



## Bridges connecting Mozambique and Goa

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The Portuguese reached Mozambique in the Indian Ocean, on the African Coast, and India at the same time. In fact, Vasco da Gama set there months before he arrived in India, in 1498. Along the years, the Portuguese established a number of forts along the coast, from Asia to Africa and Japan to Mozambique. This area would later be called Estado da India Portuguesa, of which Goa was the capital. This made Goa an important location since it was responsible for managing the affairs of the other Portuguese entrepôts, which later on became colonies. Goa had business links with Mozambique right from the sixteenth century and, in the process, Goa, Daman and Diu left their influence on Mozambique.

In Goa to deliver a lecture on the Goa-Mozambique connection – Mozambique in the Indian Ocean: Old Connections and Other Narratives of Contacts – is **Maria Paula Menezes**, senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal. Menezes, who traces her roots to Goa, was born and brought up in Mozambique and as such is witness to Goa's impact on that region

Maria de Lourdes Bravo da Costa Rodrigues

**Lourdes (L): Let us begin at the very beginning, with the migration of the people of Goa Daman and Diu to Mozambique.**

**Maria Paula Menezes (MPM):** Lots of Goans settled along the Zambezi River up to the Island of Mozambique. This was the early migration in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In the Mozambique Island, which lies to the North of Mozambique, there is a lighthouse called 'Farol de Goa' (Light house of Goa). These migrants created a nucleus which helped in the administration of the regions, especially the 'prazos'.

**L: What are 'prazos'?**

**MPM:** These are properties that have been leased to different individuals for three generations, and many Goans took this advantage. A well know Goan is Manuel Antonio Sousa, who was holder of a big 'prazo'. He supported the Portuguese to fight other invaders and native rulers with the help of his army of sipayos. It is interesting to know, that some of the benefactors were women and daughters could be beneficiaries on the demise of the mother.

**L: I was told that tailors and fishermen were welcomed by the administration of the colony. And of course many of the doctors who passed out from the erstwhile Escola Medica de Goa were the ones who looked after the health of the people.**

**MPM:** Yes, it was later in nineteenth century, when tailors and doctors started going to Mozambique. Fishermen came from Goa as well as Daman. The people from Diu were mostly merchants. The latter were descendants of the 'Company of Banians', who had the monopoly of the business in the Mozambique territory, till the mid eighteenth century.

In the beginning, there were merchants and many in the administrative system. In fact, the Goans formed the backbone of the administration. There are records to show that they had migrated from Goa and they were called 'Portugueses de boné' (Portuguese with caps) to differentiate them from other Portuguese citizens.

**L: What social status did these Goan immigrants enjoy? Was there racism in Mozambique?**

**MPM:** At different times, the perception about Goan presence changed. But Goans had a strong presence in the eighteenth century. Some Goans acted as members of the local Portuguese administration. Others, as 'prazos landlords' were perceived as a sort of local, hybrid group of what later would be Mozambicans/Africans. They knew and used local languages, married local women, etc. And when Portugal sought to take full control of the Zambezi valley, Goans like Manuel António de Sousa supported them with his private army. In the late nineteenth century the dominant families of the Zambezi prazos had strong connections with Goa.

This situation changed with the emergence of effective Portuguese colonization of Mozambique. If, as historical records attest, for a long time Indians were considered culturally and socially superior to most of the indigenous population, with the imposition of modern colonization in Mozambique, from the twentieth century onwards, this picture changed and racial segregation against Asians

emerged strongly. In December 1961, after the occupation and liberation of Goa, the backlash against Indians in Mozambique was frightening.

**L: Moving from history to culture, what cultural impact did the immigrants have on the region?**

**MPM:** The immigrants broadened our perspectives and presence in the Indian Ocean and allowed us to acquire more businesses and reinforce the same. We gained knowledge from their cultural, religious activities. There was a lot of influence on the food and dress also. You will be surprised to know that along the coast of Mozambique ladies still wear the 'Kimaó', a dress worn by Goans in the past.

**L: You mention food. Describe the influence on the Mozambican diet. Was it Goans that influenced the food or was it the Portuguese?**

**MPM:** Lot of rice and coconut is consumed by us. We also use a lot of tender coconut, and call it 'lanho' as done in Goa. We have sannas, which we eat for breakfast. We prepare sorpatel, xacuti, balchao and don't be surprised if I tell you that we eat bread leavened with 'sura' (coconut toddy). We also prepare bebinca, batica (called mocate by us) and love to eat the mangada. We make lots of achar not 'pickles' with lime and mangoes. I believe that there are many varieties of mangoes that have been taken from Goa.

We also drink coconut toddy and distil caju alcohol and call it nipa. It is consumed by the locals and, unfortunately, has many addicted to it. And do you know that cafreal that you call a Portuguese dish is from Mozambique, originally prepared by the 'cafre'? The 'cafre' is a word used to refer to a native.

**L: Tell us a little about what bring you to Goa, besides of course the lecture you will be delivering at Fundação Oriente.**

**MPM:** Historical legacies create relations (many times quite conflictive) between potential heirs, simultaneously dividing and connecting the parts together.

I am currently undertaking a small research in Goa. It is part of a broader project called ALICE that aims to understand the complexities of the connections between our worlds. From my research here I have come to understand that Goa is in our lives as much as Mozambique is in yours. I think that it is time to 'reconnect' these spaces which for a long time were connected.

*(The talk by Maria Paula Meneses on 'Mozambique in the Indian Ocean: Old Connections and Other Narratives of Contacts' will be October 27, at 5:30 p.m. at the Fundação Oriente, Fontainhas, Panaji. Open to all)*