of unity."*

The Honourable Minister noted, "It is this continuing work on the foundations of Girit that we have gathered here today to progress, in Fiji, a country that saw some of the worst work practices inflicted on the vulnerable. And we take our journey forward, to address the scourge of forced labour and migration in the contemporary world."

Minister Akbar also endorsed the establishment of the Fiji Chapter of The International Scientific Committee's Indentured Labour Route Project (ILRP). This is a recognition of the historical significance of the movement of people through forced and bonded labour trades within Fiji and the wider South Pacific region. Minister Akbar stated that she

was proud to be associated with this initiative and had gladly accepted the honour of being the Patron of the Fiji Chapter.

Minister Akbar mentioned how pleased she was to see the collaboration between a number of academic institutions, including the University of Fiji, the Solomon Islands National University, the Suriname University, and the Global Gimit Institute. Such collaborations, and such conferences are fundamental to advancing not only scholarship, but also furthering collaborative links between our countries, through our common mandate to develop a better society for all humanity.

A highlight of the Minister's speech was the announcement that The Fijian Government is committed to the establishment of a Gimit Museum. The Honourable Minister was pleased to note that the museum project will sit very comfortably within the aims and purposes of the Indentured Labour Route Project. The Minister mentioned that she had the opportunity of meeting and discussing the ILRP with the distinguished Vice President of ILRP, Dr Maurits Hassankhan.

The keynote address was given by Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Subramani. His address was entitled 'The tyranny of work'.

Other dignitaries at the conference included Maurits Hassankhan, the Vice President of the Indentured Labour Route Project, Dr Nikhat Shameem, the Acting Director of Fiji's Higher Education Commission, Professor Rajesh Chandra, the Chancellor of Fiji National University, Dr Ganesh Chand, the Vice Chancellor of Solomon Islands National University, and the Indian High Commissioner to Fiji.

## Objective:

The primary objective of the conference was to facilitate discourse on all aspects related to indenture labour and Pacific labour trades, with specific focus on the creation of two contemporary societies in countries impacted by these trades. The conference aimed to create a dialogue between scholars from different disciplines:

- To explore the connections between displacement of people through Pacific and Indian labour migrations, and their significance for the present day;
- To explore the connections between political, social, economic and environmental distresses and displacement of people through Pacific and Indian labour migrations, and their significance for the present day;
- To provide an interdisciplinary forum to discuss the influences behind forced labour trade;
- To provide an interdisciplinary forum to find solutions to forced labour as a humanitarian crisis;
- To provide a forum to discuss current manifestations of forced labour; and

- To strengthen global efforts to end forced labour in the present day.

## Outputs

Firstly, the Conference created a knowledge base on historical forced migration. The Conference provided significant evidence-based engagement on understanding and managing migration flows. A similar project, the Indentured Labour Route Project (ILRP) is supported by Mauritius, another small island similar to Fiji and which also shares specific historical elements. The Labour route project is a recognition of the significant events of Indian indenture and Pacific labour trade, both of which led to the displacement of over a million people.

Secondly, The International Conference also gave priority to the roundtable discussion around the historical dimensions of contemporary migration and thus, facilitated scholarship and knowledge in the field. This forum was an important venue to engage in discussions on migration issues.

Thirdly, the International Conference facilitated the quest for humane and orderly migration. In order to better deal with the current challenges of managing orderly and safe migration, we need to better understand and appraise historical elements of migration.

## Resolutions adopted on 17 July 2019

**Resolution No 1:** This conference supports the establishment of national and regional chapters of the Indenture Labour Route Project, whose scope should be expanded to include blackbirding.

**Resolution No 2:** This conference supports the calls for the dedication of a national day in Fiji's calendar to mark historical occurrences of forced labour, which includes, but is not limited to indenture and blackbirding.

**Resolution No 3:** This conference supports further discussions towards arriving at a consensus on the establishment of a universal code for Gimit Hindi varieties.

**Resolution No 4:** This conference supports the establishment of Global Gimit Institute activities in other countries, but notably in Trinidad, Suriname, Guyana, Mauritius, and South Africa and supports at least biennial conferences on forced labour related themes.

**Resolution No 5:** This conference supports the calls for the establishment of a University in a Gimit country which can become the global institution of excellence on indenture/ Gimit and global Indian diaspora, and more generally on forced labour.

An Interview with

# DR. MICHÈLE MARIMOUTOU, SENIOR HISTORIAN OF INDENTURED LABOUR OF REUNION ISLAND

*The interview was conducted by Satyendra Peerthum, Historian of AGTF, on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at the University of La Réunion, Saint Denis*



**Q1. Dr. Michèle Marimoutou, you are a Senior Historian and one of the leading scholars on indentured labour in Reunion Island, provide us with a brief overview of your works on the history of indenture labour in your beautiful island?**

Je suis très flattée de votre considération. Je suis en effet une « Senior Historian » dans la mesure où j'ai commencé mes études d'histoire à l'université d'Aix-en-Provence, en 1982, à une époque où l'Institut d'Histoire des Pays d'Outre-Mer était un centre de recherches très tourné vers l'Océan Indien, sous l'autorité du professeur Jean-Louis Miège. J'ai eu l'opportunité de préparer, en licence, un mémoire pour lequel il m'avait demandé d'explorer les archives de la Chambre de commerce de Marseille sur l'engagisme indien à La Réunion. Pour ce faire, il m'avait ouvert tous ses tiroirs remplis de fiches, cela avait été un vrai bonheur.

Au moment de choisir le sujet de maîtrise, le professeur Miège m'avait proposé d'analyser les archives de l'engagisme à Maurice, lesquelles venaient d'être transférées au MGI à Moka mais, je devais rentrer à La Réunion, et j'avoue qu'à l'époque, l'histoire de l'engagisme dans mon île retenait toute mon attention. C'est

donc sous la direction du professeur Claude Wanquet que j'ai préparé, tout en travaillant par ailleurs, ce mémoire sur les engagés indiens arrivés pendant le temps des conventions franco-britanniques de 1860-1861. Le pionnier, en ce qui concerne l'engagisme indien, était alors Firmin Lacpatia, Sudel Fuma soutenait sa thèse sur le sucre et donc sur ses travailleurs, Hubert Gerbeau travaillait sur les esclaves et Claude Prudhomme sur l'histoire religieuse. L'université en était à ses débuts, tout le monde se croisait et je ne remercierai jamais assez le professeur Claude Wanquet pour m'avoir fait intervenir, en 1984, au premier grand colloque international sur l'engagisme qui se tenait au MGI en présence du président de la République indienne et de tous les grands noms de l'engagisme.

En tant que benjamine du groupe j'avais, aussi, pour mission de faire un compte-rendu de ce colloque, où nous étions les seuls francophones. Toutes ces magnifiques rencontres m'ont donné ce goût de la recherche qui ne m'a plus jamais quitté. Mon mémoire de maîtrise a été publié plusieurs fois et son titre "Les engagés du sucre" est devenu une expression courante pour désigner ces travailleurs engagés du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle venus développer la canne à sucre et l'industrie sucrière à La Réunion. C'est la première fois qu'on abordait la question de la quarantaine et décrivait le fonctionnement du lazaret de la Grande Chaloupe pour ceux qui étaient isolés dans ces lieux. Cet ouvrage analysait ensuite les difficiles conditions de vie et de travail des engagés indiens sur les habitations sucrières mais montrait aussi leur capacité de résistance. Trente ans plus tard, au regard des problématiques développées depuis, son contenu reste

très actuel : si je devais le re-publier, ce serait en l'état.

Par la suite, j'ai produit des ouvrages pour la jeunesse, des documentaires, participé à nombre d'émissions de radio et de télévision et surtout continué à analyser la situation des engagés, particulièrement celle des femmes lors des nombreux colloques auxquels j'ai participé. C'est toujours en tant que chercheuse sur l'engagisme que j'ai présidé, il y a une dizaine d'années, le conseil scientifique du musée de Stella Matutina qui préparait alors son projet scientifique et culturel.

Deux questions revenaient régulièrement dans mes réflexions, celle de savoir si les engagés non indiens et les libres subissaient aussi la quarantaine, et alors dans quel lieu ? Et, dans quelle mesure le lazaret de la Grande Chaloupe était-il un site unique ? Les publications sur le sujet ne traitaient que des Indiens et de ce site, sans aller au-delà.

C'est pourquoi j'ai choisi d'aborder cette problématique dans le cadre d'un doctorat et cette fois-ci, ayant enfin découvert l'ampleur des archives mauriciennes sur l'Indenture System, d'élargir mon propos à Maurice, dans une perspective comparatiste. J'ai alors demandé au professeur Jacques Weber, éminent spécialiste de l'histoire des Etablissements français de l'Inde et de l'engagisme au départ de ces comptoirs de diriger cette thèse. Ce qu'il a fait, avec beaucoup d'empathie et une grande rigueur, depuis Nantes où il exerçait.

Entre-temps, Les engagés du sucre servait aussi de guide aux associations de la Grande Chaloupe et l'importance du lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe avait

été reconnu et l'ensemble des bâtiments classés à l'Inventaire supplémentaire des bâtiments historiques français. La collectivité départementale, sous l'impulsion de Catherine Chane-Kune et de Jean Barbier, avait fait le choix de restaurer le lazaret n°1 et de l'ouvrir au public.

Mes premières conclusions sur la présence des engagés non Indiens et des libres dans ces lieux ont permis de mettre en évidence son rôle dans le peuplement de l'île, de le qualifier de « Porte d'entrée de La Réunion », à l'instar d'Ellis Island, et d'en faire un lieu fédérateur pour l'ensemble des Réunionnais. En 2007-2008, j'ai été chargée de concevoir la partie scientifique de l'exposition permanente, qui se trouve toujours dans le quartier d'isolement du lazaret n°1, et de rédiger la partie historique du catalogue du lazaret paru sous le titre *"Engagisme et quarantaine-le Lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe."* « Lazaret » désignant la dimension patrimoniale. C'est cette exposition qui a ensuite voyagé à Pondichéry avec le catalogue, tous deux traduits en anglais, et qui a été exposée sur les quais de Port-Louis.

J'ai eu ensuite l'occasion de montrer l'importance des lazarets de quarantaine, sur la route qui conduit les engagés des ports d'embarquement aux plantations, à la fois pour ces hommes et ces femmes qui avaient passé plus d'un mois en mer, mais aussi pour les colonies d'accueil dont c'était un pilier du dispositif de leur contrôle sanitaire à l'arrivée. Ceci, particulièrement dans les rencontres internationales organisées par l'AGTF et l'université de Maurice.

## Q2. What are your current and future projects?

Depuis 2006 donc, la collectivité départementale s'est investie totalement dans la restauration du lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe et dans sa mise en valeur et je l'ai accompagné sur ces deux points, d'une part en tant que conseil scientifique, d'autre part en tant qu'enseignante, en développant des projets destinés au public scolaire (création du poste de professeur relais du lazaret, formation des enseignants de l'académie, conception de

concours destinés à faire connaître aux élèves l'histoire de l'engagisme...).

Actuellement je préside le conseil scientifique mis en place pour accompagner la préparation du projet scientifique et culturel du Lazaret, lequel est rattaché au Musée de Villèle, futur Musée de la Plantation et de l'Esclavage : ce conseil est formé de spécialistes de l'engagisme (histoire, anthropologie, littérature...) mais aussi de représentants de la collectivité et du ministère de la Culture.

J'ai également une mission de conseil auprès de la collectivité sur tout ce qui touche à l'engagisme, le Lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe ayant été positionné comme lieu de référence pour l'engagisme à La Réunion. De ce fait, j'interviens à la fois comme force de proposition et comme experte. C'est ainsi qu'en novembre 2018, nous avons conçu et mis en place les Journées d'Etudes sur l'Engagisme, en partenariat avec l'Université de La Réunion et le CRHIA de l'Université de Nantes sur la thématique cruciale des sources. En effet, une grande partie des documents qui auraient pu permettre d'identifier, comme pour les Mauriciens, les régions d'origine, restent introuvables et les actuels descendants des engagés ne peuvent se reconnecter aux villages de départ. Quant aux historiens, il leur reste impossible de quantifier le nombre d'engagés indiens et non indiens débarqués sur l'île et même d'analyser en globalité leur vie à La Réunion. Ce travail de collecte des sources est un projet extrêmement important qui va nous amener à collaborer avec différents lieux de conservation des archives sur l'engagisme, en France et ailleurs : il met en valeur les riches fonds des Archives départementales de La Réunion qui explore et numérise ses documents afin de les mettre à disposition du plus grand nombre.

## Q3. How do you see the present and future state of indentured labour research and studies in Reunion island and where do you situate it with the current research in Mauritius and the emerging Indentured Labour Route Project?

Après un long moment de pause, les études sur l'engagisme à La Réunion ont redémarré dans les années 2000 avec des soutenances de thèse de plus en plus nombreuses, signe d'un intérêt renouvelé pour ces études, mais aussi avec la publication d'ouvrages et la diffusion des connaissances par le biais des séminaires et des colloques qui se multiplient dans les années commémoratives et l'on ne peut que s'en réjouir.

De nombreux champs sont abordés : des apports littéraires et linguistiques à la musique, en passant par la question religieuse ou l'insertion dans la société réunionnaise. Toutes ces recherches bénéficient évidemment des recherches menées par l'AGTF et des colloques internationaux qu'il pilote. Elles nourrissent les réflexions menées localement et internationalement, puisque la plupart des thèses sont diffusées par internet. Mais les études sur l'engagisme à La Réunion se font également à partir des centres d'études situés en France hexagonale tels l'EHESS à Paris, le CRHIA à Nantes ou le CNRS. On connaît, par ailleurs, le rôle important de l'IHIOI dans la collecte et la diffusion des documents iconographiques sur l'engagisme dans l'océan Indien à partir de sources publiques et privées.

L'Indenture Labour Route Project, piloté par l'île Maurice et l'AGTF, a, entre autres, pour objectif de collecter, de mettre en commun, de diffuser toutes les données sur l'engagisme dans sa dimension mondiale. Les Antilles et La Réunion sont les exceptions francophones dans ce phénomène qui a concerné essentiellement des territoires anglophones. Cette caractéristique doit être totalement prise en considération, dans la mesure où, historiquement, la situation des engagés débarqués là s'est trouvée fortement compliquée par la rareté des liens avec les territoires d'origine.

## Q4. Can you provide us some information on the most important indenture sites in La Reunion such as the Grande Chaloupe and its conservation project, the Calbanon and other sites?

Le lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe construit à partir de 1860 et reconnu comme monument historique par l'Etat français est un lieu mémoriel majeur de l'engagisme. En effet, à partir de 1860, tous les engagés étaient soumis à une quarantaine obligatoire de dix jours dite d'observation, que ce soit à terre ou en mer à bord des navires. En effet, la signature de la Convention franco-britannique qui ouvre le sous-continent indien à l'émigration vers les colonies à sucre françaises laisse prévoir l'arrivée de milliers de gens venus de régions où la variole et le choléra sont endémiques. La colonie reçoit aussi jusqu'aux années 1930 des engagés issus d'autres parties des continents asiatique (Chine, Indochine française..) et africain (côte orientale d'Afrique), et des îles voisines (Madagascar, Comores ou Rodrigues). A tous ceux-ci, la crainte d'épidémies dévastatrices impose une mise en quarantaine qui peut se prolonger longtemps si certains d'entre eux sont atteints de maladies contagieuses. Le lazaret reçoit aussi des passagers libres arrivant, d'Europe ou d'ailleurs, sur des navires transportant des passagers malades, ou ayant abordé des ports où une maladie contagieuse existe, comme la peste. Ceux-là ne restent que le temps de vérifier leur état réel. C'est dans cet objectif qu'a été inauguré au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle le pavillon dit d'isolement pour séparer les malades des personnes en bonne santé, et permettre à ces derniers de rentrer chez eux plus rapidement.

Ce Lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe a fait l'objet de deux types de restauration depuis 2006 sous l'égide du Conseil départemental. Le lazaret n°1 a été restauré et consolidé de manière à pouvoir accueillir tous les types de publics, des expositions permanentes ou temporaires et des prestations artistiques : son accès est gratuit. Le professeur relais, fourni par le rectorat, permet aux enseignants de développer des projets en lien avec les programmes. Le lazaret n°2 a, quant à lui, fait l'objet de fouilles archéologiques dont le contenu a été restitué dans la nouvelle réédition du catalogue, en 2017. Sa restauration, actuellement en cours, tient compte de l'évolution temporelle.

Ainsi les ruines sont justes consolidées et la végétation qui a poussé à l'intérieur stabilisée, laissant au visiteur exprimer son émotion dans ces lieux qui ont vu passer, des années 1860 aux années 1930, non seulement des engagés de toutes origines mais aussi des passagers libres mis en quarantaine.

Le lazaret de La Grande Chaloupe est donc le lieu dédié à l'Engagisme et au Souvenir des Engagés: chaque 11 novembre, date de la suspension des conventions de 1860-1861, leurs descendants, quelles que soient leur origine et leur religion célèbrent, là, la mémoire de leurs ancêtres, par des prières, des chants et des lancers de fleurs à l'océan.

Quant aux autres lazarets qui ont précédé celui-ci, ils sont actuellement l'objet de réflexions sur leur conservation et leur mise en valeur : c'est particulièrement le cas de celui de la Ravine à Jacques qui est un lieu de quarantaine depuis la période révolutionnaire.

A La Réunion, on a déjà procédé au repérage de tous les monuments et lieux religieux en lien avec l'engagisme. Ce récolement a été fait par la représentation locale du Ministère de la culture en 2007. Un certain nombre d'entre eux ont été récemment reconnus comme monuments historiques, aux côtés des grandes maisons créoles, des églises ou des mosquées. Deux d'entre eux ont obtenu, cette année, une visibilité nationale : ils ont été retenus pour bénéficier d'un financement issu du Loto du Patrimoine organisé par Stéphane Bern pour financer la restauration des monuments historiques en difficulté. Il s'agit du temple hindou des Casernes à Saint-Pierre et de celui du Gol à Saint-Louis, tous deux construits vers le milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et connus pour la beauté et l'originalité de leurs fresques murales. A aussi été retenu la chapelle catholique de style néo-gothique de la propriété de Bel-Air à Sainte-Suzanne : ce dernier fait partie d'un projet muséal, portant également sur les esclaves et les engagés de ce domaine sucrier, ayant appartenu à la famille Desbassyns et de Villèle.

Le recensement des camps et calbanons encore existant est en cours mais

beaucoup ont disparu, en particulier ceux qui n'étaient pas en pierre. Seuls des plans et quelquefois des photos informent de leur existence. Des fouilles archéologiques permettent de mieux connaître ces sites tel le camp des engagés du Gol. Certains bâtiments ont déjà été restaurés et ouverts à la visite du public : c'est le cas des calbanons de la Cafrine à Saint-Pierre. Beaucoup de ces anciens camps dépendent de sites privés et restent inaccessibles, sauf dans le cas où l'ouverture de la maison de maître et de ses dépendances au public est programmée, comme au Domaine du Grand-Hazier à Sainte-Suzanne.

**Q5. What is your vision for these sites and how can we link it with the Mauritian sites?**

Je constate une évolution de plus en plus rapide dans la volonté de la population de mieux relier les souvenirs hérités de leurs ancêtres avec la réalité historique. De plus en plus d'associations s'impliquent dans la diffusion de la connaissance de l'histoire des engagés; souvent, en prenant conscience des vies difficiles qu'ont eu la plupart d'entre eux, elles revendiquent des réparations morales et financières. Les historiens sont là pour objectiver les faits et les replacer dans leur contexte socio-historique: beaucoup reste à faire car, contrairement à Maurice, les archives sur l'engagisme sont très incomplètes et il devient très urgent de rassembler ce qui peut l'être encore. Les archives de Maurice peuvent être d'une aide précieuse car un certain nombre d'engagés sont passés par le dépôt de Port-Louis, à l'aller ou au retour, et ont alors été enregistrés. Localement, chaque lieu significatif de l'engagisme devra être identifié et faire l'objet d'une signalétique pour reconstruire le parcours de vie des engagés dans l'île.

Les liens avec les sites mauriciens de l'engagisme doivent être absolument renforcés car l'étude comparative ne peut être que fructueuse. De longues années communes attendent les chercheurs et chercheuses des îles-sœurs.

## « LA RÉUNION PERD UN HOMME D'EXCEPTION : L'ŒUVRE ET LA CARRIÈRE DU PROFESSEUR DR. MICHEL LATCHOUMANIN »

Dr Céline Ramsamy-Giancone - Historienne et Chercheuse, Université de La Réunion



Le 31 mars 2019, le professeur Michel Latchoumanin, directeur du laboratoire CIRCI (Centre international de recherches pour la construction identitaire) nous a quittés. Professeur des universités en Sciences de l'Éducation depuis 1992, docteur en psychologie, ancien doyen de la faculté

des lettres et sciences-humaines de l'Université de La Réunion, Michel Latchoumanin avait beaucoup œuvré pour la réussite des jeunes réunionnais.

Au-delà de son combat pour l'Éducation, Michel Latchoumanin s'est investi dans les recherches sur l'engagisme particulièrement avec une publication volumineuse et analytique qu'il avait édité sur ce sujet en 2014. Soucieux de mettre en valeur la diversité, il aide plusieurs chercheurs à créer l'ODI (Organisation for diaspora initiatives) en 2010, groupe de recherches dont les objectifs sont de développer les relations avec l'Inde et les pays de l'océan Indien, d'encourager et de diffuser les recherches sur l'engagisme et l'indianité réunionnaise, dans le respect des valeurs de la République. Sous son impulsion, plusieurs colloques internationaux sont organisés à l'Université de La Réunion, puis au musée Stella Matutina, avec son ami historien Prosper Eve.

Au moment de son décès, Michel Latchoumanin organisait un séminaire consacré à la question de la transition, des points communs et des divergences entre esclavage et engagisme. Cet éminent professeur avait de nombreux amis mauriciens et avait largement contribué au développement des relations entre La Réunion et les îles de l'océan Indien. En ce jour, les membres de l'ODI sont fiers d'avoir compté cet homme dont l'intelligence et l'humilité inspirent le respect et l'admiration de tous, parmi ses membres.

## LA PLANTATION DE CANNES À SUCRE, 50 ANS APRÈS L'INDÉPENDANCE

Dr Mathieu Claveyrolas

Anthropologist, Senior research fellow, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS, Paris), mathieu.claveyrolas@laposte.net

Quittant Centre-de-Flacq en direction de Quartier-Militaire, la route longe un *shopping-mall* récent et les chantiers de quelques grandes maisons en construction. Puis, à perte de vue de chaque côté de la route, la canne à sucre reprend possession du paysage. Depuis la cour du temple tamoul rénové de Manes, également connu sous le nom de Camp-Garreau d'après le camp de travailleurs auquel il était rattaché, on aperçoit la cheminée en ruine de l'ancienne usine de canne. La route traverse ensuite Bonne-Mère après le carrefour vers Queen-Victoria, deux localités-extensions d'anciens camps sur les terres de FUEL. Quelques kilomètres de canne plus loin, deux hauts poteaux de granit sombre balisent l'entrée de l'usine de FUEL. De l'autre côté de la route, un abribus emprunté par les nombreux employés. On pénètre dans la plantation par une belle route bitumée, aux bas-côtés ornés de palmiers et de bougainvillées. La cheminée crache une fumée blanche et des pinces géantes se déplacent sur un lacs de rails aériens, déchargeant les ballots de canne des camions qui, garés en file indienne, alimentent l'usine. Une fois dépassé cet îlot industriel dans l'océan vert de la canne, un rond-point permet de s'orienter dans les nombreux espaces de la plantation. Les panneaux indiquent l'usine, mais aussi le laboratoire, la centrale thermique, le garage ou les bureaux de l'agronomie. Une autre sortie fait longer le bureau de poste de Union-Flacq (l'ancien nom de FUEL), la boutique « du Chinois », et le dispensaire (avec son *kalimai*). Le camp où résident certains employés s'étend ensuite à gauche de la route: plusieurs dizaines de maisons individuelles ou jumelées – beaucoup inhabitées ou allouées aux nouveaux migrants bengladeshi –, chacune dotée d'un terrain ouvert. On reconnaît enfin le terrain de football et le temple longtemps estampillé « FUEL Mariammen kovil ».

En parcourant la plantation avec Reynolds, résident du camp de FUEL des années 1950 aux années 1970, on passe devant ses maisons successives : celle, en toit de paille et murs en *goni*, détruite par le cyclone Carol en 1960, puis celles en dur, toujours debout, dans le 'camp des travailleurs', d'abord, puis dans celui, plus confortable, réservé aux artisans. On croise l'église St-Julien, et son école qui accueillait les enfants du camp. Reynolds y lisait les Évangiles les vendredi soir, avant de



L'usine de FUEL. Photo de M. Claveyrolas.

discrètement rejoindre le *hall* du camp pour écouter un vieil homme réciter le *Ramayana*. Ses filles, elles, se souviennent des prières tamoules, lancinantes, interminables. Elles sourient aussi au souvenir des amandes décortiquées et grillées dans les cendres du feu jusqu'à devenir caramélisées et brûlantes, des doigts trempés dans les cuves de mélasse de l'usine, et du chapeau de leur grand-père, décoré des plumes de poules que les petits-enfants étaient allés chercher dans la cour.

Le processus de concentration des usines n'en a laissé que quatre à Maurice, quadrillant le territoire, une à chaque point cardinal. On ne tombe donc pas nécessairement sur une usine en marche, mais il est impossible de parcourir (ou de survoler) l'île Maurice sans être frappé par les traces omniprésentes dont la plantation de canne à sucre balise le paysage. Immenses champs de cannes parfois parsemés de pyramides de pierres dont les laboureurs les ont débarrassés. Difficile d'emprunter les routes mauriciennes sans croiser un camion transportant ces pierres recyclées telles quelles, ou pour alimenter en béton les insatiables chantiers de routes, de maisons et d'hôtels. Au milieu des champs trônent les ruines de cheminées, de moulins ou de camps. Et celui qui s'aventure au cœur des bosquets d'arbres qui émaillent les champs découvrira les temples des plantations, témoins d'un hindouisme populaire aujourd'hui en perte de vitesse. Les seuls chemins et routes qui quittent l'axe principal préviennent : « FUEL private road - no trespassing ». Il faut dire que FUEL possède 11.400 hectares

de canne-à-sucre, soit plus d'un tiers de la superficie du district de Flacq, le plus étendu de l'île Maurice.

Plantation... nul besoin de préciser : on a *planté* ici presque exclusivement de la canne à sucre. Et cette monoculture pour l'exportation, soutenue par des débouchés et des prix garantis, a longtemps phagocyté tout autre activité économique. Ce qui, au moment de l'indépendance politique, présentait les symptômes d'une *dépendance* économique assurée augurant mal de l'avenir de la jeune nation, a pourtant été magistralement déjoué par plusieurs vagues de diversification depuis 1968.

Localement, plusieurs termes sont souvent préférés à « plantation » (*plantasyon*). L'établissement (*tablisman*) est sans doute l'un des plus familiers parmi ceux qui y ont vécu. Mais on entend aussi « *lasucrierie* ». Et en effet, que serait l'histoire mauricienne sans le sucre, autant dire : sans esclavage, sans engagisme, sans peuplement, sans économie mondialisée? On désigne d'ailleurs aussi la plantation comme « propriété [sucrière] » tant toute propriété foncière est ici liée au sucre. On dira même, plus précisément, l'« usine [sucrière] », rappelant combien l'accès à la propriété des *petits planteurs* de canne, descendants d'engagés indiens depuis la fin du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, n'a pas rompu leur dépendance: ils doivent toujours envoyer leur canne se faire broyer à l'usine du grand planteur blanc. La plantation, c'est aussi parfois « le domaine », dont l'étymologie

latine nous renvoie encore à la propriété (*dominium*) et au maître (*dominus*). Enfin, et de plus en plus, la plantation, c'est l'« entreprise » - que les incessants *name re-branding* distancient de la seule activité sucrière. *Médine Sugar Estate* s'appelle désormais simplement Médine, et seule une de ses trois branches d'activité concerne l'agriculture (et pas uniquement la canne – en voie d'être abandonnée). Et FUEL (*Flacq Union Estates Limited*) a laissé sa place à ALTEO, doté d'une branche immobilière très active.

Le sucre, fil rouge de l'histoire locale, a fait de l'île Maurice une société de plantation, à l'image d'autres îles créoles de la Caraïbe, également fondées sur l'esclavage. Il n'est guère étonnant qu'il faille revenir à la plantation pour comprendre la société mauricienne quand on sait le système à la fois total et contraignant à l'extrême que représente la plantation, structure autant idéologique que socio-économique.

L'ironie au cœur de la société de plantation veut que sa raison d'être est tout entière tournée vers la métropole ou quelque autre ailleurs lointain, alors que, sur place, l'organisation sociale est fondée sur une quasi autarcie. Outre travail et logement, la plantation fournit lieux de prière et de loisirs, facilités d'éducation et de soins gratuits, ainsi qu'une boutique qui fait crédit jusqu'à la fin de mois. Cette organisation paternaliste était en partie dictée par des accords gouvernementaux en période de boom sucrier, imposant à la plantation une gestion soucieuse des employés. Indice des réels avantages pour ces derniers, les « bons partis » que les mères ont longtemps cherché pour leurs filles à marier étaient ceux possédant « un travail à la propriété ». Plus récemment, les retraités du sucre ont profité, avec le VRS, de conditions (indemnités, lopin de terre) dont rêveraient les travailleurs précaires du textile, des *call-centers* ou de l'hôtellerie.

En plus d'un territoire, immense et exclusif, la plantation est aussi un lieu de pouvoir où, selon les époques, ont alterné oppression, résistance et collaboration. Sans l'analyse du rôle des *sirdars*, maillon essentiel de cette hiérarchie, la *success-story* collective des descendants d'engagés, l'émancipation hindoue et toute l'histoire sociale et politique mauricienne, restent incompréhensibles.

La plantation, c'est aussi deux saisons qui imposent leur rythme au pays. Ne dit-on pas que la date de l'abolition de l'esclavage a été repoussée au 1<sup>er</sup> février 1835, après la récolte de la canne, pour éviter que les planteurs ne manquent de main d'œuvre ? Et que SSR a choisi la date du référendum d'indépendance (7 août 1967) une fois lancée la saison de la coupe – lorsque l'abondance de travail rendrait les votants plus optimistes ?

La plantation, c'est donc le *lieu*, au sens territorial et institutionnel, où plongent les racines de la société mauricienne, le lieu le plus partagé par toutes les communautés, le lieu fondateur de la créolité mauricienne. Pourtant, à l'exception du bel ouvrage consacré à Médine à l'occasion de son centenaire (Adi Teelock, 2011), l'histoire de la plantation mauricienne reste à faire, et les initiatives de patrimonialisation la négligent souvent. Il faut dire que la plantation mauricienne n'est pas tournée vers le passé. Devenus de grands groupes industriels et immobiliers, les ex-sucriers n'ont eu de cesse, depuis l'indépendance, d'investir tous azimuts. Ainsi le groupe Médine s'est-il lancé dans un projet de *smart-city*. Ironie de l'histoire : voué à rassembler en un seul lieu, logement, travail, éducation et loisirs, un tel projet ne va pas sans rappeler l'autarcie jadis organisée au sein de la plantation !

*Shiv Supramaniam kovil. Photo de M. Claveyrolas.*



# THE LIFE-STORY OF IMMIGRANT MOHUN: THE HUMAN AGENCY OF AN OLD IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEUR DURING THE AGE OF INDENTURE (1838-1871)<sup>1</sup>

*Satyendra Peerthum - Historian*

In 1999, in his landmark academic study entitled *"Slaves, Freedmen, and Indenture Labourers in Colonial Mauritius"*, Dr. Richard Allen, a well-known American historian of indentured labour and slavery, referred to a small group of the early Indian immigrants, who had arrived in British Mauritius between the 1830s and 1850s, as 'Old Indian Immigrant entrepreneurs' or 'Indian commercial and agricultural entrepreneurs.' These few fortunate immigrants had exploited some of the colony's economic resources, founded or brought their families, leased, bought, and sold small plots of land. They became skilled artisans, head of workshops, clerks, shopkeepers, small traders, merchants, peddlers, hawkers, sirdar, job contractors, labour overseers, small planters and cultivators with some of whom were even independent proprietors.

At the same time, these successful Indian immigrants also shared close economic and social relations with members of the colonial elite; they saved their money, had access to capital and land, and fashioned complex webs of socio-economic relations, as they adopted Mauritius as their new home, while keeping in touch and even visiting their relatives and friends in India. One of these Old Immigrant entrepreneurs was Immigrant Mohun from India who had achieved some measure of social and economic mobility like hundreds of Old Indian Immigrants between the 1840s and the early 1870s.

## Immigrant Mohun's Worker Agency and Mobility

Mohun was a Bengali Indian seasonal worker, labourer, sirdar, job contractor, entrepreneur, and small landowner and one of my ancestors (or my great grandmother's great grandfather). He was born in 1799 in the village of Bahaheea in the 24 south parganas district near Calcutta and was the son of Ramnauth, a Bengali seasonal worker. In January 1837, Immigrant Mohun (No.3284), then a 38-year old Indian contract labourer reached Port Louis and went to work on Antoinette Sugar Estate for



*Immigrant Mohun was photographed in November 1869 at the age of 70 at the Immigration Depot less than 2 years before his return to India (MGIIIA/PG & PE Series)*

Mr. Arbuthnot. He served a 5-year contract and then left the island for Calcutta in February 1842.

Between the late 1810s and early 1830s, along with his father Ramnauth, Mohun had left his native village and worked as a seasonal worker in Calcutta, Bancoorah, and Purulia districts just like millions of other Bengali and Bihari labourers. During the early 1820s, he met his future wife, Bhoynub, a Bengali, in Purulia where he settled for several years as he got married, and had 2 daughters, Audy and Bhoynubee (my great great grandmother). In 1836, he left his family to go to work on the docks of the port of Calcutta where he was engaged as an indentured labourer under a 5-year contract.

Between March 1842 and March 1847, after having spent five years in Purulia and Bahaheea, Mohun returned to work for several weeks in Calcutta. He then came back to Mauritius on

<sup>1</sup> Research for this article, which is part of a large study on the early Indian and non-Indian indentured immigrants, was carried out between June 2017 and January 2019 at the MGI Indian Immigration Archives, the Mauritius National Archives, the Registrar General's Office, through two long oral interviews, and the family papers of the Nundlall and Peerthum families.

the ship the *Defiance* as sirdar at the age of 48. By then, he was working for James Cooper, one of the Mauritius Emigration Agents in Calcutta, with 22 labourers and was allocated the number 2530 as they came under special labour contracts. Between 1846 and 1848, hundreds of Indian indentured workers were brought to work on 3-year contracts on some of the most important Mauritian sugar estates where there was an acute shortage of labour during the sugar cane crop season.

Immigrant Mohun went to work on Les Moulins Sugar Estate (near the present-day village of Goodlands) for Mr. Antoine E. Berger Dujonet as a sirdar on a 3 year contract. James Cooper noted that Mohun recruited his workers between December 1846 and January 1847 in his native village of Bahaheea and in four of the surrounding villages in the 24 south parganas in southern West Bengal on the outskirts of the city of Calcutta.

## Mohun and the other Old Immigrant Entrepreneurs

In December 1851, after having completed his contract, he bought 4 arpents of marginal and uncultivated land for 525 piastres on the outskirts of the village of Poudre d'Or from Dame Marie Aurelie Albonier. She was described as a '*creole de maurice*' and as a '*gens de couleur*' who was a small landowner in that particular area of Rivière du Rempart district. It is interesting to note that until 1848 and for a period of more than 20 years, she worked as a domestic servant for Mr. Antoine E. Berger Dujonet, the owner of Les Moulins Sugar Estate, where Mohun was employed as a sirdar.

In order to purchase this plot of land with one single payment, in October 1851, Mohun borrowed 700 piastres from Bagma (No.3356), former indentured worker from Arrah district in

Bihar and a small shop owner and cultivator in the village of Mapou. He had arrived in Mauritius in 1837 on board the same ship as Mohun. In addition, they went to work on the same estate as labourers.

They were *jahaji bhais* and after his return to Mauritius, Mohun got back in touch with his old friend. Under this obligation, Mohun paid back Bagma the money over a period of 3 years with a 5 percent interest rate which amounted to a total of 735 piastres. The remaining 175 piastres was used for the hiring of 5 Old Indian immigrants for the clearing and derocking of his land, the purchase and planting of seeds, the purchase of some agricultural tools, and the purchase of livestock. It becomes evident that within a very short period, between the late 1840s and early 1850s, Mohun started weaving a complex web of social and economic relations, such as with Immigrant Bagma and Dame Albonier, which allowed him to become a proprietor (or small landowner) and began to achieve a certain social and economic mobility.

By the early 1850s, Mohun became a job contractor and was active in recruiting workers Old Indian Immigrants for Les Moulins and Saint Antoine Sugar Estates. Furthermore, he purchased three large plots of land for a total of 38 arpents of land for 4228 piastres in December 1851, November 1860, and November 1868 in 3 different parts of Rivière du Rempart district. At the same time, between 1850 and 1863, Mohun leased a total of 16 arpents of land ranging from 3 to 7 years for 370 piastres per year. By the early 1860s, he became a small sugar cane planter and resided in Poudre d'Or village.

During the 1860s, Immigrant Autman advanced more than 1,000 piastres to Mohun for his land transactions which was repaid within 5 years at an interest rate of 5%. Autman (No.3648) was former indentured labourer from Madurai district in the Madras Presidency, South India. He arrived in Mauritius in 1835 and also worked on Antoinette Sugar Estate and knew Mohun. By the late 1850s, Autman was a small planter and a job contractor, and worked for two sugar estates.

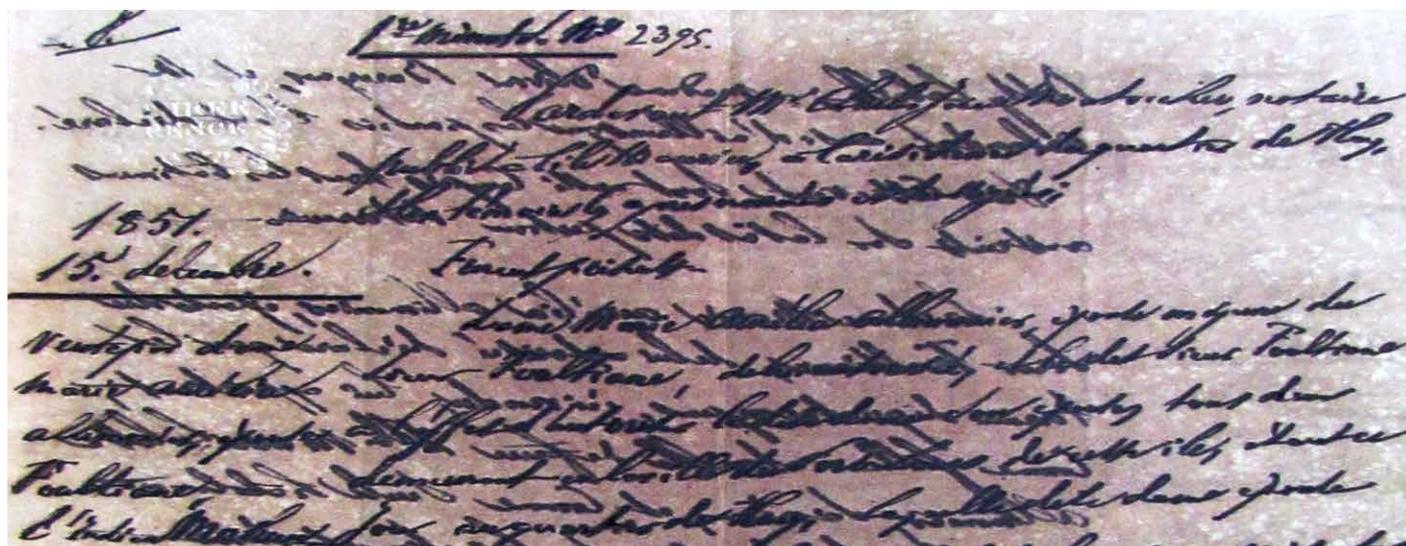


Fig 1. Immigrant Mohun's first land purchase from Dame Albonier, a well-off *gens de couleurs* lady, on 15 December 1851. (Nundloll-Peerthum Family Collection/An original copy also located in the Notarial Deeds Collection/NA at the Mauritius National Archives)

## Mohun's Return to India & Its Aftermath

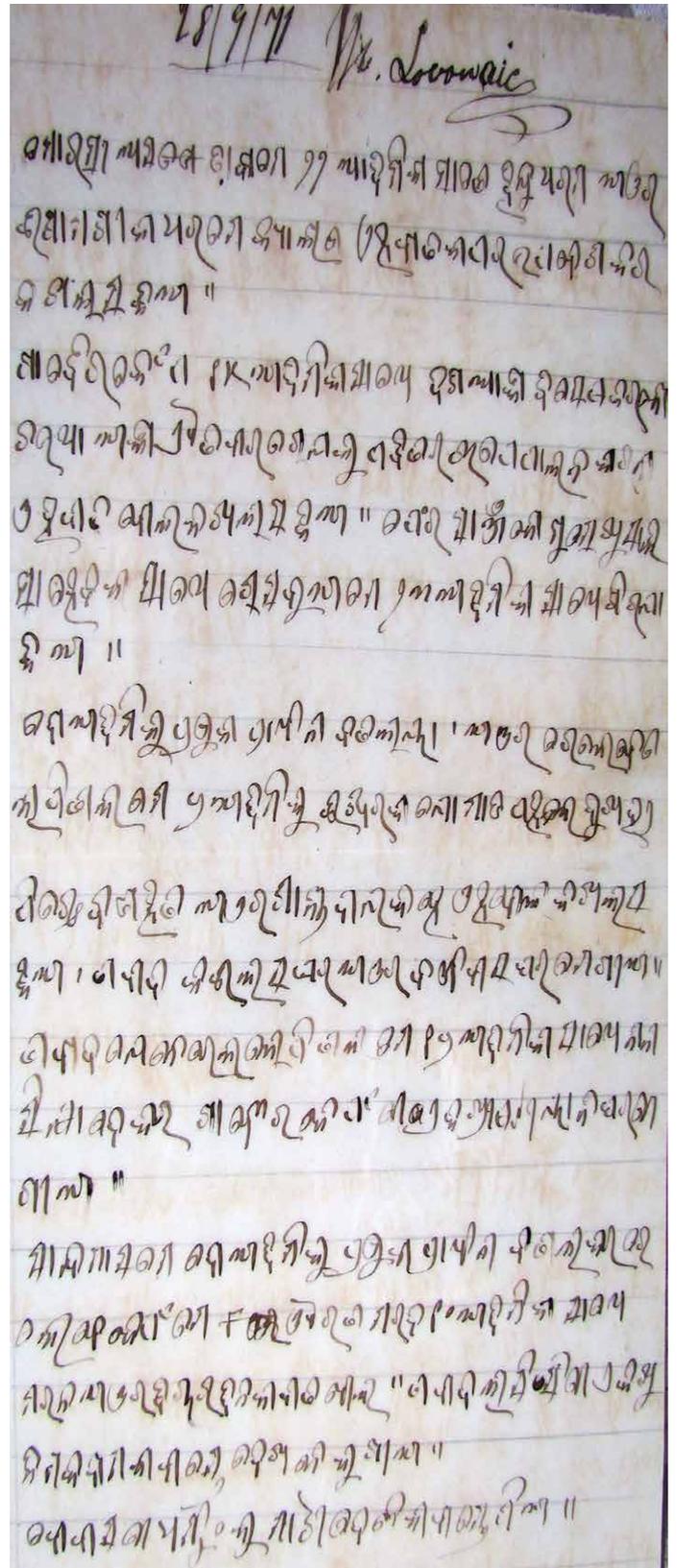
In December 1870, Mohun went to see Jean Charles Montocchio, notary who played an important role in his land purchases and land leases. He transferred his properties to his two daughters, Immigrant Bhojrubee and Immigrant Audy (who arrived in Mauritius in March 1852) and Immigrant Nundloll, a Bengali Indian (who arrived in Mauritius in December 1849). Nundloll was married to Bhojrubee and they had three children. Among the papers of Mohun, there were 61 promissory notes worth 1512 piastres from 28 individuals which by the end of 1871, or the following year, were eventually recovered by Nundloll, Bhojrubee, and Audy.

In late August 1871, Mohun who was then 72 years old, applied for a free return passage which was granted to him because he had arrived prior to 1853 and had completed two indenture contracts. On 28<sup>th</sup> September, he wrote a short farewell letter in Bengali which was intended for his two daughters, son-in-law, and two grandsons. He asked them to effectively manage his properties and to live good and productive lives and to help their fellow immigrants. The letter was corrected and proof-read by William Luconaic, a small British merchant and money-lender based in Port Louis, who knew Bengali and with whom Mohun shared a twenty-year old friendship.

Several days later, on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1871, Mohun left Mauritius on board the *Warora* for Calcutta. In 1955, Pandit Nundloll, the great grandson of Mohun and my great grandmother's elder brother, visited his son Ishwarduth Nundloll who was studying music in India. Through the Arya Samaj network, he was able to visit Bahaheea, his ancestor's village and met his distant relatives. Pandit Nundloll found out that Mohun returned to spend the rest of his days in his native village near Calcutta. His ancestor had bought three acres of land from one of the village zamindars with the money he had earned as a sirdar, small proprietor, entrepreneur, and job contractor in Mauritius. In the process, he established a small farm for himself and for the benefit of his relatives. In 1876, he passed away at the age of 77. During the 1950s, some of Mohun's Indian Bengali relatives still occupied the farm which he had bought decades earlier.

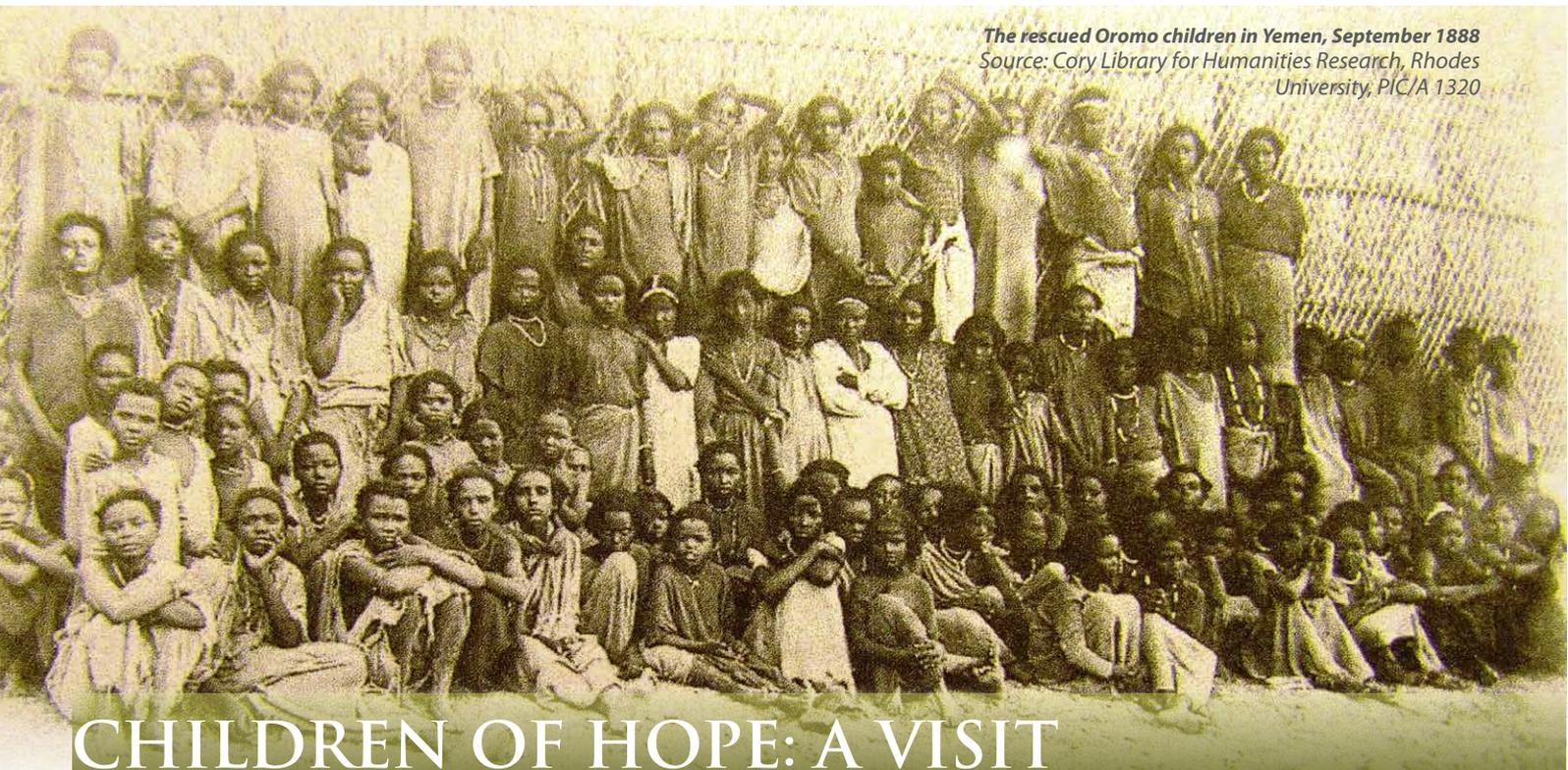
In conclusion, between 1840s and the early 1870s, the life experiences and the socio-economic mobility of Mohun, also Bagma, and Autumn, his creditors as Old Indian Immigrants, are not rare when looking at the Mauritian archival records. After all, during this decisive and early period of the Age of Indenture, there were hundreds of Old Indian Immigrants who arrived between 1826 and 1852 achieved some measure of socio-economic mobility. It is important to reconstruct the lives and economic activities of Old Immigrant commercial

and agricultural entrepreneurs like Mohun, Bagma, and Autman which allows us to understand how they were able to exploit the colony's existing economic opportunities, create and maintain social and economic relations, and climb the social and economic ladder.



Immigrant Mohun's farewell letter in Bengali. It was finalized by William Luconaic, his longtime friend. (Nundloll-Peerthum Family Collection)

*The rescued Oromo children in Yemen, September 1888*  
 Source: Cory Library for Humanities Research, Rhodes  
 University, PIC/A 1320



# CHILDREN OF HOPE: A VISIT OF LIBERATED OROMO SLAVE CHILDREN TO MAURITIUS

**Dr Sandra Shell,**

*Historian and Former Head of the African Studies Library,  
 University of Cape Town, South Africa.*

In August 1890, three ox-wagons trundled across the wooden bridge leading to Lovedale Institution in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.<sup>1</sup> The passengers spread across these three wagons were children not South African children. They were Oromo children. But who were these Oromo children and why were they in South Africa?

Today, the Oromo are the most populous group in Ethiopia, comprising 41 million, about 40% of the total population. Historically, the Oromo, an East Cushitic people with their own language, have consistently been numerically dominant but, as in previous centuries, they have been marginalised internally as a political and economic minority well into the present century. They were forbidden to speak their language Afaan Oromoo and forbidden to have their own literature, let alone their own history. The majority of Oromo today live in the present region of Oromia. However, in the late nineteenth-century, the Oromo people occupied a plurality of principalities, united in language, religion and political culture, and a collective Oromo identity.

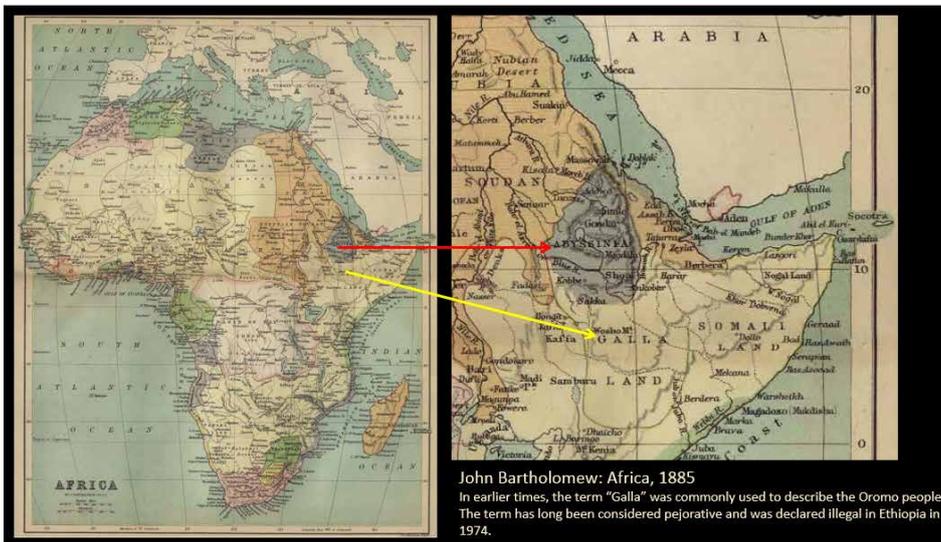
## The Oromo Slave Children

In the decades following the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, the British parliament mandated their Royal Navy to act against vessels engaged in the oceanic slave trade, with the right to search suspect vessels. In September 1888, the Royal Navy's HMS *Osprey* intercepted three dhows suspected of carrying cargoes of Oromo child slaves in the Red Sea. When the rescued Oromo slaves boarded the *Osprey*, they were automatically liberated. The ship proceeded to Aden, where the Free Church of Scotland's mission at nearby Sheikh Othman accepted some of the children (the rest were taken in by Muslim families, by other missions there, or further afield).

In August 1889, fourteen more Oromo children, similarly liberated by the Royal Navy, joined the surviving group at the Mission bringing the total up to sixty-four.

What makes this group of Oromo children particularly significant is that the missionaries at Sheikh Othman, assisted

<sup>1</sup> This article draws heavily on Sandra Rowoldt Shell, *Children of Hope: The Odyssey of the Oromo Slaves from Ethiopia to South Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018; Cape Town: UCT Press/Juta, 2019, South African paperback edition).



John Bartholomew: Africa, 1885

In earlier times, the term "Galla" was commonly used to describe the Oromo people. The term has long been considered pejorative and was declared illegal in Ethiopia in 1974.

**Focus on Abyssinia and the Oromo lands [marked by the pejorative term "Galla"] . Source: John Bartholomew, Africa, 1885**

by three Afaan Oromoo speakers, interviewed the children soon after their arrival using a structured questionnaire, asking for details of their experiences from their earliest memories to the moment they reached the Red Sea coast. These interviews resulted in sixty-four brief, but detailed and structured first-passage accounts, covering not only the journey from capture to the coast, but from cradle to the coast. The children told their interviewers their names, who their parents were, how many siblings they had, where they came from, what their family occupation was, what livestock they held, how large their properties were. They were able to say who their captors were, and who all the traders were who subsequently sold them all the way to the entrepôts on the Red Sea coast.

In the 1880s, the Oromo were entrenched in the territories to the south of the kingdom of Shewa in old Abyssinia, led by King Sahlé Mariam. In his pursuit of the imperial crown, the king needed to augment his wealth and fire-power as well as to expand his territorial domain. So he expropriated the lands of the Oromo and raided these territories for livestock and slaves. He demanded one tax for every slave passing through his kingdom and another for every slave sold within his kingdom. With the monies accrued, Menelik was able to satisfy his tactical needs and his efforts bore fruit. He was crowned Emperor Menelik II on 3 November 1889. Many of the children's narratives reflect his role in their capture and enslavement.

Concurrently with Menelik's rise to power, Ethiopia was on the cusp of the worst drought and famine in history, extending from 1887 to 1892. Crops died, food was at a premium, plagues of locusts, army worms and rats swarmed across the country and the cattle died from the rinderpest. By the time the drought eventually broke in 1892, between one-third and one-half of the human population of Ethiopia had died. The routes the children were taken from home to the coast were

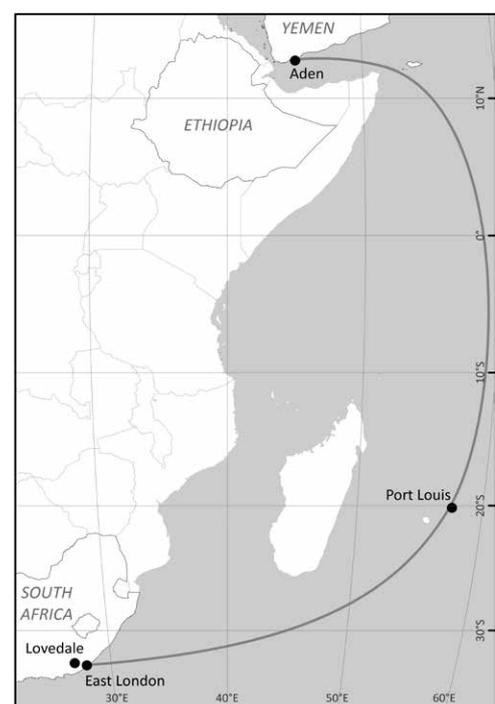
neither quick nor did they follow direct routes. Along these long and arduous routes, the children experienced multiple traumas: hunger, exhaustion and severe ill-treatment. By the time they reached the coast, the children were emaciated and many were dying.

It was soon obvious at the Mission that the children, weakened by their first passage experiences, had severely compromised immune systems and were therefore easy targets for disease, primarily malaria. The missionaries were determined to find a healthier Free Church of Scotland institution on the African continent for their care. The

answer was to send the children to Lovedale Institution in the Eastern Cape, the Church's flagship institution in southern Africa, where they would be well cared for and educated.

## Voyage to the Eastern Cape Through Mauritius

In the late nineteenth-century, the Germans were the dominant naval and mercantile presence along the Indian Ocean seaboard of Africa from Aden to the eastern Cape ports. So, with no British ships sailing directly from Aden to East London, the journey to South Africa meant a pair of sea voyages. On 24 July 1890, the Oromo children, (accompanied by Rev. Alexander Paterson and Rev. Matthew Lochhead), embarked on the French mailship *Rio Grande*, of the Messageries Maritimes.



**Sea voyage from Aden, Yemen to East London, South Africa. Source: The Author, GIS Laboratory, University of Cape Town**

They headed for Port Louis in Mauritius, where they would trans-ship to the *Conway Castle* of the British Castle Line.

Captain W. Warden, the commander of the *Conway Castle*, was deeply moved when he learned the traumatic enslavement story of his young passengers. He decided that the children were in need of a treat before departure: a visit to the circus. On the *Conway Castle's* outward voyage from East London to Mauritius, Warden had shipped the entire entourage of Fillis' Circus to Port Louis.

The circus was the brainchild of South Africa's most famous circus proprietor of the era, Frank Fillis, a proficient horseman, animal trainer and choreographer of circus spectacles. The circus performed all over southern Africa and frequently toured overseas. Prior to sailing for Mauritius, the circus performed in Grahamstown, South Africa,<sup>2</sup> with the local newspaper reporting: "The redoubtable Frank should be entirely satisfied that the Fates have led him to visit Grahamstown before leaving en route for Mauritius and India."

In Port Louis, Captain Warden and the crew of the *Conway Castle* escorted the Oromo children to the circus venue. The programme was highly varied and included burlesque, skilled artistes and four performing lions, but was predominantly equestrian. The programme also included a duo of musical clowns, Neddy Vokes and Victor Ritter as well as displays by Captain and Lillie Webb, both highly skilled rifle and pistol shottists, whose champion dog Rover was part of their act. This was the first documented light-hearted moment in their young lives since their capture and this experience will have ensured they carried away and treasured their happy memories of Port Louis and Mauritius, despite their short stay.

When the *Conway Castle* docked in East London on Wednesday, 20 August 1890, a massive crowd of curious onlookers awaited the children on the quayside. Lovedale's Reverend William Moir

was there to welcome them and accompanied them on the final leg of their journey to Lovedale where their ox-wagons finally trundled over that wooden bridge on the afternoon of 22 August 1890. Their long journey and their days of slavery were truly over. They were totally free. But, as children, they needed adults to care for them and equip them for the future through education and training till they could leave as young adults to fend for themselves.

Over the following decade, each of the Oromo, on completion of their schooling, left the Institution and dispersed, fully empowered rather than exploited. They dispersed across the whole of southern Africa, finding work of their own choice. Some, however, had saved a considerable sum from their earnings and were anxious to return home. By 1909, eight resourceful young Oromo men had taken themselves home independently.

In 1903, Lovedale distributed a questionnaire among the remaining Oromo asking them: if offered an assisted passage, would they wish to return home? Responses were evenly split among those who were definitely interested, the undecided, and those who had decided to remain. Disappointingly, Lovedale failed to follow-through, so in desperation the Oromo approached the German Consulate in Port Elizabeth for assistance. On 3 July 1909, this group sailed home aboard the German *Kronprinz*.

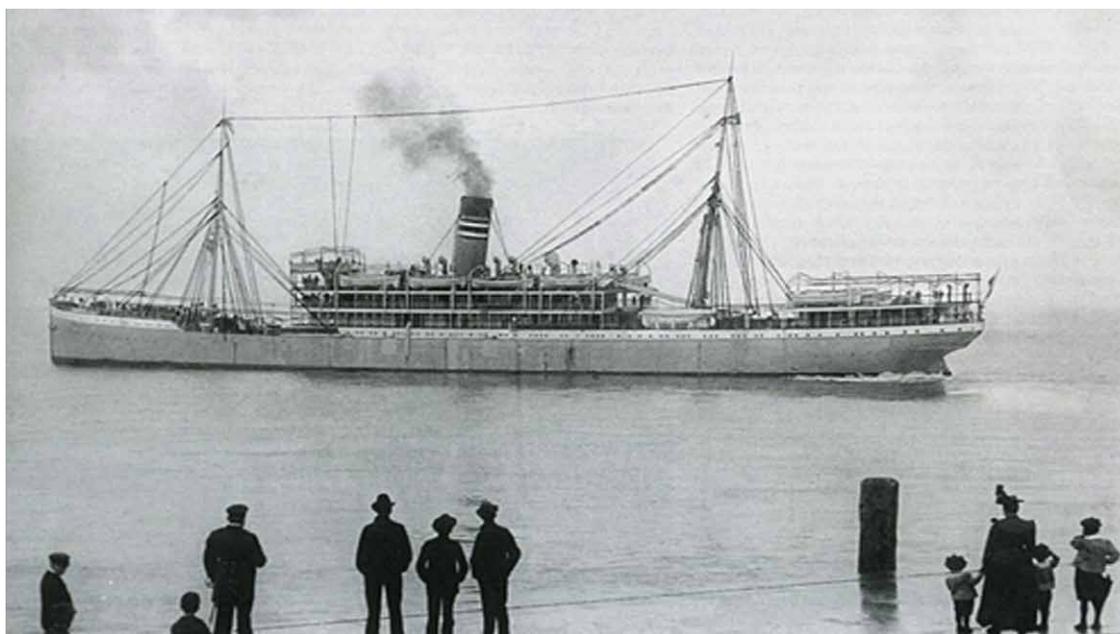
By 1909, roughly one-third of the Oromo third had died in consequence of the fierce legacy of physical trauma during their capture and enslavement, a further third had returned home and the final third had made their homes in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Renamed Makhanda in 2018.

<sup>2</sup> "Fillis's Great Circus" *Graham's Town Journal* (12 July 1890): 4.

<sup>3</sup> *The Era* (02 August 1890): 22.

<sup>4</sup> *The Era* (06 September 1890): 23.



*The Kronprinz. Source: Photographed by Witthöft, circa 1910*

# REVIEW OF CHILDREN OF HOPE

## BY DR SANDRA ROWOLDT SHELL

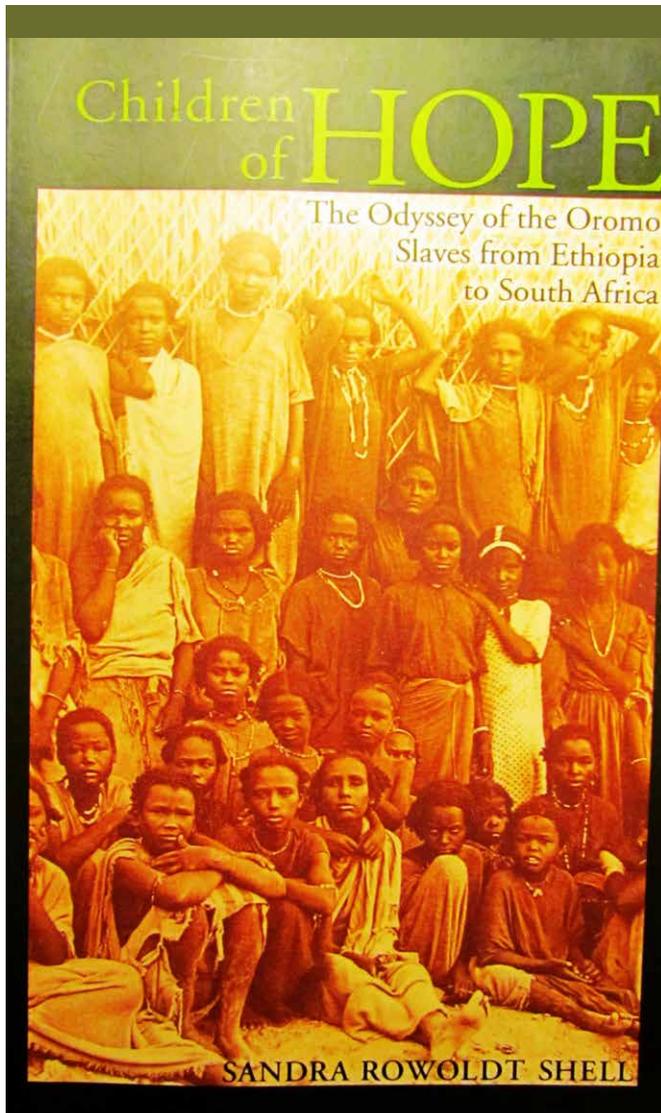
**Dr Satteeanund Peerthum,**

*Senior Historian & Ex-Ambassador and Minister*

Dr. Robert Shell, a famous South African slave historian and expert on quantitative history and demographics.

***Children of Hope*** is a real page-turner as it explores the life-stories of 64 Ethiopian Liberated Africans in South Africa between the 1870s and the early 1900s. Through the use of their recorded oral interviews, cliometrics or quantitative history, prosopography technique or life experiences of small subaltern groups, and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology, Dr. Shell keeps the reader engrossed as she analyses the sad and inhumane experiences of these young Liberated Africans from the Oromia region of southern Ethiopia. This work is truly the odyssey of these children as she describes their years of enslavement, journey to the coast, and capture by the British Royal Navy. Dr. Shell provides details on their sojourn at the mission station at Sheikh Othman in Yemen, their journey to South Africa through Mauritius, and their lives at the Lovedale Mission at the Eastern Cape. At this famous Christian mission station, they were educated, christianised, westernised, and with several among them achieving some measure of social and economic mobility.

***Children of Hope*** explores themes such as first hand narratives of Liberated Africans, the high death rate among them, the trauma of enslavement, memory, identity, and the long voyage back home, for some of them back to Oromia, Ethiopia. As a result, this landmark publication makes an original contribution to the historiography of African slavery, slave trade, and Liberated Africans. It is already a work of reference that will be used during the coming years and even decades by historians and scholars in Mauritius, South Africa, and elsewhere for their research on Liberated Africans, indentured Africans, slavery, the slave trade, South African, African and Indian Ocean social history.



Dr. Sandra Rowoldt Shell's now famous book ***Children of Hope: The Odyssey of the Oromo Slaves from Ethiopia to South Africa*** was published earlier this year by the University of Cape Town Press in South Africa. It is a well-researched and well-written publication in a vivid narrative style and which contains numerous rich illustrations. It is based on Dr. Shell's doctoral thesis at the University of Cape Town and is her magnum opus since she has been researching on this subject ever since she discovered archival papers related to the Oromo Liberated Africans in the Cory Library for Historical Research in Rhodes University in South Africa. Furthermore, I have known Sandy since 1998 and she always spoke with enthusiasm on her research work and lifelong interest in the social history of the Ethiopian Oromo Liberated Africans. She was also largely supported and inspired by her husband, the Late Professor

# INDENTURED WORKERS, IMMOBILITIES, MOBILITIES AND SPACE

*Dr Yoshina Hurgobin,*

*Assistant Professor, Kennesaw State University, USA*

Between 1825 and 1922 more than one million immigrant workers left India to labour in various fringe areas of the British Empire. Of these, the majority, more than 400,000 reached Mauritius, an Indian Ocean island off the coast of Madagascar. Indentured workers' arrival coincided with the global expansion of sugar plantations and the contraction of slave-based economies. Planters actively sought a steady supply of labour that could be tied to plantations and could enhance their production regimes. Moreover, planters and colonial governments<sup>1</sup> actively assumed that indentured workers and their families were ignorant of their destinations. It is this presupposition that shapes this paper. Here, I examine the interaction between space, mobilities and immobilities in relation to indentured workers in Mauritius. While oceans connote mobility, islands did not always imply mobility and rather suggest immobilities. For example, coolies' arrival into the island did not signify free movement. Rather the island's stringent colonial apparatus and its strict geo-physical borders limited the indentured worker's mobility at various points: the Calcutta coolie depot and the quarantine stations in various places (Pointe aux Canoniers, Flat and Gabriel islands). Thus, the case study of indentured workers' mobility through the ocean and eventual immobility in the island underline the paradoxical nature of oceanic mobility. At the same time, indentured workers' immobilities and mobilities were informed by the spaces they inhabited and their own perceptions of space. Finally, indentured workers' complex networks of information and acclimatization to new work environments led them to new mobilities.

## Early Indentured Workers' and Spatial Understanding

During the early phase of indentured labor, intending emigrants travelled long distances through large expanses of hinterland within India to the port cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. While waiting to embark for their remote destinations, recruits inhabited various spaces in the

three port cities. Because Calcutta was the most important supplier of indentured workers, it eventually saw the rise of an elaborate coolie depot. Official accounts related to the Calcutta Commission of Enquiry highlighted the imprisoning and fixating factor of such a space: "The three sides of the inner court had a running corridor, which was bounded by several cells, all having separate doors." It could be suggested that notions of mobility and immobility simultaneously coalesced at the coolie depot of Bhowanipore. Recruits had been mobile enough to reach the depot but were immobilized there, depending on which historical evidence is privileged. Because officials of the Calcutta Commission Enquiry were intent on ending indentured labour, it was obvious that the depot would be perceived as a prison. Recruits once more became physically mobile as they embarked for remote corners of the British, French and Dutch empires.

## Coolie Ship

The coolie ship has often been associated with high mortality rates, diseases and the impending spectre of death. However, the coolie ship can be approached spatially in different ways. The crew (captain, master pilot, vessels' pilot, topazes) all conceived the ship as a physical form where social and spatial hierarchies co-existed and where conflicts abounded. For example to maintain the social hierarchy and functional use of the ship, coolies were kept "down between decks." This hierarchy was broken for utilitarian and health reasons. John Dyer, master pilot explains how coolies' "place was cleaned out from once to twice a day and sprinkled with chloride." Indentured workers, at the time of questioning, had diverse responses to inhabiting the space of the "between decks." For instance, Motee Ram was taken to Mauritius by the ship "Elizabeth" and remembers that "we were put below" thus indicating his perceived lived space. Mohummud Ally's take is more definite than Ram's since he states that "we were not subject to discomfort on the ship going or coming." Nonetheless, the ship could be associated with various emotional junctures. For example, the spatial confines of the ship reminded Joomra of an emotional moment: "my father died at sea, going down." The coolie ship with its complex

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I use "colonial government" interchangeably with "colonial state."

physical, social and emotional spaces journeyed through various oceans to reach its destinations.

## Immobilities Associated with Physical Fixity, Quarantine Practices and Colonial Administrative Practices

Indentured workers encountered new climates and habitats once they landed in receiving colonies. In Mauritius, while recruits had recently experienced with the mobility of the coolie ship across the Indian Ocean, in Mauritius, they had to contend with immobilities associated with the geo-physical fixity of the island, quarantine practices and colonial administrative practices. Several diseases (namely cholera and malaria) had struck the island in the early to mid-nineteenth century thus leading to the creation of quarantine stations at Pointe aux Canoniers, Flat Island, and Gabriel Island. Often times, indentured immigrants would recover at the quarantine stations but at times they would fall sick on sugar estates. Since sugar production was central to the island's economic survival, the colonial government monitored labour fitness closely. Thus, for instance, Camiah had reached the island on

Moreover, his last employer an "Indian timber merchant" had caused difficulties regarding his papers. Unfortunately, Seetowa's petition was not granted. While the island as a bounded space became a site of immobility for the diseased, sick and injured indentured workers, it also became a prison for those who desired to return 'home.' However, it would be reductive to highlight the immobilities of indentured workers without considering the new types of mobilities that emerged after their acclimatization on the island.

## New Mobilities and Beyond

During the early phase of indentured labour, colonial accounts were informed by European notions of cartography and space. According to this principle, those who did not produce actions and movements inspired by such cartographic objectivity were unaware of their space. This is apparent in the accounts of master pilots and captains who regularly transported coolies. For instance, James Smart, a master pilot who brought coolies to Mauritius in the early phase of the indentured system claimed that "many of the Coolies have a notion that they are not going on a sea voyage; [and that it is] a river voyage." He further adds that coolies thought they were in a bumboat, tried



*Sailing ships at Port Louis harbour.  
Mauritius National Archives*

17 May 1854 but as he was nearing three years on the island on 12 May 1857, he was sent back to India because he "was labouring under leprosy" and "treatment having been of no avail." Camiah was now considered futile in a demanding labour process. Even indentured workers' filing of petitions to the Protector of Immigrants proved useless. Many indentured workers riddled with diseases sought free passages to India. For example, Seetowa described himself as "old and afflicted with a disease," and petitioned the Protector of Immigrants for a "free passage" since he was "desirous of returning to India."

to "buy gram" and tried "to lower their lotas [copper containers] on one side to get water [from the Hooghly], and finding it salt[y], they will go to the other and will lower down again, thinking to get it fresh." According to Smart's cartographic perspective, coolies were acting illogically and were highly unfamiliar with their spatial surroundings. However, it can be argued that indentured immigrants' notions of space and time would have been shaped by indigenous concepts that originated in the large land expanses of the Chota Nagpur area. Even if one were to pursue Smart's logic of workers'

'ignorance' of their destination and of the geographic location of Mauritius, they did not remain 'ignorant' for long. Soon, indentured workers grappled with a complex bureaucratic structure to exercise their choice. For example, on January 11, 1850, Dacoo, Rama, and Dhurma were "desirous of returning home without delay ... at their own expense and in a vessel of their own choice." While it may be suggested that such colonial language became standardized and did not really reflect the motivations and intent of indentured workers, it can also be contended that acclimatization to the island's space and bureaucratic conventions, enabled workers to pursue wider horizons. Dacoo's, Rama's and Dhurma's motivations could be tied to return migration and such motivations were various. The Protector of Immigrants, Thomas Hugon, skeptically demonstrated the logic of indentured workers in the following explanation of their mobilities: "immigrants on their arrival [in Mauritius] [were] certainly under the influence of comrades (...) whom they follow blindly." Hugon's words suggests that indentured workers had articulated complex information networks stretching from their places of origin in India to the different nodes of colonial plantation societies. More broadly, friendships had also enabled the mobilities of recruits to Mauritius and other colonies. These mobilities from India to Mauritius were also global. For example, by the early twentieth century, it was not uncommon for remigration to occur in a trans-colonial manner – that is from receiving to receiving colony instead of from India to the receiving colony. The Protector of Immigrants of Fiji notes in July 1907 that of 117 re-migrants to Fiji in 1906, 33 had "worked or lived previously" in Natal, South Africa; 4 in Mauritius, 3 in Rangoon, and 10 in Ceylon. This information demonstrates that 4 re-migrants to Fiji had not allowed the geographical fixity of Mauritius to bind them. Rather, they had actively new avenues that would provide them with better wages. These new mobilities of indentured workers and Old Immigrants are also linked to opportunities available within the south west and western Indian Ocean. It was common for coolies from La Réunion to seek higher wages in Mauritius or for Mauritius coolies to settle in Seychelles or in Madagascar. Even though the colonial state sought to fixate indentured workers within the confines of the island, they often found ways to emigrate to neighboring islands such as Madagascar. This came to the attention of W.H. Marsh, Assistant Colonial Secretary who entreated the Protector of Immigrants to "watch and prevent the emigration of Indian Coolies from [leaving Mauritius for] Madagascar so far as circumstances allow him to do so (...)"

Though colonial archives has emphasized workers' ignorance of their destinations, it is crucial to use the interlinkage between space, immobilities and mobilities to understand how workers perceived their space and lived experiences.

# FLAT ISLAND AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUARANTINE SYSTEM IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MAURITIUS

*Christelle Miao Foh - Research Assistant*

## Introduction

Flat island, the largest offshore islet of Mauritius located in the north was officially decreed as one of the main quarantine stations of Mauritius in February 1857, following the death of 284 indentured immigrants near its shores. Although another station located at Pointe aux Canonnières was created the same year, Flat Island became central for implementing quarantine measures to ensure better conditions to indentured immigrants suffering from contagious diseases. Thus, the quarantine scheme developed during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Mauritius is intricately linked with the indentured immigration system and the treatment and condition given to indentured labourers. This article aims to provide a general view of the implementation of the quarantine station of Flat Island as a result of the improvement of the quarantine procedures in Mauritius during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Tragedy of 1856

On January 1856, the vessel *Hydere* and the *Futtay Mombarak* arrived with more than 300 immigrants each, transporting passengers infected with cholera on board. Lengthy maritime procedures and uncertainty about the medical condition of the immigrants at the time of arrival in Port Louis had delayed in giving the ship pratique or placing the immigrants in quarantine. The final decision was to place the immigrants in quarantine at Gabriel Island, sister of Flat Island. There were no proper amenities on the islet to cater for the well-being

of the secluded immigrants. There was a shortage of water, and medical supplies, inadequate shelter and the immigrants were exposed to the hurricane season. From the time of their arrival on 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> January, the immigrants were released from quarantine only 4 months later, on 6<sup>th</sup> May, and out of the 697 immigrants who were on board the two vessels, 284 died during their stay on the islet.

This tragic event of 1856, causing the death of Indian indentured immigrants, led to the suspension of emigration by the Government of India, the same year, and triggered at the same time, the need for the reconfiguration and the amelioration of quarantine as a system in Mauritius. This situation furthermore emphasized the necessity to frame legal protective measures for the indentured immigrants during quarantine. In this context, a Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the probable causes of the epidemic outbreak of 1856. The Commission proposed a revision and a consolidation of the laws on quarantine and an assessment of the prevailing quarantine procedures to address the problems.

## Quarantine system in place 1810-1850s

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the quarantine system in British Mauritius, based on the Venetian model of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, consisted in the isolation of an arriving vessel having onboard travelers suffering, or suspected of carrying contagious disease. Under the essential core of this isolation system, vessels, passengers and indentured immigrants would mostly perform floating quarantine in the vicinity of the harbour of Port Louis or at the estuary of Grand River North West. In some cases they would be isolated on hulks as was the case for Her Majesty's Brig of war *Lily* in 1840, where smallpox was found among the *Africans* on board. They were placed in quarantine on board two hulks.<sup>1</sup> These temporary expedients were a practice that was preconized and favoured in England's quarantine system. Contrary to neighbouring European countries, in port cities such as Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Marseille where great lazarettos were built, England had preferred these temporary expedients until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from these two main types of isolation, Tonneliers Island<sup>3</sup> a small islet near the bay of Trou Fanfaron, was often used as a small quarantine station. Its close location to the harbour and the port town made it convenient for the authorities to establish a small lazaretto which had existed there since the French period. However, its closeness created much apprehension on the near-risk of propagation of diseases on the mainland. In addition, passengers or immigrants suffering from diseases (smallpox) were also landed and isolated at the Bagne,



a smallpox Hospital at Trou Fanfaron or were camped at les Salines on the leeward side of the town.<sup>4</sup> This was probably due to the small carrying capacity of the Tonneliers Island. In a Government Notice dated 21<sup>st</sup> April 1837, Benitiers Island located on the coast of Black River, was constituted a quarantine station without formally establishing it as such. During the early phase of the indentured system (1834-1842), these zones were often used for the quarantine of ships.

Although, those zones were being used in practice for quarantine, the laws on quarantine between 1810-1840s did not formally establish a quarantine station for Mauritius. Instead, zones adequate for quarantine were identified for the purpose whenever the need arose. This extract from Ordinance No.17 of 1840 shows the inadequacy of the laws on quarantine.

*“Ground in the sea side appropriated for the performance of the quarantine. With the view of insuring a rigid performance of quarantine. There shall be specially set apart and appropriated for that service a portion of land adjoining the sea side and in a situation the most convenient, upon which land building and out houses shall be erected and all other suitable provisions made for receiving as well as individuals as articles subjected to quarantine.”<sup>5</sup>*

This extract from Ordinance No. 17 of 1840 concerning the formalities to be observed on the arrival and departure of vessels and of individuals at and from the island of Mauritius, only stated that a piece of land would be used for the purpose of quarantine without being specific about the location or the premises to be used for quarantine. Without these particulars,

problems pertaining to quarantine were inevitable. At the same time, quarantine exercise of an arriving vessel was heavy and lengthy in procedures from inspection to intervention. Remissness to these quarantine laws has also been suspected to be the cause of the propagation of contagious disease in Mauritius.

The Ordinance No. 38 of 1844 on quarantine, which was in force at the time of the tragedy of 1856, did not circumscribe clearly the procedures to be followed. The Commission of Inquiry noted that the functions of the members of the Board of Health (thought to be responsible for the application of procedures for quarantine) were not well-defined neither, leading to confusion on the role of its members in decision-making and in the implementation of measures and procedures. The members of the Medical Board, the Surgeon Superintendent of Quarantine and the Chief Medical Officer were not made aware of the scope of their duties and responsibilities, although it seemed important to clearly stipulate their functions through regulations in order to prevent such catastrophe from occurring.<sup>6</sup>

## Propositions of the Commission of Inquiry

The tragedy of 1856 had shed light on the poor management of the quarantine system of vessels arriving in Mauritius and on the condition of indentured labourers while they were performing quarantine. The Ordinance No. 3 of 1857, devised after the report of Inquiry, reassessed the role of the Medical Board and the quarantine procedures by appointing two specific areas for the quarantine of passengers and vessels. The new ordinance set two quarantine stations; Flat Island and Pointe aux Canoniers quarantine stations for cholera and other diseases such as smallpox and measles, prevailing during that period.

While at the beginning, the use and conversion of Flat Island into a quarantine station was vehemently criticised by the Indian Government, it later admitted that together with the revision of the quarantine laws the Mauritian Government had invested largely in making the island more accessible and suitable for quarantine.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

The construction of proper quarantine stations both on Flat Island and at Pointe aux Canoniers had helped to organize the quarantine system in Mauritius and thenceforth prevent

the propagation of epidemic outbreaks in the country from arriving vessels. Proper amenities were constructed on both stations. As for the case of Flat Island, where immigrants had quarantined in previous years, had no proper shelter and amenities; the new station had made provisions to overcome the shortcomings. The construction of shelters for indentured labourers, deck passengers and Europeans together with amenities such as privies, kitchen and hospitals and medical comforts was required for the resumption of immigration of indentured labourers from India.

The benefits of such measures cannot be fully quantified yet as that would require an analysis of the state of health of Indian immigrants who had been treated at the quarantine station at Flat Island. However, the improvement of the quarantine procedures implemented at Flat Island would imply better conditions for the immigrants, ensuring their good health or 'fitness' before disembarkation at the immigration depot. As such, those procedures together with the improvement of the Flat Island quarantine station were of capital importance in the immigrants' recruitment system attesting to the quality of the workforce introduced in Mauritius. Flat Island was thus part of an integral system during indenture. It encapsulates a significant part of Mauritian History for its long use as a quarantine station and the memory of the indentured workers who died there.



Plan of buildings at Flat Island quarantine station. Source: MNA

- <sup>1</sup> Government Notice, Colonial Secretary Office, Port Louis, 23 June 1840.
- <sup>2</sup> McDONALD, J. C. "THE HISTORY OF QUARANTINE IN BRITAIN DURING THE 19TH CENTURY." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1951, pp. 22–44. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/44443588](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44443588).
- <sup>3</sup> Tonneliers island also known as Cooper Island was connected to Mauritius by a road known as Chaussee de Tromelin designed by the French. As early as 1770, Joseph Francois Charpentier de Cossigny, an engineer of the French East Indian Company had proposed to establish a lazaretto there for soldiers affected by smallpox.
- <sup>4</sup> BOODHOO, R. (2019) *Infectious Disease and Public Health Mauritius 1810-2010*.
- <sup>5</sup> Article 14 of ordinance 17 of 1840.
- <sup>6</sup> Report of the committee appointed by government to inquire and report upon the probable cause or causes of the recent outbreak of Cholera in the Island of Mauritius in March 185
- <sup>7</sup> Note on immigration from India by J.GEOGHEGAN ESQ. 1873.

# PLAINE VERTE: A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF INDIAN IMMIGRATION

*Dr Assad Bhuglah*

Viewing the arrival of Indian immigrants from a larger perspective, there are solid historical evidence that prove the presence of *lascars* (Indian sailors) on the island since 1735. They were brought here by Governor Mahé de Labourdonnais (1735-1747) to help in the huge task of building the harbour of Port Louis, where the basic maritime infrastructure bears their footprints.

Mahé de Labourdonnais wanted to build a new port at Port Louis. He needed skilled persons knowledgeable in maritime developments to help him in this gigantic project. As Mahé de Labourdonnais had worked for about a decade on the west coast of India before being designated Governor of Isle de France (Mauritius), he was very familiar with the skills and potentials of the *lascars* (sailors, ship-builders and port workers). He brought hundreds of *lascars* to Mauritius. They settled in the eastern suburb of Port Louis, known as Camp des Lascars, which is today's Plaine Verte. Several streets in Plaine Verte still bear the names of towns and cities of Southern India, namely Calicut, Goa, Malabar, Hyderabad, Madurai, Maharatta, Bombay, Madras, Karikal and Thrishnaputy. There are also three streets with the names of Delhi, Calcutta and Benares to testify that migrants from Northern India, mostly traders and descendants of indentured labourers, also settled in Plaine Verte.

The *lascars* originated from the south-western part of the India, which is famous for housing the first historical mosque of India in the state of Kerala, known as Cheraman Jumrah Masjid, built in the year 629 by Malik ibn Dinar. After their settlement on the island, the *lascars* would undertake a long struggle to build the first mosque of Mauritius. In 1798, the visit of Tipu Sultan's envoys triggered a 'religious' revival movement among the *lascars*. Many of them felt free to practise their faith openly. No sooner had the envoys left Mauritius, that the *lascars* sent a petition to Governor Malartic on 29 December 1798, to ask for the concession of a plot of land in Camp des



*A Yamsé procession in Port Louis. Photo courtesy of A. Bhuglah*

Lascars on which they proposed to build a mosque. Their request was turned down as a result of strong opposition from the white settlers. The *lascars* would, however, not give up their efforts and they would renew their request on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1802. It was rejected once again. But they never relented. They persevered and, finally, their consistency paid off. In 1805, Governor Decaen acceded to their request. Thus, a group of "*lascars propriétaires*" was allowed to build "*une chapelle pour l'exercice de leur culte*" in Camp des Lascars, which would become what we now know as the Al-Aqsa Mosque of Plaine Verte.

There is evidence that, during the French colonial rule, many Muslims, despite having 'lost' their cultural roots, managed to preserve in some measure their religious identity. The *lascars* used to manifest their religious identity as Muslims through the yearly celebration of *Yamsé* – a popular procession that marked the tragedy of Karbala, in present day Iraq, where Hussein (a.s), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and his companions were martyred. The term *Yamsé* could have been a deformation of Yaum-e-Ashara – the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Moharram. The appellation of "ghoon" was pejoratively tagged to *Yamsé* by the colonialists to insinuate unfairly the notion that crooks participated in the scenes of 'violence' staged by some participants. Although many of the practices and rites around the event would not fit into the mainstream of Islam, yet the *Yamsé* served as a 'platform' for the *lascar*-Muslims to keep themselves together as a religious group and thus minimize the risk of being 'assimilated' in the ways and life-style of the dominant society in the country.

While the *Yamsé* was meant to be commemorating a sad chapter in Islamic history and the procession meant to be of mourners, it, however, eventually became an annual festival of 'entertainment' for the public hosted by Muslims in the streets of Camp des Lascars and people coming in large numbers with their families dressed in their best attires to be part of a night of fun and amusement. In the beginning, *Yamsé* was observed in clandestine by the lascars because the French law forbade the practice of all religions except Catholicism on the island. When the lascars started taking the *Yamsé* procession out in the public, it met with vehement opposition from the Christian church. But it appeared that the French Government showed a tolerant attitude towards the 'festival', probably because of excellent relations that existed between France and the Prince Hyder Ali of Mysore and his son Tipu Sultan, who, in 1798, sent two envoys to Port Louis to discuss military alliance with the French governor of Isle de Frances. The Muslim lascars put on an impressive *Yamsé* procession in the honour of the envoys.

Following the conquest of Mauritius by the British in 1810, the *Yamsé* festival became a major annual event in which, apart from the traditional families of lascars, the Sepoys (Indian soldiers garrisoned at strategic spots in the island), the Cockneys (Indian boatmen and ship-repairers working at the port), freed slaves and indentured labourers (both Muslims and Hindus) participated in one way or another either as adepts or passive spectators. Even the family members of the White oligarchy and the Franco-Mauritian bourgeoisie would come to Plaine Verte to watch the procession. In a few instances, even the British Governor of the colony was invited to the *Yamsé* celebration, and, during a special ceremony, he was even given the opportunity to address the audience.

Over the years, *Yamsé* became an increasingly important annual event in Mauritius. It was a big crowd-puller and impacted directly on the socio-economic life and law and order situation of the country. Every year, *Yamsé* was impatiently awaited by the workers, who saw in the event an occasion to let the steam off after months of hard work, vent their frustration and relieve their stress. The "pass system" put in force by the colonial authorities did not allow the indentured labourers to move freely from one sugar estate to another. The *Yamsé* was, therefore, a rare opportunity for the indentured labourers to meet and socialize with their fellow migrants confined to other sugar estates.

The successive waves of newly arrived Indian indentured labourers were stationed at sugar estates located in different villages across the island. As their movement was controlled and restricted through a pass system, the rare occasions for some of them to visit Port Louis was during the *Yamsé*

celebrations, which were fervently observed by the inhabitants of Camp des Lascars. The beat of the daff echoed in remote villages like Amaury, Pointe aux Canoniers and Médine Camp des Masques where vestiges or clues of the Yaadgaar (rudimentary replica of the mausoleum of Hassan (a.s) and Hussein (a.s), martyred grandsons of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) can still be traced.

For many indentured workers, Plaine Verte became an abode of refuge and hope. The newspaper, *Le Mauricien* of 29 March 1839, reported that some 700 to 800 indentured workers from the rural areas, after having terminated their apprenticeship, were found lodging at Camp Yoloff crammed in rooms that could hardly accommodate 10 to 12 persons. The British began to fear that the *Yamsé* festival could well serve as an opportunity to motivate a migration of workers from villages to the city. Accordingly, the colonial authorities decided that it was important to control the organization of *Yamsé* celebration through Police Notices. The management of *Yamsé* became a challenging task for the British as they saw the crowd attending the event getting bigger and bigger every year. As from mid-1850s, the British started putting strict control and restrictions on the *Yamsé* festival, which, by that time, had gained tremendous popularity among the indentured workers on the sugar estates. In 1856-1857, the revolt of the Sepoys in India (also termed the "First War of Independence of India" by Indian historians) had shaken the British Empire with the risk of losing its grip in India. The British had the apprehension that the uprisings in India could have spill over effects on the Indian population in Mauritius. In fact, the arrival of indentured labourers reached its peak in 1858 and 1859 and many of the migrants came from the areas affected by the uprisings. The British therefore kept a vigilant eye on the *Yamsé* celebrations so that it would not become a platform for demonstrations by indentured workers. So much so, as from 1858, the police prohibited all processions in the public roads of villages and the main streets of Port Louis. On grounds of public security, the police restricted the *Yamsé* procession to the secondary roads, much to the inconvenience and displeasure of the Muslims. Nonetheless, *Yamsé* continued to be an important festival for several decades to come.

In Mauritius, it took an average of three generations of sacrifices and hard work for a migrant to climb the ladder of social mobility. By 1850s, quite a number of the lascar families were already property holders and some could even afford to send their children overseas for higher and professional education. Toward the end of the 1880s, there was an emergence of a Muslim elite group, as evidenced by the professional achievements of Dr. Idrice Goumany, Dr. Hassen Sakir, Dr. Piaroux and engineer Farid Dina. That was a

turning point and the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the Muslim community and the Indian diaspora, which was swelling gradually by new arrivals of Indian indentured workers among whom there was always a significant number of Muslims.

Dr. Idrice Ameer Goumany (1859-1889), who hailed from the lascar family that traced its roots in Indian seaport of Cochin in Kerala, and settled in Mauritius during the French colonial rule, serves as a bridge for the broken chapters of history about the arrival of Indian immigrants, especially the indentured labourers who arrived as from 1834 -- that is, not too long after the British took control of the island from the French. Dr. Idrice Goumany sacrificed his life while saving the lives of others, more particularly of the Indian indentured labourers, who were infected by small pox and quarantined at Pointe aux Canonniers. Indeed, there was an outbreak of epidemics of smallpox during 1888-1889. It was caused by the arrival of a ship that disembarked infected indentured labourers. The freshly arrived 'passengers' were transported by boats from

Port Louis harbour to Pointe aux Canonniers Quarantine Station for treatment. At that time, no doctors responded to the call of the colonial government to go and treat the patients at the Quarantine Station because the disease was infectious and deadly. Dr. Idrice Goumany, 30 years old and having completed his medical studies in Scotland in 1886, voluntarily agreed to take charge of the Quarantine Station. He worked with great dedication and professionalism. Unfortunately, he too caught the virus while on duty and died at the Quarantine Station "un victime du devoir" (a victim to duty), so to say. He was buried, with all the honours, in the compound of the Quarantine Station which, years later, would become the site of the present Club Med, a hotel establishment.

Plaine Verte is hardly one kilometre away from the Aapravasi Ghat. In the olden days there were scanty buildings in the city area and, therefore, one could easily view the port area from the elevated land of Camp des Lascars. Today, Plaine Verte, undeniably bears the testimony of Indian immigration.



*An old picture of Taziah, a religious procession observed by the lascars on the occasion of Yamse which also attracted participation of Hindus and Christians. Photo courtesy of the Mauritius Museum Council.*

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION AT EX-MILITARY HOSPITAL, TROU-FANFARON PORT LOUIS

**Jayshree Mungur - Medhi**

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This article summarises the archaeological research undertaken in March-July 2019 at the site of the Ex-Military Hospital in Port Louis.

Following the proclamation of the government to rehabilitate the Ex-Military Hospital to house the Intercontinental Slavery Museum, the Ministry of Arts and Culture commissioned the study of the site. The objectives were to collect data that could help to understand the historical and heritage significance of the site and to provide the basics for the feasibility study. A baseline study was thus undertaken by Stephan Karghoo, Karine Soobroydoo and the author in November-December 2018; study which helped to document the site and understand its general history but which also helped to assess further prerequisite studies.

A pool of researchers comprising of, Karine Soobroydoo, Kiran Jankee, Christelle Miao Foh, Babita Bahadoor and the author as the team leader and archaeologist, was set up to conduct a multidisciplinary study of the site to understand its present state, its evolution through time and the other historical aspects related to it. Historical research and oral history studies were conducted to document the modifications made to the Military Hospital complex from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Archaeological excavation was undertaken to assess the archaeological potential of the site and to complement historical research. Excavation and cataloguing of artefacts were undertaken with the assistance of interns from the University of Mauritius and skilled workers from Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund. The archaeological research was further intensified by a detailed architectural documentation of the buildings through photogrammetry undertaken by Dr. Diego Calaon as external consultant from the University of Ca'Foscari in Venice, Italy.

At present, the site is used as offices and stores for different public departments. Up to 2007, the site was used as Head Office for the Development Works Corporation (DWC), established in 1971, 3 years after independence, to provide work to more than 70,000 unemployed people. In consequence, the site is commonly known as Ex-DWC building. The site is also known as Ex-Military Hospital due to its use as hospital for the Military force during the British rule, and one of the wings (presently the Postal Office) was

dedicated to the care of the population hence its designation as Civil Hospital.

The site was initially conceptualized by Mahé de Labourdonnais, the first French governor who settled on the island permanently. His name is to date still associated with the building sometimes referred to as "Ex-Labourdonnais hospital". The earliest construction which started in 1736 was completed by 1742. Three wings A, B and C (Figure 1) appear to be completed by 1750s with two of the blocks, A and B, being used as hospital and one of them, C as store. Later in 1785, another wing, D was added to cater specifically for the care of the enslaved population. However, historical records show that all the wings dedicated to hospital, were used for the sick of different groups of the society regardless of their origin or occupation. It appears that the hospital was conceived as a place open to different categories of people including the upper class, sailors, skilled workers and enslaved people.

While its principal use as a hospital remained more or less the same in the French and the British period, the buildings had undergone some modifications. Major modification in its use was made after independence when it became offices for the Development Works Corporation.

The objective of the archaeological excavation was to complement the understanding of the chronology of construction and determine the use of the different parts of the building and estimate the archaeological potential of the space. The archaeological intervention consisted of the excavation of 4 test trenches labelled as Tr A, Tr B, Tr C and Tr D in 4 different areas of the site as shown in the plan below. The location of the trenches was chosen based on careful site survey and study of historical maps of the site. According to archival maps of the French period, Wing A was connected to the Wing D (presently the postal office) through a yard. At present a boundary wall stands there and a road divides these two wings. The chronology of the construction of the wall; its type of construction and what survived of the yard could be inferred based on the findings in this trench. Trench B was excavated in the interior courtyard, presently enclosed by structures and walls. The only open space is from the top where remains of iron trusses indicate the existence of a roof in the past. However, looking at the facades, it was clear

that the original doors and windows opening of this space were sealed at different points of time. Not much historical information was obtained for this area, which directed the choice for excavating this trench. Trench C was excavated along the fencing near the entrance gate of the site; as historically the existence of a boundary wall built of basalt and mortar is indicated. The trench was taken to assess any possible remains of the boundary wall. A small test trench, Tr D, was excavated in the central yard of the site to verify the deposit and correlate potential data with other parts of the site.



**Aerial view of site of the Ex-Military Hospital and its surroundings**

The excavation of the 4 trenches revealed important information for the interpretation of the site and successively for the understanding of the region. This site has preserved an undisturbed stratigraphy; as a result, much of the data are *in situ*.

Archaeological excavation has demonstrated that the site was continuously used since the earliest occupation of this area of Port Louis, even before the edifices were built. It revealed that the Ex-Military Hospital was built on the remains of fossilized sand deposits. Geologically, formed millions of years ago the fossilized sand deposits were impelled to above sea level due to seismic activities. This calcareous deposit formed the bedrock of this part of Port Louis. To provide space for the construction of the hospital, this natural deposit which appeared as cliffs, was flattened creating an even surface.

Further, the calcareous deposit queried from this area commonly known as sandstones were used to build the structures. It is most probable that all the sandstones used in the construction of the buildings came from this specific area. In some places, most probably in the court yard as demonstrated clearly in Trench D, the site was flattened and the calcareous bedrock was polished with lime wash to create a flooring.

Where the cultural layers were left untouched, much can be deduced in relation to the chorological and chronological data. The artefacts recovered from the excavation including ceramics, kaolin pipes, iron works, bricks and others further

help to establish the chronology. The large quantity of kaolin pipes and faunal remains retrieved from Trench A, is associated to the French period and provide an insight into the everyday life and the dietary habits of people using and working on site. Thus, archaeological study of the site does not only add up to the understanding of the evolution and use of the structures and space; but the material culture can help to understand the daily life of people on this site.

Being one of the most ancient sites left undisturbed in Port Louis, it has the potential to help in the understanding of the history of settlement of the city. Archaeological data from this site can be correlated with other archaeological sites in Port Louis, for example the Aapravasi Ghat, to help in the interpretation of the early history of this part of Port Louis. Moreover, as early cultural deposits are undisturbed, the artefacts recovered from those layers can be used to establish a catalogue of artefacts in Mauritius. It can thus be correlated with the other archaeological sites in Mauritius to elaborate a chronology of artefacts such as ceramics and kaolin pipes.

Hence, the archaeological investigation at the Ex-Military Hospital site reveals potential evidences and should continue.



**Excavation at Trench B. (Photo courtesy: J.Mungur-Medhi)**



**Sieving materials excavated from Trench A (Photo courtesy: J. Mungur-Medhi)**

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# MAURITIAN ARCHITECTURE: THE COLONIAL ERA AND MODERN DAY. CO-EXISTENCE OR ANTAGONISM?

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In its 421 years of civilised history, Mauritius has known three different colonisation periods since the Dutch's early settlement in 1638. It remains one of the very rare islands to have been governed back-to-back by three different monarchies. Among the three European colonial eras, the most considerable development occurred under the French then the British rule. Both colonial powers brought architectural know-how from other colonies and the motherland, developing the island's landscape and making the first urban developments. Years later, we find ourselves at a crossroad between three schools of thoughts about the 'Mauritian Architecture' or 'Mauritian Style' – The first one believes it never really became peculiar to Mauritius but remained a foreign colonial model that both empires replicated all over the world. The second supports that it can be considered as the first form of the Mauritian Architecture since, even though it was a model, both the French and the British have bespoke and tailored it to the island's tropical climate, therefore making it unique to the island. Typologies became less intransigent and evolved adaptively to the context, resulting in some Architectural gems like the *Verdun house*, a 'popular dwelling' in Beau-Bassin. However, with globalisation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, other architectural models – the most notable being the Modern Movement – hit the island slowly with an embrace of minimalism and created a new wave of cost-effective and long-lasting development that slowly began to dominate our streetscapes, rejecting ornamentation from the sophisticated colonial era. This has led to the birth of a third school of thought. As a result, in more recent years, Modern Architecture has finally settled itself as the most prevalent Architecture across the island nearly a century after its emergence in the western world. Subsequently, we can now ask ourselves if it will leave room for the remaining traditional colonial architectural heritage or swallow it in the process.

Architecture, being restless, is ever-evolving and influences everything it rubs shoulders with. A powerful 'combination of science and art' that can for instance, impact on individuals,

cultures or even the economy of a nation. Specifically as it allies itself with technology, it can sometimes be regarded as a powerful threat. As a matter of fact, conservationists resent drastic changes in architecture as it creates a tension between contemporary and historical buildings that goes back generations. They advocate for lengthening the lives of buildings from the past, through thoroughly planned strategies in order to preserve their historical and cultural importance. On the other hand, avant-gardist architects leave scope for technological and architectural change and progress, that tend to give more importance to the present and future.



*New Government Complex, 1970*

In the middle of this feud between old and new, stands the concept of 'Architecture of additions' whereby contemporary buildings are designed and built to co-exist with existing buildings (Byard, 2005). Combining two completely different styles of architecture is often perceived as controversial as there is a 50-50 chance that the illegitimate combination does not work out as imagined, leading to the new one overpowering the old one's historical importance or spirit. For instance, the New Government Complex, a brutalist architecture designed by Frey & Frey, was an extension to the old Government House of Mauritius, one of the oldest buildings in Port Louis that dates back to the early French period. As a result, we are left with a clash of architectural contrast dominated by the brutalist building.

Nonetheless, the other side of the coin can instead result in the revival of the old Architecture without destroying its essence. As an illustration, the City of Fashion and Design (Paris), designed by local firm Jakob + MacFarlane, was built within old general stores on the banks of the Seine River. The bright-green structure has now transformed the indiscernible site into a masterpiece of architectural contrast. Other examples like the Louvre Pyramid by I. M. Pei which at first was perceived as 'blasphemous' has now been accepted as a sensational addition that gives more relevancy to an old museum in the modern world.



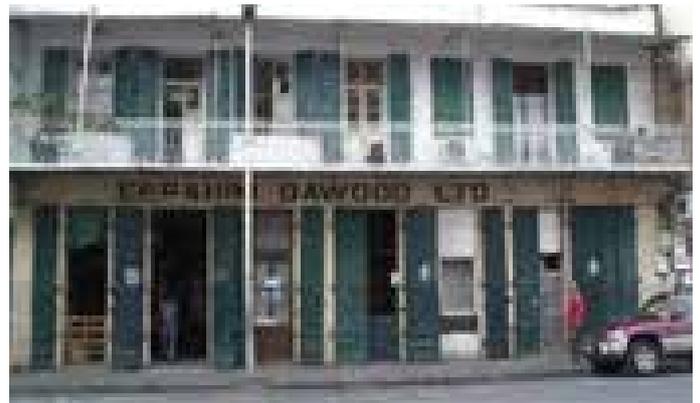
*The City of Fashion & Design (Paris), 2012*



*Louvre Pyramid, 1989*

Furthermore, architecture from those two eras interact mostly with each other in the major towns and in the Capital. But unlike the remaining 'châteaux' around the island, that have been passed down to colonizers' wealthy descendants for generations, the historical buildings that now remain in Port Louis house primarily businesses, governmental organisations and a few individuals. Building types such as the 'popular dwelling' (or Case Creole) which were mostly owned by the general population, have almost completely disappeared and the main reason is the cost of maintenance, which remains very high to undertake on historical buildings. When their wealth and status increased in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, non-Europeans inhabitants chose to go for more durable and cost-effective buildings that led to the prominent usage of concrete. At that time, there was also the wave of trends and the urge to copy what was being done in Europe; 'concrete = Europe = rich = new = better'. Slowly, streetscapes lost their uniqueness to miles of concrete. In the last three decades,

20% of the 'historical Port Louis' have been demolished and replaced by contemporary buildings. Some owners find it more profitable to pull down their old creaking and flimsy properties, replacing them with hassle-free new concrete ones by spending much less money on restorations or renovations. For example, the Ebrahim Dawood Ltd building which was located in Louis Pasteur Street was pulled down some years ago and was replaced by a four storey concrete building. A harsh contrast to the Joonas & Co building which is also a building protected under the guidelines governing Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone. The cost of rehabilitation is one of the reasons that creates antagonism between colonial and contemporary architecture.



*Ebrahim Dawood Ltd, 1850*



*Joonas & Co, 1850*



*New 4 storey building*

Due to legal obligation, protected zone limitations or personal appreciation of the initial glory that old structure liberates, some owners invest in their building to maintain the essence of the colonial era. Usually requiring a considerable investment, these owners choose to go for restoration and renovation using modern day techniques and materials as substitute to historical ones that are unavailable geographically or too expensive to acquire. The “Metric Building” is a perfect example along with the edifices in the banking vicinity on the Duke of Edinburg Street (next to Place d’Armes). Redesigning the interiors creates a perfect balance between the old and the new while preserving the priceless historical values and appearances. Countries like France, Italy and the United Kingdom can be cited as models where the new and old co-exist in harmony. A passer-by will appreciate the beauty of the historical streetscapes yet stepping inside would feel like they went through a time-space continuum where modernity blends perfectly as compared to the contrast when modern edifices and colonial buildings are side by side.



**Metric Building (Post restoration)**

To conclude, it is fair to say that a country's identity resides primarily in its history and cultural heritage. The 'Mauritian Style or Architecture' is a rather broad term that is characterised by its versatility and adaptability over each period of its history. Unlike the civilisations cited previously, Mauritius is orphaned of an actual organisation that advocates the protection and conservation of its Architectural heritage. However, there is the Planning Policy Guidance, but its scope protects buildings found only in the Core and Buffer Zone around the World Heritage Site. In addition, the country lacks architects specialised in heritage conservation. Hence, preservation works are often assigned to consultants – architects, engineers, and so on – whose expertise do not extend to the preservation of historical buildings and monuments. In order to find the

perfect balance between architecture from the colonial era and that of modern day, we should bridge the gap by setting up specialised organisations and encourage our architects to specialise in heritage conservation. It will take time but by educating and communicating on the importance of our heritage, which bears our identity, we shall aspire to achieve an ideal stability between both extremes.

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# THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF CURRENCY MAURITIUS - ISSUER OF CURRENCY FROM 1849 TO 1967

**Ghirish Bissoon** - Museum Officer  
The Bank of Mauritius Museum

Between 1834 and 1924, more than 450 000 indentured labourers embarked from the ports of Calcutta, Mumbai and Madras for Mauritius. Their primary motivation was to flee famine, plague, unemployment, poverty and to embrace pull factors such as remuneration and better life.

Labourers were recruited under a five-year contract. They earned Rs.5/a month, two pounds of rice, half a pound of 'dhal', two ounces of coconut oil, two ounces of mustard oil and salted fish.

At first, several sugar estates had recourse to a geographically localized money called domain currency to pay Indian Immigrants. The objective of such particular currency was to ensure that it would be used solely within the boundaries of a particular estate and nowhere else.

Later on, under Ordinance No 6 of August 1849, the British Imperial Government established the Board of Commissioners of Currency and Mauritius became the first country in the world to have such a Board. The setting up of a Board aimed at ridding the economy of multiple competing currencies whilst providing complete and absolute guarantee of convertibility into Pound Sterling at a stable rate of exchange.

The Board of the Commissioners of Currency was empowered to issue Rs10 and Rs5 notes. The first notes were issued on 1 September 1849 following a covenant with the Mauritius Commercial Bank on the transfer of monetary operations to the Board of Commissioners of Currency. The notes bore the following inscription: "We promise to pay the Bearer on demand in Gold or Silver Coin of the Value of Five Rupees of the East India Company's present Coinage Value received."

On 12 August 1876, an Order in Council prescribed the Indian Rupee as the sole monetary standard of the island as from 1 January 1877. The first notes in Rupee denomination were printed by Thomas de La Rue. In the same year, the Royal mint struck silver coins of 20 cents and 10 cents as well as copper

pieces of 5, 2 and 1 cents. The notes issued by the Board were legal tender and redeemable on demand in Indian silver rupee coins. As such, they were more valuable than the domain currency which was usually in tin and aluminium.

From then on, and until the establishment of the Bank of Mauritius in 1967, the Board of the Commissioners of Currency was responsible for the management and issuance of the currency of Mauritius.

The notes and coins are on permanent exhibition at The Bank of Mauritius Museum, which started in 2017 with the support of The Mauritius Commercial Bank Group Ltd, The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Thomas de La Rue and The Royal Mint.



**Five Rupee - Currency Commissioners of Mauritius 1849**  
(Source: The Bank of Mauritius Museum/MCB Group Ltd)



**The Government of Mauritius - Five Rupees 1896**  
(Source: The Bank of Mauritius Museum/MCB Group Ltd)

# 'HABITS OF INDUSTRY, TEMPERANCE AND ECONOMY': EMIGRATION, INDENTURE AND THE MAURITIUS SAVINGS BANK, 1837-62

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The first savings bank in Mauritius opened in Port Louis on 1 May 1837. Part and parcel of the colonial government, its aims, the new president stated, were 'to create provident habits amongst the lower classes of society ... [and] introduce habits of industry, temperance and economy ...

among the labouring classes'. In that respect it was a close copy of the many other savings banks created in Britain and elsewhere since 1810, the first modern microfinance institutions in the world, which aimed to encourage respectability and improvement among the labouring classes. Indeed, the president boasted that it 'promises to be attended by the same successful results as have been produced in other parts of the world in which similar institutions exist'. Yet it was also specific to the situation of Mauritius, in particular the large groups of ex-slaves still bound to planters as 'apprentices' until 1839, and also the growing numbers of Indian indentured labourers stepping ashore at the Aapravasi Ghat in Port Louis to replace them in the sugar cane fields of the island.

Although the planters and merchants were most interested in exploiting both groups for their labour on the plantations, the imperial government was still quite strongly influenced by the humanitarian ideals which had abolished slavery in the British Empire in 1834, and which would suspend the immigration of Indian indentured labourers between 1838 and 1842 until various abuses were addressed. Alongside measures such as creating the post of Protectors of Emigrants in the three embarkation depots in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to manage the process of emigration, and the appointment of stipendiary magistrates in the rural districts of Mauritius as impartial arbiters between planters and labourers, and even the creation of the Aapravasi Ghat or Immigration Depot itself in 1834, the savings bank was an imperial measure that aimed to protect and support the labourers in the island. As the

rapid growth of microfinance in the modern world has shown, access to small loans and saving facilities is crucial for enabling people to support themselves and to begin to address social and economic inequalities. In Mauritius from 1837 to 1862, the new savings bank played a similar role for large numbers of Indian immigrants, and laid the foundations for the incorporation of this group into the society and economy.

Statistics presented in regular reports by the presidents of the savings bank show that it grew rapidly, especially after 1850, rising from nothing to 1,294 depositors in 1840, at least 2,037 by 1850, and 5,041 by 1860. This was equivalent to between 5 and 10 per cent of the total population of Mauritius. Most of the depositors were drawn from the white population of the island, including the local planters and merchants, the soldiers of the garrison and their wives, and their children, as a result of their parents 'availing themselves', the president explained in 1848, 'of this means of depositing for their own use a larger sum than that allowed by the regulations'. Numerous servants and artisans also used the bank, and so did former slaves, but their numbers dropped rapidly after 1840 as they withdrew their savings to invest in small plots of land or other enterprises across the island. The reports commented on the 'striking difference' with Indian labourers, whose numbers expanded rapidly, and who consistently made up between 20 and 25 per cent of depositors. A survey in 1853 found that Indian labourers had an average deposit of £18.0 compared to £8.1 for creole labourers, about the same as the artisans, mechanics and servants working in Port Louis, and amounting to about 20 per cent of total deposits. Another survey in 1853 found that £4,575 or nearly 40 per cent of the £12,524 withdrawn from the bank in 1852 was taken out by indentured labourers who were returning to India.

By 1854 the savings bank was therefore growing in size quickly, to the extent that it doubled its hours of business and hired additional staff, but the colonial government worried that it was still failing to reach those it was intended for. There were about 700 Indian depositors in December 1853, a quarter of

STATEMENT of the Number of Open Accounts in the Government Savings' Bank on the 31st of December of each Year From 1838 to 1852.												
YEARS.	CLASSES OF DEPOSITORS.									TOTAL.	Amount due to Depositors, including interest.	REMARKS.
	Mauritian.	Indian.	Artizans and Mechanics.	Servants.	Soldiers and their wives.	Children.	Public Servants.	Societies.	Miscellaneous.			
1838	213	12	18	75	98	107	13	1	41	578	£ 5984 17 10	<p>Of the amount due to the Depositors on the 31st of December 1852, there has been deposited in the Treasury..... £ 53446 1 11</p> <p>The Interest for 1852 falling due on that day, amounted to..... 2548 1 5</p> <p>And the deficit through the defalcation of Mess<sup>rs</sup> Werner and Madge amounted to..... 1828 1 11</p> <p>TOTAL..... £ 57824 3 6</p>
1839	215	84	32	122	133	181	24	2	72	865	9904 10 11	
1840	226	202	58	199	199	239	32	2	137	1294	15248 7 3	
1841	71	413	64	290	146	237	25	6	241	1493	26658 15 8	
1842	98	511	76	240	161	287	32	4	305	1714	32779 14 9	
1843	75	544	54	212	150	313	36	3	265	1652	33063 17 5	
1844	70	405	41	197	156	380	47	4	153	1453	32290 10 5	
1845	77	480	44	348	199	443	57	4	151	1803	36408 1 1	
1846	69	586	47	253	194	424	44	5	222	1844	38581 3 3	
1847	70	690	23	255	71	426	49	3	255	1742	37873 11 10	
1848	78	355	43	276	97	394	74	3	223	1543	35263 12 10	
1849	86	392	48	267	138	449	87	5	295	1767	38921 9 11	
1850	75	419	54	309	152	499	112	9	408	2087	50623 2 3	
1851	72	447	69	319	114	519	105	11	487	2143	54990 9 13	
1852	64	487	139	341	126	556	126	10	444	2293	57824 3 6	

An example of the Statement of the Government Savings' Bank Account. Source: MNA

the total, but the president of the bank pointed out 'how small the number is compared with the population now belonging to this class'. Part of the problem may have been a lack of knowledge. Several surveys by the colonial government in 1840 found that many labourers were unaware of the bank, and were either hoarding their money or depositing with the planter or sirdar (overseer) of the plantation, at considerable risk. The other part of the problem was financial. The indentured labourers insisted on being paid in rupee coins, which they could then send back or take with them when they returned home, but whereas one rupee was generally considered to be worth 2s in the market, the government insisted that they were only worth 1s 10d. Since the accounts of the savings bank were kept in pounds sterling, this meant that labourers depositing 100 rupees in the bank, for example, which was worth £10 on the open market, would only receive credit in the bank for £9 3s 4d, a loss of more than nine per cent. The labourers were well aware of this problem, and were reluctant to deposit funds in the bank as a result. 'The great obstacle ... to the development of the operations of the bank ... is the valuation of the rupee fixed by the government', remarked the president in 1847, and added that 'almost daily Indians and others bring rupees, and take them away with them on learning the consequence of depositing them'.

The only real solution to this was to bring the values of the coins into alignment, a solution the imperial government only permitted in 1876, but in the meantime the colonial government made various efforts to promote the bank in other ways. In 1838 the magistrates overseeing indentured labourers were advised 'to take every opportunity which may occur ... to impress upon the Indians the expediency of depositing their money in the savings bank'. In 1854 an ordinance was passed allowing the bank to open branches in rural districts, to make it easier for labourers to deposit money, and these branches were put under the direct supervision of the stipendiary magistrates there, 'whose position affords

them great opportunities for encouraging the labouring classes, especially the Indian immigrants, to avail themselves of the institution'. In 1857 the president announced the creation of an advertisement for the bank, 'drawn up in language adapted to the capacity of the Indian labourers ... [in] Tamul and Hindosstane' [sic], to be sent to the depots at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to inform the

emigrants embarking for Mauritius.

As a result, in 1862 the governor of Mauritius was able to report that the savings bank was in good health and making a real difference to the lives of the indentured labourers in the island. It held £140,000 for about 5,700 depositors, around 20 per cent of them Indian labourers, and he stated that it 'is gradually making way in the estimation of the Indians and superseding amongst them their savage custom of secreting their hoardings in holes under the floor of their houses'. They were thus building up the savings that would allow them to take advantage of the approaching crash in sugar prices in the 1870s and the 'grand morcellement' that divided up the sugar estates into small holdings that labourers could buy up as their term expired. Gradually the economic monopoly of the planters and merchants was weakened, and the indentured labourers who chose to remain in the island were incorporated into its economy and society, fundamentally reshaping the nature of both.

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# TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF GOVERNOR HIGGINSON'S INDIAN EDUCATION IN MAURITIUS

*Anand Moheeputh - Historian & Writer*

It was during the administration of Mauritius by Sir James Macaulay Higginson (1851-1857) that the first serious attempt to make education accessible to children of Indian immigrants began. The Imperial Government then had no definite education policy for its colonies. Mass education did not figure yet on its agenda, nor did the British consider it was government's duty to promote it. Whatever education system was put in place varied from one colony to another and adapted with a certain degree of elasticity to meet prevailing local conditions. As W.E.F. Ward, a top official at the Colonial Office and appointed Director of Education in Mauritius in the 1940s, wrote, "Each colony was unique and there was no magical formula that applied to all".

In the case of Mauritius, Lord Grey, the Secretary of State for the Colonies sanctioned an amount of £200 in 1852 for the instruction and "moral and social" uplift of immigrants' children.

Governor Higginson, having served in India, lost no time to embark upon a scheme that would help Indians get out of the rut of ignorance and delinquency. Education, it was hoped, would in a great measure tackle lawlessness and crime that had become rampant, particularly, among Indian immigrants in the Colony.

Higginson's motive was clearly spelt out in the Council of Government in 1854 when he harped on the essence of education, stating that it was "the best prevention of crime and the surest guarantee of social order".

Sensible to the cause of the Indian immigrants whom he praised for their "loyalty and pacific disposition", Higginson in 1854 circulated a draft Minute in which he put forth details of his Indian education project. The new elementary school that would be established in Port Louis, after the failure of the Savanne experiment, and extended to other parts of the island was to be opened exclusively for the admission of Indian boys and girls. The medium of instruction would be the English and Tamil languages. The Reverend Hardy who came

from South India was to assist in getting the project floated. Higginson's plan also included the opening of a "Normal School" that would train teachers.

The Governor's Minute was subsequently sent in 1854 for review to a "Special Education Committee" of the Council of Government.

When the Committee's report arrived a year later, one of the Governor's proposals, namely, that the school was to be devoted to Indian children was not favoured. The Committee noted that the separation of Indian and Creole children would "tend to foster the exclusive habits of the former and perpetuate divisions between the races and prevent the fusion of the immigrant population into the mass of inhabitants".

While supporting Higginson's decision of making elementary education compulsory, the Special Committee suggested the participation in the project of sugar estates. It was argued, that estate managers as recruiters of Indian labour had the responsibility for taking care of the schooling of their employees' children.

At first, Higginson believed his project attracted as much support as expected from the population. However, the first major obstacle that confronted him was the thorny issue of language that was to be the medium of instruction.

To the suggestion that the French language ought to be used, Sir James Higginson was not keen. But he still wanted to have the ruling of Henry Labouchere, the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1855-1858). The latter stated that the French language was the most appropriate medium because "it was spoken by the great majority of the tax-paying classes of the colony" and that English was to be taught as a secondary language.

Labouchere's recommendation was, nonetheless, taken on board by the Governor who passed Ordinance No 21 of 1857 in the Council of Government after the Officer commanding the

troops supported by Gabriel Froppier and Hippolyte Lemière, members of the Legislature, expressed their opposition to the Governor's education scheme. They argued that emphasis be laid for the establishment of "Schools of industry" that would cater for the teaching of technical, agricultural and trade occupations rather than the traditional three R's so that young people could better be equipped to perform as skilled workers.

Nonetheless, Ordinance 21 made elementary education compulsory for boys between the ages of six and twelve and girls between the ages of six and ten. The monthly school fee for a child was six pence and courses were to be conducted for three hours in a day. By making parents pay a fee, Higginson said he wanted them to appreciate the value of education. Parents keeping children away from schools were liable to a fine of £5 for a child or imprisonment if absences were recurrent.

But before the Indian school could take off, still further protests began to be raised. The Catholic Bishop of Port Louis, Allen Collier, who at the outset found nothing wrong with the project, began complaining about Anglican interferences in matters of education.

He joined the chorus of "proprietors and planters" in sending a petition dated 7 August 1857 to the Secretary of State stating that though they were not against compulsory education, they feared that "by connecting education with coercion, the law will connect it in the mind of the population with slavery".

Furthermore, the petitioners expressed concern about the Catholic population being exposed to a "danger".

That "danger", according to them, appeared in the form of a gradual proselytism threatening Mauritian society. "Passing events in India", they wrote had exposed "the danger of proselytism among the Indians".

The growing influence of Anglican priests, the more so, since the Governor had given a free hand to Reverend Hardy to conduct at his own free will religious courses in government schools, was bitterly resented by the Catholic Church.

Besides, it was no secret in Mauritius that Governor Higginson was impressed by the Reverend James Chapman, the Protestant Bishop of Colombo, who during a visit to Mauritius earlier had stayed as guest of Governor George Anderson at Le Réduit and had expressed the wish to see the number of Protestant clergymen increased so that they could better supervise the education of Indian and Creole children.

The rivalry between the Catholic Church and Protestants was kept alive with news spreading around that the first Protestant Bishop of Mauritius, Vincent William Ryan, had a hand in the drafting of Higginson's Minute on Indian education.

That antagonism was, by ricochet, going to hit Higginson's Indian school project at its very embryonic stage when estate owners of the Catholic faith, much enthusiastic at the outset, began retracting.



Government Orphan Asylum. Photo courtesy S. Peerthum.

So much so that the newspaper, *Le Cernéen*, belonging to the influential Franco-Mauritian community, too, raised the banner of protest. In its issue of 14 September 1857, *Le Cernéen* vehemently denounced the introduction of compulsory Indian education in an article captioned "*Protestons contre la loi sur l'éducation obligatoire*". The paper fired a barrage of criticism against Governor Higginson for championing the cause of Indian education.

Although Henry Labouchere had recommended the French language as the medium of instruction, that hardly meant the language issue was resolved. The East India Company, in its turn, successfully lobbied for English and Indian vernaculars to be used as the main languages in the Indian schools in Mauritius. So strong was the pressure that Lord Carnarvon, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, who tried to resist, ended up conceding to that demand.

On the other hand, despite the obstacles Higginson had to contend with, resistance from Indian parents reared up its head. Parents were less inclined to send their children to schools as they were gripped by the fear of their children being lured into conversion to another religion. If not, another argument for resistance was the loss of earnings gained from juvenile labour that helped supplement household incomes.

Seen at as a "grievance and a source of terror" by the majority of the Indian population, Indian schools moved by fits and starts. Until 1864, there existed in all 15 such schools. According to the report (1865) of J. Comber Browne, the Government Inspector of Schools, "the establishment of twelve new schools, during the current year, for the benefit of the Indian population was to be given special attention".

Yet the motivation of parents was constantly slow as the census of 1871, for example, showed that out of 31,112 Indian children (21,035 boys and 18,077 girls) in the Colony between the ages of 5 and 14, only 794 boys and 35 girls attended schools.

Furthermore, according to the Annual Report submitted by Walter Henry Ashley, the Superintendent of Government schools, in 1875, only 23 per cent of Indian children attended schools compared to 77 percent of the General population. Higginson's education endeavour for Indians did not make much headway. The end of his gubernatorial assignment in September 1857 was greeted with a sigh of relief by the Conservative press. Despite all odds, he set the ball rolling for Indian education to prosper at a much later stage.

Sir Arthur Purves Phayre (1874-1878) tried to revive Higginson's ill-fated project by adopting a more flexible approach. He made it clear that all British subjects including Indians "should enjoy equal freedom". Governor Phayre, as Hugh Tinker puts it, urged the importance of education for "that most interesting class, the Indian immigrants, the future Lords and Masters of the land of Mauritius".

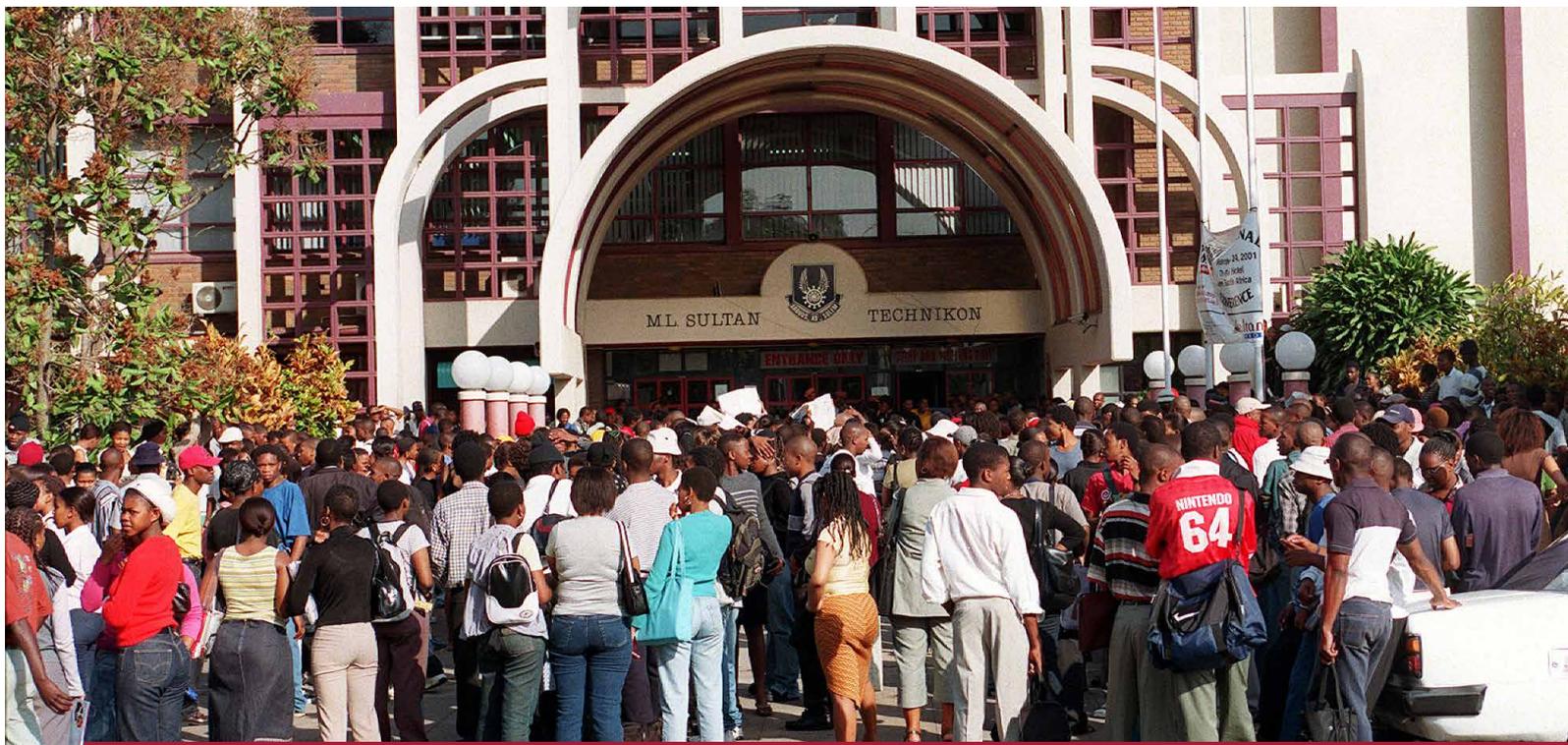
He encouraged Indian children "to be stronger than them in the battle of life". He firmly believed from his experience in India that Indian vernaculars were the appropriate medium of instruction for Indians. Indian schools in Mauritius, he said, were to be like those found in villages in India "with a mat for the children and a cushion for the teacher". Indian teachers were to be recruited from India where they were plenty "as blackberries".

Though Governor Phayre's scheme seemed more adaptable to Indian children, when he left Mauritius, the acting Colonial Secretary, Nicolas Duverger Beyts, with the blessing of Governor George Bowen, decided after a survey report that all the Indian schools should be closed down by December 1881 because the "Indian languages are of little advantage here" and that according to him, "it will be better for the Indians themselves that English alone should be taught in Government schools".

The slow evolution over the years of Indian education due mainly to the lack of interest by parents elicited from the Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1872 the remarks that the hard way was required to get Indian education moving fast: "We strongly recommend", the Commissioners wrote, "the adoption by Government of a system of compulsory elementary education, such as was contemplated in 1857 by Governor Higginson".

50 years after Higginson had launched his project, Indians were still trailing behind.

Indeed, the breakdown of figures of children attending schools in 1908 quoted from the Blue Book by Sir Charles Bruce, Governor of Mauritius (1897-1903) in his "Broad Stone of Empire" shows that Government schools in that year were attended by 5191 Catholic children, 2090 Hindus and 905 'Mohammedans'.



# M.L. SULTAN FROM RAILWAY PORTER TO EDUCATION PIONEER

*Professor Goolam Vahed* - Department of  
History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Growing up in Durban in the 1970s one could hardly escape M.L. Sultan. It was the name of the technical college that stood next to the school I attended, Orient. But I barely knew the story behind the name. The name belies the incredible journey of Mulukmahomed Lappa (M.L.) Sultan Pillai Kannu.

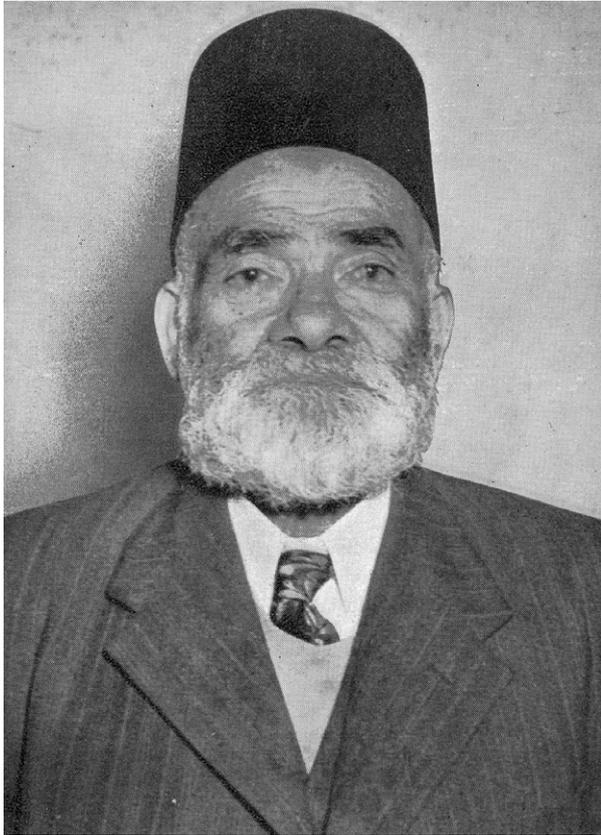
Born on 15 February 1873, in Quilon (now Kollam) in Kerala in South India, he left school at the age of 14 to support his family. Shortly after he turned 17, he set out for Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to seek greener pastures but the ship's engine broke down and he was persuaded to go to Natal instead, where a steady stream of indentured migrants had been arriving from 1860.

He reached Natal on the *Congella* as Indian Immigrant no. 43 374 in 1890. He was assigned to the Natal Government Railways and worked as a porter at the Berea Road Railway Station. After completing his indenture Sultan went, like many young Indians, to the Transvaal which was booming economically because of the mining revolution. He worked as a waiter at several well-known establishments but returned to Natal in 1899 when the South African War forced many Indians to flee the Transvaal.

M.L. Sultan showed great business initiative. He took up market gardening and later became a successful banana farmer at Escombe; he partnered a specialist in Vedic medicine in Grey Street, Durban, and they brought spiritual and physical comfort to the many who patronised them; grew betel leaf in Stamford Hill; and opened M. L. Sultan & Sons (Pty) Ltd., a retail business at 106 Victoria Street

M.L. Sultan married Mariam Bee in 1905 and they had ten children. After the death of Mariam Bee in 1933, it is said that he dedicated his life to community upliftment. While he accumulated wealth through his business endeavours and property investments, he lived a simple life. He usually caught a train from Escombe to Durban.

M.L. Sultan had a great passion for education. He was a self-taught man, described by Dr. Goonam as the finest orator in the Tamil language in South Africa, and read the writings of Muslim and Hindu philosophers in their original form and in Sanskrit. He saw education as a means of upliftment and was instrumental in the establishment of a technikon. Leaders like A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather wanted to educate Indian workers to compete in an industrialising economy. The Natal Worker's Congress and the Indian Teachers Society initiated Worker's



**M.L. Sultan.** Photo courtesy of Goolam Vahed

Continuation Classes in August 1929. In June 1930 an Indian Technical Education Committee was formed with B.M. Narbeth as chairman. It provided part-time evening classes in commercial and technical education at Sastri College until 1956. There was no government help and the Committee functioned with generous public contributions and free tuition from teachers.

The first development towards a permanent structure occurred in 1942 when M.L. Sultan donated £17,500, which was half the cost of a proposed institution. This contribution placed the question of Indian higher education in the public sphere. The city council eventually granted a piece of land, in the Botanical Gardens area. The M.L. Sultan Charitable and Educational Trust was formed in 1949 for spiritual, cultural, educational, and economic upliftment. The first trustees included B.M. Patel, Vincent Lawrence, and G.B. Chetty. Shortly before his death, M.L. Sultan doubled his contribution for the technikon.

Full-time classes were conducted in a private premises in Mansfield Road from 1954 until the building which stands today, was officially opened in, a few years after M.L. Sultan's death, with an enrolment of 240 full time students. By 1965 there were over 1500 full-time and 4 000 part-time students. Over time, the technikon expanded its offerings to include catering, hairdressing, nursing, dressmaking, engineering, draughtsmanship, bookkeeping, welding and so on. The initial years saw the enrolment of African students but the 1959 law segregating higher education prohibited African students from attending the institution. Fulfilling the promise

of the M.L Sultan, the M.L Sultan Charitable and Educational Trust made a contribution of £20 000 to the University of Natal in 1955 for its Non-European Medical School.

M.L. Sultan suffered a stroke and passed away on 6 September 1953, aged 80. Thousands attended his funeral service and hundreds more gathered at the Avalon theatre where a memorial service was held to publicly honour M.L Sultan philanthropic contribution. There were tributes from the likes of H. Natrass, First principal of the M.L. Sultan Technical College; B.M. Narbeth, Chairman of Council, M.L. Sultan Technical College; Dr A.D. Lazarus, principal of Sastri College; and Jalbhoy Rustomjee.

Rustomjee, a close friend of M.L. Sultan, captured the sentiments of many when he said that their one regret was that he had passed on 'before he saw the fruits of his labour ... though it will go down to his revered memory that thousands of scholars have already benefited and thousands more will benefit in future by his generous gifts. He persevered in life amid many changing scenes and conditions, and to one who labours in that way success is bound to follow. One feature of his charity I commend to my countrymen, is that it knew no bounds of caste or creed or religion.'

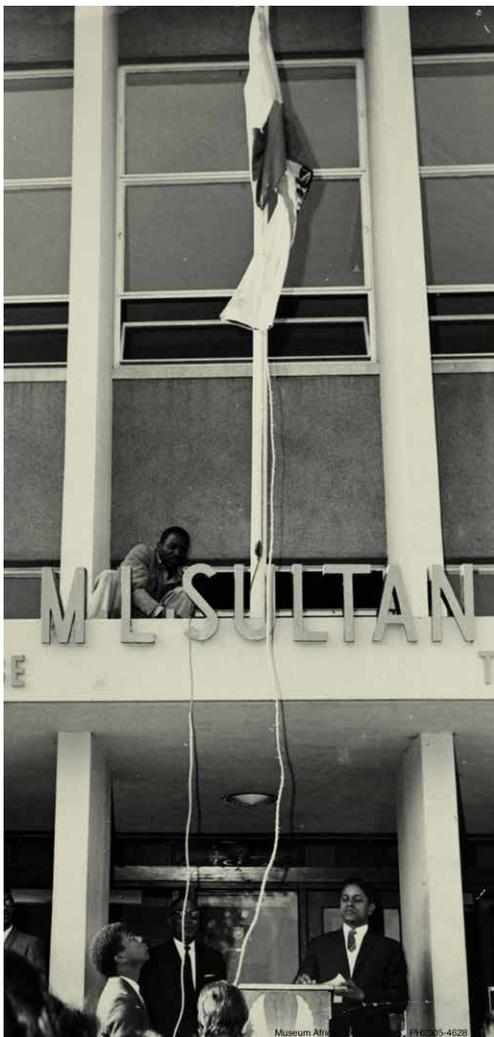
An editorial in *The Graphic* described M.L. Sultan's story as being 'in the best American tradition of the poor American boy "who made good". Farm hand, waiter, farmer, porter, small businessman, big businessman, he passed through all the phases of poverty and wealth.... Who knows but that in time to come another small boy provided with the advantages existing only as a result of Hajee M.L. Sultan's beneficence will not rise from poverty to wealth; and what is more important, from ignorance to knowledge; and become in the field of political leadership or literature or science or industry a great statesman leading the whole Indian community to new levels of attainment.'

In 1979 the institution was named the M.L. Sultan Technikon, and remained so until 2001, when it merged with (the then white) Technikon Natal to form the Durban Institute of Technology, and is now known as the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The old M.L. Sultan college was incorporated as part of DUT as the M.L. Sultan Campus. Centenary Road, where the technikon stands, has been renamed the M.L. Sultan Road.

The M.L. Sultan Charitable and Educational Trust has contributed to numerous education and social welfare institutions throughout KwaZulu Natal for all racial and religious groups. The DUT posthumously conferred the degree of "Doctor in Management Sciences" (honoris causa)

upon M.L. Sultan in 2011 in recognition of his outstanding services to this institution specifically and social and welfare programmes more generally.

M.L. Sultan teaches us that a single person's life, even one arising from the most humble beginnings, can hugely influence generations after. Now more than ever, when accumulation of wealth for accumulation's sake, and when people make a fetish of consumption to show-off, the example of M.L. Sultan points a way in which wealth can be used to uplift those who do not have, and can give hope where there seems to be nothing to live for.



## CHARM OF OUR INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE - AAPRAVASI GHAT THE CRADLE OF INTERCULTURALISM

In November last year, Mauritius was under the Charm of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) at planetary level. The 13.COM ICH Meeting gave a strong boost to this major element. It was the first time in history that such an event dealing with our daily life was highlighted by participants of the 13th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage from 26 November to 1 December 2018 in Mauritius.

It is a matter of pride to note that Mauritius was the second country to sign the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2004.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mauritius is rich and fertile. The multiplicity of languages and cultural practices has been the main source of the construction of a colourful Nation which has made its way in the League of Nations.

It all started at the Aapravasi Ghat the silent witness of the arrival of people from different parts of the world – Africa, Asia, Europe and China.

The arrival of Indian Immigrants is commemorated each year at the Aapravasi Ghat by way of speeches, cultural items, exhibition and films. As a World Heritage Site, it has been given a new orientation as a *'lieu de mémoire par excellence'*.

However, we have a lot of more work to undertake to motivate more people to visit the site. Tourists, students, members of the civil society and foreign dignitaries are conveyed to have a glimpse of the Mauritian history and the making of a Nation.

A massive campaign with the use of IT technology will have to be worked and a marketing strategy to be prepared. It no longer has to be a passive site waiting for people to come. It must attract people and appeal to their sense of history and belongingness to the Nation. Use of digital billboards, and mass media, audiovisual support and regular radio-programme are some of the modern methods of rendering a heritage site popular and attractive. It is a silent zone deprived of sound and music. The site has to be lively and user friendly. Live performances, enactment of the arrival of indentured labour are essential to create the interest of the public to come to the site.

Those responsible for the safekeeping of the site and management have to join their hands, heads and hearts to give the site the treatment that it deserves, a symbol of unity in adversity.

**Islam Bhugan**  
**Director of Culture**  
**6 May 2019**

# QUAND LA POÉTIQUE BHOJPURI SE CRÉOLISE. MADHULIKAR ET AUTRES RECUEILS DE RAJENDRA KUMAR BHAGAT « MADHUKAR »

Dr Catherine Servan-Schreiber - CNRS/EHESS, France

Dans une double démarche de perpétuer les langues indiennes et de réinventer des formes littéraires mauriciennes spécifiques, s'insère l'œuvre poétique de Rajendra Kumar Bhagat, dit « Madhukar » (1916-2004). Cet écrivain évolue dans un univers composite, où brillent les noms de Léoville L'homme, Robert-Edward Hart et Malcolm de Chazal, à une période où l'économie de plantation bascule et où de nouveaux critères esthétiques opèrent. De par sa culture nord-indienne, Madhukar est nourri de la tradition orale bhojpuri, dont les formes les plus caractéristiques sont le purvi (chant de ceux qui vont vers l'Est), le barahmasa, complainte de l'absence des douze mois, le bideshiya, chant de ceux qui s'expatrient, le biraha, chant de séparation des Ahirs, le nirgun, chant mystique du départ de l'âme, et le chant de gauna ou chant du départ de la mariée. Mais Madhukar est également un lettré qui a étudié le sanskrit. De par sa formation en littérature indienne, acquise pour devenir professeur de hindi, il est imprégné des classiques indiens, Tulsidas, Premchand et Tagore. De par son environnement familial, -il est fils et neveu des frères Bhagat, fondateurs de la Hindi Pracharini Sabha-, Madhukar fréquente les milieux littéraires de Delhi et de Bénarès. Il parvient à se rendre assez souvent en Inde, où il se lie avec Mahadevi Varma (1907-1987), poétesse hindoue qui compte parmi les membres fondateurs du mouvement Chhayavad. Il se forme alors à ce courant néo-romantique et humaniste de poésie qui a vu le jour entre 1922 et 1938. Mais son écriture est ouverte à une pluralité des modèles.

Et notamment, par son intermédiaire, la vogue de la romance créole, à travers son ambiance frivole et romanesque, va introduire une dimension inédite dans le paysage de la poésie villageoise bhojpuri.

Cette esthétique indienne transformée doit beaucoup à l'existence de certains lieux spécifiques, que le sociologue Stéphane Dorin a identifié comme « des lieux mixtes » :

- Les Fancy Fairs, ces fêtes de charité organisées par les paroisses catholiques, où les hindous ont accès. On y vend de la nourriture et des vêtements, on y fait des jeux de société, mais aussi, on y récite de la poésie en français, on y joue de la musique créole, et on y organise des concours de chants.
- Ou encore, les salles de cinémas, où on ne se contente pas de montrer des films, mais qui servent de lieux d'échange culturels et de débats, comme l'ancien Cinéma des familles.

Trois phases de créativité se distinguent dans l'œuvre de Madhukar. Militant pour le Parti Travailleuse avec Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, dans les années 40-45, il est à l'origine d'un style de poèmes destinés à être chantés, qu'il appelle « election chutneys ». Ses récitals de poésies ; ou biraha, accompagnaient les campagnes électorales. Des milliers de gens écoutaient les compositions qu'il préparait spécialement pour ces moments (Ramyeed 1985, 161). Puis il entame son action pédagogique

en 1947, prenant position pour l'Indépendance de Maurice, autour des années 1948 et 1950. Enfin, entre 1960 et 1990, il dédie un nombre infini de textes à exalter conjointement indianité et mauricianité. Beaucoup d'entre eux reposent sur l'histoire des coolies : brefs couplets, longs poèmes épiques, ou pièces de théâtre, en bhojpuri ou en hindi comme *Kulikeânsû*, 1967 (Les larmes du coolie) ou *Ekkahânikooliki*, 1968 (Une histoire de coolies). Ses poèmes, édités le plus souvent en petits fascicules, ou dans des revues, ont été rassemblés par un spécialiste de son œuvre, Kamal Kishore Goyanka.

Une grande partie des poèmes de Madhukar se construit autour du thème de l'engagisme et présente la patrie mauricienne comme bâtie sur le sang et la sueur des coolies asservis (Dhartikekhunpasinâdân). Son long poème épique, *Kulikeânsû*, Les larmes du coolie « odyssée des coolies » a été comparé au poème *The Ancient Mariner*, de Coleridge. C'est Madhukar qui a popularisé le premier le mythe du rêve de l'or, avec son poème *Sonâ ka sapnâ*. L'esprit de sacrifice du coolie, puis la glorification de l'engagisme sont les ressorts de l'inspiration de Madhukar. Sa poésie jouira d'une grande popularité dans un contexte économique particulier : on est dans la période charnière dite « de l'usine aux champs » ; la plantation voit son déclin, le textile paraît. Mais aussi, les archives de l'engagisme s'ouvrent aux familles. La littérature mauricienne s'en fera le témoin. Après Lal Pasina d'Unnuth, c'est toute la saga de l'engagisme qui sera évoquée. On peut dire que les poèmes

de Madhukar, inaugurent ce courant. Dans cette perspective, Madhukar veut donner la fierté d'appartenir au monde de la terre (Dhartikipukâr : L'appel de la terre, Dhartimângatbâbalidân : La terre demande un sacrifice, Mit'tîkî bât : La question de la terre), et d'être paysan (Main hun vîrkisân: Je suis un héros et un paysan). Madhukar fait partie de l'élite hindiphone, mais il est fortement attaché à la valeur poétique du bhojpuri. L'apport littéraire de Madhukar se situe précisément dans cet entre-deux où, grâce à lui, le bhojpuri garde son aura et sa popularité.

Sur l'ensemble de son œuvre, qui est immense, trois recueils sont composés en bhojpuri : Madhukalash écrit entre 1948 et 1969, MadhuBahâr, en 1985 : Madhulika en 1991. Il s'exprime par des « messages » (sandesh), des conseils : Il va garder les thèmes, les formules et les structures de la poésie traditionnelle, mais sous une forme « modernisée ». Et introduire, dans la langue indienne, des concepts et images qui relèvent de cultures créole et française, pour la singulariser.

Madhukar va d'abord affirmer sa filiation, disant : « Je n'écris pas pour les pandits, mais pour le peuple ordinaire. Je tente de faire en vers ce que Premchand a fait en prose » (Cité dans Ramyeard 1985, 161). Une chose est sûre, il garde l'écriture en langues indiennes, alternant hindi et bhojpuri. En première démarche, il intervient dans le domaine de la chanson de mariage et de la poésie des Ahirs. Le fait de composer des poèmes à partir de chansons de mariage lui permet d'atteindre aussi bien un public de l'arrière-pays qu'un public urbain mauricien. Il jouit d'une aura, car en milieu bhojpuri, la poésie est reconnue comme mode d'expression privilégié. Ainsi, à partir de thèmes indiens bien connus, comme celui du départ de la mariée, le gauna, il va composer des poèmes qui peuvent davantage parler à une population insulaire créole, et

répondre à de nouveaux schémas. L'influence du séga, avec ses thèmes quotidiens, - le chauffeur de bus, le travail à l'usine-, transparaît aussi, et le vocabulaire créole imprègne la langue de Madhukar. Sous son anodine apparence de chanson de mariage, sa composition « Sofarmor bhayâ », transposition moderne et beaucoup plus sensuelle du classique chant de gauna : « ô Kahar, avance doucement, je te prie », montre le cheminement effectué vers la créolité.

## Conclusion

Dans l'esthétique recherchée, ce sont la modernité et la sensualité du langage corporel qui priment. Madhukar a été officiellement reçu par des instances telles que la Sahitya Akademi de Delhi, ou la Kavi Sammelan de Varanasi. Il y a été admis comme un auteur reconnu en hindi et bhojpuri. Madhukar joue un rôle charnière à la fin de la période de l'engagisme. Il contribue à la transmission des répertoires classiques comme le Ramayana, et compose des hymnes dévotionnels, mais écrit des chansons à thème dans le registre de la variété. Comme me l'a précisé sa fille Gawtami Bhagat-Ramyad, son rôle d'entrepreneur identitaire s'exerçait aussi du fait qu'il oeuvrait à toutes sortes d'endroits de l'île, se déplaçant pour lire sa poésie de Flacq à Rivière du Rempart, et surtout, comme le permettait la tradition de l'époque, dans les salles de cinéma : le cinéma Odéon, à Plaine des Papayes, le cinéma Anand à Triolet, le cinéma des Familles à Port-Louis. Du mouvement Chhayavad au jazz, de la romance créole au séga, les courants artistiques qui l'inspirent sont donc multiples. A travers l'exemple de Madhukar, on peut conclure à la spécificité indianocéanique de l'écriture, en pointant un courant de la créativité poétique indienne intégrant de nouveaux rythmes et un langage créolisé. Cette démarche est

alliée à une posture de modernité, tout en maintenant le substrat indien folklorique bhojpuri.

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# LES CROYANCES DES ENGAGÉS ET L'EXOTISME INDIEN DANS LES REPRÉSENTATIONS COLONIALES

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Les manifestations culturelles des migrants indiens et de leurs descendants ont attisé la curiosité des intellectuels et ont alimenté l'exotisme sur la société créole: mémorialistes, journalistes, écrivains et artistes restituent ainsi un discours idéologique dans leurs représentations sur les croyances et les pratiques. Le corpus du fait religieux et des fêtes indiennes à l'époque coloniale est constitué d'une variété de production textuelle de genres variés qui est corrélée au transfert massif d'engagés au XIXe siècle, avant et après l'abolition de l'esclavage en 1848. Ce foisonnement se prolonge jusqu'à la départementalisation de 1946 avec le roman colonial et contemporain. Entreprise d'écriture fictionnelle, la littérature coloniale met en scène les immigrants indiens et leurs particularismes religieux. Contrairement aux pauses didactiques afférentes aux données anthropologiques et historiques, et les préoccupations sociologiques du roman contemporain qui rend compte de l'insertion indienne et de sa créolisation, ces écrivains du XIXe siècle se préoccupent d'attirer l'attention des lecteurs sur un spectacle exotique dénué de valeur spirituelle et religieuse afin d'éveiller la vigilance des Créoles sur l'étrangeté diabolique des pratiques hindoues. Des récits documentaires agrémentent ce corpus de l'indianité religieuse qui paraît ainsi dans les journaux illustrés avec une riche iconographie non dénuée de vue partisane. Par-delà l'idéologie raciste dénoncée par les critiques littéraires nous retenons dans cette contribution sur les représentations européennes des croyances, les manifestations religieuses indiennes qui prolongent

ainsi dans le temps et dans l'espace le legs des premiers esclaves et des Libres Indiens sous contrat à la société créole. L'univers du discours sur les croyances et les pratiques indiennes offre une pluralité de productions dont le genre varie entre la nouvelle, le roman, le récit documentaire et l'icône. Dans cet article nous focalisons nos observations sur une source iconographique, et des textes de nature historique et descriptive qui sont corrélés à deux dessins. Et par-delà les distorsions opérées par les descripteurs sur les représentations tronquées des croyances, nous explicitons leurs motivations puis nous privilégions les aspects descriptifs de ces textes et de ces icônes en restituant leurs significations majeures.

Outre les aquarelles de Jean-Baptiste Louis Dumas sur l'identité professionnelle et sociale d'esclaves et d'engagés Télingas dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle, les thèmes évoqués dans ces récits documentaires, et les personnages mis en scènes dans ces dessins concernent le fait religieux indien dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle à La Réunion. Cette période innovante de la production coloniale dans le domaine du récit de l'étrangeté des populations immigrées se singularise par le développement du graphisme avec l'utilisation de la lithographie en noir et blanc. Nous avons sélectionné un journaliste et un dessinateur. Le commanditaire est un opérateur professionnel qui obéit à des motivations d'ordre idéologique et commercial : une presse nationale, Le Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer. L'association du texte et de l'image motive la sélection

de ces supports où la redondance des informations éclaire de manière pertinente les productions offertes à un public curieux. La diffusion de ces œuvres fut conditionnée par l'engouement des lecteurs pour l'exotisme colonial sous les prismes d'un reporter journaliste, J. Macaries et son dessinateur Castelli.

Par-delà les signes de l'exotisme opérés par le descripteur sur les représentations des croyances et des pratiques indiennes, nous explicitons les motivations de cet auteur. Puis en dépit des visions idéologiques et partiales exprimées, nous nous demandons s'il est possible de restituer les traits objectifs du sacré indien livrés dans l'article illustré ? La production coloniale constitue l'unique source pour la période et l'objet d'étude sur les croyances et les pratiques indiennes ancestrales, et il convient d'effectuer une lecture critique afin de dévoiler pleinement les significations.

## Les croyances indiennes d'après le discours colonial

L'exotisme indien du reporter journaliste J. Macaries présente dans « la danse du feu » une vision déformée de la réalité. Il projette dans son article des préjugés tenaces à l'encontre de populations indiennes dont les mœurs s'apparentent aux sociétés primitives. En dépit des anecdotes douteuses voire mensongères insérées dans ses écrits, il est loisible d'appréhender le fait religieux dans un camp de cinq cents indiens. La similitude est frappante

dans les préparatifs et le déroulement des cérémonies avec le rituel dans le temps présent, et seul diffère le cortège des jongleurs et des acrobates qui ont disparu. L'auteur décrit l'espace sacré du camp dans son récit qu'agrémentent des illustrations :

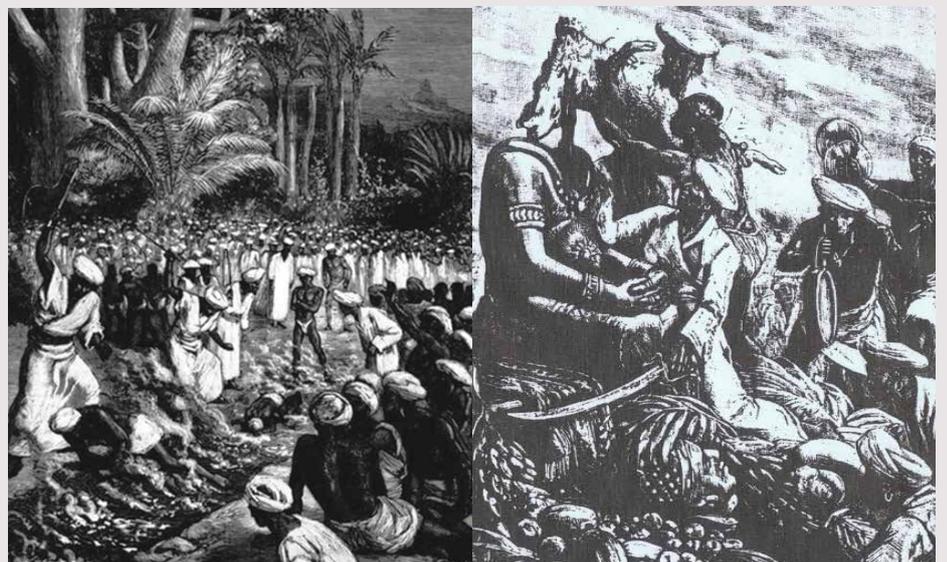
Les trois casernes sont une propriété sucrière à Sainte-Rose dont le propriétaire s'appelle Crivelli. Il emploie cinq cents Indiens. Les festivités commencent le 21 décembre 1867 et dès le matin les Indiens des habitations voisines se rejoignent au camp afin de confectionner le brasier dont un mât central illuminait de mille feux de couleur. Au pied du mât, des offrandes destinées à la divinité y étaient déposées dont des fruits et un animal. L'auteur décrit l'avancée d'un cortège accompagné de diable et de tigres qui bondissaient et rugissaient. La pagode est érigée à l'écart et elle est constituée d'une case en paille dont les officiants aux longues tuniques safranées ont extrait une grossière statue de bois. Portés par les hommes, la procession se met en marche vers le rivage accompagnée de chants et de cuivre. Arrivé au bord du rivage, le sacrifice d'un animal est fait pour le Dieu. Puis le cortège retourne à une centaine de mètres et on y dépose la statue tout près du brasier allumé depuis les quatre heures du matin et dont les dimensions en largeur font deux mètres, en longueur six mètres et une profondeur de vingt centimètres. Plus tard dans la journée, les maîtres de cérémonies reprirent les cérémonies et la danse du feu qui débutèrent avec les bonds et les rugissements des tigres. Les jongleurs aux corps rayés de rouge, de noir et de jaune se livraient ainsi à des sauts et à des contorsions. Plus tard les marcheurs traversèrent en file indienne d'un pas assez lent la couche de braise et ils répétèrent plusieurs fois la traversée. D'autres pénitents entrèrent dans le brasier en cadencant leur pas et en psalmodiant des chants sur un ton plaintif. Un petit bassin situé à la fin du brasier et rempli de la cendre du lait et de l'eau recueillait les pieds des marcheurs

afin d'atténuer les souffrances...Le soir dans le camp illuminé retentissaient les chants d'allégresse. »

## Iconologie des pratiques indiennes

Deux illustrations de Castelli montrent l'événement religieux de la marche sur le feu à Saint-Rose sur la côte Sud-est. La première montre des pénitents fouettés qui traversent un brasier. La deuxième que nous avons sélectionnée pour l'analyse est intitulée « la danse du feu : on égorge un mouton sur la tête du Bouddha ». Les circonstances dans lesquelles se réalise cette cérémonie ont été évoquées dans le récit de J. Macaries et nous retenons dans notre commentaire l'attrait de la représentation du rituel et le mythe qui le sous-tend. Ces considérations ont totalement échappé au reporter qui s'est fourvoyé dans la désignation du panthéon hindou et de la symbolique de ce rituel. Au-delà des aspects sensationnels et des mœurs bestiales présentées par les auteurs, nous voyons dans cette image l'importance des libations et du sacrifice. Les dons de fruits tropicaux et la soumission des Indiens aux idoles apparaissent en premier plan, puis les musiciens dont un percussionniste et un joueur de cymbales se tiennent debout dans une position active. Dans le prolongement

de ce second plan horizontal se tient un officiant muni, d'un sabre sacrificatoire, accosté à une colossale statue décapitée. Enfin en arrière-plan deux autres indiens portant un animal sacrifié abreuvent la divinité. Cette construction pyramidale où domine l'animal sacrifié au dieu décapité est cependant non dénué de réalité. L'auteur de l'article se méprend de la configuration du panthéon hindou. Il ne s'agit aucunement de Bouddha et encore moins de mouton. Le journaliste et le dessinateur ont probablement assisté à des bribes du rituel, et ils ne restituent que partiellement le sens. Pire ils le pervertissent car l'enjeu de leur message vise à impressionner les lecteurs par l'exotisme indien à La Réunion, à entretenir leur méfiance à l'égard des Malbars descendants d'engagés et à les éloigner de toute tentative de rapprochement. En réalité, les épisodes du mythe du Mahâbhârata sous-tendent les phases du rituel et seule la connaissance du récit épique facilite sa compréhension. Le rituel mime les événements majeurs du mythe, et l'officiant hindou a dû reproduire le sacrifice d'un guerrier divinisé en l'occurrence Alvan qui offrit sa tête pour le gain de la Grande Guerre des Bharata. Encore désigné en créole gardien d'fé ou en français, « gardien du feu », il est présenté devant le brasier - qui représente « le champ de bataille » encore désigné kuruksetra - avec « une grosse figure » en créole grotet



La traversée du brasier et Le sacrifice sur la tête du Bouddha. Illustrations de Castelli.

sectionnée à la gorge et qui a connu une extension dans les représentations et les pratiques religieuses et divines des hindous à La Réunion. L'octroi du bouc à cette divinité est un sacrifice qui perdure encore de nos jours. Cette icône est significative des croyances indiennes populaires qui perdurèrent dans les camps d'engagés et permettent de comprendre l'importance des cultes villageois de l'hindouisme réunionnais. Le mythe actualisé dans les traditions orales et artistiques, les rituels carnés, les sacrifices et les mortifications physiques sont censées remémorer les exploits des héros du Mahâbhârata.

## Conclusion

Les œuvres présentées s'inséraient dans une campagne nationale qui visait à influencer l'opinion publique, et ces productions participaient ainsi au projet colonial de la grandeur de la France. Les auteurs assimilent systématiquement les Indiens à des peuples sauvages, sanguinaires voire bestiaux sans préoccupations théologiques, et l'exotisme contribuait à la nécessité des missions civilisatrices auprès des «peuples primitifs». Au-delà des marqueurs axiologiques liés au jugement de valeur et esthétique des auteurs, notre problématique interroge les caractéristiques du fait religieux ancestral à la fin du XIXe siècle. Les mythes qui sous-tendent ces événements proviennent de l'épopée, des épisodes bibliques et islamiques. La description de ces fêtes indiennes dégage les traits structurants des mentalités indiennes. Le mythe sous-tend le rituel qui le véhicule en y intégrant les arts sacrés. L'épopée du Mahâbhârata occupe une place fondamentale dans la tradition orale et l'imaginaire des pénitents.

Plusieurs éléments polarisent les croyances indiennes dans l'île et maintiennent le lien avec l'Inde ancestrale et villageoise. Dans leurs représentations les Européens insistent

sur la vision pragmatique des Indiens et sur leurs croyances domestiques. Ces auteurs privilégient dans leur description les espaces du camp des travailleurs, les processions festives et soulignent le rôle primordial de l'interprète-officiant dit Kourou. Le sacré s'incarne dans le rituel à travers un panthéon complexe ou dans les manifestations artistiques avec les croyances islamiques et chrétiennes. Ce sacré s'actualise dans les corpus complexes et se manifeste dans un continuum des arts religieux avec les ballets indiens. La visibilité des croyances indiennes est orchestrée par les travailleurs à l'occasion d'un calendrier imposé par le pouvoir et au moment de la cessation des activités agricoles. La « fête de la moisson » ou Pongal constitue un moment phare de la créolisation des migrants indiens où s'exprime le sacré indien dans la sphère publique et privée et qui trouve son apogée dans le rituel de la « marche sur le feu ».

Cette étude confirme l'hypothèse que nous formulons sur l'hindouisme réunionnais dite «créole». Les représentations coloniales du XVIIe siècle jusqu'à la départementalisation en 1946 constituent le soubassement d'une histoire des traditions ancestrales indiennes, en dépit de leurs distorsions idéologiques. Ces imprimés établissent la filiation entre les croyances et les pratiques des migrants indiens avec le fait religieux dans le temps présent.

<sup>1</sup> « Attitude de curiosité mais aussi de réification de l'Autre. Dans l'exotisme, c'est en effet avant tout la différence, l'étrangeté, l'altérité qui attirent et mobilisent l'attention, voire un certain primitivisme de l'Autre, et dès que la distance s'abolit avec l'Autre, il perd son pittoresque et son intérêt », dans, -Un état des savoirs à la Réunion, Sous la direction de Valérie, Magdeleine-Andrianjafitrimoet Marimoutou Carpanin, Tome II : Littérature, ADSFOI, 2004, p.253

<sup>2</sup> Nous nous référons aux travaux de Valérie, Magdeleine-Andrianjafitrimo, « Les enjeux

du récit des origines indiennes dans le champ littéraire pluriculturel de la Guadeloupe et de la Réunion à travers Aurore d'Ernest Moutoussamy et Boudour. Du Gange... à la Rivière des Roches de Firmin Lacpatia, dans « Littératures et Fondations », numéro coordonné par Carpanin Marimoutou & Valérie Magdeleine, Etudes créoles, vol. XXVII, n°1, 2004, L'Harmattan, p.139-173. ; « 'Ethnotexte' et intertextualité : la mise en scène des représentations culturelles dans les romans ethnographiques », dans, Contes et Romans, Univers créoles 4, sous la direction de Valérie, Magdeleine-Andrianjafitrimo et Carpanin Marimoutou, Anthropos, Paris, 2004, p.93-145.

<sup>3</sup> Carpanin, Marimoutou, (1993) « Le Malbar dévisagé et l'Inde envisagée : la figure du Malbar dans la fiction coloniale réunionnaise de Marius-Ary Leblond », dans, « La Mer indienne. Indianités Ici, Maintenant et Ailleurs. » Numéro 5 de la revue Grand Océan. Saint-Denis, 253 p., p.30-53. ; Martine, Mathieu. « L'image de l'indianité La Croix de Sud de M.-A. Leblond : la représentation de l'Autre dans l'écriture coloniale. », in Itinéraires et contacts de culture : le roman colonial (suite), volume 12, Publications du Centre d'Études Francophones de l'Université de Paris XIII, L'Harmattan, 1990, p.125-133. ; Rose-May, Nicole, Noirs, Cafres et Créoles, Etude de la représentation du non blanc réunionnais. Documents et littératures réunionnaises (1710-1980). L'Harmattan, Paris, 1996, 334 p. ; Geneviève, Palmas, L'Image du malabar dans la littérature réunionnaise, Maîtrise de lettres modernes sous la direction de Martine Mathieu, 1985, Université de la Réunion, « la religion et les fêtes religieuses », p.22-33. ; Valérie, Paüs : « Espaces créoles et implantation indienne: discours et représentations des romans réunionnais et mauriciens », dans, études créoles, vol. XXVII, n°1, p.175-194 ; « La représentation des fêtes indiennes dans le roman réunionnais » dans, édition virtuelle (évir) du site des Indes réunionnaises en mai, 2004 chez : <http://www.chez.com/indereunion/> ; « Le surnaturel et le sacré indiens dans la littérature réunionnaise et mauricienne : indianisation de l'espace insulaire », dans, Démon & Merveilles dans l'Océan Indien, édité par Valérie, Magdeleine-Andrianjafitrimo, Carpanin Marimoutou et Bernard Terramorsi, LCF, 2005, p.399-418.

<sup>4</sup> Christian, Adam-de-Villiers, Identités réfléchies, photographie contemporaine et perception-intellection des présences et du fait identitaire indiens à la Réunion, thèse en Anthropologie à l'université de la Réunion en 2002 : tome 1, p.429-430 ; Sully Santa, Govindin -Indianité & Insularité. Collection de 16 cartes postales, « Dipavali, Sainte-Marie », Éditions le Germ, ISBN 2-9517144-4-0, 1998 : n°15, « Pagode indienne » ADR ; n° 16, « Fête du feu » Musée de la Marine, Paris ; n° 12, « Terrou ou Radon », chariot des Indiens, ADR, collection Galerie des Arts.

<sup>5</sup> J. Macaries « La danse du feu chez les Indiens à l'île de la Réunion », article écrit en 1867, dans, Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer, numéro 223, 1881, p.242-243.

<sup>6</sup> Iconologie : étude de la représentation en art.

<sup>7</sup> Castelli- « La danse du feu », image accompagnant l'article de J. Macarie écrit en 1867, dans, Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer, numéro 223 du 16 octobre 1881, p.227, colonne 2.

<sup>8</sup> Castelli- « La danse du feu », image accompagnant l'article de J. Macarie écrit en 1867, dans, Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer, numéro 224 du 23 octobre 1881, p.242 colonne 3.

<sup>9</sup> Alvan : personnage du Mahâbhârata très populaire à La Réunion, il se sacrifia pour le gain de la Grande Guerre.

## MY GRAND-MOM RECIPES

# Drumstick curry (*Kari Baton Mouroung*)

*Aarti Pydatalli - Field Guide*

The drumstick curry is a famous traditional dish in Indo-Mauritian families. The drumstick pods used to make the curry come from the Moringa plant which is considered as a medicinal plant. Drumsticks are considered to be good for digestion; they also help to control and lower blood sugar levels and blood pressure, and promote a healthier heart. The drumstick curry dish is now very rarely prepared in Mauritian households as drumstick pods are very rarely found on the market.

### The mode of cooking drumstick curry

Time for preparation: 15 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Number of servings: 5

#### Ingredients

- 2 or 3 drumsticks, cut to finger length
  - 1 or 2 potatoes, cut into bite size
  - 1 or 2 eggplants, cut into bite size
  - 1 onion- finely chopped
  - 1/3 cup chopped tomatoes
  - 1 green chili
  - 3 curry leaves
  - 1 pinch of mustard seed
  - 1 pinch of cumin
  - 2 or 3 cloves of garlic, finely crushed
  - 2 tsp of curry powder
  - 1 tsp red chili powder
  - ¼ tsp turmeric
  - 1 tsp coriander leaves
  - 2 tsp oil
  - Salt to taste
  - Water as needed to cook the drumstick
1. Slightly peel off the thin skin of the drumstick with a knife then cut it into pieces and wash with running water. Put the pieces aside in a large bowl.
  2. Add oil to a deep pan and heat it, add the mustard seed, cumin, curry leaves, green chili and allow them to splutter.
  3. Add the onions and fry till golden in colour.
  4. Add the drumsticks, the diced potatoes and the eggplant, add salt, turmeric powder, garlic, curry powder and red chili powder.
  5. Fry for 2 to 3 minutes to remove the raw smell of the drumstick.
  6. Pour water just enough to cover the drumsticks and cook on a medium flame till they are tender. Cook on a lower flame to yield a tasty curry.

7. Add the chopped tomatoes and cook it till it turns soft and pulpy. Do not cover. Let the curry cook in an open pan. The tomato gravy will taste better.
8. Finally, after three minutes, turn off the cooker and garnish the dish with coriander leaves.

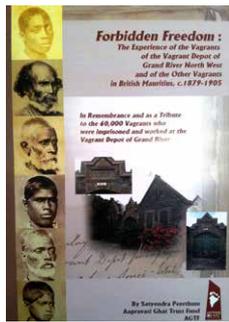
The drumstick curry goes well with rice or with *chapatti* or *roti*. This recipe was popular during my grand mother's days. This simple dish is a very comfort food, next time if you get drumsticks, do try to cook this dish and you will know what you have actually missed. It is a must dish to try. Thank you grandma for teaching me this traditional recipe which comes from our indentured Indian ancestors. Although you are not here, I still prepare your traditional recipe.



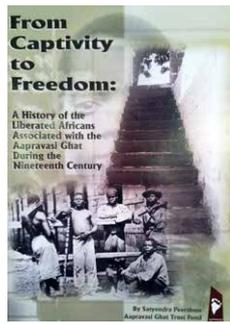
# PUBLICATIONS ON SALE AT THE AAPRAVASI GHAT TRUST FUND



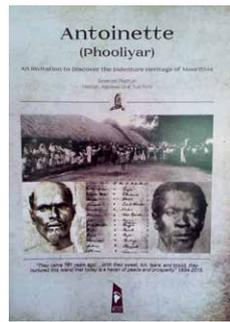
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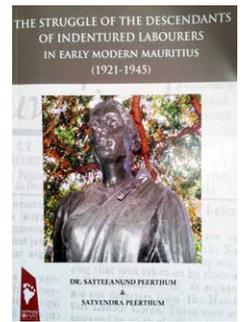
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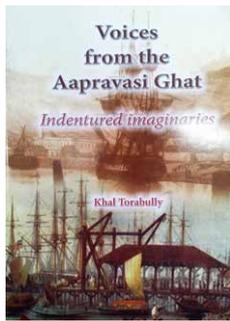
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MUR 65.00



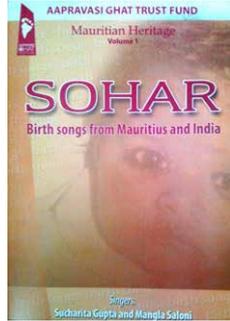
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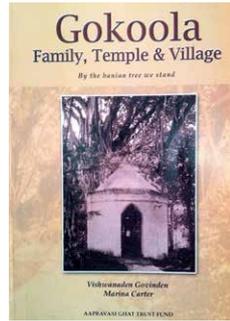
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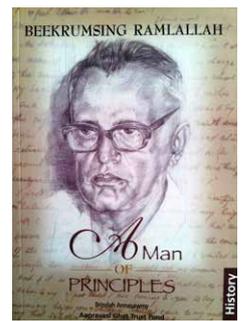
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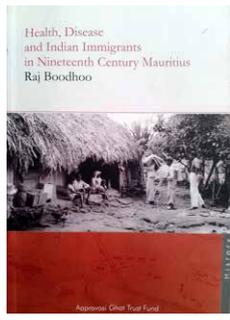
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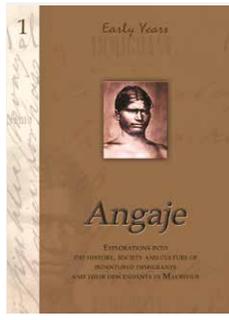
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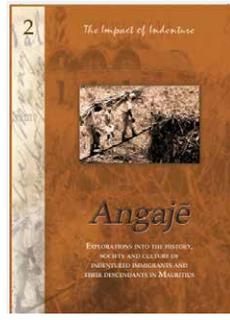
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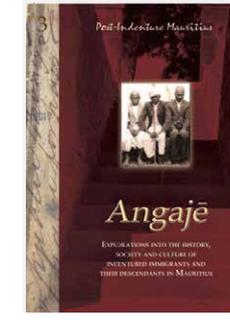
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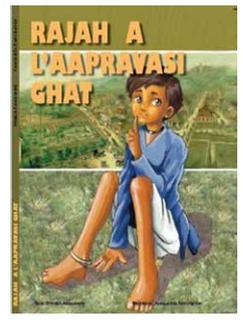
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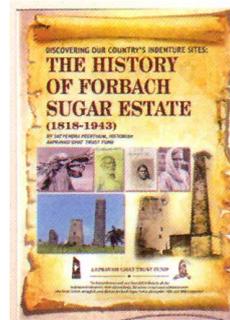
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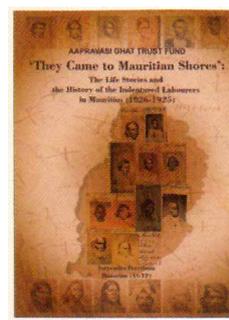
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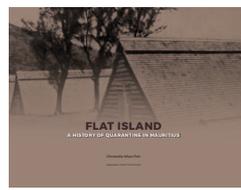
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MUR 700.00



MUR 900.00



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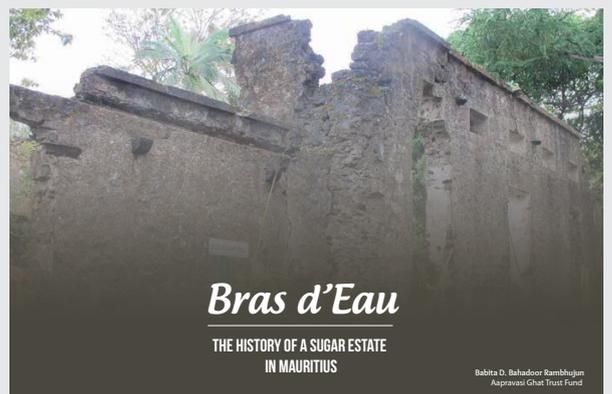


MUR 200.00

## New publication: Bras d'Eau : The History of a Sugar Estate in Mauritius

Since 2014, the AGTF has conducted in-depth research on the former sugar estate of Bras d'Eau which is situated in the North-East of Mauritius. This research on Bras d'Eau sugar estate places emphasis on the history of sugar estates in Mauritius and in particular, on the transition from slavery to indenture.

The former Bras d'Eau sugar estate was later converted and proclaimed as the second terrestrial National Park in Mauritius in 2011. It consists of many structures pertaining to life on the sugar estate which are still conserved including the dwellings of the slaves that were later expanded into a larger zone to house the indentured labourers. These vestiges provide a window on the conditions of the labour force working on estates.



### Bras d'Eau

THE HISTORY OF A SUGAR ESTATE  
IN MAURITIUS

Babita D. Bahadur Rambhujun  
Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund

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185<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of Indentured Labourers in Mauritius

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