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FAKULTÄT FÜR KULTURWISSENSCHAFTEN
INSTITUT FÜR ETHNOLOGIE



STUDIEN AUS DEM MÜNCHNER INSTITUT FÜR ETHNOLOGIE, Band 2
WORKING PAPERS IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, LMU MUNICH, Vol 2
Herausgeber: **Eveline Dürr, Frank Heidemann, Thomas Reinhardt, Martin Sökefeld**

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**A XEROX OF INDIA?
POLICIES AND POLITICS OF MIGRATION
IN AN OVERSEAS COLONY**

MÜNCHEN 2012

ISBN 978-3-9809131-1-9

A XEROX OF INDIA? POLICIES AND POLITICS OF MIGRATION IN AN OVERSEAS COLONY

INTRODUCING MINI-INDIA

“The Andaman society is like a Xerox copy of India”. With this metaphor, my local interlocutor did not intend to reduce the whole population of this group of islands in the Bay of Bengal to mere paper existence. He alluded to his own society, called 'Mini-India'. Most Andaman people refer to the icon of Mini-India when they represent their multi-ethnic, but nonetheless Indian, society. Such statement is not self-evident: the strategically important islands are located more than thousand kilometres away from the Indian subcontinent.

Despite geographical vicinity to the South-East Asian countries of Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia, the territory of the Andamans belongs to India.¹ This is due to the islands' historical entanglement with the British Empire and the ensuing Indian nation-state. The present population came into being due to colonial and postcolonial settlement and social-engineering policies.² Resemblances of the contemporary Andaman society with larger representations of the Indian nation can, therefore, be regarded as manifestation of this very history.

Andaman Indians hail from different regions, ethnic groups, castes and creeds of the Indian subcontinent. Some smaller sections have come from Burma, too. The term Mini-India serves to symbolically incorporate highly diverse migratory backgrounds “from Kashmir to Kanyakumari” into an encompassing model of nationalism. It indicates that the society represents a harmonious 'unity in diversity' due to the ideals of the secular nation-state; however, contrary to such obvious declarations of attachment and belonging to *Bharat Mata*, or Mother India, 'mainland' Indians, in general, have very limited knowledge about the territory. Few are aware that there are approximately five hundred thousand island inhabitants. This perception can be regarded as a result of two dominant forms of mass media representation.

First, the islands are projected as space of Orientalist fantasy. Since pre-colonial times, travel accounts, among others from Marco Polo, have depicted them as tropical islands inhabited by 'savages'.³ Continuous media coverage of the indigenous people has reiterated a persisting imaginary that the archipelago consists of large tracks of 'virgin' forest; within this tropical fantasy, the supposedly 'Noble Savages' function as

¹ I am not going to focus on the southern Nicobar Islands, which, together with the Andamans, constitute a Union Territory of India that comprises more than three hundred islands.

² A particular kind of regional 'shadow existence', marked by economic dependence from the centre and discursive hegemony, have remained a salient feature in the islands since colonial times. Such form of governance has been informed by Indian overseas migrations from the larger British Empire, by discourses in the Indian nation-state, and by the transnational sphere, each highlighting an outsider's view on Andaman policies.

³ The Andaman hunter-gatherers migrated to the islands several thousand years ago. A large body of monographs – like Radcliffe-Brown's anthropological classic “The Andaman Islanders” (1922), but also more recent works, e.g. by Pandya (2009), Sen, S. (2010), Sekhsaria (2003), and Venkateswar (2004) – have been written about them.

exotic signifier of 'nature'.⁴ In the last decade, the expanding tourism industry has taken up this paradigm of an 'untouched' frontier to market mass compatible 'dream' holidays in a 'paradise lost'.

The second perception of the Andamans has to do with the anti-colonial struggle. In the aftermath of the Mutiny/ Rebellion of 1857 (Anderson, 2007), state-directed deportation of political and criminal convicts served the colonization of the islands. For the British Empire, the Andaman penal colony functioned as permanent outpost in the Indian Ocean. Overseas transportation, in general, meant that many convicts and indentured labourers did not return to their homelands. They either died or settled down at these destinations; the dread, anxiety, and uncertainty of their relatives and friends who stayed back on the subcontinent, was associated with the allegory of *Kala Pani*, literally the "black water" (Bose, 2006, p.24; Mathur, 1984, p.1; Sen, S., 2000, p.5).

In the wake of nationalist consciousness and mobilisation at the beginning of the 20th century, media reports and rumours about the deportation of revolutionaries to the Andamans contributed to the islands' discursive embodiment as one synonym for *Kala Pani*. This image was gradually reiterated through narratives about freedom fighters like the famous Veer Savarkar. Their imprisonment in the notorious Andaman Cellular Jail was memorized as 'martyrdom' for the nation-to-be. Thus, for subsequent generations of Indians, the islands have transformed into an imaginative site of patriotism and the freedom struggle.⁵

Beyond evolutionist representations of 'savagery' or elitist glorifications of the nation, this paper focuses on largely unnoticed consequences of historical processes of overseas migration and place-making in the islands.⁶ Like the former two grand narratives, Mini-India is a representation of the Andaman society; a product of hegemonic relations of power and knowledge that is efficacious in the islanders' every-day life.

As early as 1937, the colony's social and cultural diversity had been conceptualized as India in "miniature form" (Dass, 2001, p. 73).⁷ After independence, government servants and academics have continued to portray the Andaman society as "Mini-India" (cf. Das, 1982, p.110). Many had the urge to incorporate the multitude of colonial and postcolonial migrants into a common national framework of multi-culturalism: each

⁴ After the 2004 Tsunami had hit the islands, the indigenous people were in the focus of global media reports. These represented their 'miraculous' survival – they had saved their lives by following the animals' retreat in anticipation of the waves – as result of their 'proximity to nature'. Despite the availability of detailed knowledge about the indigenous Andaman islanders, many foreign and domestic tourists believe that they are cannibals. Such discrepancy between factual knowledge and Orientalist myth is symptomatic of the postcolonial condition.

⁵ For a discussion of reverberations of the freedom struggle, see Zehmisch, P. 2011. *Freedom Fighters or Criminals? Postcolonial Subjectivities in the Andaman Islands, South-East India*. in: Pannu, P.(ed.). Kontur, Nr. 22: Colonial and Post-Colonial Subjectivities. 4-16.

[http://kontur.au.dk/fileadmin/www.kontur.au.dk/Kontur_22/ZEHMISCH_MOD1.pdf]

⁶ Despite pointing out ethnographic particularities, I regard my study as embedded in larger theoretical debates of migration and place-making. I understand place-making as a cultural practice of settlement that involves a transformation of spaces into places (cf. Gupta/ Ferguson, 1997). In migration context, place-making connotes not only the process of adaptation to the physical and human environment, but also the exercise of political commitment in that place. This often implies people's inscription in public spaces through "naming, rituals and institutions" (Pascoe, 1992). In migration contexts like the Andamans, one can observe how migrants literally 'made' a place by settling down in a particular setting, establishing social relationships and an attachment to the place, which culminated in political identification and engagement.

⁷ The Census 1901 had already listed forty-five linguistic groups in the penal settlement (Temple 1909: 64).

individual has been categorized as member of, at least, one specific migrant community;⁸ all of these communities, in turn, have been represented as 'organic' components of a 'whole', the Indian nation. While these writers ascribed Otherness to each community, they proclaimed a common 'Indian-ness' as unifying element (cf. Das, 1982, p.74-5; Naidu, 1998, p.246; Dhingra, 2005, p.155).

The idea of the Indian nation, depicted with the trope 'unity in diversity', serves here to classify, divide and encompass a society in the making. Due to hegemonic nationalist discourse, representations of the Andaman 'melting pot' as Mini-India have not only become omni-present in public and private contexts. Moreover, the local model of multi-culturalism has established as framework of 'speaking' the language of the secular state. In order to be 'listened', most Andamanis have, thus, appropriated Mini-India as collective self-representation of their society.⁹

During eighteen months of fieldwork on the islands, most of my interlocutors confronted me with utterances about Mini-India and its supposed qualities. It is, thus, worthwhile asking in how far these representations of communal harmony correspond to my empirical observations. Do they really cohabit in the manner one is supposed to believe? Indeed, I have found a lot of congruence between nationalist depictions of the society, and local values, norms and practices. My every-day experience has confirmed that – apart from mandatory lip services to the nation – there are concrete manifestations of secular ideology.

As described in the literature, I have frequently observed that people embrace 'Nehruvian' ideas: religion is regarded mostly as private matter (cf. Mathur, 1985, p.264); a large number of intermarriages, often love marriages between different castes, linguistic groups and, to a certain extent, religious groups, indicate a gradual shift of group boundaries; there are very few instances of caste or communal violence (cf. Tamta, 1991, p.120); caste discrimination based on ritual purity is generally absent in everyday interactions of people from different linguistic backgrounds; however, it might occur within some recently migrated groups coming from particular mainland settings, which have been able to reproduce a diasporic model of caste, *jati* or *gotra*, from their place; in general public, people from various social and cultural backgrounds mingle with each other, in professional as well as in private matters.

The local way of creating unity can be seen as result of speaking a common vernacular, too. For effective communication, every migrant, hailing from one of the multiple linguistic backgrounds present in the islands, has to adopt the colonial lingua franca: Andaman Hindustani, a colloquial type of Urdu that – in tune with the all-embracing nationalist unification – is often termed as Hindi. Even Tamils, who are known for their

⁸ A community in the Andamans can be defined in various and overlapping ways: by religious denomination or sect, by ethnicity, caste, class, gender, language or even by certain common experiences related to the migration experience. Institutional channels for membership in such communities are political parties, NGOs (especially language associations), unions, communities defined by sentiment or by practice (such as Tsunami-affected farmers), and religious groups such as temple committees, Haj associations or the various churches. While Andaman communities have been formed due to a large variety of identifications, in this paper, I am going to confine myself on communities defined by categories of settlement, language and an imagined ethnicity.

⁹ Most Andaman people have to engage with the system in a pragmatic way, as the state provides the majority of capital and employment. Compared to the Indian mainland, the population enjoys a high standard of life. This is a result of huge annual plan outlays, which are spent for defence establishments, administration, labour, development projects, and for the supply of the population with subsidized consumer goods.

political aversion against the hegemony of Hindi, regularly learn it. Andaman Hindustani is spoken in a large variety of tongues according to the linguistic context of each speaker. There are constant adaptations from other vernaculars, e.g. from the fashionable 'Bombay Hindi', as many youngsters emphasize. While change and transformation have been constant features of linguistic diversity in the islands, the adoption of a lingua franca has also contributed to the formation of local identification and belonging.

Based on what I have described, I do not deny the efficacy of the local version of nationalist integration. My stance is, rather, to critically examine Mini-India as projected model of multi-culturalism. This involves questioning its taken-for-granted status as signifier of communal harmony. There is a 'flip side of the coin': during my fieldwork on political negotiations of Otherness in the local migration discourse, I encountered multiple forms of conflict lurking beneath the surface. I want to highlight this more conflict-laden, politically charged aspect of Mini-India.

While migration to the Andamans was conducive to create an Indian 'model' diaspora of creolized overseas communities, the very model of multi-culturalism led to political conflict between these communities. In sharp contrast to public representations of Mini-India, I have found intense political competition between communities. These lines of communal divide are formed on the basis of essentialized difference.

I wondered if this phenomenon can be understood by looking at the political relationship between the state and identified communities through which welfare policies are channelled.¹⁰ The local welfare regime is, indeed, tied to community politics. Voice and political demands for sinecures are formulated through powerful patrons. The strength of the patrons depends, among others, on their number of supporters, their so-called "vote bank".

One of the most obvious examples of such political conflict is the discourse of migration itself: continuous population growth and increasing social complexity in the last decades has led many to worry about the economic and ecological balance of the islands. People, who consider themselves to be locals or islanders, have stimulated negative views about migration in public; by pointing to threats of overpopulation, they have pressurized the administration to stop further migration to the Andamans.

This article aims at highlighting the politicization of community. I am, therefore, asking for particular consequences of historical migration processes on the formation of communities. What kind of attachment to the place have they developed and how are these forms of belonging articulated and performed in politics? To answer these questions, I will refer to ethnographic data collected in Port Blair, the only town of the Andamans, and in rural areas between 2006 and 2012.¹¹

In the following, first part of my paper, I will depict the history of the Andaman regime of migration and the social engineering policies that led to the crystallization of distinct communities in Mini-India. Political competition, which emerged in the migration

¹⁰ Competition for funds and status between different groups, and the resolving of conflicts in the political arena, can be regarded as characteristic of South Asian politics and peoples' appropriation of democracy (Spencer, 2007).

¹¹ I have to point out that my research on the topic has, to a large extent, been influenced by male interlocutors and their gendered perspectives on politics. Women's voices, especially those in a subaltern position, were often suppressed by male claims on universal representative status.

process, will be the topic of the second part. I will exemplify relevant aspects of reification of community by pointing to a contemporary conflict about reservation policies. In the final, third part, I will highlight the problematization of the very discourse of migration and subsequent implications for state policies.

1. HISTORY OF THE ANDAMAN REGIME OF MIGRATION

Colonial and postcolonial forms of managing migration have continued to shape material and discursive frameworks of subjectivation. The Andaman regime of migration has to be analysed by taking into account broader socio-economic and historic conditions. For the sake of analysis, the regime can be divided in a twofold manner: first, state-directed policies of planned population movement; second, independent migrations occurring without administrative planning.

Both the British (1858-1942) and the postcolonial Indian state have applied overlapping technologies of power and knowledge. Social engineering implied the shaping of a new and 'better' society through population movement. Transport and rehabilitation of 'problem populations', such as convicts or refugees, served to ameliorate 'receiving' as well as 'sending' contexts (cf. Sen, S., 2000). Here, subalternity¹², appears both as precondition for the transportation of populations as well as their continuous domination in the island colony.

In addition to that, there has been an independent, 'self-motivated' population movement to and from the islands since the early years of colonization. The urge to 'develop' the colony's infrastructure, and to enhance its institutionalization, has attracted labourers, adventurers, scientists, entrepreneurial traders, soldiers, and white-collar as well as blue-collar government servants.¹³

Due to these two different types of migration, state-directed and independent, particular property relations and specific divisions of labour developed. This has had consequences for the cohabitation and interaction of communities. In the following, I am going to describe the ideological and material premises that have shaped the Andaman regime of migration and the subsequent emergence of communities.

Forced labour migration - the foundation of the 'local-born' community

After the Mutiny/ Rebellion of 1857, delinquents from all over India and Burma were transported overseas to the Andaman penal settlement at Port Blair.¹⁴ The diversity of convicts posed a significant problem for the administration. There was a constant urge to classify the subalterns in order to know and discipline them.¹⁵ As soon as the con-

¹² I define subalternity as a relationship of subordination as well as physical and epistemic violence, experienced by marginal groups in the modern state – women, children, peasants, indigenous people, daily wage labourers, refugees, et cetera. However, the condition subalternity cannot be applied on everyone belonging to the 'lower-class' section. Being subaltern is characteristic of not 'speaking' and, thus, of not being 'listened' to within dominant frameworks of representation (Spivak, 2008). This lack of articulated voice inhibits socio-economic mobility of subalterns, but it does not necessarily fix subaltern subjectivity for ever: many examples from the Andamans demonstrate, how the descendants of former convicts or refugees have entered the higher echelons of civil society.

¹³ Apart from searching employment, each migrant had multiple other reasons to come to the Andamans; e.g. adventure, love, friendship, evasion from state or kin, land grabbing, religious conversion, etc. This multitude of motivations serves to transcend simplistic conceptualizations of migration, which are prevalent in classical migration studies applying mechanistic push-and-pull factors.

¹⁴ In 1904, the German scientist Gustav Fritsch came to the Andamans to study the convicts' physiognomy. He called the penal colony a "laboratory of Indian humankind", because the convicts represented such a diversity of races, castes, religions, and classes of India (Anderson, 2004, p.199).

¹⁵ The British attempted to order the obscure life-worlds of the colonized with their hardly classifiable multiple belongings through administrative classifications of collective group identity in the 'ethnographic state' (Dirks,

victs had arrived on the islands, the administration took over the management of their religious and social activities (Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.10).

Convict labour was primarily utilized to dry swamps and cut forests, and to develop the infrastructure in order to ease the colonization. The penal colony was established out of strategic and punitive considerations.¹⁶ A rehabilitation scheme was set up that allowed loyal convicts to settle down with their mainland families as free, self-supporting colonists at the end of their term (ibid., p.27). To create families for the permanent settlement of the colony, the British encouraged self-supporters to marry convict women, too (Sen, S. 2004, p.261).

In these weddings, less emphasis was laid on the observance of rigid rules of engagement from the mainland. Spouse and groom just had to be from the same denomination (Temple, 1909, p.67). There was an attempt to reconstruct caste amongst 'Hindus' after 1884 (Sen, S. 2004, p.279); however, as suitable matches in the same *jati* were regularly lacking, inter-caste marriages became common. Facing less social control through extended family networks, sometimes even inter-religious marriages were arranged. The offspring of these often caste and language barriers transcending unions was classified as 'local-born' community by the administration.

In the following decades, many 'local-born' raised their socio-economic status through education and employment in the administration (Dhingra, 2005, p.163). Descendants of older generations of local-born have confirmed that, due to spatial distance to their kin on the mainland, the importance of caste status and ritual purity has weakened. Contemporary self-representations of the 'local-born' community emphasize that they had developed a caste-less society.¹⁷

Because of their appropriation of various cultural elements from the convicts' contexts of origin, their community has also been conceptualized as cosmopolitan "creole culture" (Ghosal, 2001, p.206). The local-borns' approach of encompassing cultural difference and Otherness expresses a core value of the contemporary Andaman society or Mini-India; for example, people from different confessions regularly take part in each others' religious festivals (Tamta, 1991, p.120). Initially, the term Mini-India was applied to this particular hybrid community. Later, the ascription, along with its con-

2001). This led to the gradual reification of community identifications, as these were fixed in the process of knowledge production. The classificatory differentiation of separate, bounded castes and their politicization continues to haunt postcolonial relations of power and knowledge. These categorizations can be regarded as an outstanding example of the postcolonial legacy of colonial governance.

¹⁶ Regarding the purpose of setting up a colony in the Andamans, differing priorities were identified by historians. Satadru Sen's "Disciplining Punishment" (2000) rests on a Foucauldian argument that the institutionalization of the penal settlement had the primary purpose to isolate, punish, survey, rehabilitate and reform subversive or 'criminal' convicts from the Indian mainland. In "Imperial Andamans" (2010), Aparna Vaidik accuses Sen of neglecting the spatial and geographical dimensions of insularity. She states that "[t]he establishment of the penal settlement (...) was only a mode of colonization and not the actual objective as it has come to be represented by historians." (Vaidik 2010, p.36). According to Vaidik, the primary motive for the colonization was to gain control over the Bay of Bengal (ibid, p.6).

¹⁷ Such statements about the absence of caste are paradoxical for several reasons: in the light of reservation politics, these utterances have to be interpreted as politically motivated representations of internal unity; however, there is an empirical absence of discrimination on the basis of purity rules. Most local-borns have, indeed, only vague ideas about their caste backgrounds (Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.19). Further, there is lack of conceptual clarity in local parlance; caste is often interchangeably used as a synonym for either ethnic community, religious denomination, category of settlement, or, in its more original sense of indicating hierarchy, as *varna*, *jati* or *gotra*.

notations of modernity and secularism, has been extended to the whole Andaman society.

Migrations after 1920 – from convict to contract labour

Sustenance and sustainability have continued to be exigent issues of island policy. Since the opening of the settlement, the administration had to uphold the chain of food supply and all other necessary amendments of 'civilized life'; rations, transport of passengers and convicts, and communication were regularly provided by overseas shipping (Vaidik, 2010, p.63-4). Expenses multiplied due to steady arrivals of convicts and the crystallization of the local-born population.¹⁸

Poor climatic conditions, high expenses, and the dependence on imports urged the administration to reconsider their settlement policy in the 1920s. They considered to close down the penal settlement at Port Blair and to develop into a free colony (Anderson, 2008, p.5; Mukhopahyay, K. 2002, p.8). Additionally, the realization that the effect of transportation of 'criminal classes' was not as deterrent as expected, led to the emergence of a new policy that laid more emphasis on agricultural development (cf. Tamta, 1991, p.69). Commercial farming and plantations were to replenish self-supporting farming activities and, thus, to ensure self-sufficiency (cf. Dhingra, 2005, p.71).

One distinct outcome of this policy change was the settlement of two criminalized groups of subalterns as self-supporters: the Bhandu, a 'criminal tribe' from North India, and the Moplah, rebels from the Malabar coast. Both groups were not split up like the previous convicts in the settlement. Instead, they were settled in isolated spaces of jungle, far away from the villages and stations of the penal settlement (Coomar, 1997, p.23; Dhingra, 2005, p.161; Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.8). This served to avoid potential menace to the well-maintained order of the colony, which these rebellious and 'criminal' groups were thought to cause through insubordinate behaviour.¹⁹

Moreover, the development of new plots of agricultural land coincided with a desire to stretch the geographical boundaries of the colony. An increase of surplus production could only be realised through the clearing of forest land. This 'settler colonialist' policy of stretching the frontier into 'virgin' forest was combined with the expanse of commercial forestry. The exploitation and export of high-valuable timber like the endemic Padauk, Teak and other hard-wood species was to provide a source of income. Timber exploitation in tropical rain forests required labourers, who were deemed fit for this purpose. That's why the Karen, an ethnic group from Burma, and other Burmese labourers,²⁰ were brought in by the government. Burmese labourers, including

¹⁸ Total population increase between 1874: 9,217 and 1901: 16,101 (Census report for 1901, R.C.C Temple Collection, MSS Eur/F 98, no.42, IOR, cited in: Vaidik, 2010, p.67)

¹⁹ Due to their separate settlement, both Bhandu and Moplah were able to preserve and reconstruct a large variety of traditions from their places on the subcontinent. This, in turn, has led to heightened identifications with their diasporic communities. In the contemporary social substratum of the Andamans, they are regarded as independent communities that have established in addition to the local-born community.

²⁰ Many Burmese were recruited for the "Bush Police". They had to fight the indigenous Jarawas and track down escaped convicts (Dhingra, 2005, p.161). People also told me that many Burmese were artisans and wage labourers in colonial Port Blair. After the independence of Burma, the majority of Andaman Burmese was 'repatriated'.

Karen, were assumed to cope better with the humid, tropical climate because of the geographical proximity of the Andamans to Burma (Dass, 2001, p.108).

From 1918 onwards, indigenous labourers from the Chotanagpur plateau in Middle India were recruited as coolies by the Catholic Labour Bureau in the city of Ranchi. Their subalternity can be regarded as precondition for the physical exploitation of their labour power by the recruiters and the Andaman authorities; the example of their 'ethnic' naming, however, demonstrates how they were subjected to epistemic violence, too: Instead of enumerating and recognizing a large variety of *Adivasi* labourers according to their belonging to groups such as Oraon, Munda, Kharia, all of them have been subsumed under one category, referring to their place of recruitment: they have been called 'Ranchis' or 'Ranchiwallahs' (Mukerji, 1992, p.113).

Most circulating labourers and many free settlers, who had a place on the mainland to return to, left the islands before the Japanese occupied them in World War II (1942-45). Only those groups, who had collectively stayed back during the occupation, i.e. the local-born, Bhanu, Moplah and Karen, were later recognized as 'pre-42' communities (Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.18). Pre-42 is a specific category of settlement that denotes contemporary descendants of colonial inhabitants. It indicates, therefore, a certain, periodical sense of time, which implies a sense of place, too. This attachment to the islands has become a marker of differentiation from postcolonial settlers and migrants.

Rehabilitation and Colonization Settlement

After independence, the dominant perception of the Andamans was that vast spaces of dense tropical forest were 'terra nullius'. Due to the steady numerical decline of indigenous people, these lowly populated jungles were thought of being suited for colonization (Sen, U., 2011, p.223). They appeared apt for the settlement of Bengali 'Hindu' refugees.²¹ The decision to settle the island territory was decisively influenced by larger strategic considerations. The distribution of citizens in the name of the recently founded nation state into low-populated, marginal regions was to prevent internal political instabilities and invasions of neighbouring countries.

The colonial "garbage dump" policy, the deportation and settlement of problem populations (Sen, S., 2000, p. 53), was, therefore, continued by the postcolonial Andaman administration. Emulating its predecessor, the policy not only served to increase the governance of the mainland by removing landless people, squatters, refugees, and other categories of uncontrollable subalterns to the former penal colony, where they were rehabilitated as sedentary farmers; this massive state-directed population movement also had the aim to rejuvenate the older colonial project of attaining self-sufficiency in terms of agricultural production (cf. Dhingra, 2005, p.187; Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.15; Venkateswar, 2004, p.126).

²¹ These had come to India after their exodus from East Bengal, the newly declared East Pakistan. To a large extent, the refugees had moved to Kolkata and other cities of West Bengal (cf. Chatterjee, 2006, p.54). Because many of them had squatted available public spaces in and around cities, they were perceived as a 'threat' to public order. In later years, the continued violence between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka had caused an increase of refugees in India, too. The Andamans were seen as a bastion to bring these refugees (Venkateswar, 2004, p.153, Footnote 8).

1. History of the Andaman Regime of Migration

Thus, between 1949 and 1978, under so called rehabilitation and colonization schemes, all together 4531 families were settled on cleared plots of jungle (Dhingra, 2005, p.167). Most families were provided with either ten or five acres of hilly and paddy land, supplied with food items and timber, pesticides, a buffalo, and/or a milk cow plus some cash (Mathur, 1985, p.266). More than 86% of these families were Bengali refugees (Biswas, 2010, p.90).

Apart from that, landless communities, like Malayalis from Kerala, and Ranchi labourers from Middle India, were rehabilitated. Further, Tamil Sri Lankan repatriates, and Telugu as well as Tamil repatriates from Burma, came to the islands under the same schemes. These non-Bengali families were probably brought in by the government as a reaction to protests of the local-born community. The old inhabitants, who were in control of political power, had fears that a Bengali majority might overpower them (ibid., p. 89-90).

Influenced by secular and egalitarian concepts of the Nehruvian welfare state, rehabilitation functioned as a social upliftment policy for the previously deprived settlers. In the beginning, they were cast as agricultural pioneers that colonized the frontier (Sen, U., 2011, p.222). While agriculture had been the main source of livelihood for the first generation of settlers, many of their descendants in the second and third generation have become government servants (cf. Paul, 1994, p.44; Biswas, 2010, p.147-8). This has reduced their economic dependency on agriculture and, therefore, their willingness to cultivate the land. Nonetheless, being a land-owner turned out to be a crucial advantage for many settlers. Later coming migrants in their neighbourhoods had to lease or buy land from them. I have observed that some migrants even acted as sharecroppers of settlers (Paul, 1994, p.43-44). In this 'neo-zamindari' system, a certain proportion of the harvest, often a third of it, must be handed to the land owners.

Independent Migration

Parallel to the state-directed settlement of people, an independent movement of people to and from the Andamans has always existed. These migrants – soldiers, administrators, servants, labourers, traders, teachers, fishermen etc. – have come either temporarily, as circulating labour, or they have settled down permanently. Privileged migrants have always been white-collar government servants. Most of them were from Kerala and West Bengal (Mukhopadhyay, 2002, p.16). Many had been attracted from the mainland with raised salaries. While the majority of educated white-collar migrants returned to the mainland after some years of service, a considerable number has taken up permanent residence in the islands, too.

In the decades after independence, objectives of development in the Andamans resembled the colonial focus on agricultural development and a timber-based industry (cf. Mukhopadhyay, C., 2002, p.30). A large number of government servants and labourers was needed to provide the development of infrastructure. Possibilities of private employment were generated in fisheries and the evolving service and trade sector.

In order to clear plots for the rehabilitation settlements in the remote forest areas of South, Middle, North and Little Andaman, there was a demand for specialized forest labour. Since convict labour was no longer available, a new labour recruitment scheme

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had to be set up (ANI Administration, 1976, p.149). In continuity with colonial schemes, the administration hired many Ranchi labourers from the Chotanagpur region to work on a contract basis. Several officials have confirmed to me that as Adivasis, as indigenous people of India, they were assumed to be racially fit for this kind of labour. Their 'aboriginality' and 'primitiveness' have both served as the main explanation for their 'docility' and 'hard-working' character (cf. Ghosh, 1999).²²

Additionally, there was a demand for workers in the timber industry, in large-scale infrastructure projects, and in the domestic sector. Chatham saw mill, one of the biggest in Asia at that time, was especially in need of man power. Therefore, contractors mainly brought labourers from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Ranchi (Dhingra, 2005, p.254). Until now, labour migration has been organized by subcontractors, who work for larger contractors that often take over infrastructure development projects from the administration. These subcontractors go to respective villages on the mainland and bring whole groups of precarious, but able-bodied, labourers to the Andamans.²³

Common to all migrants is that they were not given land under rehabilitation or colonization schemes, even if they were employed with the government. In general, migrants were not regarded as potential settlers by the administration. They were repeatedly termed as "floating population" (cf. ANI Administration, 1976, p.150), implying that a 'reserve army' of circulating migrants is willing to sell their labour power without establishing personal relationships or attachments to the place.²⁴

Based on ideological conceptualizations of cultural 'rootedness' of communities, it has been expected that migrants were keen to return to the mainland after their contract terms had expired. Assumptions that people 'naturally' want to return to a definite place of 'origin', defined by kinship and territoriality, have continued to shape the migration, employment and development policies in the Andamans for several decades.²⁵ It has led officials to ignore the fact that migrants have continuously taken up residence in the islands.²⁶

²² This has determined the relationship with their employers and the larger society, which can be described as one of subalternity. Their discrimination as 'jungles' has contributed to their continuous social and political marginalisation in the island society. In spite of their major contributions to the process of colonization and rehabilitation through clearing of forests and infrastructure development, there were only 197 families rehabilitated as reward for their compliance with the Forest Department (Statistical Outline of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 1962, cited in: Dhingra, 2005, p.83). As many other Ranchis have not been provided with land to settle down, they have either leased or bought land from settlers. Most have encroached forest land for building houses and gardens, often near their previous places of work. Ranchis, as a community, lack powerful political support that articulates their voice. Not much has been done for peoples' welfare on encroachments of forest land: schools do function only partially, whereas primary health centres, electricity, and infrastructure are absent. It has been assumed that "they are tribals, and quite happy in the forest." (Saldhana, 1989, p.14).

²³ Due to post-Tsunami rehabilitation funds and the general economic growth, the demand for cheap labour in the construction business has increased in the last years. Contractors have always employed the most precarious and, thus, cheapest labour power. Most of the present contracted labour has come from rural West Bengal. Confirming local rumours, one subcontractor told me that he had transported illegalized Bangladeshis, who had crossed the border to West Bengal.

²⁴ Many studies about migrant labour in India stress the aspect of circulation as its main characteristic (Bremner, 1996; Gidwani/ Sivaramakrishnan, 2004). While I acknowledge the validity of these approaches, my study is locally confined to the Andamans as place of departure and arrival of people.

²⁵ Ranchis, for example have always been regarded as circulating labour force. While many, indeed, used to return to the mainland after their tasks were completed, lots of them have decided to stay back and bring their families, too. A considerable number has encroached forest or revenue land to build houses and gardens. The second or

1. History of the Andaman Regime of Migration

The contrary of these assumptions has manifested: over the decades, the Andamans have come to be known as a place of various opportunities with large chunks of 'free' land (Mukherjee, 2002, p.74).²⁷ After dropping out of their contracts, many labourers have decided to stay in the islands. Decisive factors have been established networks of friendship and kinship, good employment opportunities, a comparatively high level of income and a good quality of life (cf. Dhingra, 2005, p.102). Local interlocutors, who had migrated themselves, told me in retrospective that they had needed several years to establish in the upwardly mobile local society. This social advancement has led them to refuse to do low-paid manual labour any more. As a result, contractors have constantly brought in new labourers.

People often moved with their families through networks of chain migration on established routes from different places; e.g., a considerable number of Andaman fishermen came from particular villages in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh (Mukhopadhyay, K., 2002, p.24). While some migrants have lost contact to their families on the mainland, the majority has maintained personal links to their *muluk*, or native place; even if they have settled down permanently in the Andamans, they continue to visit their villages once a year, or, at least, once a decade.²⁸

Others live in the islands only for certain periods of a year; e.g., for seasonal work in tourism or construction, until they return and come back again. Marital alliances are forged to connect the multiple dimensions of place attachment, too. Circular population movement and multiple forms of belonging distinguish migrants from settlers and pre-42 inhabitants; the pre-42 and most settlers define themselves through their belonging to the Andamans.

third generation now lives on these lands. Most of them have never gone to mainland. They identify themselves as locals.

²⁶ This parallels conceptualizations of migration in other parts of the world; e.g., as late as 1998, after several decades of mass migration, the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD) was finally declared as "immigration country".

²⁷ A young owner of an Internet Cafe in Kolkata, who had no personal relationship to the Andamans, told me: "In school, when someone was not good in studying, our teacher made the joke: If you are not successful in school, go to Andaman. There you will get land and everything you need from the government for free. *Keti karo, Khana khao!* [PZ: Make agriculture and eat your food!]."

²⁸ A good example of these transregional connections are trader families from Tamil Nadu. Until today, many families have been able to uphold their connections to the Indian mainland through regular business and holiday visits, the forging of marriage alliances and the 'import' of rituals and festivals. One of my interlocutors belonged to an influential Tamil business family from Chennai, where he had married within his caste. In colonial times, his ancestors had come to the Andaman penal settlement to supply the population with consumer goods. Since then, his family has dominated certain segments of trade to and from the islands. As confirmation of their influence and status, he told me that in 1967, his family even managed to bring 'their' Murugan temple to Port Blair from Chennai. [PZ: of course, they did not bring the whole temple, but only the *murti*, the statue of the God Murugan!]

2. ISLAND MULTI-CULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY

The politicization of community in the islands is closely intertwined with categories of settlement that I have described above; migration policies and processes of place-making have contributed to the crystallization of several separate communities: Local-born, Bantus, Moplahs, Karen, Bengalis, Malayalis, Tamils, Telugus, Ranchis, Punjabis, Marathis, et cetera.²⁹ There are, of course, internal divisions within the communities.³⁰ The migration from a locality in the Indian mainland, from a particular village, district or state, functions here as a political identification, a creation of Selves versus Others.³¹

For Andaman people, the community form has become the primary mode to articulate voice vis-a-vis the administration. This voice is most often not directly articulated by subalterns themselves. Subalterns rarely speak for themselves within established frameworks of political representation (cf. Spivak, 2008). Instead, they depend on articulate, and, therefore, educated and well-connected leaders, who know how to speak the language of power. These are civil society actors like ex-government servants, religious leaders, businessmen, media persons, NGO employees, politicians, and so called 'social workers'. Their role as intermediaries is to articulate voice for numerically large groups of their subaltern 'clients' in public, especially towards those who govern. Their claim to directly represent a strategically unified and decisive subaltern voice serves to underline their political efficacy as 'voice-givers'. This particular way of voicing demands through community leaders can be regarded as functional element of a welfare regime that is based on ethnically framed participation.

The Politics of Ethnicity

Contrary to the harmonizing ideal of Mini-India, local welfare policies have become entangled with the local discourse of multi-culturalism. In the following, I am going to demonstrate how the practice of distributing welfare, and of recruiting government servants according to categories of community, has created political conflict in the

²⁹ In the Census 1991, the main languages spoken in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were enumerated as follows: Bengali (64.706), Tamil (53.356), Hindi/Hindustani/Urdu (50.961) Telugu (32,979), Nicobari (26.142), Malayalam (26,075), Kurukh/Oraon (9253) (Directorate of Statistics, Port Blair, cited in: Dhingra, 2005, p.168)

³⁰ The often class-transcending, categorical mingling of subaltern wage labourers, white- and blue-collar employees, and the bourgeoisie in separate ethnic 'containers', leads to a political division of those who might otherwise have common class interests.

³¹ It is important to mention that I do not assume any primordial attachment of migrants to one of these groups. Instead, I regard subjectivities as products of genealogies of power and knowledge. Subjects are capable to choose between one or several of these different politicized forms of community, in which she or he is often already embedded through life history. I argue, therefore, that belonging to a community is part of a political identification that encompasses other forms of 'traditional' loyalty and solidarity from the 'sending' contexts such as *jati*, *gotra*, family affiliation, et cetera. While the latter are often reconstructed as a part of the process of place-making, community identifications can be regarded as products of the specific cultural "theatre" of local politics (cf. Amit/ Rapport 2002, p.7-8). 'The cultural' appears here as a permanent battlefield in the fight for recognition of position and status. It can even transform into a 'culturalism', when "ethnicities mobilized by or in relation to the practices of the modern nation state...take cultural differences as their conscious object" (Appadurai, 1996, p.146-7).

island society: community leaders aim to strategically appropriate provisions of welfare; they do this by instrumentalizing the discourse of ethnic difference and sameness; community itself has, therefore, become the first and foremost vehicle of such conflict.

Local-born civil society actors, for example, identify themselves as local Andaman Indians in opposition to mainland migrants. One local-born gave me a clear definition of how he imagines ethnicity: "What makes the identity of an ethnic group? A common history, a common descent, a common language, and a common culture. That's what we have!"

Similar processes of ethnic identification can be observed among the other two categories of settlement, the rehabilitated settlers and the independent migrants. Political leaders have tried to include new migrants from their respective states, who often came through networks of chain migration, in their 'vote bank'. This emphasis on commonalities, like a vernacular, or the sharing of an imagined 'culture' and history, contributed to the forging of diasporic communities. As a result, in the contemporary island society, collective self-representations vis-a-vis others who do not belong to one's own vernacular group are predominantly framed in such broadly defined cultural identifications.³²

The production of Self and Other is accompanied by the ascription of certain stereotypes to each community. My interlocutors often emphasized primordial and homogeneous forms of belonging to a particular community. Especially, when they emulated political rhetoric, I could not take them at face value; they attached specific racial, social, and cultural stereotypes to certain ethnicities and furnished with positive or negative qualities: Malayalis, for example, who are often employed as clerks, are said to be educated, but also deceitful. Tamils, who dominate business and trade, are stereotyped to be arduous, but also scrupulous. The local-born are depicted as 'criminals' because of their convict ancestors. Bengalis are said to have an affinity for politics, and a love for arts, but are assumed to be lazy. On the contrary, Ranchis, who are mostly landless labourers living on encroachments, are seen as hard-working, docile, and submissive. Due to their indigeneity, they are continuously represented as backward, primitive and dumb, too.

Many of these clichés go back to historical divisions of labour and modes of production in the mainland. These have been reproduced and appropriated to the local context. Such objectifying representations can be regarded as strategic forms of essentialization.³³ They have to be interpreted as conscious strategies of 'position-making' in a multi-cultural system of political competition.

³² Apart from the social imaginary of diasporic solidarity, these groups are internally divided into different castes, classes, sects, and religions; e.g., two Tamils from different castes might structure their interaction according to reconstructed rules from the mainland. Nevertheless, if claims have to be made via the administration or other ethnic groups, they will strategically assume a diasporic unity as Tamils – as imagined community based on a common language and 'culture'. On the contrary, a Bengali, who does not know the specific caste names and backgrounds of both Tamils, will not be able to differentiate them without getting to know them better. For him, both will be first and foremost Tamils, or Madrasis. Vice-versa, both Tamils will not necessarily know that a Bengali named Ram Mandal is from the *Namasudra* caste. Instead, she or he will just be a Bengali for them (cf. Paul, 1994, p.30).

³³ I have appropriated Spivak's contention that the Subaltern Studies Collective did strategically essentialize the subaltern in a "scrupulously visible political interest" for my own argument (Spivak 1988: 15). Here, I am ascribing

The most important institutions for processes of ethnic identification have been associations of language groups: the Ranchi association, the Local-Born Association, the Andhra Association, the Tamizhar Sangam, the Bengali Association, the Kerala Samajham, et cetera. I interviewed influential spokespersons of all these associations. The majority of them emphasized that the associations were formed in order to promote specific language education, to reconstruct (mainland) tradition and culture, and, to take over an intermediary function between the people of each language group and the administration or even the government. This form of patronage could be provided for an individual's court case, or for collective aims like the reservation of quota in the education system. The Andhra Association, for example, has negotiated with the Andhra Pradesh government about the reservation of seats for Andaman-based, but 'ethnic' Telugu students.

Furthermore, even if formally defined as non-political organizations, some associations have become vehicles of electoral mobilisation. The general secretary of one important association told me that he had dealt out an alliance with a party candidate and religious leaders before the last parliamentary elections. They were to commonly support the candidate in order to help him getting elected as sole local member of parliament. The deal included a promise to mobilize the particular 'ethnic' electorate to vote for the candidate in exchange for future political support of the community. One of the demands was quota reservation under a particular category.

Party politics are also dominated by ethnic mobilization. Many party politicians seem to have their own ethnic networks of patronage and clientelism organized on the basis of community. There are, thus, not only branches of the big national parties, Congress and BJP, but also a variety of regional parties such as the Tamilian DMK, the Trinamool Congress from West Bengal, the Telugu Desam Party from Andhra Pradesh, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, et cetera.

In general, voters don't seem to be attached to party ideology or a specific election program; especially in municipal and local government (Panchayat) elections, they are much more focused on a specific personality of a candidate or patron, who is able to give a voice to their demands. During the 1985 elections for the Port Blair municipal council, for example, the Telugu Desam Party won one seat with 81.58% of votes (Biswas, 2002, p.101). This was due to active support of Telugu people in the ward, where this community had a majority of voters (ibid., p.96). When I was talking with voters about their party affiliation before the last national parliamentary elections, many displayed their dislike or appreciation of a particular Member of Parliament (MP) candidate. They disliked him, because they supposed that, as a Bengali, his 'natural' inclination will be to support his Bengali vote bank. They emphasized that, after being elected, each candidate would primarily take interest in the betterment of his own community.

The Bengalis as biggest community in the Andamans are said to heavily influence local politics. In the last three decades, every elected MP was a Bengali. That's why people from other communities often blame the former Bengali MP, who was in power for several decades, to have facilitated the migration and settlement of Bengalis in the

the political strategy of essentialization to community actors who represent 'their' own as well as other communities with objectified/ reified/ essentialized stereotypes in order to take political advantage.

Andamans in order to increase his vote bank. The electoral dominance of Bengalis also had crucial influence on the introduction of Other Backward Classes (OBC) quotas in the Andamans. This example demonstrates the inextricable entanglement of communities' articulation of political voice and their access to sinecures.

The Struggle for OBC

An official notification released by the administration on 12th December 2005 declared the introduction of quota reservation under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) scheme: 38% of government service posts and of seats in higher education have been reserved for identified backward communities.³⁴ This had an outstanding influence on the politicization of community in the Andamans. The introduction of OBC marked an explicit turn away from official policies that had hitherto declared equality and sameness in secular Mini-India as guiding principles of its cosmopolitan society.

Many interlocutors claimed that such reservation policy has never been necessary because there has never been religious or caste discrimination. Some 'local-born' have been more satisfied with the older system. They have complained that this decision would not only symbolically undermine the absence of a caste system in the islands; it would also lead to casteism, because other communities started to represent to be backward and discriminated in order to get reservation. Nonetheless, there has been reservation, and thus, 'positive discrimination' before the introduction of OBC.³⁵ The only difference was that it has not been given on the basis of community, but according to a hierarchy of categories of settlement.³⁶

Only five communities, distinguished on the basis of their migration and settlement, were declared as OBC: the rehabilitated Bengali settlers, as well as the 'local-born', Bantu, Karen and Moplah, who according to political context, can act loyally as 'pre-42', or as separate communities. This decision was based on recommendations of an OBC Commission that had reviewed social and economic conditions of various island

³⁴ For decades, Indian (federal) states have practised quota reservation of seats in higher education, and of jobs in the state apparatus; for example, in the police or in clerical employment. The intention has been to uplift discriminated and deprived communities. Since then, quota reservation has been probably the most decisive vehicle for class mobility. In independent India, *naukri*, state employment or service, is often a direct result of getting seats in higher educational institutions. *Naukri*, thus, can be regarded as one important means of upwards mobility. It is not only connected with social security in the form of proper salary and pensions, but also with access to the state machinery and its funds.

³⁵ The administration, as opposed to central government institutions, has had its own approved guidelines of admission to higher education and clerical jobs; accordingly, bona fide holders of specific 'local certificates' were eligible to get 88% of government jobs under the local administration, while 12% was reserved for the indigenous Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Biswas, 2010, p.132). This reservation practice is still continued by most local institutions, as, for example, the polytechnic. It is based on a hierarchy of classifications defined by the duration of settlement.

³⁶ If two candidates from different communities are applying for the same job or educational seat, preference will be given to that candidate, who is able to produce a certificate that proves a certain category of settlement: the first category comprises 'old inhabitants' or 'pre-42', the second were 'settlers', i.e. all communities settled by the state under rehabilitation and colonization schemes. The third group classified was '10-years category'; i.e. all people, regardless from where they migrated, who were not settled under any scheme; however, it is mandatory for that category to have visited a school in the islands for at least 10 years. Finally, there were 'others', all migrants, who could not produce any proof to have visited an Andaman school for at least 10 years. They had hardly any chance to get an official seat or job.

communities and then identified those who were 'educationally and historically backward' (Biswas, 2010, p.133).

Apart from the Bengalis, there were no other rehabilitated settler groups like Tamil, Malayali, and Ranchi settlers, included. Apparently, Tamils and Malayalis did not appear in front of the Commission. Their leaders, in turn, are claiming that it was a set up political game by the Bengalis and the 'pre-42', in which they were not considered. Ranchi leaders, on the other hand, did not agree to be included under OBC because of their demand for reservation under the category of Scheduled Tribes (ST) (ibid, p.133). One interlocutor, himself from a disadvantaged community, connected this injustice to a lack of political voice as vote bank caused by their meager numerical strength. Following the same logic, most other people I talked to, have linked the Bengali settlers' success in getting OBC to their population size. Another important factor was the influence of the former MP, who himself belongs to a Bengali family.

The outcome of the decision, i.e. which particular communities have got benefits, highlights how local power structures are determined by opportunities to articulate voice. One needs to be heard by the government authorities in order to achieve something. Under the prior reservation system, pre-42 communities and Bengali settlers had already received the majority of seats and government jobs. They can be regarded as comparatively advanced communities with a high proportion of middle class government servants.

Due to that, they were able to mobilise the support of a lot of influential intermediaries and politicians. These, in turn, were capable to raise enough voice within dominant political frameworks. When I interviewed several leaders of the benefited communities, I asked them about their opinion what the reasons for the final decision about OBC were: their most important and politically viable argument was, that, in opposition to independent migrants, both groups had been brought to the Andamans by the state; they were historically backward due to poor infrastructure and educational facilities, too; as a consequence, the state would have to take over responsibility for their welfare. These statements point out to what extent the legacy of migration and social engineering policies continues to shape the actual political landscape.

Further, pre-42 spokespersons instrumentalized genealogical arguments for their cause. This is typical for processes of ethnicization in nation-states (Balibar/ Wallerstein, 1990, p.122-23). Accordingly, their ancestors were "freedom fighters", who fought against the British and Japanese regimes. They have argued that contemporary pre-42 people would be qualified to receive governmental support as compensation for the past suffering of their ancestors (Zehmisch 2011).

Another criteria for their supposed eligibility was the 'ius soli', the territorial principle. One pre-42 interlocutor emphasised that they were the "original colonizers".³⁷ As the first people, who settled 'upon' the land, he represented the community as "sons of the Andamanese soil" (see also: Biswas, 2010, p.133; Dhingra, 2005, p.168). Nonethe-

³⁷ One interlocutor presented a particular local identity in the following way: "We were brought here by the British. I am a descendant in the 4th generation. Now there is high pressure by the migrants. In British times we were not very well; under the Japanese, the economy was nearly zero. After the Japanese occupation we started from nothing. My family had 4 acres of land. Whatever has been done here, we did on our own. This is our identity, our contribution and our culture."

less, they regard themselves as different from the indigenous peoples, who are perceived to be 'of the land' (cf. Ingold, 2000, p.135).

Community leaders of rehabilitated settlers from East Bengal have appropriated quite similar arguments: they have claimed to be historically backward according to their ancestors' displacement; their isolated settlement in vast jungle areas has contributed to their educational backwardness; life at the frontier was replete of hostile 'nature', including dangerous animals and 'savages'; they have been deprived of communication and infrastructure, too.

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy of previous warnings of communalism, the introduction of OBC quota for these two categories has provoked a political 'chain reaction' among other communities. Many leaders are now trying to emphasize the 'backwardness' of their communities vis-a-vis the administration. Associations of Malayali, Telugu and Tamil 'settlers' are demanding equal treatment with Bengalis as OBC. Politicians and other intermediaries, mostly of the language associations, also started insist on reservations as Scheduled Tribes (ST) or Scheduled Castes (SC) in order to appease their clients and to strengthen the unity of their vote bank. Many of these claims are based on reservations given to their communities on the Indian mainland. This goes along with a process of objectification of ethnic and cultural identities connected to a common 'place of origin'.

Bengali politicians, for example, have demanded an equal entitlement as in West Bengal, when they are claiming SC for large numbers of Bengali settlers, who belong to the Namasudra community; Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), a Dalit party, demands SC reservation for all Dalits in the Andamans on equal terms with reservation policies in the mainland; the Ranchis, on the other hand, do not demand a SC or OBC status; one of their leaders told me that only a ST status like in the mainland would be appropriate for "true Adivasis".

The most obvious field, in which such political competition between different communities materializes, is the very discourse about migration. Here, a migrant society debates its own foundation by deducing entitlements from their their own migration history. Arguments from the national and the global sphere are central to local discourse. As a result, cultural hybridity, with its emphasis on the incorporation of diversity, is still a much celebrated aspect of social cohesion and conviviality. However, as political competition encompasses the articulation and representation of separate 'bounded' and exclusive ethnic groups, this norm is currently under transformation. Whereas the societal set up of Mini-India has been quite easily adaptable to new migrants, the settlement of whole families through networks of chain migration created various forms of political, social, cultural and economic exclusion. This has ramifications for the whole migration discourse, in which the question "Who is a local?" becomes increasingly prevalent.

3. MIGRATION AND THE POLITICS OF LOCALITY

Between 1951 and 2011, postcolonial settlement policies and unplanned, independent chain migrations led to an official population increase of around twelve times.³⁸ Such demographic growth was probably neither planned nor expected by the Indian government. It turned out to be a major cost factor for the state, which, due to insufficient agricultural production, has to maintain the supply of its Andaman citizens with subsidized consumer goods from the mainland.³⁹

Broader conceptualizations of migration as a problem for the Andamans emerged in the 1980s. Arguments against migration have been based on Malthusian perceptions of overpopulation and the scarcity of natural resources.⁴⁰ Main participants in this discourse have been civil society actors from the mainland and local spokespersons, especially from the local-born community.⁴¹

These actors have put political pressure on the administration and the Indian government to stop further immigration.⁴² Scholars and NGOs have critiqued the administration for its “open gate policy of allowing unrestricted migration to the Andamans” (Naidu, 1998, p.240). Harsh critique has also been formulated against the former Bengali Member of Parliament. Accordingly, he had enabled large-scale migrations of Bengalis and supported subsequent regularisations of their encroachments in order to gain their votes.

Ongoing discussions about the introduction of an “Inner-Line Permit”, similarly to the existing one in the Indian Union Territory of Lakshadweep, are a result of popular agitations against internal migration. The objective of an Inner-Line Permit is to stop or

³⁸ 1951: 30.971; 1971: 115.133; 1991: 280.661 (Directorate of Statistics, Port Blair, cited in: Dhingra, 2005, p.168). While the data for 2001 numbered 356.265, the provisional census data of 2011 gives a total population figure of mere 379,944 people (THE DAILY TELEGRAMS, 2011). This increase does not correspond with estimations of many local interlocutors, who believe that the population must number between 500.000 and 600.000 people due to continuous migrations. The local estimations seem to be more realistic, indeed, as official institutions such as the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS) tend to “underestimate population mobility and labour migration to a significant extent” (Srivastava 1998: 584). This gap in enumeration becomes comprehensible by looking at the reliance on survey instruments with which permanent and semi-permanent migration can be primarily covered. It is less effective to assess short duration circular or seasonal migration (Gidwani/ Sivaramakrishnan 2004: 346).

³⁹ From a pure economic perspective, it becomes clear that the costs this project of settling subaltern populations has caused, do not outweigh its financial profits. The motivation to populate the islands after independence was clearly strategic; however, the subsidies for five hundred thousand people have become an inevitable necessity of state hegemony. The maintenance of public institutions, and the development of the territory have been dictated by the obligation to provide services to the people and their demanding political leaders, contractors, and bureaucrats, who appropriate the largest surpluses for themselves.

⁴⁰ “In the last 20 years, the Andamans have been increasingly ravaged for resources and used as a dumping ground for the landless” (Whitaker and Whitaker, 1984, p.16 cited in: Venkateswar, 2004, p.132)

⁴¹ Hinting at the increasing pollution, population density and depletion of the 'natural' environment caused by demographic changes in Port Blair, one 'local-born' interlocutor told me: “I cannot hear the birds singing any more. I cannot breathe freely. I have to take showers three or four times a day, because it has become so hot. Earlier, we had nine months of rain every year. Now we have only six. It has never been so hot that we needed a fan. It was a paradise for us. Today, everywhere are buildings, it is hot and dirty. The islands are overpopulated and we face drinking water problems. If we don't stop migration, the islands will become a desert.”

⁴² Several interlocutors told me that an influential study, initiated by the government in 1987, came to the conclusion that the carrying capacity of the islands had already approached its limit of 250.000 people. In 1988, it was officially recommended to control population growth up to a level of 450.000 people in 2011. However, migration has not been stopped since then, probably because local businessmen are in need of a continuous flow of cheap migrant labour for 'development' projects.

severely limit the access of mainlanders to the Andamans by declaring it illegal. Similarly, the on-going issuance of Islander Identity Cards that officially prove the local belonging of each individual, can be regarded as administrative step towards creating an islander identification.

Parallel to this migration discourse, the representation of Mini-India as a 'melting pot' model of cultural hybridity has transformed into a 'container' model of separated ethnic communities, or objectified 'cultures', which are supposed to be essentially different. Ironically, the cultural creolization of the local-born, which can be defined as their 'ethnic' characteristic, has turned into a political means of 'local' self-definition in opposition to migrant communities. While their incorporation of Otherness into a "composed whole" is formulated as fundamental value of being local, it is increasingly represented as marker of difference to other diasporic communities.⁴³

Further, many local-borns distinguish their place attachment by claiming to have "a heart for the islands". They declare that their feeling of 'home' would clearly distinguish them from their political opponents, the so called "opportunistic migrants", who have their 'roots' in the mainland.⁴⁴ Migrants are suspected to have come to the Andamans for the sole purpose of earning money. Their lack of attachment to the place would then, inevitably, lead them to destroy the fragile islands ecosystem.

As a result of such civil society intervention, subaltern migrants have become a scapegoat for environmental degradation, too. The current Zeitgeist of global, or planetary perceptions of climate change, has become intertwined with local conservation politics and policies. In the discourse about sustainable protection of the environment, the problematized figure of the migrant/encroacher appears as major obstacle to conservation measures.⁴⁵ Migrants' 'hunger for land' is blamed to cause the destruction of both the island biosphere as well as the protected habitat of the indigenous hunter-gatherers. Indeed, many landless subalterns have encroached forest or revenue land and built houses and gardens. The clearing of rainforest has damaged the ecosystem, caused erosion and drinking water scarcity, and contributed to a loss of biodiversity. Nonetheless, such damage occurred because the whole society is utilizing limited resources. Not only migrants, but people from all communities have encroached forest and revenue land. Many felt the need to sustain growing numbers of joint family

⁴³ A local-born leader told me: "We have a distinct cultural feature: We are a mixture of everything; we never said I am Bihari, Bengali or Tamil..., but now, after the arrival of the migrants everybody says: I am Bengali, I am Ranchi. The migrants, especially from Bengal and Tamil Nadu, have come here and built up water-tight compartments."

⁴⁴ One local-born interlocutor polarized the distinction to the migrants in the following way: "We were the real colonizers, when the British left. The islands are our property. After Independence there were job opportunities and land available. That's why the migrants came from the mainland. It was a paradise for them." Such representations of belonging have to be interpreted within the larger context of local politics of recognition. They can be explained with the local-borns' gradual loss of political dominance to more numerous communities. Many old inhabitants have expressed fears to become "second-class citizens" and strangers in their 'own' homelands (Tamta, 1991, p.122).

⁴⁵ The removal of illegal encroachers had been on the agenda of several parties during election campaign for the Indian Parliament in 2009. Further, there were several legislative and executive debates and measures to remove encroachers in order to protect the biosphere and the indigenous people in recent years. Since ecological consciousness has influenced a Supreme Court Order of 2002 to protect the forests, encroachers are under permanent threat of eviction (cf. Sekhsaria, 2007, p.84-6). Some had been removed from their encroachments, while the majority remains on their lands in a state of insecurity and without perspective to be rehabilitated. These actual political developments cannot be regarded as phenomena that are isolated from the migration discourse; they are entangled with concurrent conceptualizations of migration as a problem.

members or wanted to spatially expand their cash crop plantations. All sorts of settlers and migrants have been using forest resources according to their requirements; they are hunting, gathering, collecting raw materials for houses, et cetera. Poachers are selling their illegal prey to customers in Port Blair and shark fins are exported to South East Asia and Japan. A just solution to these problems, therefore, needs to address all stakeholders involved. It requires taking into consideration livelihood issues of 'speechless' subalterns, instead of taking decisions or making politics above their head.

Questions of utility and damage, in which migration has been debated in the Andaman society, have, of course, not only been linked up to environment and conservation issues; they have been connected to questions of nationalism and security, too. While the interior frontier is constituted by the 'junglescape' of tropical Andaman rainforests, the external, maritime frontier is defined by the EEZ, the Exclusive Economic Zone (ranging from 12 until 200 miles off the coastline). In this peripheral zone of the Indian subcontinent, the effectiveness of the nation-state itself is at stake. Large parts of local media and the administration, therefore, often connected the sensitive issue of territorial governance with debates about migration (cf. Andaman Sheeka, 2009).

The policing of territorial waters has been justified by fears of foreign military invasions and allied secret service activities. In order to augment the protection of sea borders, local fishermen and the population have increasingly been co-opted as "eyes and ears of the security agencies" (THE DAILY TELEGRAMS, 2012). Moreover, the Indian military has also emphasized its task as protector of the nation; in line with global border policies, it has intensified surveillance activities against illegal poaching, piracy, transnational terrorism, as well as contraband and drug trade (Nayyar, 2005, p.86). This restrictive policy not only relegated foreigners to the role of malevolent 'intruders' into India; it also criminalized people different kinds of people moving across the Andaman sea in the Bay of Bengal: Thai, Burmese, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan fishermen have been captured and fixed by the Indian Coast Guard (cf. Andaman Chronicle, 2009; Krishnaswamy, 2009).

Additionally, the increased policing of borders should hinder illegal migrants from Bangladesh,⁴⁶ Sri Lanka, Thailand or Burma to squat and encroach the islands (cf. Gayatri, 2010). Moreover, there is a debate among the islanders about 'bonded labour' from Bangladesh; it reminds one of discourses about feminized 'flesh trade' and 'human trafficking' of illegalized migrants in the European migration regime. Both discourses are dominated by xenophobic conceptualizations of migration as a threat, and its counterpart, the 'benevolent' saving of victimized migrants, who, through their designation as victims, are deprived of their agency. Persistent representations of migration as a 'plague' or 'disease', for which a 'remedy' has to be found (cf. Poddar, 2002, p.113), resemble the migration discourse in Europe.

The fallacy to defend the nation in the Indian Ocean with military power not only undermines independent Andamans' history of migration as a place to where subaltern

⁴⁶ People who are crossing the borders from Bangladesh to India have been continuously termed as 'illegal aliens' and represented as "an imminent threat to the health of our healthy nation" (Sen, S., 2003, p.611). Here, the global discourse about 'muslim fertility' as a cause of overpopulation, is also getting connected to the nationalist perception of threat.

3. Migration and the Politics of Locality

people from all over South Asia could come and make a living. The stimulation of exclusive feelings of 'us' and 'them' does not remain confined to a context of territorial border defence; equivalent ethnic borders are made in local discourse. While incorporation of Otherness can be regarded as the defining quality of the secular and cosmopolitan idea of the nation in the Andamans, stimulated fears of the Other are threatening to subvert the very idea of Mini-India.

CONCLUSION

By retelling the history of the Andaman regime of migration, I have intended to depict specific ideologies and material conditions, which both shaped the life-worlds of the islanders. Labour migration, forced and voluntary, was the major driving force for demographic changes in all periods of settlement. People from all over India, often in search for a better life, have settled in the Andamans. The term Mini-India was first applied to conceptualize the hybrid and heterogeneous 'local-born' community. They were united by somehow equalizing difference into sameness. In the last few decades, Mini-India was increasingly used to conceptualize the whole society.

My analysis of migrant communities has demonstrated that 'multi-culturalist' politics and policies led to intensified processes of ethnicization. The composition of the society has changed due to the migration process; separate communities have emerged in the political field, and identifications with a *muluk*, a place of origin or homeland, have become more important. Politically influenced representations of 'contained' communities suppose that groups live side by side to each other instead of with each other.

Mini-India as an idea of incorporating difference, gradually transformed into a 'multi-cultural' model of perceiving difference as marker of distinction, or Otherness. As a result, the migratory contexts of these communities have transformed into a source of political mobilization and conflict evolved on the basis of community identifications. The conflict about OBC quotas is a vivid example for such conflict; it is entirely adverse to the idea and everyday practice of inter-communal cohesion and incorporation.

With demographic growth, migration has increasingly come to be regarded as problem. Thus, the migration discourse, negotiated between communities that were themselves created by migration, has transformed adverse and competitive. Not acknowledging that labour migration is inextricably linked to the logic of island 'development', and therefore, to the economic survival of the urban middle-class, people from this segment have started to demand various administrative measures against migration.

The transformation of the meaning of Mini-India demonstrates not only its trajectory into the realm of community-based politics of mainland India. It also adds another example to the global migration discourse. Paralleling other settler societies around the world, many Andamanis have gradually become adverse to the very idea of migration, which led to the constitution of their own society.

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