Crossing Places
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Thank you to Rick Guidotti for kindly allowing us to reproduce his photograph.
FOREWORD

KADIJA SESAY

Literature is the most beautiful of countries
—José Martí, poet and essayist 1853–1895

As the editor of SABLE LitMag, I have always been excited by the enthusiasm of researchers and artists working together. For me, this is where crossing places starts—when academia comes face to face with the artistic space.

Such metaphorical crossings often begin with a physical journey. One of my own turning points came during a “Writers Hotspot” trip to Cuba that I organised in 2000. In Cuba, we participated in a vibrant Black Anthropology Association conference, which encouraged anthropologists and artists to discuss the culture of Africa from a wide variety of perspectives, through stimulating mixed panels. There was so much crossing of art, culture and traditions amongst the African diasporic peoples on the island, that restrictions of any sort hardly seemed to make sense. It was this Cuban-African dissolution of boundaries that helped me to realise that my LitMag needed to expand its focus from “writers of African descent” to encompass all “writers of colour”, if it was to progress as a publication that was alive and relevant.

And so, as I journeyed back to the UK, SABLE grew to cover an ever wider geographical spread and a broader sable coloured spectrum of writers. All due to one revelatory trip to the Caribbean and not, as would be imagined, in response to any of my various trips “home” to Africa.

Having extended the scope of my work I initially hesitated to produce “themed” issues of the publication, as I believed that the “narrowness” produced by specialisation would leave out too many kinds of people. But as it turns out, specialisation reveals the need to focus deeper, as from within that narrow place of the particular, it becomes even more keenly apparent that we are only touching on the tip of a topic: whenever we bring something under the microscope, the depth of what still remains to be researched is revealed. Similarly, the various themes found within this collection are not only exploratory in themselves, but also highlight the fact that there are still new ways, new perspectives for looking at old and new issues and topics within African Studies.
The Summer 2006 issue of *Sable* was dedicated to literature in Africa. One of the most striking and powerful pieces that we included was a memoir written by the guest co-editor, Sulaiman Addonia. In this article, “Living the Oral Tale”, Addonia recalls his own childhood experiences of living as an Eritrean refugee in Sudan. His memories centre on the powerful spoken word performances given by Eritrean women fighters who toured the refugee camps during the Eritrean struggle for Independence. The article exposes how creativity underlies the fight for freedom – in the midst of war, there is word power – and it is word power that stirs people to action.

In many ways every chapter of this volume of essays on African Studies contains its own powerful story. We are all creative writers and it is through this creativity that many of the discussions and studies around the themes of crossings, borders and boundaries are emerging. These crossings are as wide or as narrow as we need them to be, with specialisation running alongside linking and cross-fertilising projects within and about both Africa and the diaspora.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have been working on the Crossing Places project for over a year now and would like to thank everyone involved, from the people who assisted in the conception and organisation of the conference at Nottingham University to those who supported us during the editing of this volume.

In particular, we would like to thank Professor Christopher Johnson, Dr Nicki Hitchcott, Susie Colley and the secretaries in the Department of French and Francophone Studies, University of Nottingham for their help in organising the conference. We would also like to thank those people across the world who helped us circulate our call for papers in autumn 2005 and all the conference delegates who responded so enthusiastically to the brief. Thanks as well to Lizelle Bischoff for setting up the conference blog.

Several people have been particularly involved in the production of this volume of essays, namely the team at Cambridge Scholars Press, Kadija Sesay for her insightful forward, and our patient proof-readers, Susan Dickinson and Philippa Norridge. Of course the volume would not have been possible without the research of all the contributors–thank you for your words.

We would also like to thank Sylvia and Peter Baker and Alistair Pullin for their love, laughter and understanding through many early mornings and late late nights.

Charlotte Baker and Zoë Norridge
INTRODUCTION
CHARLOTTE BAKER AND ZOË NORRIDGE

On a cold January day in early 2006, thirty postgraduate students with an academic interest in Africa met to discuss their research at Nottingham University in central England. This conference was entitled “Crossing Places” and marked the beginning of our inter-disciplinary collaboration that ultimately resulted in the publication of this collection of essays, to which it gave its name.

The students at the conference came from countries as far afield as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Austria, France, Italy, Japan, India, Scotland and the United States. But the majority of these students were studying Africa from within the walls of European or US institutions. Sadly our colleagues from Cameroonian and Nigerian universities were prevented from attending the conference at the eleventh hour by visa restrictions. The irony being that at a conference devoted to African crossing places, our West African friends faced insurmountable boundaries.

Homi Bhabha, himself one of the twentieth century’s most mobile academics, chooses to begin his foundational work *The Location of Culture* with a quote from Heidegger: “A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing.*”¹ The visa restrictions imposed by the United Kingdom on young African scholars form a boundary where Europe’s unequal power relations with its close continental neighbour begin their presencing in no uncertain terms.

Crossing, then, is fundamentally concerned with power. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the forced crossings that have scarred the African continent. From the cruel divisiveness of the slave trade to that of the modern refugee camp, those who are deprived of power have been moved on and along. Nonetheless, on the other side of the coin, voluntary crossings are found to have the potential to subvert, to transgress or overstep a limit, bringing hierarchies and hegemony back into question. This is where concepts such as hybridity and diaspora are re-read as empowering.

Whilst crossing over power structures is perhaps the unifying theme of this volume, the contributors have interpreted the topic of “crossing places” in many

different manners. Some, as we will see in the first section of the collection, have taken a historical approach to crossings, re-evaluating colonial encounters and examining how knowledge is passed on from one generation to the next. These papers also examine the geographical journeys which play such an important role in Africa’s past and present, questioning how we study migrating peoples and why our perception of identity varies over time and space.

Developing this theme of migrating identities, the second section of the collection looks at transgressive identity politics. Here we examine how apparently fixed categories, such as religion, gender and race, can be subverted through processes of identification and self-redefinition. These crossings are perhaps more metaphysical than material, but still consistently reveal the role of political and social structures in delineating boundaries.

The third section of the volume, which focuses on self-definition within changing groups, is markedly post-modern in its feel as it examines the negotiation of multiple identities. The authors analyse the dynamics of deliberate role playing and code switching, showing how Africans today cross between diverse identities on a daily basis. These studies also illustrate the international nature of life in Africa and its diasporas today, raising questions as to whether “crossing” as an academic theme is becoming ubiquitous to the point of redundancy as we move into the twenty-first century.

To close the volume we then turn to hybrid contemporary communities to see how multifarious individuals create national identities within global societies. The two very different essays in this final section show how in both the arts and the sciences, we respond to increasingly varied influences and forge new communities with the potential to reinclude those who have previously been excluded.

Alongside the themes of movement through geography, history and identity brought to mind by our topic of “crossing places”, we have also been acutely aware of the need to cross over the boundaries present within the academic community. This volume includes essays by scholars from university departments as diverse as African Languages and Cultures, English Studies, French and Francophone Studies, History, Politics, Film Studies, Sociology, Anthropology and Genomics. Some of the contributors are attached to centres dedicated to research on Africa, as is the case with scholars from the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies and those from the University of Edinburgh’s Centre for African Studies. However, many others come from departments whose primary focus is towards European-centred research and who consequently feel rather isolated by their interest in Africa.

There are several academic Africa Centres both in the United Kingdom and in the United States that bring together scholars from a range of disciplines, although these centres do predominantly represent the social sciences. There are
also a number of organisations that work to promote interdisciplinary “African Studies”, most notably the “African Studies Association” (United States) and the “African Studies Association of the UK”. In addition to these organisations, several interdisciplinary journals and a growing number of internet resources such as “HNet Africa” are opening up new forums for discussion.

Yet, many of the old boundaries still remain. Language continues to divide the disciplines, particularly in the case of African literature where researchers tend to concentrate exclusively on writing in one language, be that an African language such as Hausa, Yoruba or Swahili, or a European language such as French, Portuguese or English. Several of the postgraduate students who attended the “Crossing Places” conference were attempting to buck this trend by working across languages, but whether this multi-language research will be continued beyond doctoral research as scholars move into the job market is another question entirely, as academic posts are often characterised by linguistic constraints.

Another enduring division in the field of “African Studies” is the boundary between the arts, the social sciences and the sciences. It is rare that “Africanist” conference panels include representatives from each of these fields. Although arts and social science scholars may attend talks outside of their disciplines for interest, real collaboration between researchers from different academic backgrounds still needs to be developed. This is why we have attempted to structure this volume around common themes, rather than by discipline. In pairing film studies with genomic research and literary papers with historical or anthropological perspectives we hope to show the potential points they have in common as well as highlighting the relative strengths and shortcomings of the various disciplines.

So is this Crossing Places volume truly interdisciplinary? We could argue yes in the sense that the collection brings together essays by scholars from a wide range of disciplines who have engaged in active debate with each other. On the other hand, only one paper in this volume–Baker and Djatou’s literary-anthropological collaboration–brings together diverse disciplines within the constraints of the academic essay. And none of the papers are truly an example of a lone scholar drawing extensively from two or more disciplines. Perhaps this is a result of the limitations of length imposed by a collection of this kind since several of the contributors do draw on more diverse academic traditions in their extended doctoral research. But if this volume is representative of postgraduates undertaking African Studies research in the United Kingdom today, then there is clearly some way to go before we attain true interdisciplinarity.

Of course the question can then be asked as to whether interdisciplinarity is so desirable in any case? Whilst the concept remains extremely fashionable in the world of academic conferences and research centres, is it achieved in
practice? And where it is, does it dilute and distract from rigorous academic research? In the best of all possible worlds, drawing on insights—methodological, theoretical and practical—from a range of scholars, irrespective of discipline, would generate new and exciting perspectives on the changing field of African Studies. This is perhaps what the institution of the university is all about: drawing together minds working on diverse questions so that they can share ideas and suggestions. To be controversial, we could suggest that “interdisciplinarity” then is a modern way of compensating for the organic exchange of ideas that is going into decline with the demise of the leisured academic in the face of financial, administrative and time constraints.

What is clear is that projects devoted to crossing through the conventional disciplinary boundaries are increasingly popular in the current climate. Over the past year for example, many conferences have been organised around this theme, variously entitled: “Border Crossings and Boundary Definitions” (University of New Hampshire), “Changing Borders and Creating Voices” (University of North Carolina), “Voices Across Boundaries” (Stony Brook University) and “Boundaries: Creative/Critical” (Loughborough University). Coupled with this interest in disciplinary boundaries is a growing trend towards the study of travel, migration and diaspora, as reflected in the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s five million pound “trans-disciplinary” programme, “Diasporas, Migration, Identities”. This volume of essays is therefore a timely contribution to several emerging fields, adding a new perspective to established topics and bringing to light previously neglected material.

The Crossing Places collection also forms a starting point for new conversations. It exemplifies how young researchers in African Studies are working outwards to make innovative connections and comparisons across disciplines. As we do this we also aim to demonstrate the move from boundary as constructed entity designed to contain towards boundary as a space of agency and innovation. Devoting a volume of essays to postgraduate research is a delimiting exercise in itself, but as the contributors prepare to move into permanent academic positions we hope to carry with us the atmosphere of questioning and community that characterised our meeting in Nottingham.

Nottingham and London, September 2006
PART I

RENEGOTIATING COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

In Part I, Joan Haig, Ayako Aihara and Marie Rodet’s papers examine the colonial insistence on constructing boundaries and ask whether highlighting this construction can call into question colonial discourse. Haig’s study raises questions of boundary crossing in the context of the “Indian Question” and early Indian immigration to Northern Rhodesia which are echoed in both Rodet’s study of neglected forms of female migration and Aihara’s examination of colonial encounters and border crossings in two Zimbabwean war novels, Jikinya and Nehanda. These three studies re-examine the colonial encounter in relation to the construction and consequent manipulation of boundaries which, whether gendered or racialised, are designed to exclude. While Haig draws on the experience of early Indian immigrants to Northern Rhodesia to highlight the boundaries between colonial narrative and local reality, Aihara finds in the novels Jikinya and Nehanda a portrayal of two female protagonists whose marginal status invites an imaginative re-examination of the themes of colonial encounter and communal reactions to colonial encroachment. Rodet also focuses on gender, arguing that gender biases in the historiography on African migration obscure reality. By drawing attention to the neglect of African female migrations in the historiography prior to 1970, Rodet argues for the abandonment of gender dichotomies which ultimately prevent the analysis of the mobility of African women, in order to make female migration visible again. Where all three researchers concur is in their suggestion that official narratives can and should be challenged by academic research.
CHAPTER ONE

CROSSING COLONIAL BOUNDARIES:
THE “INDIAN QUESTION” AND EARLY INDIAN IMMIGRATION TO NORTHERN RHODESIA

JOAN HAIG

Introduction

As a precursor to my current work on the Asian minority of present-day Zambia, I scoured the London archives for the history of those Asians who crossed from mainland India into what was, until its independence in 1964, the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia. Although much has been written on the Asians of East Africa and South Africa, the experiences of Asians in Central Africa, and particularly Zambia, “have been virtually ignored by historians and social scientists”.¹ At least at the outset, however, the story of Indian immigration to Northern Rhodesia was markedly different from other recipient countries. My argument here relates to the earliest phase of Indian incomers to the territory, up until 1926. Although the crossing described is physical, I will argue that Indian newcomers also crossed into a position of marginality in their new surroundings. Whilst the archives represent what Robinson terms the “official mind” of colonialism, I will highlight the boundaries between this colonial narrative and the local reality.² Firstly, I will offer a brief history of Indians in Africa, and explain the phenomenon known as the “Indian Question”. Then I will analyse the ways in which discourses surrounding the “Indian Question”, with their attendant racial fear and prejudice, were imported into Northern Rhodesia from neighbouring countries. Finally, I will show that immigration policy targeting Indians was unfairly applied to the territory.

¹ West in South Asia Bulletin (14, 1994), 86. West himself conflates the experiences of the British Central African territories.
The “Indian Question” emerged as part of colonial discourses on settlement and migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a set of concerns that came about in response to the increasing movement of Indians within the British Empire, and the pressure (real or imagined) that this placed on other British citizens and subjects. Importantly, it adopted various forms at various times in different host countries. One of the first references to this phenomenon is in Winston Churchill’s 1906 travelogue, *My African Journey*. His observations related to Indians in South Africa and British East Africa: colloquially, he referred to it as the “Coolie Question”. The idea that most Indians in Africa originally came as “coolies”—a derogatory term for indentured labourers—is a misnomer commonly found in postcolonial literature on the subject, as will be evidenced below.

In fact, Indians crossed the ocean to Africa in a series of distinctive and cumulative waves. The first brought sea-faring merchants who traded along the
eastern coastal regions and rarely settled or ventured very far inland. The second wave from the 1860s brought the indentured labourers. These Indians were summoned by white settlers to work on sugar plantations in South Africa and later on the East African railway; they tended to be of low caste origin from across the sub-Continent. In many cases, indentured labourers stayed on in Africa after the end of their contracts (typically five years). Members of this class of “free” Indians carved out a space for themselves as laundry wallahs, hawkers, porters, and clerks. The third wave, from the late 1800s, brought the Passenger class: these Indians, “consisting mainly of merchants and a sprinkling of teachers, lawyers, doctors, preachers,” tended to be better educated, relatively affluent, and predominantly Muslim. In all cases—labourer, free, and Passenger—the white settlers and institutions of Empire restricted Indians’ legal and civic rights. By the time Churchill penned his African diary in the early 1900s the “Indian Question” had developed into, “a many-sided conflict of interests and principles.”

The streets and districts of Central Africa, however, were not awash with this busy Indian history. Southern Rhodesia’s use of indentured labour was one-off; five hundred Indians were contracted to toil on the Mozambique-Rhodesia railway line. Further, no class of “free” Indians emerged from that, since “hardly any survived the depredations of heat, animals and insects.” Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, when significantly large Indian populations elsewhere were operating at several levels of society and competing for various spaces in the economy, the numbers of Indians entering Central Africa remained low. Of the Central African territories, Northern Rhodesia was the most isolated from contact with Indians, who were officially recorded entering in 1905. While it is assumed that the Indians migrating to Northern Rhodesia did so under the indentured labour scheme, I found no evidence in the archives to this effect, although it is probable that there was an informal cross-border migration of workers. The majority of Indians entering Northern Rhodesia did so as skilled

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4 Rao in *The Indian Year Book of International Affairs*, 44. In the archives and other secondary literature the term “Passenger” is capitalized; this status was given to those who were self-funded and the capitalization distinguished them from their less affluent counterparts making the same journey from India.
8 This assumption is made by Geber in *Southern African Sources in the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library*, 11; Gann, *Birth of a Plural Society*. 
 artisans or as commercially-driven Passengers. Unlike the pattern elsewhere, they were mostly Hindus from the Gujarat region of north-west India, new to Africa, and their numbers were initially small. In 1911 there were 39 Indians in Northern Rhodesia. Gann, Birth of a Plural Society, 155.

The “Indian Question” in Northern Rhodesia

Until 1911 Northern Rhodesia was divided into two regions: North-Western (governed from Livingstone) and North-Eastern (Fort Jameson). Both parts were administered and financed by Cecil Rhodes’ British South Africa Company. At a meeting in London in the 1890s, Rhodes and his partner, Harry Johnston, shook hands in agreement that Johnston would oversee Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia on behalf of the Company. Back in Africa, Johnston hurriedly set about advancing his colonial ideal; one in which Indians played a central role. He wrote: “[Tropical Africa should be] ruled by the Whites, developed by the Indians, and worked by the Blacks.” Johnston perceived that the European appropriation of the territory required a strong, skilled army and so he employed Indian Sikhs in his coercive land acquisition. While most of these soldiers returned to India, some continued to work for the Company as policemen in Nyasaland. Having assumed the sole right to allocate land, settle whites and cordon off areas as Native Reserves, the Company began to rearrange the ethnic hierarchy of the territory. A new governor, Robert Codrington, was appointed for North-Eastern Rhodesia. Codrington was directly influenced by his more experienced partner, Johnston, who continued to control Nyasaland. The two men worked closely in trying to create a role for Indians as middlemen in the fledgling economy of North-Eastern Rhodesia.

North-Western Rhodesia, on the other hand, was influenced not by the relatively inclusive intentions of Johnston, but by the conservative and segregationist policies of Southern Rhodesia. Whereas Nyasaland’s administration had invited Indians into the country, the convention of the governing offices in Salisbury was markedly different and, like South Africa, was “hostile” to Indian incomers. The two parts of Northern Rhodesia developed separate legislation on immigration. In 1907 the Immigrants Restriction Regulations (Fort Jameson) reflected the open-door policy of Johnston’s Blantyre and included free movement between the two territories. In

9 In 1911 there were 39 Indians in Northern Rhodesia. Gann, Birth of a Plural Society, 155.
10 Quoted in Rotberg, Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa, 13.
11 Gann, Birth of a Plural Society, 154.
contrast, the 1908 Immigration Restriction Proclamation (Livingstone) mirrored Southern Rhodesian attitudes. This is an early indication of how official responses to Indians were shaped by forces outside the territories themselves.

Attempts to redesign the local economy in North-Eastern Rhodesia by encouraging whites into farming and assigning the Indians specific trading licences, was met with some resistance from the white settlers who perceived Indians as a threat. Even in 1905, ill-feeling against Indian traders circulated among the whites. The Glasgow-based African Lakes Company was particularly anti-Asian. However, the Fort Jameson administration remained optimistic about the role of Indians in Northern Rhodesia, and continued encouraging them to fill the gap in the sale of small products and to work as intermediaries between the white producers and African buyers. Johnston hoped that the role of Indians in British Africa would be one of “unlimited success, since they trade under the British Flag, create trade, first in a small way and then in a large way, where no trade hitherto existed.”

Once more, administrative attitudes in Livingstone were somewhat different. There, the colonial administrators sided with the white settlers. The *Livingstone Mail*, the only newspaper in Northern Rhodesia at the time, ran anti-immigration stories under the editorial watch of its owner, L.F. Moore. After the unification of the two parts of Northern Rhodesia in 1911, Moore became a member of the government’s Advisory Council. His political campaign was augmented by his newspaper, in which letters opposing incoming Indian traders were published. The amalgamation of the two sides of the territory required the reworking of their respective legislation. In 1915 the government in Livingstone hammered out the Immigration Regulation (Northern Rhodesia) Proclamation. This was almost an exact duplication of the policy articulated by the governor’s office in Southern Rhodesia a year earlier, making immigration for Indians an extremely difficult process. This document became pivotal for official discussions around anti-Asian concerns in Northern Rhodesia.

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12 IOR Archives, L/E/7/1332 File 763/1924, “Indians in Northern Rhodesia”. Please note, all subsequent archival evidence in this chapter comes from this IOR source.
16 See Gann, *Birth of a Plural Society*, 206. The paper was previously named the *Livingstone Pioneer and Advertiser* and was first published in 1906.
The Crossing of Racial Fear

In all countries the backbone is the small man, the white colonialist with small means, but there is no place for him in the country once the Asiatic is there... It means, if open competition is allowed, the small white colonialist must go to the wall. (Elspeth Huxley) 18

Opposition to Indian immigration in Northern Rhodesia tended to be articulated within discursive frameworks that were formulated outside the country’s borders. These external discourses addressed long-established interracial problems that were not apparent in Northern Rhodesia. In settler dominions around the world there was strong anti-Asian feeling, mostly based either on the growth of an educated, skilled and competitive Indian community, or on simple racially-exclusionist politics. Canada turned away applicants at the port; Australia introduced language tests designed to exclude Asians; and the United States enforced a strict quota system. 19 In South Africa, anti-Indian legislation varied across the regional administrations. The Orange Free State banned new Indians outright; Natal and the Cape Colony placed entering constraints on certain classes of Indians. By 1910, intra-territorial movement of Indians in South Africa was restricted, and the Transvaal had embarked on its policy of racial segregation (a precursor to Apartheid). 20 In South Africa Indians were perceived and portrayed by whites as “a sophisticated and active menace to their own position in colonial society, competing for space, place, trade, and political influence with the imperial authority.” 21 Indeed, in some cases Indians outnumbered whites and, where open competition was allowed, many white middlemen had, as Elspeth Huxley described, gone “to the wall”. 22 By 1920, over 95% of the Indians in South Africa had been born there. 23

In the same decade, the 1920s, the “Indian Question” in Northern Rhodesia was also receiving a significant amount of attention. The Colonial Office, the India Office, the Governor’s Office and the Government of India exchanged several pieces of correspondence about the debate every month. Antagonistic

18 Quoted in Nehru, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 357.  
19 Rao in The Indian Year Book of International Affairs, 50-51.  
21 Swanson in The International Journal of African Historical Studies (6, 1973), 403. Also Gupta in Singh (ed.), The Other India, 60.  
22 The failure of the white middlemen has been attributed to the fact that many did not engage with the local African trade, preferred to import rather than source local products at lower rates, or did not take the same risks as Indian entrepreneurs. See Gann, Birth of a Plural Society and Phiri, A History of Indians in Eastern Province of Zambia.  
23 Rao in The Indian Year Book of International Affairs, 47.
newspaper articles were printed, meetings were held in Livingstone town, and the general attitudes of the whites developed to reflect the fear that there would be an Indian takeover. Data in the archives, however, reveals a different reality: Figure 1 shows that in 1921 as few as ten Indian emigrants crossed into the country, and that this number diminished in subsequent years. That same year a census reported 3,634 Europeans, 56 Asiatic, 145 Coloureds and an estimated 980,000 Africans living in the territory.24

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<td>Indian Immigrants</td>
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Figure 1: Numbers of Indian incomers to Northern Rhodesia per annum.25

In addition to there being no statistical basis for the formation of an “Indian Question” in Northern Rhodesia at this time, the Indians had so far presented no actual threat. In other African countries a hierarchy had developed in which both the upward mobility of the class of “free” Indians and the broad variety of skills brought in by Passenger Indians intensified competition for the white “small man”. In Northern Rhodesia the Indians occupied a less intrusive position in the existing order. Indians did, of course, engage and compete with those around them; in fact, due to their small numbers they were less likely at first to form and live in insular communities. In other African countries, Indians had formed powerful support networks and were mobilising for political representation at the state level. For instance, in East Africa in 1918 an Indian National Congress was formed and a delegation was sent to London to discuss the “India problem” in Parliament: there were 30,000 Indians in Kenya at this time, outnumbering whites by 3:1.26 But in Northern Rhodesia Governor Stanley described the few Indians as “generally innocuous and law-abiding,”27 and there was little real prospect in the foreseeable future of the white colonialist going to Huxley’s wall. The fear had spread, however, and official policy was applied with little regard for realities on the ground.

24 The Northern Rhodesian Handbook, 53.
25 Adapted from India Office Record statistics. IOR Records, “Indians in Northern Rhodesia November 1916-1930”. Note, the first column (1921) comes from Phiri, A History of Indians in Eastern Province of Zambia, 18.
27 18/08/24, H.J. Stanley (Governor of Northern Rhodesia) to J.H. Thomas (MP), Colonial Office London.
Imported Immigration Policy and Practice

In May 1924, the Chief Immigration Officer in Bulawayo informed his counterpart in Livingstone that Southern Rhodesia had decided to exert its right to control the composition of its own population “by means of restriction on immigration from any of the other communities.”28 This sovereign right to exclude individuals or classes of people marked a shift in imperial policy away from the widespread ideal that all Crown subjects were entitled to freedom of movement within the Empire; it also reduced the issue to one of race. In his letter, the Chief Immigration Officer disclosed that the policy was designed, “to prohibit the settlement of Asiatics in the Colony,” on the grounds that they were considered, either for economic reasons or “on account of their standards of habits of life” to be “undesirable inhabitants.”29 Southern Rhodesia’s use of this resolution to clamp down on Indian immigration jeopardised reciprocal provisions built into the immigration laws with their northern neighbour. They provided “that any person born or domiciled in one of these territories shall not be treated as prohibited immigrants by the other.”30 The purpose of the May 1924 letter was to request the revocation of the earlier agreement.

Initially, Livingstone resisted this change. The Viceroy in India sent a telegram to the India Office in London warning that such legislation would “have the effect of excluding every Indian, and will give rise to public resentment in India.”31 Governor Stanley noted that such “wholesale restriction of Asiatic immigration” on these terms deemed Indians collectively to be “undesirable”, with the insinuation that the Indian lifestyle itself was objectionable.32 Stanley was disinclined to adopt such policy in Northern Rhodesia, but he and the Viceroy were rendered powerless in this matter: Southern Rhodesia unilaterally withdrew from the reciprocity agreement.

While the flow of Indian migration into Southern Rhodesia was prohibited, Northern Rhodesia continued to admit migrants from the south and other

28 31/05/24, Letter from J.C. Brundell (Chief Immigration Officer, Southern Rhodesia) to T. Hamilton (Chief Immigration Officer, Northern Rhodesia).
29 The Immigration Restriction Ordinance 1914 in Southern Rhodesia included Section 2 (1) allowing for any individual to be refused entry on these grounds. 31/05/24, Letter from J.C. Brundell (Chief Immigration Officer, Southern Rhodesia) to T. Hamilton (Chief Immigration Officer, Northern Rhodesia). Italics added.
30 04/04/25, Northern Rhodesia: Proposal to Adopt a Policy of Excluding Asiatic Immigrants, from India Office to Colonial Office. (Note: this included Bechuanaland and Nyasaland).
31 01/08/1924, Copy of Telegram from Viceroy, Department of Education, Health and Lands, to the Secretary of State for India (India Office).
32 18/08/24, Governor’s Office (H.J.Stanley), Livingstone, to Colonial Office (J.H.Thomas, MP), London.
neighbouring territories. Nevertheless, officials in Southern Rhodesia alleged that Indians from elsewhere in Africa would regard the expansive and under-policied Northern Rhodesian plateau as a “convenient jumping off ground for illicit entry” into Southern Rhodesia.\(^{33}\) Given the links that existed, which included frequent industrial cargoes across the borderline, it would indeed be difficult to prevent improper entry of any individual. Southern Rhodesia pressed for region-wide restrictions on movement to prevent such migration. This had its desired effect: it spread further feelings of threat across the border, and culminated in a letter from Stanley to the Colonial Office lamenting that he was, “reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the wisest, and in the long run the kindest, course would be to assimilate” with the immigration practices of their domineering neighbour.\(^{34}\) A follow-up letter at the end of the year admitted that no “actual experience had demonstrated the necessity” for this shift.\(^{35}\)

Despite his moderate ideals, Governor Stanley’s accountability to the Crown (first and foremost loyal to white settlers and local Africans) and his ties to Southern Rhodesia’s government placed him in a difficult position regarding the “Indian Question”. In an animated inter-departmental exchange, Stanley explained that, “probably by reports of controversies and difficulties in other parts of Africa,” local Europeans continued to demand stricter legislation against Indians.\(^{36}\) Again, the Viceroy of India stepped in, referencing the Kenya White Paper: “Only in extreme circumstances could [His Majesty’s Government] contemplate legislation designed to exclude from a British Colony immigrants from any other part of the British Empire.”\(^{37}\) It is remarkable that such a debate involving high ranking civil servants and even the Viceroy took place over this issue, because the conditions remained far from extreme: by 1926 there were only 60 Indians living and working in the territory amongst thousands of Europeans.\(^{38}\)

Indian applicants continued to be refused entry on the basis of imported policy. In 1926, the Government of India demanded reasons for the ill-treatment

\(^{33}\) 13/12/24, Notes from Governor’s Office (H.J.Stanley)
\(^{34}\) 18/08/24, Governor’s Office (H.J. Stanley), Livingstone, to Colonial Office (J.H.Thomas, MP), London.
\(^{35}\) 13/12/24, Letter from Governor’s Office (H.J. Stanley), Livingstone, to Colonial Office, London.
\(^{36}\) 18/08/24, Letter from Governor’s Office (H.J.Stanley) to Colonial Office (J.H.Thomas, MP). Italics added.
\(^{37}\) 07/05/25, Telegram from Viceroy (Simla) to India Office (London). Italics added.
\(^{38}\) 04/04/25, Proposal to Adopt a Policy of Excluding Asiatic Immigrants, from India Office to Colonial Office.
of Indians. None could be provided, perhaps because the reason had been reduced, as in Southern Rhodesia, to race. In London, later that year, Governor Stanley met with India Office representatives and it was agreed that the angered Government of India would be induced to “let sleeping dogs lie.” One India Office diplomat later mused: “The whole controversy seemed somewhat unreal because there is at present little or no immigration of Indians into Northern Rhodesia.”

Conclusion

In the first three decades of the administration of Northern Rhodesia, governed first by the British South Africa Company and from 1923 by the British Crown, immigration policy and practice underwent change. With a moderate set of ideals, influenced by Nyasaland, Indians were initially welcomed into the economy. By the 1920s, a more restrictive set of policies had emerged. Rather than being based upon quantitative evidence and social realities, the construction of an “Indian Question” at the official level was underscored by racial discrimination and influenced by legislative concerns elsewhere. Not only did Indians arrive in Northern Rhodesia much later, but unlike their counterparts in other colonial territories, and contrary to received interpretation, early Indian immigrants arrived into a society in which their reception and role was pre-determined. In other countries in Africa, particularly South Africa and Kenya, the problems associated with a growing Indian population had preceded legislative solutions. These solutions included limiting further Indian entry, segregating urban space, and controlling land and trading rights. Such social marginalisation was racial in design and did not take into account the valuable role that the Indians performed in the development of the colonial economies. Rather, white settlers and colonial administrators perceived the Indian’s “middleman” position as a threat and adjusted their attitudes and policies accordingly. As this study has shown with the example of immigration policy, white settlers and administrators in Northern Rhodesia imitated these “solutions” before the Indian population was large enough to be considered a problem.

The strict immigration policy and also the lack of economic opportunities, “held the flow of Indians into Northern Rhodesia down to a trickle” until after the Second World War. It is worth noting here that the post-war phases of

39 01/04/26, Letter from B.W. Bhore, Secretary to the Government of India to Under-Secretary of State for India, India Office.
40 16/07/26, Walton’s Notes on Interview with Sir Herbert Stanley.
41 22/10/26, Draft letter to Colonial Office, from J.C. Walton.
42 Dotson and Dotson, *The Indian Minority of Zambia, Rhodesia and Nyasaland*, 49.
Indian involvement in the territory are more easily comparable to the experiences of other countries. After the war, the Indian population increased fairly steeply, for several reasons. One reason was the unearthing of the territory’s vast copper wealth in 1945 and the subsequent expansion of trading networks. As the community grew, Indians began to move up the social ladder, occupying more prominent urban space, and expanding and fortifying their local African market. As the trading circles of the Indians strengthened, so did the resentment of the Europeans. Moreover, changing world and regional politics, such as the end of British rule in India, the establishment of the Central African Federation, and African independence and nationalism, brought about complex developments in the race relations of the territory.

Accounts of the Indians themselves across the colonial period are difficult to trace in the official archives: the former Deputy Archivist of the India Office Records regrets that “the records on the whole do not provide much biographical data on individual Indian emigrants.” As part of my ongoing research work, I will gather the life narratives of Indian individuals who recall the challenges and rewards of crossing into Northern Rhodesia. Today, the Indian community of Zambia is intricately involved in the social and political life of the country: my further research into cultural boundaries and feelings of national identity among this community will shed light on the extent to which Indians in Zambia continue to be marginalised. There is significant scope for further work on the Indians in Zambia, and also for comparative research between their experiences and those of other migrant groups, both within and beyond the country’s borders. What I hope to have made clear here, however, is that at the outset, the story of Indians’ arrival into Northern Rhodesia is markedly different from other recipient countries, and that upon crossing the Ocean and travelling inland, the first set of Indian emigrants to the territory also crossed into a new position of marginality in the order of the British Empire, over which they had no prior influence or control.

I would like to thank Pat Filter and Lawrence Dritsas for their insightful comments.

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CHAPTER TWO

COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS AND BORDER CROSSINGS IN TWO ZIMBABWEAN WAR NOVELS: JIKINYA AND NEHANADA

AYAKO AIHARA

Introduction

Feminist scholarship has argued for resituating women’s roles and positions in the history of war literature in resistance to the traditional definition of war and its story as a masculine domain and enterprise. By building on women’s war narratives, a body of feminist criticism has contributed to the redrawing of boundaries between male and female spaces—namely those of battlefield and home—and consequently the redefining of the whole concept of war literature. Feminist critics have duly recognised women’s various experiences in wartime as “war experiences” and challenged the traditional discourse of war in which women are either simply disregarded or invited to represent purely symbolic meanings for the “male” work of war and nation-building.

Such feminist scholarly work, despite its focus on stories of the two World Wars, can certainly help to explain narratives from the African liberation wars, although the latter obviously have different dynamics and implications that should be carefully examined. Zimbabwe has fought two fierce liberation wars which have strongly influenced its repertoire of creating writing. The 1896-97 Shona-Ndebele uprisings are considered as the country’s first concerted widespread resistance to the white settlers and came to be called the “first liberation war” from the perspective of the national liberation war of the 1960s and 1970s. The memories of the late nineteenth-century war and its heroes, in particular Nehanda, the influential female spirit medium and political leader,

1 See rich anthologies such as Helen Cooper, et al. eds. Arms and the Woman: War, Gender and Literary Representation and the important work of the Arabic literary critic Miriam Cooke, for instance, Wars’ Other Voices.
emerged as galvanising forces for shaping the second liberation war which led to the country’s independence from the Rhodesian white minority rule in 1980. In this context, the recognition and representation of women’s roles in the two liberation wars have been particularly contentious issues. For instance, Elizabeth Schmidt and Tanya Lyons query a persistent gender-biased perspective in historical accounts that has obscured women’s presence in the first liberation war. There has also been much discussion over women’s experiences of the second liberation war against the background of the post-war nationalist discursive tendency to downplay women’s contribution to the struggle and to ignore the issue of the once-promised women’s liberation. The status of women, as it is represented in Zimbabwean war literature, often echoes such male dominated discourse. Although several writers, both female and male, have sought to insert women’s voices into the discourse of war, women are in most cases just absent or play minor roles, whilst only Nehanda is accorded a significant but symbolic status.

In this respect, Geoffrey Ndhlala’s 1979 novel Jikinya and Yvonne Vera’s 1993 novel Nehanda occupy a unique position in the corpus of Zimbabwean war literature and make a thought-provoking comparison. These two novels are concerned with the nineteenth-century anti-colonial war, whilst most other Zimbabwean war narratives focus on the liberation war of the 1960s and 1970s and its aftermath. Moreover, both writers employ female protagonists and depict their peculiar liminal positions and in so doing, attempt to imaginatively re-examine the themes of colonial encounter and communal reactions to colonial encroachment. Significantly, the cross-border metaphors that revolve around the protagonists are located in the destiny of the nation and ultimately lead to the manifestation of a new national consciousness and the premonition of the future liberation struggle. By focusing on the heroines’ border crossings as necessary incentives for the collective will to fight, Ndhlala and Vera’s novels interrogate the space of women in war discourse and thus recreate the narrative of the first Zimbabwean liberation war.

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3 The important publications concerning this issue include Mothers of the Revolution and Women of Resilience.
4 The most crucial aspect of Vera’s work is the rewriting of the war from a feminist perspective. Other writers who do the same include Chenjerai Hove, Barbara Makhala, Irene Mahamba, Freedom Nyamubaya, to name but a few.
5 For the literary work which portrays Nehanda, see for instance: Chenjerai Hove, Bones; Charles Samupindi, Death Throes; Stanlake Samkange, Year of the Uprising; Garikai Mutasa, The Contact.