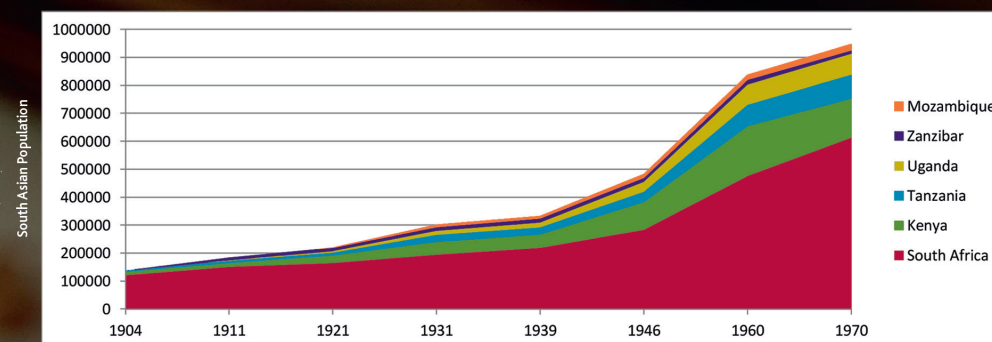




South Asian Population in Africa



Globalization from below

- ★ Migrants from South Asia contributed to building East Africa's infrastructure and administrative apparatus during the second half of the 19th century, and they continued to play an important role throughout the 20th century. We spoke to **Dr Margret Frenz** about her research into circular migration between South Asia and Africa, work in which she combines historical and anthropological methods.

There is a long history of migration between South Asia and Africa, but interactions across the Indian Ocean intensified around the latter part of the 19th century as colonial powers increasingly sought control. This is a topic of great interest to Dr Margret Frenz, who aims to build a deeper understanding of migratory movements across the Indian Ocean between 1850 and 2000 in the *GloBe* project. "The idea is to compare different types of migration movements. Some South Asians came voluntarily as traders, while others came as indentured or contract labourers, for example to build the Uganda Railway from Mombasa to Kampala," she outlines. Others may have chosen to move to Africa for better work prospects. "A group of people were recruited to work in the colonial administration. I aim to compare types of movement, and people who came from different areas of India, and went

to different areas in Eastern and Southern Africa," says Dr Frenz.

The main focus of Dr Frenz's attention is migrants who travelled to Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa, countries with natural resources that European colonizers were keen to exploit. The major European colonial powers, including Great Britain, France, Germany and Portugal, effectively divided up Africa between themselves at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, formalizing the 'scramble for Africa', which led to an increased demand for labour in these countries. "The colonial states needed people to run their administrations," says Dr Frenz. These migrants have been characterized as the backbone of colonial administrations and have put in place the foundations of the globalized economy. "Through maintaining relationships, through the production of social

and cultural space, they enabled globalization from below," points out Dr Frenz. "Without those people, none of the European empires could have built up their administrations and acted on a global level."

As a global historian, Dr Frenz now investigates the historical trajectory of South Asian migrants to Africa. This work involves delving into national archives across three continents to reconstruct a deeper picture of how migration affects families. "The official archives mostly offer the government perspective on migration. They include government reports and census documents, as well as information on laws, regulations and perhaps court cases," she outlines. The European powers ran different countries in the region; Great Britain were able to recruit people from India, the 'jewel in the crown', to work and live in their African colonies.

"Tanganyika (modern day Tanzania) was part of German East Africa until 1918 and then became a British mandate, Mozambique was under Portuguese rule, while Kenya and Uganda were British," says Dr Frenz. "The British recruited Indians actively, as India was also under the British crown. So it made sense for them to actually recruit people from India to East Africa."

This analysis of archival sources provides official or top-down views of migration. It is much more difficult to get material on outlooks of individuals, or bottom-up perspectives. Diaries, autobiographies and other publications can provide valuable insights in this respect. "I combine these multifarious types of sources to get an insight into the story from different angles," explains Dr Frenz. In addition, Dr Frenz also conducts oral history interviews with both recent migrants and the descendants of migrants, to probe personal memories and investigate the importance of family heritage to individual identity. "After their family has lived in a destination country for five or six generations, individuals don't see themselves as migrants, they are at home where they live," says Dr Frenz. "Frequently, there's a distinction

between an individual's social or cultural self-perception, and the pragmatic decisions they need to make to be successful."

Migrants face many challenges when they arrive in a new country, not least adjusting culturally, socially and economically. This is a central part of Dr Frenz's research. "It's important to understand how individuals actually made a new life," she says. In her research, Dr Frenz investigates how they

A level of cultural exchange was, however, established with these migratory movements, which to some degree helped plant the seeds of independence movements. Many people moved between East Africa and India in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, not only between colonies within the British Empire, but also across empires. "Goa was a Portuguese colony for instance, as was Mozambique. In both, there were discussions

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established themselves not only economically, but also socially and culturally in wider society. "I highlight how they founded a church, temple or mosque for example, or sports or cultural clubs, in their new home," she outlines. "It's crucial to be aware that society was tightly regulated in colonial times, particularly in British East Africa. Administrative structures and neighbourhoods were arranged along racial lines."

on how countries could gain independence," says Dr Frenz. India and Pakistan achieved independence in 1947, which sent a signal to colonized countries that it was possible to end colonial rule. It took another two to three decades, however, for East African countries to become independent nation-states; Mozambique, for example, could not celebrate independence until 1975. "There was a lot of pressure from Frelimo

GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW

Circular Migration between South Asia and Africa, c. 1850-2000

Project Objectives

This project is path-breaking, because it conceptualizes global history as a connected history, taking into account experiences, trajectories, and perspectives of different social actors from the 'periphery'. *GloBe* investigates South Asian migrants to Africa, their historical trajectories, the continuities and transformations of their movements, as well as similarities in and differences between their migrations to different parts of Africa. It differentiates the various types of migration in order to create a novel understanding of circular migration movements between South Asia and Africa.

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Contact Details

Dr Margret Frenz
Historisches Institut
Universität Stuttgart
Keplerstr. 17
70174 Stuttgart
T: +49-711-68583847
F: +49-711-68573847
E: margret.frenz@hi.uni-stuttgart.de
W: <http://www.margretfrenz.de/Research>
W: <http://www.uni-stuttgart.de/hi/globe/forschung/index.en.html>



Dr Margret Frenz

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Margret Frenz holds a Heisenberg Position at the University of Stuttgart. Her research interests are in connected and comparative histories of South Asia, the Indian Ocean, East Africa, and Europe between the 18th and 20th centuries. Her publications include *Community, Memory, and Migration in a Globalizing World. The Goan Experience, c. 1890-1980* (OUP, 2014); *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805* (OUP, 2003), and (edited with James Belich, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham) *The Prospect of Global History* (OUP, 2016).



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for Mozambique to liberate itself from Portuguese rule after the Estado Novo broke down," outlines Dr Frenz. "In all East African countries and South Africa, Indians were part of the independence movements."

Migration between the two regions continued during the period in which colonial regions and newly established nation-states existed simultaneously, and the number of South Asians in East Africa is thought to have peaked in the 1960s. Subsequent political developments led many to leave, with the decision of some new governments to nationalize property, for example. "Many Tanzanians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Mozambicans and South Africans of Indian descent didn't see how they could survive economically if they stayed, and so decided to move on," outlines Dr Frenz. "Seismic events such as the revolution in Zanzibar in 1964 or the expulsion of South Asians from Uganda in 1972 affected migration patterns, and in some cases they resolved to set off to new shores. Some went back to South Asia, others went on to Canada or the UK, while today Australia seems to be the most attractive destination," continues Dr Frenz.

The situation has since changed again, and in the 1990s President Yoweri Museveni invited Asians to return to Uganda, and a 'new' community has been established in the country. This is a good example of migration between countries in the southern hemisphere, a topic which has yet to receive adequate scholarly attention. "My work demonstrates that south-south connections have been very significant, and they have often been overlooked. A lot of researchers have focused on looking at movements between the global north and the global south, in both directions," she says. There is a high level of migration nowadays from

the global south to the global north, yet Dr Frenz says it's important to consider migration between countries in the southern hemisphere as well. "We need to look at movements between countries of the global south, to understand what these south-south movements meant then, and what they could mean today," she stresses.

This forms a central part of Dr Frenz's research agenda. The next step within the project will be to go to relevant archives across the world and bring the material from different sources together to create a novel understanding of migration, which will be a demanding task. "My methodology is multi-sited archival and field work, carried out across three continents. So I'm integrating complementary analytical methods," says Dr Frenz. This covers data and documents on migratory patterns between several countries. "Working on the history of numerous countries is more time-intensive than if you go to just one place. The next step will be to write and disseminate findings through workshops and presentations," outlines Dr Frenz. "My goal is to highlight the history of south-south connections, analyse the workings of 'globalization from below', and reflect on narratives, perceptions, and memories of multiple migrants to reach a fuller understanding of today's world, which is characterized by a culture of migration."



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