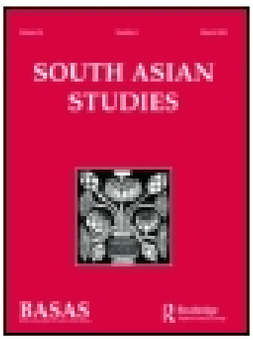

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Beyond the Margins: Place, Narratives, and Maritime Circuits in Diu

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This article explores the traces of maritime connections across the Indian Ocean in the island of Diu, a Portuguese territory on the Gujarat coast until 1961 with historic privileged contacts with Mozambique. An investigation of the existing heritage materialities is intersected with an ethnographic study of life stories from the Vanza community, once dedicated to weaving. Following other local social groups, the Vanza started migrating to Mozambique at the turn of the twentieth century. The ethnographic findings suggest that crossing different layers of heritages and remains that these circulations left in Diu with life narratives draws us to alternative cartographies of the Indian Ocean world and to a constellation of experiences and sensory worlds that constitute this region.

Keywords: Diu; India; Mozambique; Indian Ocean; migration; heritage; ethnography; cartographies

Introduction

The territory of Diu, under Portuguese domination from 1535 to 1961, became a prominent place in the oceanic circulations between the Indian subcontinent and the eastern coast of Africa, connecting the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*[1] with the Gujarati hinterland and the network of port cities on the Saurashtra coast, assuming the position of a nodal point among diverse commercial routes across different times and geographies. The links between Diu and Mozambique developed across centuries would become one of the most important connections between Asian and African Portuguese territories, participating in a much wider context of Indian Ocean circulations across Africa, the Arabian Gulf, and Asia, and cutting across diverse political systems.

The traces of these long connections between Diu and other geographies are perceptible in its urban space and architecture, in the names and international connections of commercial houses (Figure 1) but also, especially, in personal narratives translated in words, memories, and objects.

This article explores the overlapping cartography of material and intangible traces that the maritime connections with Mozambique have left in the territory and in the life stories of the ones who crossed, and still cross, the Indian Ocean and feel that they belong to both of its margins.[2] This exploration invokes a dialogue between the sensorial landscape of Diu, its material heritage and its Indic character, and life narratives that spread between Diu and Mozambique. This is done by intersecting ethnography and archival research through an anthropological gesture sensitive to the visible and invisible traces of this fluid oceanic history, investigating how senses of belonging to vast geographies are sustained by fluxes of visual cultures and sensorial worlds.

One first act to perceive Diu as an oceanic node is to frame the territory beyond its more obvious geographic context on the Saurashtra coast of the Indian subcontinent, and see it also as part of the Indian Ocean world at large or, with direct reference to East Africa, the Afrasian sea, following Michael Pearson's perspective.[3] This relocating is not merely geographical, but also methodological, establishing a canvas for relational cartographies and centring the analysis on the traces of the established connections on their place of origin.

As Helene Basu rightly points out in the introduction to her edited book on Indian Ocean circulations, 'relatively little is known about the ways in which this maritime world has shaped and is manifested in social settings in South Asian regions that were part of it [...] How have these been influenced by Indian Ocean histories? And how is the Indian Ocean past encountered in the present?'[4] This is the case for the territory of Diu. Despite having a recognizably long and vital role in the connections between the Swahili coast and Western India since before European colonial systems came to existence in the region, the island of Diu, encompassing its cultural, built, and natural landscapes and heritages, has mostly been at the margins of historical studies of both Portuguese and British India, and of research on maritime trade across the Indian Ocean.[5] This peripheral positioning reflects the locations from which we draw our perspectives: within the context of the

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1. Sign of the Hotel Mozambique in the bazaar area of Diu town (photo by the author, September 2016).

Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, Diu seems too far away from Goa, the administrative centre of the Portuguese possessions in Asia; if our studies focus on the British Raj from the late eighteenth century onwards, Diu was slowly superseded by cities such as Surat, Ahmedabad, or Bombay for textile and maritime trade. If we browse through the existing research on the connections between port cities along the vast Indian Ocean shores, from Southern Africa to Southeast Asia, Diu is almost unacknowledged. This research, thus, intends to place Diu in its broader context: an island connected with the mainland, but also part of Indian Ocean histories. This character of a 'littoral' place, using the expression coined by Michael Pearson,[6] can help us dilute the boundaries between ocean and land and observe Diu as a node of flowing connections, as well as the ways in which this reflects in its heritage and social landscapes. Using the notion of 'littoral' in its literal sense also guides us towards a much-needed contextualization that cuts across borders between sultanates, empires, or colonial systems. Diu became part of a ramification of port cities that turned the Gulf of Cambay and the Saurashtra peninsula into the most important coastal areas of the Indian subcontinent for several centuries.[7] The crucial position in both long-distance maritime trade as well as in coastal connections between Mandvi and Veraval to the West, and Baruch, Cambay, and Surat to the East, motivated a Portuguese conquest that enlarged the scale of trade, intensifying links across the whole of the Indian Ocean and the African and European continents.

If the relative importance of these harbour cities changed through time due to natural causes (in the first decades of the sixteenth century, Surat and Diu presented the best harbouring conditions for long-distance vessels), we should not isolate Diu from its regional context by situating it only within Portuguese India – while the neighbouring lands remained under the Gujarat Sultanate, the Mughal empire and, later, came under British rule. This calls for working with cartographies drawn by circulations of commodities and people, by the flow of religious sensitivities and languages, aesthetic forms, and social structures, and not by sharp lines demarcating territories that, even under different political systems, were porous to mutual influences.

Taking this notion of 'littoral' further into the ocean, this text also takes inspiration from the concept of 'island-ness' developed by Pamila Gupta.[8] This idea is assumed here as a cartographic layer in order to draw and locate Diu through both its geographical and sensorial features, provoking dialogues between the peculiar characteristics of islands: made of land and water, isolated but connected in archipelagos, small dots on larger maps, but essential nodal points in circulatory routes across the sea. Sharing some of the particularities of the ocean, an island, as a conceptual perspective, naturally allows for fluid fields of research, spatial templates without severe contours or assertive borders which can direct us to a more sensitive and multilayered analysis of Diu.

This conceptual framework also directs us towards an erasure of the distinction between the study of what happens on land and what happens in the oceans. Islands are land 'in' the ocean, recalling once more Michael Pearson and his emphasis on 'history in the ocean',[9] and, by their own nature, participate in both worlds, materially and metaphorically.

Before narrowing the scope of my observation down to the island and town of Diu, to its soil and 'land'-scapes, I wish to follow a maritime route and reach the island by sea instead of approaching it by solid ground. This proves fruitful since it highlights the location of Diu in the larger oceanic world and brings the qualitative dimensions of the maritime landscape to the observation of the island.

The Indian Ocean has motivated inspiring research about the ocean as a space of circulation,[10] among other research trends more focused on specific fields such as slave trade routes[11] or Indian trading communities in East Africa.[12]

The Ocean's peculiar characteristics, intimately associated with the monsoon system and its moving winds, clouds, and rains, has also inspired other modes of understanding the marine landscape and its interference in continental regions. Lindsay Bremner's ongoing exploration of the monsoon systems through her project 'Monsoon Assemblages' continues her exploration of the idea of a 'folded

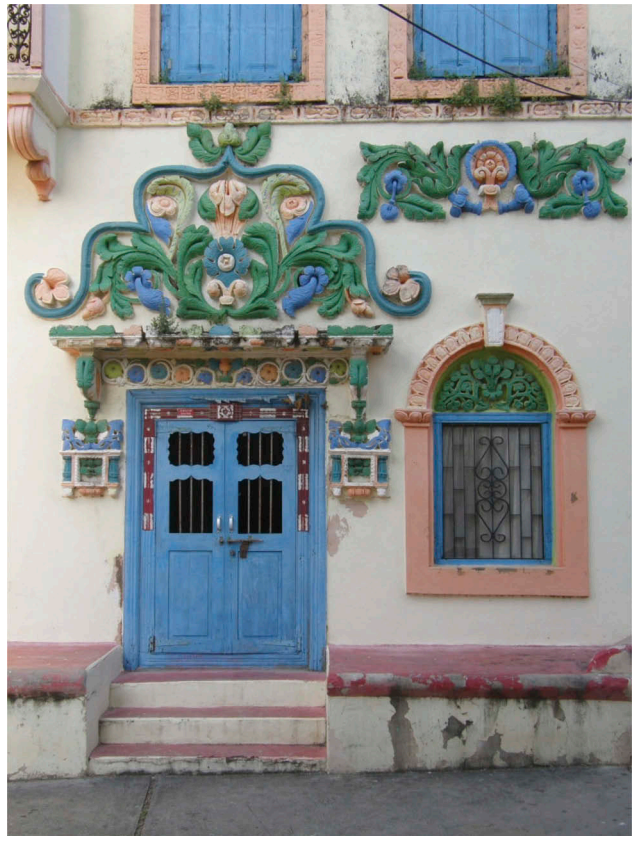
ocean' and 'the spatial logics of the Indian Ocean world'.[13] Her approach is particularly stimulating for this research since Bremner elaborates on Pearson's idea of an 'amphibious' world[14] through the observation of how oceanic practices are unfolded and transformed into architectural and spatial products on solid ground. This is, in fact, crucial to my purpose of observing how Diu preserves traces of aquatic worlds that materialize in, and are constitutive of, its built and intangible heritages. This 'amphibiousness' is particularly apt to transgress dichotomies between material and immaterial, land and water, built heritage and memories or words. This enables us to be sensitive to both the solidity of walls and the meanings and affections embodied by photographs hung on them. Stone, lime, and images or objects are part of homes that open up to streets and alleys on different margins of the ocean. Those are the living remains of stories of migration of people, ideas, commodities, and affections.

Diu: The place

There is a certain Indic atmosphere in the old Diu town, the urban space drawn along narrow streets and squares and gradually opening up to the port while one walks under the shade of two- and three-storey buildings of a notoriously simple geometry and with the decorative strength confined to balconies, doors, and window-frames, in a Gujarati language that dialogues with other Western Indian Ocean latitudes (Figure 2).

The old town takes time to be understood in its spatial and built environment as well as in its organization in different neighbourhoods that translates its social composition across several centuries.

Like many other port cities along the shores of the Indian Ocean, Diu developed in relation with other geographies, and the materiality of its urban space embodies other margins of the ocean and their social, natural, and cultural landscapes. Oceanic port cities can be seen as spaces developed while looking at the horizon, as if they did not only look towards where they are situated but also towards other realities that, in certain ways, are constitutive of what they are. Prita Meier sensitively references this embodiment of what is distant but connected with the expression 'architecture of elsewhere', describing the architectural personality of historical port cities on the Swahili coast.[15] In the same way, we can understand that Diu town is also tied in with the places it has had contact with over time, relating its architectural and spatial aesthetics with those of other port cities in the Western Indian Ocean, such as Zanzibar, Mozambique island, or Mombasa. Although it is distant from the Swahili coast and does not belong to a topography of Swahili cultural influence, I wish to reinforce the connections Diu and the coastal Saurashtra port cities have with Eastern African littoral cultures through architectural and urban spatial sensorial characteristics.



2. Banyan house in the Vanyawada, old Diu (photo by the author, September 2016).

In a previous ethnographic research in southern Mozambique, observing how the landscape has integrated the residues of historical processes unveiled the concept of landscape as a potential archive, to be read through its own particular language of remains, traces, and natural qualities, in dialogue with both textual and cartographic records, and personal archives formed of words, memories, domestic spaces, objects, and senses of belonging. Intertwining, then, perceptions of ruins and landscape open up paths to a wider understanding of the landscape itself, which embodies natural and human worlds.

Observing Diu under this gaze has the advantage of connecting my research with an intrinsic aspect of oceanic existentiality: the waters of one shore are not separated from the waters of other shores. All are bounded by the constant flux of tides and winds, and so are the material remains of centuries of trade and connections between Africa and Asia.

To develop, then, an ethnography of Diu as a maritime place and as a node in extensive networks of circulation should be sustained by a conscience that those 'elsewheres' are part of its historical life, while navigating the tortuous alleys between the past and the present.

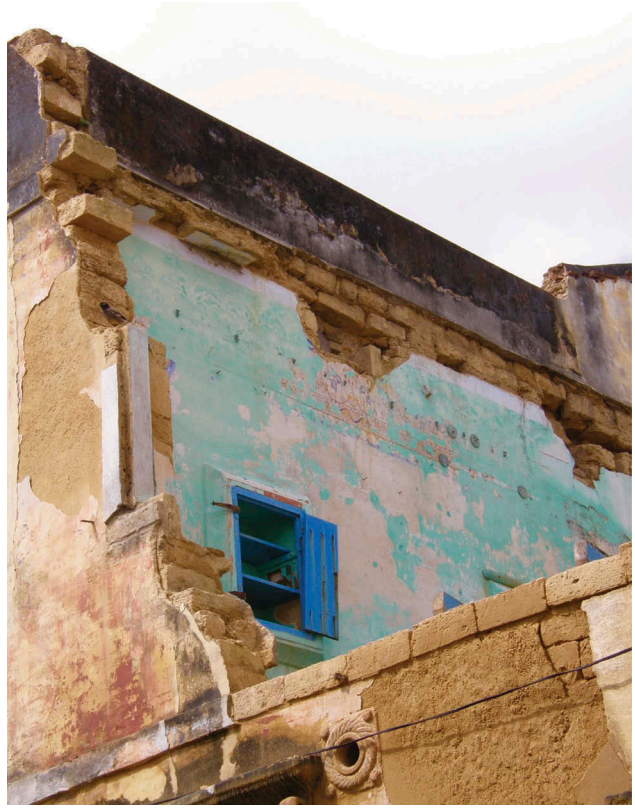
Ruins and shadows

The ruins that we come across in the historic town amplify a sense of confrontation between the past and the present, between the historic references to Diu's dynamic trading past and its current situation, between the references to an extraordinary diversity of nationalities living on the island and its modern social context.

Here, I take inspiration from the works of Ann Laura Stoler on debris and processes of ruination,[16] and from Gaston Gordillo's research on rubble and constellations of debris scattered across the landscape.[17] Their work prompts us to sense ruins not only as memories of a past 'in the past', but as witnesses of processes of ruination that are integral parts of material realities and aesthetic emotions of the present time. Ruins are constitutive of the present, of the material qualities of Diu town, and the built and natural landscape across the island (Figure 3). In fact, this sense of ruination is not only perceived in the urban old town. Throughout the island, we can encounter saltpans devoid of salt, long disused roads leading to uncultivated lands, or the churches in Fudam and Vanakbara emptied of religious objects and rituals. Diu has long been a territory of migrations that have changed its social landscape over time. It is precisely the relationship between a past and a present that is embodied in processes of ruination, translating migratory experiences into the material (natural and built) context of Diu.

At the same time, this contrasts with an effervescent fishing activity in Vanakbara, a village on the western tip of the island which is famous as one of the most skilled shipbuilding places in Saurashtra, or the steady development of Goghla, a fishing village on the mainland peninsula facing Diu island, which is also part of the Union Territory of Daman and Diu.

The old town displays remains of a past that no longer exists but has become part of its character.[18] The once powerful Parsi community may have definitively left the island, but their old, rich houses (Figure 4) and the fire temple,[19] partially transformed into the chapel of a feminine Catholic convent, still stand as memories of the days in which this community had a fundamental role in maritime trade. Some of those houses are still inhabited, by Hindu families now, retaining the beauty of the carved decorative elements



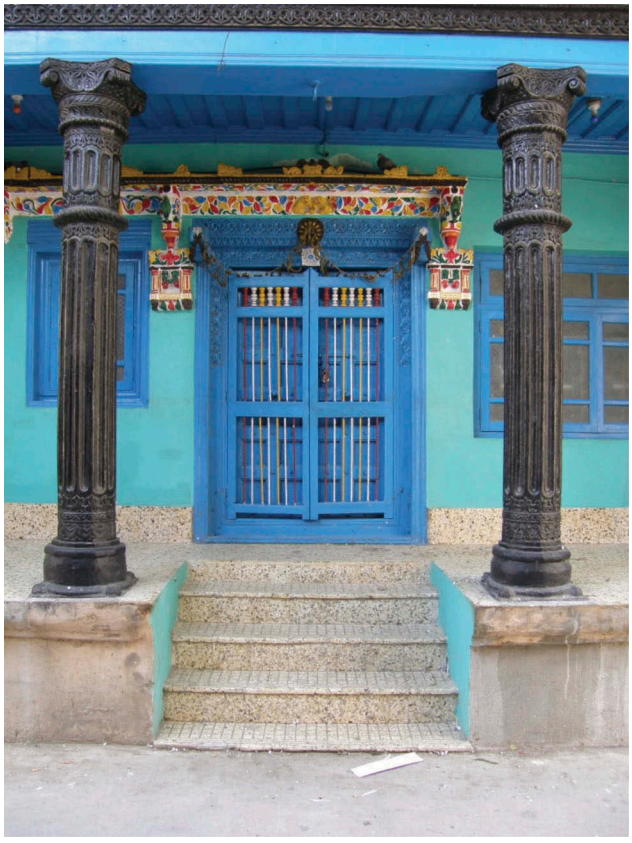
3. Ruins of an old house in the Vanyawada (photo by the author, October 2016).

that were signs of the richness that sustained the families who built them.

The two old mosques still stand amid the busiest area of the town, near the port and the main market, now surrounded by various hotels which, higher than any other buildings, dot the streets of the most dynamic neighbourhood of Diu. These buildings, and the life around them, bear testimony to the fact that the Portuguese conquest of the island did not mean the imposition of the Catholic faith, as in other Portuguese possessions in India. This peculiar history is strongly linked with the reason the island was such a valuable conquest: its relevance in the Indian Ocean maritime trade, only possible with the maintenance of the diverse communities that sustained it.

The fort was built at the eastern end of the island, and the Catholic neighbourhood, with its churches and convents, occupied an area between the port, the old city, and the fort, connecting with the existing town but, at the same time, separated from it.

The town grew, then, connecting the Gujarati cotton-producing and weaving centres with Eastern Africa and Southeast Asia, sustaining a dispersed settlement of Gujarati communities across this vast region of the globe.



4. Main entrance of an old Parsi house in the Parsiwada, near the bazaar and the harbour (photo by the author).

Visualities

Besides the architecture and urban spaces, the visual landscapes of Diu town include other, more discreet elements that equally express the history of this place. The names of several neighbourhoods (*wadi*, in Gujarati) are vestiges of the urban and social development of Diu, with the preservation of the old designations that translate the social codification of the caste system in the urban space, as, for example, Vanyawada, Koliwada, Khumbarwada, or Firangiwada, respectively the *wadi* of the Banyans, the weavers and masons, the potters, and the Christians (*firangi* meaning 'foreigner'). These names translate and fix in small stone plaques on the walls the diversity of communities that have historically inhabited and built this town, and can be considered part of its heritage, simultaneously material and intangible. Interestingly, we still find the name of Hajjwadi, reminding us of the area near one of the main gates where the pilgrims to Mecca could stay and rest before and after their maritime travel. Once more, I would like to affirm the relevance of what can be seen as discreet and apparently strictly localized; in this case, the historic role that the Hajj and Islamic religious networks played in the development of Indian Ocean routes and in the circulation of languages, and religious and ethical sensitivities that linked extensive littoral geographies. A small painted plaque on the wall of a humble house evokes historical events that locate this particular *wada*, and this particular town, within intercontinentally connected histories and cultural heritages.

Defying a sharp cut between a colonial past and a post-colonial present, the Portuguese language lingers in a multitude of traces: in spoken words at an old *chai* place near the bazaar, in the names of old streets and stores that can be seen in the historical area of the town, or in an occasional red T-shirt of the Portuguese national football team worn by a football lover.

A more recent history, however, can be perceived through a different kind of visual element that bears testimony to the continuities between the past and the present.

Signboards advertising businesses that specialize in flight tickets and courier services to London, Lisbon, and Maputo synthetize persistent histories of migration that cut across colonial and post-colonial temporalities and geographies (Figure 5). These signs represent the contemporary illustration of circulations between South Asia, Eastern Africa and, after the independence of the African colonies, Europe. Through the dispersed locations of business activity, we can clearly understand the contemporary geographies of family and business connections that have in Diu their original homeland.

Besides these layers, the social composition of Diu, translated in the visual and architectural culture already mentioned, more subtly reveals the relationships I aim to analyse here. A brief study of the social landscape of

5. One of the several signposts of companies specializing in parcel delivery to the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Mozambique (photo by the author, October 2016).

this territory highlights the history of Diu as a maritime one.

To begin with, among the social landscape of the territory we find the Siddi, an Afro-descendant community.[20] While the Siddi, or Habshi, communities in India originate from a diversity of social contexts (slavery, military service, or religious networks, for example)[21] and different maritime networks, Yimene's research has revealed that the Siddi community of Diu claims to have its origins in the slave trade from Mozambique to Portuguese India and neighbouring Muslim sultanates, through the commercial links developed by Diu trading communities under Portuguese rule. Despite being a discreet community, their presence in Diu reveals a past of constant circulations across the Indian Ocean and between former Portuguese East Africa and Portuguese India.[22] Nowadays, the Siddi of Diu are Muslim, similar to other Siddi groups in the state of Gujarat.

On the other hand, trade in Diu was significantly developed during the Portuguese colonial period through the action of the local Banyan community. For centuries, Indian textiles were among the most important commodities flowing from Asia to Eastern Africa and, until the advent of industrial mills in the nineteenth century, Diu remained a vital port in Western India (in close relation with the Gulf of Cambay). Local Banyan families dominated this textile trade by setting up commercial houses in Mozambique, from which businesses also ramified to other Eastern African port cities.

The Vanyawada testifies to the wealth amassed by this community, in notable family houses with entrances and balconies profusely decorated with Gujarati carvings and walls filled with green and blue decorative paintings.

In addition to the Banyan, the Khoja community from Diu also engaged in trade with Mozambique and port cities on the Swahili coast. Therefore, we can observe how, in a small island off the Saurashtra coast that is nowadays on the margin of any international trade route, we find the traces of the expansive and enduring transoceanic commerce that formed an Indian Ocean world.

However, besides these material vestiges, there are also less visible testimonies, constituting intangible repertoires that I wish to address here.

Life stories and the inner spaces of family homes in the old quarters of the town are, in a veiled way, remnants of these enduring maritime crossings, and it takes time for them to be shared by those who inhabit them. Their extraordinary richness constitutes a fundamental factor in understanding that oceanic circulations have been experienced by a diversity of social groups that have been able to adapt to changing political and economic contexts in multiple locations.

When stepping indoors, we leave the architectural features of Diu to encounter the intimacy of lives, memories, and narratives that constitute particular and cherished heritages of this territory, and of a particular community that, after the turn of the twentieth century, gradually settled in Mozambique: the Vanza[23] of Diu.

Inner spaces and narratives

Here, I present fragments of life stories collected at an initial moment of ethnographic fieldwork in Diu among the Vanza community.

The Vanza are part of the social fabric of Diu and traditionally worked as weavers. The weaving of saris was their main work, notably wedding saris especially made for the Kharwa, the fishing community.

They revere Hinglaj Mata, a Hindu goddess whose main pilgrimage temple is located in the modern Pakistani region of Balochistan. This social group has historically formed part of the intense textile trade from India to Eastern Africa that sustained the economic activity of Diu for several centuries.

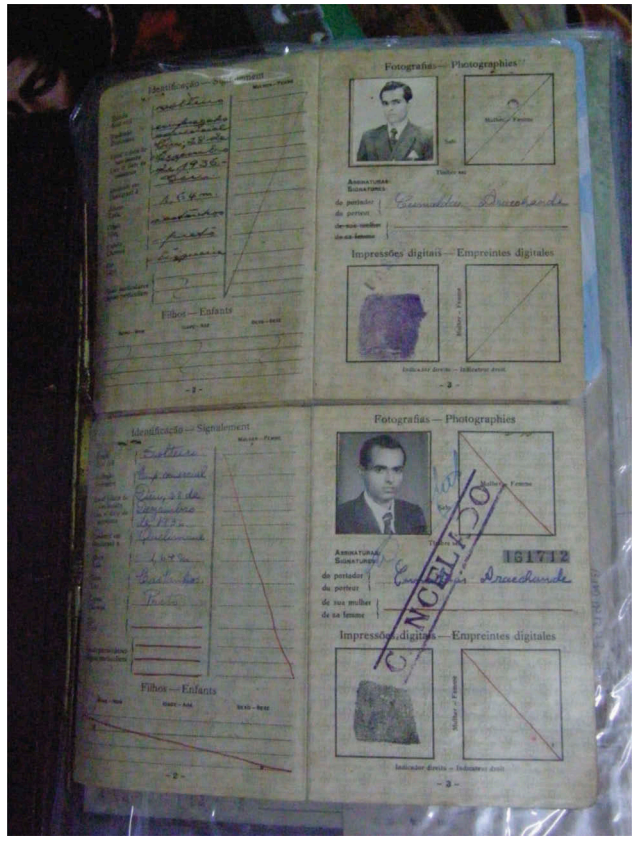
In this research, the relevance of personal narratives establishes several associations I wish to draw as a cartography of circulations, rather than a cartography of two places, Diu and Mozambique. A crucial concern, mentioned previously, is the unveiling of different layers that carry traces of these circulations, in a dialogue, more than a contrast, between material remnants and the intangibility of memories, spoken words, and affective threads that weave stories of mobility. Life stories thus become one of the multiple heritages of Diu, and, in searching the tangent lines between those diverse inheritances – urban materiality and aesthetics, place-naming, visual culture, and lived memories –, I aim to highlight the simultaneous dimensions that are part of the ethnographic exploration.

A handloom and a private museum

At a crossroads in the Koliwada, near the Travessa Cuxalpara, a recently painted building displays a big sign with the words 'Tecelagem Vijay Lisboa' (Vijay Lisboa Weaving) with two small Portuguese flags on the side (Figure 6).

Behind a window on the ground floor, a woman who became curious about my interest in taking several pictures of the signboard initiated a conversation with me in English and Gujarati, followed by one of her sons. Learning that I was Portuguese, and that I had been in Mozambique to do research on Diu and Mozambique connections, she spoke a few Portuguese words referencing Mozambique and the city of Quelimane in the

6. Sign of 'Vijay Lisboa Weaving', Kholiwada (photo by the author, September 2016).



7. Passports of Vijay's grandfather, kept in his personal museum (photo by the author, October 2016).

north of that country. I was invited to come back the next day to talk to her husband since he could share more about Mozambique with me.

That afternoon turned out to be the beginning of a series of highly significant meetings and conversations that would transform my initial research intentions and became an open door to the Vanza community of Diu. If, previously, in applications for project grants or research presentations, I had declared my interest in researching what I denominated 'intimate museographies' or 'personal cartographies'[24] as a way of translating life stories that emphasize links between two different places, the unexpected happened. The word 'museum' found a reality I had not expected when I first climbed the narrow stairs to the first floor of the house where Vijay lives. In addition to a big, old handloom, I would discover, perfectly arranged on shelves behind glass doors, documents and passports stamped by the colonial government in Mozambique (Figure 7), pestles and wooden objects also brought from that country in big suitcases, old photographs of Diu, a 1960 edition of the Portuguese newspaper *O Século*, and pieces of several publications of the mid-twentieth century about Portuguese India.

His willingness to preserve the family history resulted in a private museum that he proudly maintains, and triggered a series of conversations that allowed me to slowly access intimate realities and life accounts that connect Diu and Mozambique in explicitly personal ways.

Vijay is the last weaver of Diu, and so the last representative of the weaving knowledge of his Vanza community. He spends half of his day weaving wedding saris for the Kharwa fishing community. The long history of Diu's weaving has a witness, maintaining the inherited family skills on the first floor of a modest house in the old town.

His main activity is that of a civil constructor, and part of the buildings and houses he builds are sold to members of his community who live in Maxixe, a Mozambican city facing the coastal city of Inhambane, in the south of the country.

Even though Vijay has never been to Mozambique and speaks only a few words of Portuguese, his maternal grandparents and his father lived long periods in that country. His

father lived in Quelimane and in Beira, respectively in the north and the centre of the country. In his personal archives, he keeps travel documents and passports of his paternal grandfather Arachande, born in Diu in 1908, and his father Cumaldas, born in Diu in 1936, along with some objects brought by them from Mozambique.

It is significant that, between the walls of a house in the historic centre of Diu, I could hold in my hands documents signed in what was then the Province of Mozambique. The documents kept in that room are not only pieces of a museum of Portuguese colonialism, but are, above all, the material remnants of life stories that speak to us simultaneously from, and about, Mozambique and Diu and the ways in which tight kinship networks connecting both shores of the Indian Ocean sustained multiple life geographies.

'If he has family there? How not to?'

The exclamation above was a comment made by Vipin Yadav when we were discussing Vijay's family life story in Mozambique. It was my first afternoon in the house of Vijay, and while he kept the paced work of weaving a wedding sari in tones of red and gold, Vipin chatted with me in Portuguese. His comment clearly translates the stories of migration to Mozambique, not only of his own community but, more broadly, of the population of Diu.

Vipin's father, a tailor by profession with schooling in Portuguese up to the fourth standard, went to Mozambique in 1938. His grandfather also lived in Inhambane and once had a commercial store in the town, he recalls, at a time when Mozambican miners coming back from the mines in the then called Transvaal[25] used to pay their bills in Rands and gold. This fact connecting the life of a Diuese family with the social and economic context of the South of Mozambique at the dawn of the twentieth century shows the importance of personal histories and narratives in understanding how historical processes are experienced, and in highlighting the interconnectedness that migratory experiences sustain.[26]

Having a series of meetings in a house of Diu brought into the conversation the history of the region where I had previously lived for my PhD research and, suddenly, we were no longer talking about Diu but about Mozambique, towns and landscapes I know well.[27] Details such as these prove that, through migratory lives, we understand how deeply connected the histories of India and Mozambique are. What I had studied about Mozambique and its history, and my experience of living in that country, became relevant to understand the life experiences of Diuese migrants in southern Mozambique.

Going back to Vipin's story: his father migrated to Mozambique as an employee of the trading company of Calachan Irachan, known in Diu as Nagar Sheth (among the richest and biggest local employers in Mozambique), on a sailing boat that took three months to reach its destination, calling at Karachi, the Seychelles, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam and the Mozambican ports of Porto Amélia (modern-day Pemba), Beira, Inhambane, and, finally, Lourenço Marques, the capital city. At that time, working contracts were valid for two or three years, after which the worker had to spend up to a year in Diu before departing for Mozambique again. Even though his father was hired as a cook, as he had completed a postal course from Goa in accounting and management, he ended up becoming one of the accounts clerks of the commercial firm he was working for.

Vipin travelled to Mozambique to join his parents in 1963 (his mother had joined his father a few years earlier) and stayed there for twenty years, twelve in Lourenço Marques and eight in Beira, where he worked as a Mathematics teacher for two years. He returned to Diu in 1976 with his parents, leaving behind a ready-made clothing store in the Xipamanine commercial neighbourhood of Maputo,[28] which his parents had bought in 1970. As he did not like Diu, he went back to Beira, where a brother-in-law was living, returning to Diu again in 1983, then going back to Mozambique in 2009, after which he returned to his hometown permanently.

Portuguese notes and Portuguese India stamps

Rameshbhai lived away from Diu for twenty-five years. His extraordinary life of migration encompassed different places in Mozambique, London, Lisbon, Italy, Montreal, and Brazil. He first left for Mozambique on 14 January 1971, when his father was living in Quelimane. After that, he lived in Tete and in Maputo, employed in the business of a neighbour from Diu. While in Maputo, he frequented the Bharat Samaj, a nodal place for the local Gujarati and Diuese society.[29]

He left Mozambique in 1975 with the country's independence and, after brief periods in Lisbon, London, and Montreal, went to Brazil, where he spent six years between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Leaving Brazil when an economic crisis hit the country, he lived in Italy for six years, returned to Portugal in 1991, and returned to Diu permanently in 1996.

He generously gifted me an envelope with Portuguese bank notes from the time of the escudo (the currency that preceded the euro), stamps from Portuguese India, as well as a copy of an article about the Portuguese possessions on the Indian subcontinent from a mid-twentieth-century magazine. He also offered

Vijay old colonial Portuguese magazines and coins from Portuguese India, bought in second-hand bookshops and antiques stores in Lisbon and Ahmedabad. These are some of the treasures Vijay keeps behind glass doors on that first floor of Kushalpara street, in the old town of Diu.

A Mercedes and a Mozambican president

Having celebrated his ninetieth anniversary on 11 September 2016, Tulsidas is a cherished man among his community, both in Diu and in Inhambane. Speaking in flawless Portuguese, learnt during the decades he lived in Mozambique, his important place in the community is visible in the fact that he was for many years the president of the Hindu Community of Inhambane. His father also lived in this town for many years, travelling to Mozambique with the regular contract of three years of employment plus travel costs paid for by the employer.

Tulsidas left for Mozambique in 1942, at the age of fourteen, to join his father, who worked as a clerk in the aforementioned firm of the Nagar Sheth family, and later worked for the Arimdlal Tricamji & Company, a company of the Diuese trader Lalddas Kisordas based in the southern city of João Belo (modern-day Xai-Xai), in front of the vast lowlands near the mouth of the Limpopo.

Four years later, he moved to Lourenço Marques (modern-day Maputo), where he stayed for two years until returning to Diu to get married. In 1950, he returned to Mozambique and settled in Inhambane. In 1963, when his father passed away, his family joined him, after which his younger daughter was born. He returned to Diu permanently in 2004.

In 1961, when India annexed the Portuguese territories on the subcontinent, Tulsidas was in his period of leave between contracts, residing in Diu and working in the Taxes department of the Portuguese administration. Commenting on this period, he mentioned that he personally did not have any problem with the Indian administration, and that he decided to refuse an offer to stay in Diu permanently as an employee of the State Bank of Saurashtra because he would have to opt for Indian nationality, which he never desired.

'Portuguese government left its traces', Tulsidas explained, commenting on the arrival of the Indian army and the fact that they were surprised by its quietness and lack of conflict.

His life has some extraordinary episodes, such as the one when, while he was president of the Hindu Community of Inhambane, he met the Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano; or the one when, only a few days before the independence of Mozambique, during the so-called 'Digression from Rovuma to Maputo' (in which the president-to-be Samora Machel crossed the country from north to south in the lead-up to the night of independence), his own Mercedes 220 was requested by the Frelimo for Samora Machel and Armando Guebuza to visit the district. At the time, his was the best car in Inhambane.

Weaving circulations: The Vanza across the sea

Complicating circulations[30]

Let me reinforce three relevant facts from the previous life narratives: all the men I interviewed belong to the Hindu Vanza community and have returned to Diu,[31] all of them have retained their Portuguese nationality after 1961, and their ancestors first settled in Mozambique at the turn or in the first decades of the twentieth century.

With respect to his Portuguese passport, Tulsidas recalled the agreements made when the Portuguese President Mário Soares visited India, stating that 'many people go to London thanks to Mário Soares'. This agreement grants Portuguese nationality to the citizens of former Portuguese India and to their descendants for three generations, and has been one of the possibilities to widen diasporic geographies and networks across Europe and North America.

My interviews and observations suggest that this community was able to read the economic opportunities that Mozambique could offer and was very much aware of the development of long-established Goan and Gujarati communities in that Portuguese colony. Diuese Banyan families had been extremely active in the trade with Mozambique for the last two centuries and, at the turn of the twentieth century, with the local economy in accentuated decline due to the demise of the textile trade, the Vanza, traditionally weavers, and the Darji, who worked as tailors,[32] looked for work in a Mozambique that promised new prospects. It is revealing that two communities directly connected with the textile production would migrate when this trade faded away from their homeland. 'It was for our survival', Tulsidas said, referring to his departure for Mozambique, which, at that time, was considered a 'good country'. With the Portuguese territorial appropriation of the south of Mozambique in 1895[33] and the expansion of infrastructure as well as plantation and extraction industries in the neighbouring British and German colonies, Mozambique provided new opportunities for trade under new networks linking several African colonies with developing industrial centres of production in North America, Europe, and South and Southeast Asia.

At that time, Bombay had become the main port in Western India, and most of the travels between Diu and

Mozambique involved British steam ships, following the usual route from Bombay to Cape Town, with brief stops in major ports like Karachi, Mombasa, or Dar-es-Salam on their way to Mozambican territory.

One of the relevant aspects of these life narratives is the field of research they unveil, gathering life stories and experiences of a community with still a discreet presence in studies of the Indian diaspora in Mozambique and in Portugal, having been mentioned in several works, but never as the central object of study.[34]

Here, I follow Pamila Gupta when, with reference to the Goan presence in Mozambique, she argues for the importance of 'using the collection of life stories as a historical ethnographic method and an analytical tool'.[35] Her pursuit of a sense of 'disquieting'[36] is inspiring and useful in this research since these initial life stories I have been able to record reinforce the need to unpack categories such as 'Indian', 'Portuguese Indian in Mozambique', or even 'Diuese'. These personal accounts direct us towards a constellation of social belongings that are translated through very diverse experiences and affective memories.

The fact that this community began to migrate to Mozambique in a particular historical context complicates the histories of circulation between Portuguese India and Mozambique. Further investigation is necessary to understand the presence of this community in Mozambique among other social groups hailing from Portuguese and British India, as well as the decisions made at the time of the country's independence and subsequent dispersion of family networks.

Another important layer of enquiry is the role of this community in the economic landscapes of both Mozambique and Diu. According to Tulsidas, in the mid-twentieth century, trade in Inhambane was '99% under Hindu hands', with around fifty stores. By Hindus, here, he meant the Vanza community, which slowly dominated, and, according to him, still dominates, trade in Inhambane and in the neighbouring town of Maxixe. On the other hand, it was repeatedly mentioned to me that a significant portion of the hotels now operating in Diu are the property of Vanza families (along with Khania families, traditionally masons). This indicates a transformation of the social tissue of the territory, made possible by sustained migratory practices and by systematic remittances and investments in the hometown and surrounding villages by those who migrated. This establishes a connection with Edward Simpson's research on the Kharvas, a community of Hindu sailors from Kutch (also present in Diu and in the Saurashtra peninsula), and how constructing a 'caste identity in relation to the land, sea, history and other groups associated with the ocean redefines local social status and concerns'.[37] Further ethnographic fieldwork is required to better investigate the social and economic consequences that these migratory practices have had for the place of origin. The current gradual development of Diu as a tourist destination can be seen as an opportunity for investing the revenues accumulated during decades of work in Mozambique, while the construction activity of Vijay is dependent on the investment in real estate of families from his community that wish to maintain a house in Diu (Figure 8).

Remembering Mozambique in Diu

All my interviews reference the fact that life in Mozambique was generally characterized by successful trading activity. Mentioning the immense number of the so-called 'cantinas', the Portuguese word for small stores scattered across the roads and the hinterland, my correspondents suggested that the success of the Indians in Mozambique was partly due to the fact that they were very patient with the Mozambican customers, while 'the white didn't have the patience' and 'treated the blacks badly', as Tulsidas recalls. Among other facts shared with me concerning their commercial activity, there was a curious reference by Tulsidas to the fact that some of traditional chiefs in the Inhambane region occasionally left 'money on the counter' to buy protection against witchcraft by other rival chiefs. This is a most revealing fact of a field yet to be explored, on religious contacts and interferences between the local population and the communities of Indian origin.

As expected, the long period of civil war in independent Mozambique is described as a difficult time when the Indian communities that stayed back in the country were 'people as all the others' and had to go to

8. Entrance to the library of the Vanza community in Diu, Kholiwada (photo by the author, October 2016).

'the bread queue' as any other Mozambican citizen, as Tulsidas has put it. He also recalls that one of the ways of maintaining commerce throughout the difficulties of the period was the product exchange between different stores, and a generally good relationship with the local populations who, according to him, in Inhambane, 'are a trusty and peaceful people'.

This fact was also mentioned in my other interviews to demonstrate the participation of the resident community in the newly independent country, and should be understood in the framework of the complex position of the Indian population during the process of decolonization and the establishment of a new Mozambican nation. Pamila Gupta, in her previously mentioned article, investigates 'how a specific diasporic group responded in very different ways to decolonization, some reinforcing ideologies of colonialism through migration to the metropole, others opening up niches for themselves by aligning themselves with the newly elected authority, even as they faced the future with a sense of disquiet'.[38] In this case, it is still to be explored how, as a community and individually, the Vanza responded to the challenges of Mozambique's independence. Nevertheless, according to the information shared with me, the current Vanza community in Mozambique is quite significant, which denotes that staying in the country was the option of many, as well as returning after the peace agreements of 1992.

All of these are open interrogations that need longer ethnographic fieldwork to be explored and mapped in a relational mode onto studies of Indian origin communities, not only in Mozambique but also in the overall context of East Africa.

These personal stories also help us to locate Portuguese colonialism in a broader context. Between 1961 (the Indian annexation of the Portuguese possessions on the subcontinent) until the independence of the Portuguese African Overseas Provinces (as Portuguese colonies were legally denominated after 1951, when the Colonial Act was revoked and the Portuguese Constitution was revised), Mozambique would be surrounded by newly independent states and become the last colonial territory in East Africa after 1963, when Zanzibar became independent from the United Kingdom (and united in the following year to Tanganyika to form Tanzania).

In the case of Portuguese citizens from India who migrated to Mozambique, a clear division between colonial and post-colonial periods is not operative. From 1961 to 1975, migrants originating from the previous Portuguese Indian territories navigated between post-colonial and colonial contexts: post-colonial because they were coming from territories that were now in a post-colonial situation and had integrated with the Republic of India, while simultaneously they were colonial subjects in Mozambique. This is an extremely complex juncture, when travelling across the ocean meant not only crossing waters, but also crossing political regimes and chronological periodizations. The adaptation to these fluid and complicated contexts enhanced the sustenance of these migratory networks that, after Mozambique's independence, quickly spread across Europe.

Instead of a conclusion, an open door

The life narratives I have recounted in this article dialogue in meaningful ways with the aesthetics of Diu, its landscapes, built heritage, and visual culture, which manifest the particularities of this place. The superimposition of the different material and intangible aspects of the long history of maritime circulations in Diu attempts to enhance dialogues that allow us to reflect on the multiplicity of traces left by this history and produced in contemporary times. Some of these traces are solid and visible, such as the urban features of the old town's neighbourhoods, while others seem to fade, such as the words and objects that are part of intimate experiences shared with time and generosity. But all of them narrate lived pasts that constitute the present and keep changing the natural, built, and human landscape of this island, and make present those 'elsewheres', to use Prita Meier's expression once again, which this territory embodies in different scales.

One of the most rewarding experiences of doing fieldwork that focuses on migration and lives that span different geographies is, in this case, to hear so much about Mozambique in the inner spaces of some of the houses in old Diu. This particular situation connects with my own personal experience of living in southern Mozambique and Western India, while the names and words that carry a sense of familiarity make me more attentive to the modes and affections with which these memories are shared.

In this way, conversations about Mozambique, objects and photographs kept within the houses, or words that are characteristic of the Mozambican Portuguese language become fundamental lines to encompass the cartographies of these long oceanic connections, which need to be recorded while they are alive.

One open question, from now on, is how all of this can constitute alternative cartographies of the Indian Ocean, and how to perceive and approach the constellation of experiences and social belongings constituting a region that has been constructed precisely on circulations and movements. By alternative cartographies, I mean maps and tools to visualize connections across the Indian Ocean world that incorporate not only

geographical information, dates, and movements, but also incorporate layers of intimate stories, material and visual cultures that allow us to simultaneously read the past and present of the immensity of stories that populate space and time.

Personal narratives also guide us towards understanding the contemporary changes in Diu town. The current state of ruin of many buildings translates stories of migration such as the ones I have started to record, while the construction of new buildings that obey deeply different aesthetics is a living consequence of those same intense migratory fluxes for an array of places around the world, the Vanza being one among many Diuese communities that experience transnational lives.

At the same time, the study of the circulation networks of this community and its presence in Mozambique allows us to establish a counterpoint to the studies focusing on the presence of other social groups in Mozambique and East Africa, as the Banyan or Khoja communities. Interestingly enough, the narratives shared with me commonly refer to the status of employees in important Banyan commercial firms enjoyed by the first Vanza men when they first travelled to Mozambique. This is a fact that calls for an attention to the interconnectivity of the diverse populations living and trading not only in Mozambique, but also in other Indian Ocean port cities.

Thus, a history of century-long journeys across the Indian Ocean, tying a network of knots and strings that link distant geographies, can also be perceived in the dim light of a room in the old quarters of Diu, in the sound of words being spoken, or in old photographs hanging on walls painted in shades of blue.

NOTES

1. *Estado da Índia* was the Portuguese denomination for its empire in Asia and, until the mid-eighteenth century, East Africa. The city of Goa became the head of a vast network of territories under Portuguese control. In the twentieth century, Portuguese colonies became overseas provinces, and Portuguese Indian territories were known as Portuguese India (*Índia Portuguesa*).
2. This research draws from previous ethnographic research in Southern Mozambique over long fieldwork periods between 2009 and 2013, and several short research stays in Diu between 2015 and 2017. While in Mozambique, the presence of Indian origin communities, mainly Gujarati, began as a lateral investigation of my PhD research. In Diu, I was focused on surveying the traces the migration to Mozambique had left in the island and in its population. The first encounter with the Vanza community resulted from my meetings with Vijay, owner of the Vijay Lisboa weaving house, in Diu old town.
3. Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003).
4. *Journeys and Dwellings: Indian Ocean Themes in South Asia*, ed. by Helene Basu (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008).
5. With the exception of works focusing on the Diuese Banyan community and its role in trade with Mozambique and textile trading. See Luis Frederico Dias Antunes, *A Actividade da Companhia de Comercio dos Banianes de Diu em Mocambique (1686–1777)* (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1992); and, in English, Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
6. See Michael Pearson, 'Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast', *The Great Circle*, 7.1 (1985), 1–8.
7. *Port Towns of Gujarat*, ed. by Sara Keller and Michael Pearson (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015).
8. Pamila Gupta, 'Island-ness in the Indian Ocean', in *Eyes across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, ed. by Pamila Gupta, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Michael Pearson (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), pp. 275–85.
9. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 249.
10. Beside the works of Michael Pearson, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Pamila Gupta previously mentioned, see: Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a broad approach to diverse research in this field, see: *Indian Ocean Studies: Cultural, Social and Political Perspectives*, ed. by Shanti Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal (New York: Routledge, 2010).
11. *Resisting Bondage in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. by Edward A. Alpers, Gwyn Campbell, and Michael Salman (London/New York: Routledge, 2007).
12. Among the existing literature, Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2007); and Claude Markovits, *Merchants, Traders, Entrepreneurs: Indian Business in the Colonial Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), provide an extensive bibliography on this broad subject.
13. Lindsay Bremner, 'Folded Ocean: The Spatial Transformation of the Indian Ocean World', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 10.1 (2014), 18–45.

14. Bremner, 'Folded Ocean', p. 18.
15. Prita Meier, *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).
16. *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, ed. by Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2013).
17. Gaston Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2016).
18. For literature on the history and architecture of the old town of Diu, see: Nuno Grancho, 'Diu as an Interface of East and West: Comparative Urban History in "Non-Western" Stories', in *Port Towns of Gujarat*, ed. by Sara Keller and Michael Pearson (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015); Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, 'The Karao Jāmi' Mosque of Diu in the Light of the History of the Island', *South Asian Studies*, 16.1 (2000), 55–72.
19. Mehrdad Shokoohy, 'The Zoroastrian Fire Temple in the Ex-Portuguese Colony of Diu, India', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 13.1 (2003), 1–20.
20. Briefly studied with an ethnographic eye by Ababu Yimene, 'Transplant and Ampersand Identity: The Siddis of Diu, India', *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage*, 4.1 (2015), 19–33.
21. *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean*, ed. by Shihan de S. Jayasuriya and Richard Pankhurst (London: Africa Research & Publications, 2003); *Sidis and Scholars: Essays on African Indians*, ed. by Edward Alpers and Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy (New Delhi: Red Sea Press, 2008).
22. Ababu Yimene, 'Transplant and Ampersand Identity'.
23. Although a significant part of the literature describes this community as Vanja, I decided to use the term Vanza following my interlocutors' option. See Figure 8, featuring the entrance to the library of the Vanza community in Diu.
24. Concept I developed during an earlier ethnographic research in southern Mozambique. Pedro Pombo, *O Espaco entre as Palavras: Antropologia de uma Comunidade no Sul de Mocambique* (Lisbon: ISCTE-IUL, 2015).
25. Roughly corresponding to today's Gauteng Province of South Africa. The city of Johannesburg grew with the development of the mining industry in the region, attracting a significant migrant workforce from Mozambique that became part of the local social and economic context. It also had deep consequences for the economy of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique. For a synthesis of these processes, see: Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South-Africa, c. 1860–1910* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1994).
26. Pamila Gupta, 'The Disquieting of History: Portuguese (De)colonization and Goan Migration in the Indian Ocean', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 44.1 (2009), 19–47.
27. This fact was relevant for the interest that my interlocutors showed in my research and their confidence and generosity: my personal knowledge of Mozambique, Mozambican Portuguese words, and local gastronomy were the object of discussion and facilitated the intimacy that was necessary for sharing personal stories.
28. After independence, the name of Lourenço Marques was changed to Maputo.
29. According to my interlocutors, this association was mainly composed of families hailing from Gujarat and Diu.
30. I am using the term proposed by Isabel Hofmeyr in her article on the Indian Ocean as a method and on the importance of 'crosscutting diasporas': Isabel Hofmeyr, 'The Complicating Sea: The Indian Ocean as Method', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 32.3 (2012), 581.
31. Migration from Diu to East Africa was, and still is, experienced by the Catholic and Muslim communities.
32. Even though I did not interview anyone from the Darji community, there is a close relationship between them and the Vanza. Some diaspora associations gather both communities, such as, for example, the 'Diu Vanza Darji Samaj' in the United Kingdom <http://www.diuvanzadarjisamajuk.org> [accessed 20 July 2017].
33. This year marked the effective colonial domination of central and southern Mozambique, with the exile of Ngungunhane, the last ruler of the Gaza kingdom, who had become a vassal of the Portuguese crown. With this military victory, Portugal obtained direct possession of vast territories that incorporated the then denominated Portuguese East Africa.
34. *Das Indias: Gentes, movimentos e pertenças transnacionais*, ed. by Susana Trovão and Marta Vilar Rosales (Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2010); Rita Ávila Cachado, *Colonialismo e Género na Índia – Diu: Contributos Para a Antropologia Pós-Colonial* (Lisbon: ISCTE-IUL, 2003); Inês

Lourenço, *Os Corpos de Devi: Religião e Género em Diáspora* (Lisbon: ISCTE-IUL, 2009).
35. Gupta, 'The Disquieting of History', p. 23.
36. Gupta, 'The Disquieting of History'.
37. Edward Simpson, 'Sailors That Do Not Sail: Hinduism, Anthropology and Parochialism in the Indian Ocean', in *Journeys and Dwellings: Indian Ocean Themes in South Asia*, ed. by Helene Basu (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2008), pp. 90–124.
38. Gupta, 'The Disquieting of History', p. 35.

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