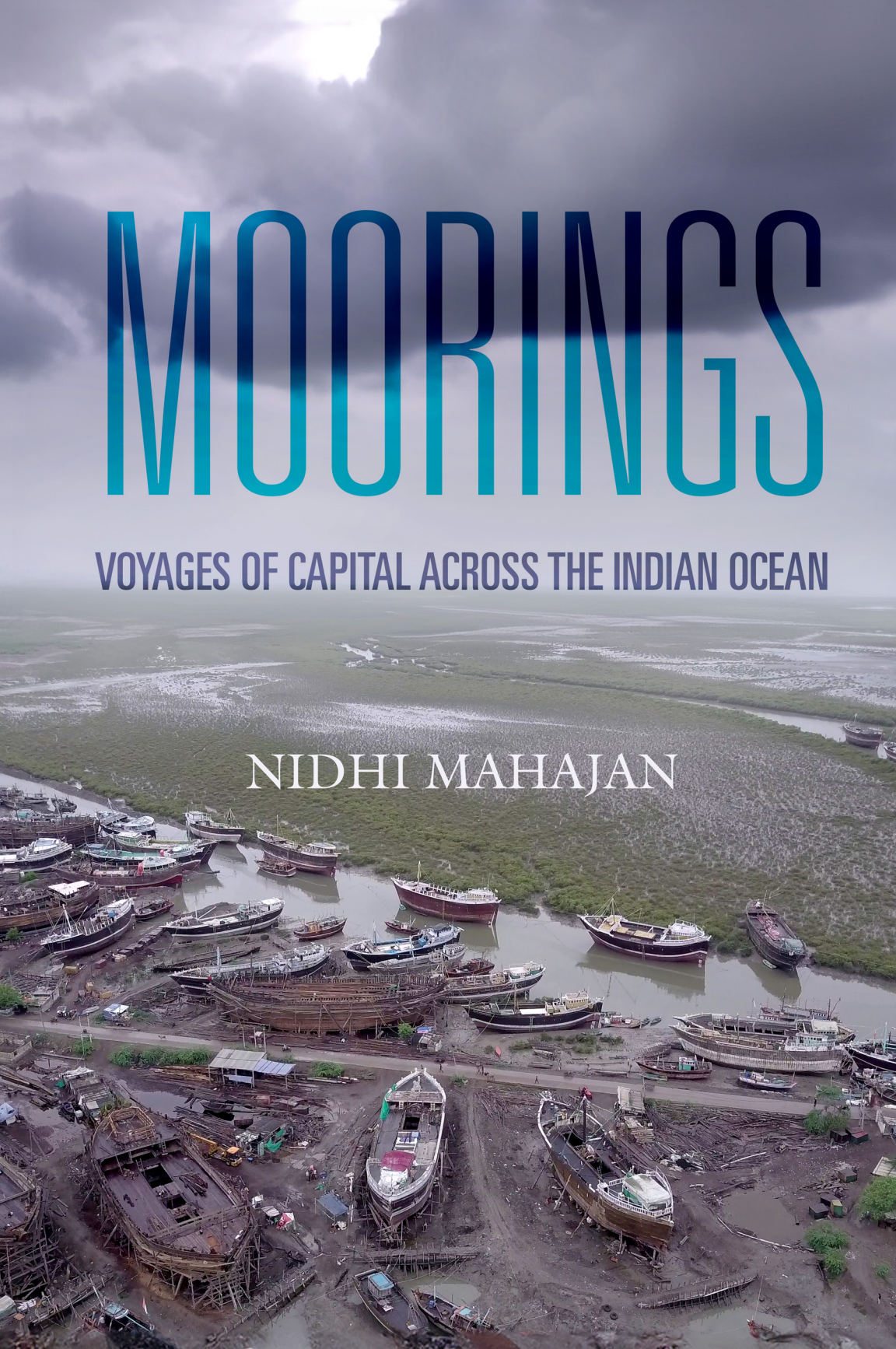
MOORINGS

VOYAGES OF CAPITAL ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN

NIDHI MAHAJAN



THE FLETCHER JONES FOUNDATION
HUMANITIES IMPRINT

The Fletcher Jones Foundation has endowed this imprint to foster innovative and enduring scholarship in the humanities.

The publisher and the University of California Press Foundation
gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the
Fletcher Jones Foundation Imprint in Humanities.

Moorings

Moorings

Voyages of Capital across the Indian Ocean

Nidhi Mahajan

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

University of California Press
Oakland, California

Suggested citation: Mahajan, N. *Moorings: Voyages of Capital across the Indian Ocean*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2025.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.234

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mahajan, Nidhi, author.
Title: Moorings : voyages of capital across the Indian Ocean / Nidhi Mahajan.
Description: Oakland : University of California Press, [2025] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024047404 (print) | LCCN 2024047405 (ebook) | ISBN 9780520413511 (pbk ; alk. paper) | ISBN 9780520413528 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Seafaring life—Indian Ocean. | Merchant mariners—Indian Ocean—Social conditions. | Dhows—Economic aspects—Indian Ocean. | Muslims—Indian Ocean—Social conditions. | Capitalism—Indian Ocean Region—History. | Indian Ocean—Commerce—History.
Classification: LCC G540 .M259 2025 (print) | LCC G540 (ebook) | DDC 910.4/508829709165—dc23/eng/20250120

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024047404
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024047405

GPSR Authorized Representative: Easy Access System Europe,
Mustamäe tee 50, 10621 Tallinn, Estonia, gpsr.requests@easproject.com

34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

FIGURES

NOTE ON LANGUAGE

In this book, I use common English spellings or source text for direct quotations in languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Gujarati, Arabic, Kiswahili, and Kachchhi.

The region of Kachchh is referred to as Kutch in the colonial period and Kachchh in the precolonial and postindependence eras.

I use *Bombay* throughout the text, even though the city's name was officially changed to Mumbai in 1995. While Marathi speakers have long referred to the city as Mumbai and some Hindi-Urdu speakers refer to it as Bambai, the official change was led by right-wing Hindu nationalists, the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party. It came on the heels of violence against minorities, especially Muslims, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The moment in which the change occurred redefined the city in multiple ways, layering violence upon violence. Born and raised in Bombay, I have yet to make the change.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One does not voyage alone. Sailors and their kin know that it takes many laboring hands to make moorings and voyages possible. This book would not exist without the hospitality and friendship of many who cannot be named here and remain in the shadows. To the seafarers and vessel owners, their families and friends, from the Gulf of Kachchh and beyond, thank you for welcoming me into your vahans, your homes, and your lives; for offering shelter in stormy weather at home and on strange shores. Thank you for mooring me—then, now, and always, across many ports and at sea. I continue to learn from you about life, love, and death.

While this book is based on research across many Indian Ocean ports, I began the project in Mombasa, Kenya. Mohammed Mchulla and Rukiya Abdulrehman Said's generosity and love made Mombasa a mooring. Mchulla's profound knowledge of the Swahili coast has been formative for me, his wit and warmth making every day joyful. Aunty Rukiya's humor, and careful advice kept me safe even as she leaves me in splits, her hospitality unsurpassed. The wisdom of Abdalla Bujra, Athaman Lali Omar, and the late Ali Mazrui opened many doors in Lamu and Mombasa. Suresh and Neela Popat, together with Mona and Haresh Palan, took me under their wing. Surinder Kapila, Dinesh Kapila, and Simon Ndiege helped me navigate Nairobi and gave me a home. Allan Ndiege helped procure a much-needed research permit. The staff at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi, the Fort Jesus Museum in Mombasa, the National Museums of Kenya in Lamu, and Zanzibar National Archives made archival research pleasant. A research permit from the Kenya Port Authority opened the gates to the Old Port.

My itinerary across the Indian Ocean was enabled by seasons away from it. As an undergraduate, Maxwell Owusu, Thomas Metcalf, and Kelly Askew gave me a

view of the Indian Ocean from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The road to Ithaca led me back to the sea. Cornell University became home, despite my resistance. The Department of Anthropology and the South Asia Program offered a generous intellectual community, with an ethic of friendship and collaborative scholarship. Viranjini Munasinghe, my dissertation advisor, thank you for your intellectual rigor, your warmth, humor, unwavering support, and for teaching me that life must be lived beyond the page. Anne Blackburn always went above and beyond and made me see ways forward when all I could do was falter. Eric Taglicozzo's own voyages across the Indian Ocean continue to instruct and inspire, his work is foundational to my ideas. Saida Hodžić's astute advice, moral compass, and kindness buoyed me. Prita Meier paved the way to Mombasa and beyond. She continues to move with me from port to pillar, on planes, trucks, boats, and *boda bodas*, with the joy and comfort of shared *utamaduni*.

In Ithaca and New York, I am grateful to have learned from Lauren Benton, Fernando Coronil, Iftikhar Dadi, Durba Ghosh, David Holmberg, Kathryn March, Fouad Makki, Mwalimu Abdul Nanji, Michael Ralph, and Steve Sangren. Donna Duncan, Bruce Roebal, and Margaret Rolfe saw me through many an administrative hurdle. Thanks also to the library staff at Cornell, who were incredibly patient with my many requests. The friendship of Bronwen Bledsoe, Bernardo Brown, Dambar Chemjong, Vivian Choi, Todd Dickey, Reighan Gillam, Adi Grabiner-Keinan, John Phan, Sadia Shirazi, Tina Shrestha, Osama Siddiqui, Ivan Small, Deniz Yonucu, Olujumoke Warritay, and Erick White kept me warm in the harshest of winters. Can Dalyan, Carter Higgins, Tim McLellan, Mariana Saavedra, and Yasmine Singh continued to be writing partners who read new chapters long after we closed old ones. Rishad Choudhury is an incredible friend, thinker, reader, and co-traveler, Balkans-to-Bengal style.

Transregional research and writing were made possible through the patronage of many funding bodies including a Dissertation Fieldwork Grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and a Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship. At Cornell, research was funded by the Einaudi Center for International Studies, the Bernard Cohn Memorial Fund for Graduate Research, and the Society of Humanities. A visiting fellowship at the International Institute of Asian Studies and the African Studies Center in Leiden supported me in a time of need, many a *bitterballen* made truly *lekker* in the company of Tom Hoogervorst and Priya Swamy.

Departing Ithaca entailed charting a whole new course across multiple moorings. A year-long Mellon Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for Humanities at Tufts University from 2016 to 2017 made me change tack. Lisa Lowe has been the most brilliant and generous mentor and friend—thinking with her completely transformed me. Kris Manjapra was the ideal postdoctoral mentor whose profound suggestions, always given so lightly, made me think concepts

anew. The Mellon Sawyer Seminar in Comparative Global Humanities Lisa and Kris co-organized with Kamran Rastegar has been central to my thinking on relationality, with every participant of the seminar helping shape new ideas for this book. Special thanks to my cohort of fellows, Anna Cruz, Mark Minch, and Khury Petersen-Smith, as well as Alexandra Chreiteh and Nitsan Shakked. Chris Gratien and Marijana Mišević have been companions across borders. Kareem Khubchandani's Auntie ishtyle lifts me, always with good food, music, dance, and drag.

My time at Tufts transformed my thinking so much that I did not want my dissertation to be my book. I needed new voyages, new moorings—spatial, temporal, and conceptual. A yearlong SSRC Transregional Research Junior Scholar Fellowship: InterAsian Contexts and Connections funded new research in India, the UK, and the UAE. Conversations with Prasenjit Duara, Engseng Ho, Dilip Menon and my cohort enabled my thinking on transregionalism that underscore this book. Without this pivotal year, the book would not have taken its current shape.

A residency at Khoj Studios supported archival work and art in Delhi. The staff at the National Archives of India put up with my many requests for documents "in tressing" with good cheer. Aditi Chauhan, Shubigi Rao, and Sarover Zaidi made visible other horizons. Chhaya Goswami's generosity and knowledge of Kachchh are unparalleled. CAMP and Ed Simpson's advice and work made me see gulf to gulf anew. The staff at the Maharashtra State Archives in Bombay made archival work pleasant even on the hottest of days. Yet, much of this story remains to be written. Early research in the UAE was supported by the Sharjah Art Foundation, and Sharjah Architecture Triennial, with the cooperation of the Sharjah Creek Customs. Moad Musbahi has become a co-conspirator in art and anthropology. I am most grateful to him for allowing me to use the beautiful images, including the cover photograph, he took in Jam Salaya while I was in a dengue fugue in Bombay.

The University of California, Santa Cruz became an intellectual home as soon as I arrived. I am thrilled to have found exceptional colleagues in the Anthropology Department, who inspire with their generosity, kindness, and playful intellectual curiosity. As chairs, Nancy Chen and Andrew Mathews have seen me through the tenure track. Mark Anderson's support and advice always exceed the calls of chair-ship and friendship. Thank you, Mark, for seeing me through it all, with and without Molly pours and the jukebox at The Rush Inn. Mayanthi Fernando's caring critique, laughter, and friendship makes life at institutions so much better. Megan Moodie has been an utterly supportive mentor and friend; her artful abilities make even the most complex critique smooth sailing. Savannah Shange and Jerry Zee made for an ideal junior faculty cohort, long after JZee left port. I continue to learn from Anna Tsing, whose work has had such an impact on my own. Lisa Rofel's work and ideas have shaped me and this book. A writing group with Lisa and Kali Rubaii saw me through many chapter drafts, I could not have completed this book without their supportive and transformative feedback.

Fred Deakin is a godsend, managing it all with characteristic calm. Kirk Lange, Mariela Ramirez, and Emmanuel Akabogu smoothened the logistics of teaching. I continue to learn from students in my courses and beyond. Special thanks to Gillian Bogart, Axelle Boyer, Xafsa Ciise, Salman Hussain, shah noor Hussein, Joe Klein, Andrew Lee, Kelsey McFaul, Natalie Ng, and Eda Tarak.

My colleagues and friends at UC Santa Cruz have sustained me through the seasons. Muriam Haleh Davis read multiple drafts and kept me on the ball with playlists, calls, texts, and impromptu dance parties. Thomas Serres' careful feedback brought the manuscript together. Their collective intellectual and emotional labor enabled me to #cutandsend. I cannot imagine life without them as family. Anjali Arondekar's radical kinship, sharp wit, and intellect make me think epistemologies, geopolitics, and life itself anew, amid abundant laughter that echoes from Bandra to Santa Cruz (CA). Her work as the founding co-director of the Center for South Asian Studies helped build a new intellectual mooring for me: there's really no place like it. Vilashini Cooppan has been auntie, mother, sister, friend, advisor, collaborator, and hostess extraordinaire. Her table, already full of Indian Delights, has always been open to every emotion and idea. Dinners at V's with Jennifer Derr, Jody Greene, and Marc Matera ensure that that my cup is never empty. Madhavi Murty, Dard Neuman, Juned Shaikh, and recent arrivals Sanjay Barbora and Dolly Kikon have made me feel at home.

The Center for Cultural Studies at UC Santa Cruz has been a critical node of intellectual community with whom I have tested many ideas. The Center for the Middle East and North Africa and the Center for Southeast Asian Coastal Interactions have helped me shape new ideas across shores. I am also grateful to have been able to think with faculty and graduate students in the research clusters "Feminist Futures in the Indian Ocean" and "Vernaculars of Travel in South Asia and the Middle East." Yasmeen Daifallah has written with me at all times of day and night, her great company saw me to the finish line. Emmanuelle Salgues has been a most caring writing partner whose abilities to find hidden treasures keep daily life entertaining. Together with Camilo Gómez-Rivas and Zélie, she makes the neighborhood home. In Santa Cruz and beyond, thanks to Mark Amengual, Anna Barry-Jester, Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns, Gina Dent, R. Benedito Ferrão, Susan Harding, Alma Heckman, Kate Jones, Amy Krauss, Amy Ginther, Debbie Gould, Laurie Palmer, Dulce Rogio, Debarati Sanyal, Vanita Seth, Megan Thomas, Ronaldo Wilson, Hollian Wint, Karen Tei Yamashita, Riva Tunoa, Shantanu Saptarshi, and Zac Zimmer for their support.

The Africa Institute at Sharjah became a mooring in pandemic times and brought me back to Indian Ocean shores when so many were stuck away from home. Despite lockdowns, lockups, delays, disease, and death, my two years there allowed me to continue research and rekindled old hopes for South-South connections. Salah Hassan's guidance, faith in my work, and ability to build intellectual community made art and ideas come alive in the most difficult times. I am grateful

to Hoor Al Qasimi for her creativity and generosity. Elizabeth Giorgis, dear neighbor, always kept it real, as a scholar and a friend. Naminata Diabate and Amy Niang, it's been a pleasure. Surafel Wondimu Abebe, Premesh Lalu, Netsanet Gebremichael, Binyam Mendisu, Ahmed Sikainga, and John Thabiti Willis give me hope for a radical politics in academia. Sataan Al-Hassan, Sara Majdi, and Abdulazeez moved mountains with humor and grace. In the UAE, thank you to Ali Shawwa, Anushea, Archana Menon, Arif Ladhabhoy, George Jose, Govind Dhar, Harshita Singh, Hiba Farhat, Jyoti Dhar, Mahnaz Fancy, May Al-Dabbagh, Nada Raza, Paul Crabtree, Rahul Gudipudi, Reem Shadid, Ryan Innouye, Sabih Ahmed, Saira Ansari, Surabhi Sharma, and Vikram Gawde.

I am most grateful to Sugata Bose, Jatin Dua, Thomas Blom Hansen, Engseng Ho, Laleh Khalili, Priti Ramamurthy, and Abdul Sheriff for giving much needed feedback on the manuscript. Bettina Ng'weno not only read the manuscript with care but also saw me through the writing and publishing process. Her friendship has sustained me across time and space, from East Africa to the West Coast. Johan Mathew generously read multiple drafts and helped bring this book together; his own incredible work and astute and kind comments continue to inspire and sharpen my own thinking. I am indebted to him and a second reviewer at the University of California Press for helping me improve the book tremendously; all shortcomings are my own.

The book took form through feedback from audiences at many universities and centers including Ahmedabad University, Al Serkal Arts Foundation, Bangalore International Center, the British Institute in Eastern Africa, Columbia University, Cornell University, UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis, Delhi University, Georgetown University—Qatar, Goethe University, Harvard University, Hyundai Tate Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia University, Leiden University, New York University, NYU-Abu Dhabi, Oxford University, University of Pennsylvania, School of Oriental and African Studies, Sharjah Arts Foundation, Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Stanford University, Tufts University, and more. Special thanks to the participants of the Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds: Mellon Research Initiative Symposium at UC Davis, especially Smriti Srinivas, Bettina Ng'weno, and Neelima Jeychandran. May Joseph, Pedro Machado, Jeremy Prestholdt, and Nethra Samarawickrema continued the conversation.

Kate Marshall at the University of California Press is the editor of my dreams. She and Chad Attenborough have ushered this book through the publishing process with wisdom and warmth, creating the space for me to write the book I wanted. Carrie Hamilton, Steven Hiatt, Khushi Malhotra, and Bart Wright provided much needed support. The Writing Circles Program at UC Santa Cruz offered a community of cowriters, and a grant from the Institute of Social Transformation at UC Santa Cruz allowed me to hold a manuscript workshop. Excerpts from chapters 2 and 3 have appeared in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* and *History of the Present*. Some arguments and sections of

chapter 5 have appeared in the edited volumes *Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds* and *Cosmopolitan Cultures and Oceanic Thought*. I am grateful to the peer reviewers and editors for their invaluable feedback, and to the publishers for allowing me to reprint material here.

The unconditional love and support of my family and friends at home in Bombay and beyond has made departures and returns possible. My father has been there for me in all that I do, even when he was unsure of what I was doing. My mother has been resolutely supportive, even when I was unsure of myself. She stays, so I can leave. A room of my own in our family home with Gooseberry has been a refuge for writing, till the very end. Farah Ladhabhoy has been my rock, and a wall of support. Soyeon Lee and Sandhya Moraes have been with me from Solvik to Santa Cruz. I return each season to my loving aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces; Gayatri especially never fails to pick up my calls from afar. In Bombay and London, Priyanka, Karan, Riya, and Alessandro have seen and heard me go through it all. Being Masi and Ati to Aarav, Maya, Alia, and Namh brings me endless joy. The love of my grandparents, Sharda and R. K. Malhotra, holds me long after their passing.

I return to the many seafaring families, and vahan crews who have made every voyage and mooring possible. Their invisible labor fills these pages; they appear with pseudonyms and with some details altered to protect their identities and those of their vahans. To them, my deepest gratitude.

Introduction

Moorings and Voyages

The View from the Dhow

"When the world ends, all that will be left is the *vahan*," said Ali Chacha, a retired sailor, as we approached a brand-new wooden sailing vessel. "It's happened before—after all, what was Noah's Ark?" he added. It was a quiet evening in 2017 in Mandvi, a port in Kachchh, in western India, that has long been a center for ship building and maritime commerce across the Indian Ocean. The town is dotted with crumbling old homes with carved wooden doors and latticed balconies, mirroring mansions across the sea in Muscat, Zanzibar, and Mombasa where many of Mandvi's merchants made their fortunes. Past the abandoned houses that hint at the former wealth of this now derelict town and to the east of the center runs the Rukhmavati River, which flows into the Gulf of Kachchh and the Arabian Sea. Today, the river is largely silted up, but it is full of wooden boats—vahans—or dhows that have long carried Mandvi's merchants and mariners to places beyond these shores. Some squat on wooden slats, their ribs not yet in place, while others stand tall, nearly completed. Many lay at rest on one side, as if the creek were a graveyard for old ships.

But it is not yet the end of times.

At one end of the delta, close to a breakwater near the open sea, was a new vessel ready to voyage out to sea. Ali Chacha had spent a lifetime working on board vahans at sea and now spent his nights here at home, watching over this new vessel. Despite his failing health, he scrambled up the rickety twenty-foot wooden ladder that tentatively linked the ship to land. I followed close behind him, gingerly lifting one leg after the other on each rung, ever aware of the growing distance between the ground and my feet as the ladder shivered in the cool monsoon evening breeze. As we clambered onto the deck, Ali Chacha exclaimed, "Here we are, this old sailor showing you a brand-new vessel. It is unlike anything I have ever seen!"

The vessel's wooden bones were visible even in the fading daylight, its skin untouched by paint. My fingers grazed a plank of wood at the edge of the deck, and I noticed a similar, larger plank at the center, and then at the other end: the ship's skeleton. These straight planks of wood framed curved wooden ribs attached to a larger long plank at the bottom, the ship's hull. The vessel's cavernous belly was open at the center, revealing the symmetrical wooden squares of the empty cargo hold. The cooing of pigeons echoed within. I stepped closer to peek into this well, accidentally knocking a loose nail into the hold with my foot and disturbing the pigeons, who came fluttering out. Ali Chacha laughed as I flinched in surprise: "This is the largest vahan ever built here—2,500-ton carrying capacity! But although the vessel is new and bigger than any I've ever seen, it's built in the old style. No models, no diagrams. The *gaidar* [ship builders] still rely on the knowledge of our ancestors. From here we will tow it to Dubai, where it'll be fitted with diesel engines, and then off she goes to Somalia, Yemen, and maybe even Mombasa! Come and see it all!"

We left the deck and climbed up to the cabin to see the living quarters. I had seen many such ships before—in Mandvi, Mundra, Sikka, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Jam Salaya, Sharjah, and Dubai. Usually, they were filled with the buzz of the crew, the jocular chatter of porters, and the drone of cranes as cargo was loaded or unloaded at port. But here, the laborers who spent all day hammering this and fixing that were gone—empty packets of glue, nails, and caulk strewn around the deck hinting at their recent presence. The vessel seemed completely bare that quiet evening. Here it was, as Ali Chacha described it, a new avatar of an old form, born of a practice, a technique, handed down from one shipbuilder to his apprentice, from a sailor to his son. Here, past, present, and future seemed to be held in the belly of the vessel. The vahan wasn't simply in Mandvi—part of it was already elsewhere.

After the tour of the vessel, we saw Noor, the vessel's owner and Ali Chacha's employer, sitting and sipping chai in the shipbuilding yard on the western bank of the river. He smiled as we sat down in the makeshift shelter and said, "Look around you. I'm the only one who has been able to complete a vessel recently—others seem to think that the business is dying. But I've been in this business my entire life—every time we think it's over, there's nowhere else to go, another route opens." Noor lit a cigarette and continued, "Wherever there is conflict, wherever there are restrictions, sanctions, that's where we go. This has always been the case. War never ends! See, even Ali made me a fortune trading in diesel and dates from Iraq during the Gulf Wars!"

Ali Chacha nodded and laughed, recalling his many voyages. "When there were sanctions against Iraq, I made at least 103 *ghos* [voyages] from Iraq to Dubai, transporting dates. But we carried dates only in name—the real cargo was diesel. Even when Americans were in Iraq, we carried diesel and never got caught! *Humara naseeb accha tha* [we had good luck]." However, this was not just a matter of luck—Ali Chacha and his crew were also adept at navigating state regulations, both on

FIGURE 1. Ali Chacha on a brand-new vahan in Mandvi, 2017. Photo by author.

land and at sea. He recalled a particularly memorable episode when he was the captain of a vessel docked at the Iraqi port of Khor al Zubair at the beginning of the US invasion in 2003. Ali and his crew usually spent a day or two in port to load and unload cargo before setting off on a new voyage. However, when the invasion began, their vessel had been stuck in port for over forty days as American naval forces blocked the channel between Iran and Iraq. Tired of waiting, Ali and his crew decided to move toward the Shatt al-Arab river in the middle of the night.

But their plans were disrupted when American naval forces intercepted the vessel at night. Ali Chacha's eyes grew wide as he said, "The Americans came on board and asked us, 'What have you carried to Iraq?' We had a ready answer—rations! But now the eight-hundred-ton vessel was filled with over four hundred tons of diesel and nothing else. So they started questioning us. 'Why are you carrying so much diesel?' It was in contravention of sanctions, you know." But here too, Ali and his crew had a quick reply. "We told the Americans that we were heading toward the port of Merka in Somalia and reported that the eleven-day trip would require all the diesel on board—which was much more than we needed! We even produced a manifest stating that we were enroute to Merka! And so we got away from the Americans." Ali Chacha laughed. Noor chimed in, "Today, if not Iraq, then Somalia, if not Somalia, then Yemen. There is always war, and so there will always be business, and our vahans will be there."

Yet voyages across spaces of conflict were risky for dhow sailors. While Ali Chacha was fortunate to have escaped patrollers through his long career, his nephew Yusuf was not as lucky. Only three years later, in May 2020, as the world was

reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, Yusuf was working on board a vahan from Mandvi, the *Al Imran*. They were smuggling essential goods between the UAE and Iran during lockdowns and pandemic restrictions on trade. Yusuf and the rest of the crew were intercepted by the Iranian coastguard as they were offloading cargo onto fishing boats from Iran in Omani territorial waters. The vessel was impounded, and the crew incarcerated in Iran. The sailors could not be released on bail without the dhow owner also paying a huge fine for the release of the dhow. I return to Yusuf's story in chapters that follow, showing how the case revealed what sailors like Ali Chacha and Yusuf knew to be true: that the past, present, and future of the vahan and its sailors were bound together.

• • •

Voyages or ghos on vahans across the Indian Ocean are marked by both peril and possibility for sailors. While Ali Chacha was able to maneuver geopolitical conflicts to accumulate profits, Yusuf was arrested and held in Iran, his freedom tied to the wooden boat. At the center of this book are vahans and seafarers from the Gulf of Kachchh. Dhows such as the *Al Imran* have long enabled trade in the Indian Ocean, sustaining generations of seafarers such as Yusuf and Ali Chacha. These Muslim sailors from the Gulf of Kachchh continue to labor on board these vessels, even as the form of the dhow changes, its voyages contingent upon weather, geopolitical conditions, supply, demand, and government policy in different ports.

The label *dhow* encompasses a diverse range of wooden sailing vessels with a collective purpose: to carry goods, people, and ideas across the Indian Ocean. Long before European voyages to the Indian Ocean, dhows and their crews made this space a cradle of globalization. They were powered by the monsoon winds, capitalizing on their predictable cycles to connect East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia across vast stretches of sea. Today, modern mechanized dhows like Kachchhi vahans—meaning "vehicle" in Kachchhi and Hindi-Urdu—continue to traverse the same space. Despite major transformations in the scale of shipping, dhows have found a niche servicing minor ports in times of conflict, operating in spaces where container ships cannot go. Vahans from Mandvi, Jam Salaya, and other small ports in Gujarat and launches from Pakistan, Oman, Iran, and the UAE continue to carry foodstuffs, diesel, electronic goods, dates, and even cars across the Indian Ocean, their mobility and flexibility making them crucial intermediaries in global shipping.

How and why do these seemingly archaic sailing vessels continue to move across the Indian Ocean, long after Portuguese galleons and British frigates were rendered obsolete? What forms of social, political, and economic organization have allowed for the dhow trade to persist in the margins of contemporary nation-states? How do mobile dhows and sailors at sea negotiate different forms of sovereignty? And ultimately, how does this Indian Ocean trade challenge our assumptions about global capitalism? To address these questions, the pages that

follow take a "view from the dhow," from the perspective of sailors like Ali Chacha and Yusuf who voyage across land and sea. In his work on mobilities elided by the imperial frame, Engseng Ho argues that although Bernard Cohn once described the imperial point of view as the "view from the boat," "there were other boats as well" (2004, 213). The vahan is one of these boats that hold mobile lifeworlds that existed prior to colonialism and that persist today—albeit in transformed ways—its sailors responding to a series of ruptures through repetition and by continuing to traverse the Indian Ocean.

If the vahan is the object at the center of this book, its seafarers breathe life into its pages, the body of the vessel now inseparable from the sailors who labor on board. This book is about the shape of the societies of seafarers who seek out possibilities created by geopolitical contests and global economic shifts. Their mobility at sea is structured by caste, race, religion, and gender, their voyages made possible by moorings on land. Even as scholarship on the Indian Ocean has centered voyages of possibility and connection, less has been said about the multiplicity of subjects and labors that make such movement possible.[1] To speak of moorings, as I do here, is to engage with the social spatialities and temporalities of life, labor, and capital of seafarers who seek livelihoods within and without the constraints of geopolitics, climate change, political economy, gender, caste, and religious difference. Here, moorings are equally vernaculars of settlement and materialities of displacement, even as they make visible longer entanglements of capitalism and sovereignty.

Unlike many studies of the Indian Ocean that focus on the elite diasporas of merchants and scholars or on free and unfree labor migration, what follows is an ethnography that examines the material practices, geographical pathways, affective orientations, and lifeworlds of itinerant seafaring communities that are often overlooked in the making of shipping and capitalism in the Indian Ocean and beyond. These sailors are from two Muslim communities—Bhadalas and the Waghers—from the port towns of Mota Salaya in Mandvi and Jam Salaya on the Gulf of Kachchh in Gujarat; for these endogamous groups, seafaring defines caste identity. Contending with marginality produced by caste and religious difference in India, they voyage out to sea, capturing profits across a vast Indian Ocean littoral fractured by multiple sovereignties and jurisdictions. But these men leave only to return home to sustain families in Mandvi and Jam Salaya, gendered forms of labor enabling their mobility. Today, even as Islamophobia, Hindutva, and rising authoritarianism in India offer these seafarers no alternatives, voyages across the sea allow for the accumulation of capital amid the perils of geopolitical contests, climate change, and economic transformations.

Voyages at sea begin and end with a mooring on land. The voyage, or ghos, marks a unit of circulation of capital, an itinerary across different sovereign forms and regulatory mechanisms that moor the dhow trade in different port cities. These moorings, as material and social practices across different ports, enable sailors and traders to extract profit by operating in the interstitial spaces between and

FIGURE 2. Vahans at Jam Salaya, 2019. Photo by Moad Musbahi.

across states, through regulatory mechanisms that are both state- and community-based. By focusing on the relationality between voyages and moorings, this book examines the dyadic relation between capitalism and sovereignty. I follow dhow voyages and moorings across the Indian Ocean, showing how dhows have been made illicit by states in some moments and are harnessed by them in others. I argue that dhow sailors navigate across multiple forms and registers of sovereignty, finding niches for value creation through ghos, extracting profit in the interstices of the global economy.

The voyages of capital explored in this book point to alternate modes of accumulation, made possible through multiple moorings across the Indian Ocean. As Arondekar and Patel argue, the idea of an area, such as the Indian Ocean, is "a postcolonial form through which epistemologies of empire and market can be critiqued" (2016, 156). The ghos and moorings do not offer up missing pieces in theorizing capital but instead become modes of translation that critique epistemologies that have produced a linear history of capital centered in the West. The dhow, as an object that courses through the history of the Indian Ocean, offers a perspective on the history of capitalism that is braided with struggles over sovereignty.

THE VIEW FROM THE DHOW: MOBILITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The "view from the dhow" is always contingent, partial, flexible, and ever-changing. Following the vahan across space and time means that, in each place and historical moment, a different set of logics become visible, obscuring some moorings and bringing into view other possibilities. These moorings or material and social

practices, forms of sovereignty, and regulatory regimes across multiple physical sites are not static but reflect specific voyages and the conditions that made them possible. The dhow as a material object exhibits these contingencies, its built form a palimpsest of many different navigational techniques and technological forms that are ever-changing and shifting and yet hold together multiple spaces and temporalities.

However, the *dhow* is not a stable category. It is less a technical and more an abstract concept that falls into the category of "you know it when you see it" (J. Mathew 2016, 21). The term emerged from orientalist colonial discourses and was used by the British in the nineteenth century to refer to a variety of sailing vessels in the Indian Ocean that had a "common tradition of navigation and technology" (Sheriff 2010, 80). The word itself is derived from the Swahili term *dau*, used to refer to specific vessels from the region. The British popularized the term as they sought to control the slave trade off the East African coast in the nineteenth century (Sheriff 2010). Although the dhow has been defined according to its form, including the use of a lateen sail and its being made purely of wood, with older versions sewn together with coir rather than constructed using nails, the dhow has most clearly been defined in opposition to European vessels. British colonial officials simultaneously flattened the category of the dhow, while still attempting to define it, so that its form and movement might be more tightly regulated.

However, seafaring communities across the Indian Ocean rarely used this term and instead referred to specific vessels defined by the shape of the stern, stem, and hull such as the ocean-going Arab *baghala, bum,* and *sambuk*; the Indian *kotia* and *ghanja*; and coastal vessels such as the East African *mashua*, *mtepe*, and *jahazi*; the Arab *jalbut*; and the Indian *pattamar* and *batil*.[2] In their attempt to classify these different vessels, the British tried to decipher the differences based on size and shape but ultimately, by the 1940s, came to legally classify all dhows or "native vessels" as those that had the "outward appearance of being of native build" and manned by a crew whose origins were from the Indian Ocean.[3] The dhow thus became a racialized metonym for non-European seafarers and traders across the Indian Ocean, with a "'kinetico-spatial' focus in thinking persons through things—that is, an assessment of negative or positive value triggered not only by the qualities of an entity's form but also by its location and its trajectory" (Kahn 2023, 192), as well as by the people and goods it carried with it. Despite the colonial origins of the usage of the term, it is now widely used in both English and Arabic as shorthand for boats from across the region that continue to be classified through their non-European, Indian Ocean origins. I use the term *dhow* to refer to vahans and other types of Indian Ocean vessels to highlight how these classificatory systems produce real effects as they shape government attempts to control mobility at sea.

Despite the wide usage of the term *dhow*, in colonial India similar wooden cargo boats were often known as "country crafts" in official parlance, the term gesturing to their association with "natives" and artisans, traders who peddled

wares across the ocean. Nevertheless, the British colonial government came to rely on dhows for surveillance and transport, especially in places and spaces that steamships could not reach. Many colonial officials also viewed dhows as unsafe, although some European observers remained in awe of these seemingly unseaworthy vessels, commenting that they were so well adapted for their intended use that Europeans were unable to suggest improvements (Malcolm 1833, 2). Where Western imagination failed, seafarers, *khalasis* or *lascars*, continued to adapt and transform these wooden sailing vessels.[4]

Indeed, the dhow defies any notion of purity. For instance, vahans, launches, country crafts, or mechanized sailing vessels (MSVs), as they are officially known in India today, were adapted from the Kachchhi *kotia* and outfitted with diesel engines, often secondhand generators once used on container ships. This is, however, only one instance of improvisation. Vahans were once made of teak from India and Burma but are now made of cheaper *sal* wood from Malaysia. Even its form is inherently adaptable. The *duraa*, or cargo hold, is built so that planks can be rearranged to hold different cargoes; enclosures can be made for livestock, sacks of tea and coffee, and even cars. Many now have a crane at the center, making loading and unloading of goods less labor intensive. The cabin of the vessel might also be rebuilt and redesigned in port. It is precisely this flexibility in form that has ensured the endurance of this vessel amid the rise of rigid steamships and containers.

Scholarship on the Indian Ocean has focused on how the long history of flows of people, goods, and ideas created a unique cosmopolitanism across the littoral (Bishara 2014, 2017; Green 2011; Ho 2006; Simpson and Kresse 2008), mobility made possible by dhows (Sheriff 2010). Today, these dhows have become cultural and symbolic icons of these historical exchanges (Gilbert 2011). Yet in the colonial period, dhows were often associated with illegality (Gilbert 2004). Johan Mathew (2016) has written extensively on how the "framing out" of the dhow trade in the colonial period was central to the making of a market. Recent work by historian Fahad Bishara has focused on how Arab-owned dhows contended with legal regimes of empires (Bishara 2018), the notebooks of dhow captains forming "the documentary infrastructures of circulation in the Western Indian Ocean" (Bishara 2023, 589). Indeed, as Bishara (2020) argues, a focus on dhows offers an entry point into an oceanic history of regions within the Indian Ocean, such as the Gulf, allowing historians to push back against popular, nativist discourses in the region. However, it has largely been assumed that the dhow trade declined with the rise of container ships and the oil industry during the first half of the twentieth century. This echoes a broader trend in Indian Ocean studies, with the postcolonial period being viewed as an age when Indian Ocean connections became more tenuous (Chaudhuri 1985, 1990; Metcalf 2007; Pearson 2003). While Arabs once involved in the Persian Gulf dhow trade no longer sail on cargo dhows, mechanized Kachchhi vahans (as well as launches from Pakistan and Iran) continue to traverse the old

Indian Ocean routes today. As Jatin Dua (2019) has argued, these vahans function as an economy of arbitrage, dhows quickly adapting to market trends and shifting government policies, finding a niche in servicing minor ports in times of conflict.

Recent historical scholarship on the Indian Ocean has addressed tensions between mobility, cosmopolitanism, and more bounded forms of sovereignty and belonging grounded in the nation-state. Sunil Amrith has argued that the rise of nation-states fragmented previous forms of circulation and regional integration in the Bay of Bengal, questions of citizenship remaining unsettled as informal networks of mobility continue to be salient today (2018, 5). Similarly, as Kalyani Ramnath (2023) has argued, in the postwar era of decolonization both migrants and governments made claims to jurisdiction, nationality, and territory, as legal citizenship and national imaginaries jostled with community imaginaries that still cut across these boundaries.

While these questions of belonging and citizenship have been addressed by historians, there is a need to think ethnographically about the "contemporary and contemporaneous" Indian Ocean (Srinivas et al. 2020, 13)—not least because "on the one hand, the Indian Ocean serves as a regulatory space; on the other, it is also an imagined (and imaginative) one wherein ideas of law, governance and geography are constantly revisited and revised in relation to real lives" (Gupta 2019, 57). Understanding the itinerant lives of dhow sailors who traverse the Indian Ocean while being moored to towns on the Gulf of Kachchh thus requires moving beyond seeing the Indian Ocean as a regulatory space and instead seeing it as a place in which sailors labor and live on the move. While studies of the dhow trade in the contemporary moment have focused on piracy (Dua 2016) and on religiosity and apprenticeship among Bhadala seafarers (E. Simpson 2006), I follow dhow voyages and sailors across the Indian Ocean, charting how the lifeworlds of seafaring communities are deeply imbricated with state practices of sovereignty and global circuits of capital, and yet always exceed them.

Past mobilities and circulations inform the present. Sailors would often say to me, "We have been here [in the Indian Ocean] long before nation-states and will remain long after." Even government officials, such as one Mr. Phadke, the official in charge of mechanized sailing vessels for the Directorate General of Shipping in India, recognized that dhows exceed the horizons of territorial state sovereignty. Sitting in the Bombay offices of this government agency, which regulates all shipping in India, he said to me dreamily one afternoon in 2017, "The social mores of India don't affect them [dhow sailors]. They are beyond that. The boundaries of India don't affect them either. They go where they want and do what they want. That is how they survive." Although the Indian government has intensely surveilled dhows, his work had led him to identify a long-standing tension between the bounded notions of the territory and sovereignty of the nation-state and the mobility of dhows, even as his observation obscured how dhows today extract profit by voyaging between and across different sovereign states.

By taking a view from the dhow, I focus on the relationality between capital and sovereignty, through the twinned concepts of voyages, or ghos, and moorings. I examine itineraries and imaginaries in the vahan trade to show how Indian Ocean connections persist as dhows continue to move between nation-states. Dhows voyage across different nation-states, extracting profit and value through differences in jurisdiction, regulation, geopolitical conditions, and weather. This trade articulates with regional and global circuits of capital, becoming expropriated and illegalized by states in some moments and conscripted by them in others. Rather than seeing Indian Ocean connections as being ruptured by the nation-state, I examine how profit in the vahan trade is made possible through geopolitical arbitrage by voyaging across multiple states.

The dhow is "an artifact of historical density in which we could locate a confluence of technologies, transportation, migration, labor, oceanic connections, human perceptions, and memory" (Mannil 2023, 176). Indeed, the dhow is a unique vector through which to think about time, space, capital, sovereignty, and history in the Indian Ocean. A vahan, like any other ship, is a heterotopic space (Foucault 1998). For sailors who live on board the vessel for over nine months of the year, it is a place of work, the hours of the day being divided into six-hour shifts. But for them, it is also a domestic space, the dhow becoming their home, where they sleep and eat, even when they are docked at ports. The dhow is also a heterochrony (Foucault 1998) that holds together the past, present, and future, as sailors who travel across the Indian Ocean gesture to their ancestors and to the Sufi saints who previously moved across the region, even as they complete present voyages and plan new ones.

Dhows have been the most enduring symbol of Indian Ocean connectivity and unity. Across Indian Ocean port cities, the dhow has become a symbol of cosmopolitan pasts celebrated in museums, heritage projects, cultural festivals, and nationalist imaginaries of a world before European colonialism. Today, the dhow conjures a motley crew of Arabs, Africans, Indians, and Persians working on board leaky wooden vessels, their lateen sails and ornately carved bows and sterns marking a time before modern national identities. Dhows have become tourist attractions in places like Zanzibar, Muscat, Lamu, Mombasa, Doha, Dubai, and Sharjah, with live music, dance, and all-you-can-eat buffets. Modern mechanized cargo vahans become lost in this heady mix of nostalgia and romance. Even though dhow cruises often ply in the same creeks as vahans and even though both are often manned by Bhadala and Wagher crew, these two kinds of vessels become ships that literally pass in the night.

These romantic images of dhows occasionally shatter as dhows appear in the news in moments when states and international agencies view their movement as threatening to national and international security. Most recently, in January 2024, a fiberglass boat likely made in Iran and classified as a dhow was intercepted by US Navy Seals off the coast of Somalia. This dhow, manned by crew from Pakistan,

was carrying Iranian-made weapons for the Houthis, who had been attacking ships associated with Israel in the Red Sea. These attacks were acts of solidarity in protest of the genocide in Gaza. The interception of this dhow and its framing as part of an infrastructure of illegal trade rather than part of a broader contest over sovereignty is just one iteration of a longer history of illegalization by imperial authorities, which has become especially significant after 9/11. The dhow has become a locus around which state anxieties about mobility in the Indian Ocean have been situated.

For example, writing about Kenya's porous border with Somalia in the wake of a 2002 attack on an Israeli hotel and passenger jet in Mombasa, Dexter Filkins and Marc Lacey (2002) reported in the *New York Times*: "The attention on the illegal traffic across the Kenyan-Somali border casts new light on the historic smuggling routes that form a 2,000-mile arc from Pakistan down the eastern coast of Africa to the Comoros Islands, between Mozambique and Madagascar. Western officials suspect that in recent months Al-Qaeda operatives have used the routes to move guns and people around the region, taking advantage of the predominantly Muslim areas along the coastline."

It is not every day that the *New York Times* runs a story about dhows, and this one contained notable distortions. The article characterized trade across the Indian Ocean as smuggling and uncritically parroted assumptions that Al-Qaeda operatives could easily find sympathizers, if not accomplices, among coreligionists along these shores roughly a year after 9/11 and just a few months before the US-led invasion of Iraq. While, with the Global War on Terrorism, such blanket suspicions of Muslims became rife in popular discourse and politics, the *Times* uniquely captured how the dhow was at the center of these anxieties. The authors went on to state, "The centrality of the dhow in the East African smuggling network has not been lost on American officials. This afternoon, two American investigators were spotted poking around Mombasa's Old Port, the entry point for many of the wooden boats" (Filkins and Lacey 2002). As the historical foil to Western maritime hegemony, dhows fit well into the orientalist frame that enclosed public discussion of the war on terror.

Dhows have also been viewed with suspicion by states in the Indian Ocean. For example, a recent report by the India-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses think tank states that dhows from India "smuggled in heroin, arms, and explosives from Pakistan either via Dubai or when they make a stopover at the Karachi port. This illegal practice continues even today" (Das 2013, 10). Bemoaning the purported lack of monitoring of these dhows by the government, the report insinuates that dhows operated by Muslims are inherently menacing, such reports fueling Islamophobia in India in the context not only of the rise of Hindutva but of long-standing tensions over religious difference. These fears around security and surveillance are also visible in everyday life. Dhow owners and sailors in India, the UAE, and Kenya often speak of government informers in

their ranks and plainclothes policemen lurking at ports and their local hangouts. Intelligence agents working with the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in Mandvi told me in 2017, "Anything can come on these boats—RDX, weapons, people, drugs—you name it." Many of these suspicions were vague, but the dhow and the mobility of its Muslim sailors are a locus of concerns over national and international security.

Rather than taking a presentist view of these security issues, this book argues that current suspicions of dhows across the Indian Ocean have emerged from a deep-rooted anxiety over the long history of trade and connection across the Indian Ocean. The anxiety about the movement of dhows reveals entanglements between long-standing mobile trade networks across the Indian Ocean and state authorities—not only imperial and colonial but also national. At the heart of tensions currently unfolding between states and mobile dhow networks, therefore, lie questions about territoriality and sovereignty. In the precolonial period, dhow networks functioned as an "itinerant territoriality" (Mbembe 2000, 263) across political entities that operated on the basis of a shared, overlapping, and layered sovereignty (Bose 2006). Since the colonial period, mobile dhows and their dynamic trade networks have contended with the boundaries of the sovereign state, defined and delimited by colonial and then national and international law and policy. These shifts in understandings of territory and sovereignty have led to the creation of regulations that seek to tightly monitor and control mobile people, goods, and vessels. Yet it is precisely these regulations and difference created by national borders and jurisdictional struggles at sea that have offered the dhow trade opportunities for profit. As a result of state and international policy, the dhow trade has become an intermediary in the underbelly of global capitalism.

DHOWS AS INTERMEDIARIES: CAPITALISM ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN

Oceans have long been central to capitalist expansion and extraction, enabling the circulation of commodities, labor, ideologies, and the consolidation of state power. After all, global capitalism is seaborne (Campling and Colás 2021; Schober and Leivestad 2022). While scholars have focused on maritime transportation and its remaking of space, infrastructure, labor, and the environment, most of these studies focus on containerships (Carse 2014; Carse et al. 2020; Chua et al. 2018; Cowen 2014; Fajardo 2011; Leivestad and Markkula 2021; Markkula 2022; Mannov 2021). The dhow, however, was central to the making of global capitalism long before the rise of containerships and thus offers an entry point into rethinking histories of capitalism at sea.

Since the pioneering work of K. N. Chaudhuri, Indian Ocean histories have drawn upon Braudelian frameworks to show that the system of exchange in the Indian Ocean did not become "capitalist" until capital became incorporated into

the institutions of sovereign European states, even though there were capitalists with extensive exchange networks in the Indian Ocean (Chaudhuri 1985; Abu-Lughod 1989). For example, Jairus Banaji (2020) has argued that although notions of capital, and even commercial capitalism, existed in premodern Islamic societies across the Indian Ocean, they did not coalesce into modern capitalism as conventionally understood, as capitalists did not become a cohesive class and capital remained external to the state.[5] While Banaji's narrative ends in the twentieth century, he suggests that these earlier forms of commercial capitalism gave way to modern forms. As Michael O'Sullivan (2023) has shown, however, caste and religious organizations such as *jamaats* offered Muslim merchants a cohesive sense of community and caste identity that organized them as capitalists, and these organizations are still relevant today.

Dhows have existed in some form or another through the periods of commercial capitalism, industrial capitalism, and neoliberal capitalism. Contrary to linear histories of capital, I argue that capitalism draws on multiple genealogies and logics, including those grounded in historical forms of circulation that once enabled merchant capitalism in the Indian Ocean and continue to articulate with contemporary global supply chains. The dhow trade then emerges as a vestige, a detritus of historical forms of capitalism that underpin contemporary shipping and capitalism, as older forms of social and economic organization articulate with a flexible capitalism. These dhows have molded according to different capitalist logics, the dhow itself being a malleable object that is flexible and improvised to suit the moment. Dhows continued to operate with the arrival of Europeans on Indian Ocean shores and remained a critical component of British dominance, just as they stitch the gaps continually opened today by neoliberalism. This, then, is a story of both continuity and discontinuity, different forms of capitalist organization coexisting and mutually constituting each other.

The Indian Ocean dhow trade thus offers a nonlinear history of capital in which time is layered, episodic, and even cyclical. The flexibility and adaptability of dhow networks begs an understanding of capitalism not as a developmental process akin to modernity but as part of a field of opportunities, tactics, and strategies. I draw from the work of scholars of South Asia who have long decentered metropolitan accounts of capitalism, showing how artisans and "traditional industries" were reconstituted such that capitalism was always—and continues to be—uneven and built on existing hierarchies of caste and gender.[6] For example, Sharad Chari has argued that "an entrepreneurial caste has learnt to deploy its alleged caste character, to turn subaltern knowledge to capitalist advantage" (2004, 238): Gounders in South India transformed agrarian pasts for industrial work that was ultimately feminized and informalized, demonstrating that capitalism is an uneven process. Similarly, Douglas Haynes (2012) has focused on "small town capitalism" to highlight heterogeneity in the making of capitalism in western India, where small, informal units rather than marking a precapitalist order became central to the

workings of capitalism.[7] Capitalism as viewed from the dhow appears not as an overwhelming economic force but as a set of conditions that can be leveraged in different moments. Dhows stitch together a contingent set of logics, even as their intermediary function has been glossed as "peddling." Not unlike the way in which bazaar economies have been cast as interstitial peddling trades,[8] dhows too function as intermediaries.[9]

The persistence of dhow networks indeed begs a recuperation of our notion of *peddling*. As Johan Mathew shows, in the late nineteenth century, even as steamship lines dominated Indian Ocean transport, dhows operated in niche markets, acting as feeders for steamship lines. Reframing peddling, Mathew argues that "dhow traffics could be characterized as peddling in that they were more nimble, responsive, and elastic than the rigid and encumbered bureaucracies of steamship lines. Peddling need not be irrational or archaic but rather can be a creative response to changing conditions of trade and geography" (2016, 25). While Mathew argues that dhows were ultimately "framed out" of the market and hence suggests that peddling was no longer useful in the modern market created by the colonial state, it is indeed this very flexibility and creativity that has enabled dhows to continue to operate, despite the dominance of containerships, their survival pointing to a nonlinear history of shipping and capital.

The rise of containerized shipping in the Indian Ocean led to a decline in the use of dhows, but the vahans that now ply these old routes continue to do so because of their ability to move quickly, creatively, and flexibly between different port cities. "We are the Uber of shipping," explained Abdul, a vahan owner. "Wherever a small quantity of goods needs to go, we can send it there, straightaway. While containers move on preordained itineraries like bus routes, we see where goods are available, where they need to go, and can send them directly there, like taxis or Ubers." This form of "tramp shipping" has provided the dhow economy with a niche in conflict areas and minor ports. Dhows still act as feeders for containerships, reexporting goods from ports in the Persian Gulf to Yemen, Somalia, and Iran. This form of trade is flexible, mobile, and always "just-in-time" in today's supply chain capitalism (Tsing 2009). As e-commerce has reshaped logistics and transport in centers of global capital, creating new forms of centralization and decentralization, there is room for dhow owners today to imagine their trade not as the past but rather as the future.

For example, with the disruption of global supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic, the dhow trade boomed, dhows acting as connectors for Indian Ocean ports when other forms of shipping were not available. During the pandemic, Dubai Ports World, which administers the dhow port of Dubai, even created a mobile application called Nau Shipper that traces the activity of dhows and enables users to book cargo space based on existing vessels in port; it details freight rates and itineraries much like a rideshare or delivery app. Thus, while dhows might be considered archaic and anachronistic in a world of containerized shipping, their

way of moving flexibly and carrying small amounts of cargo across ports typifies the kinds of carriers that operate in peripheral arenas of the global economy. Habituated to disruptions, bottlenecks, and multiple regulatory regimes on land and at sea, dhows are uniquely malleable and suited to the so-called gig economy. As Laleh Khalili has argued, "It is a mistake to imagine these dhows as remnants or residues of 'traditional' trade; their business has flourished alongside, in the interstices of, and because of the more global, large-scale, and mechanized trade of container ships and modern bulk carriers" (2020, 50). Dhows are mobile, flexible intermediaries in global shipping. These carriers offer a way forward in a world of shipping, where efforts are constantly made to produce smooth, efficient supply chains, even though global shipping is characterized by mobility and immobility, flows and "stuckness" (Markkula 2022, 190).

The dhow economy is an intermediate sphere in global shipping today. Actors in the dhow economy at times collaborate with states and at others contest or evade their authority. For example, dhows that carry contraband across Indian Ocean ports may also transport food aid or supply naval vessels stationed in different parts of the ocean. Dhows, then, are in some moments co-opted by states and global shipping and at other times run in contravention of state-sanctioned commerce and trade. The state is, however, only one kind of regulatory authority, alongside "community and corporate forms of reputation, trust, and obligation" (Schwecke and Gandhi 2020, 16). Indeed, the "predominance of a capitalist world order reserves roles and creates uses for historically sedimented and socially embedded conceptions underlying exchange" (Schwecke and Gandhi 2020, 8). Modern markets are thus "embedded" in pliable, capacious ways, operating in a realm of multiple sovereignties and contested jurisdictions.

The dhow economy is grounded in such sedimented and socially embedded conceptions—some of which are explored through this book as moorings and voyages. These practices and regimes of circulation are grounded in older historical social forms of exchange that are constantly made anew as they become part of the capitalist world order. As feminist political economists have argued, capitalism is always heterogenous, flexible, and embedded in a range of social institutions.[10] Capitalism then reinterprets preexisting social forms to "produce new forms of value, accumulation, inequality and identity" (Rofel and Yanagisako 2019, 6). Indeed, the dhow trade today is an intermediary that, through capital's imbrications with sovereignty, transforms older social relations to produce new forms of value.

This book examines key forms of community organization and regulation as they articulate with state forms of regulation. It does so by focusing on dhow sailors who act as a hinge for global shipping even as they themselves are moored and unmoored in multiple regulatory regimes that extend beyond the state into formations such as caste, kinship relations, and religious practices. This book is about the social fabric of these Muslim seafarers, whose labor and forms of social

organization have been rendered invisible and disposable even as they creatively maneuver multiple regulatory regimes and the exigencies of life at risk—risk produced by colonialism, neoliberalism, the rise of Hindutva, insurgency, climate change, and border regimes in the Indian Ocean. For these seafarers, capital is captured through one unit, the ghos, or voyage.

VOYAGES OF CAPITAL: THE GHOS

For Kachchhi dhow sailors, time, space, and capital are felt, lived, calculated, moved through, and monetized in one unit: the voyage, or as it is known in Kachchhi, the ghos. A ghos indicates a movement from one point to another, the ghos itself linking distinct sites. The ghos is inherently a mark of flexibility as dhows move from one point to another along no set itinerary, instead responding to the needs of shippers and markets on land. As dhows voyage from India to the Middle East and East Africa, they connect port cities like Mundra in India; Dubai and Sharjah in the UAE; Kismayu, Bosaso, and Berbera in Somalia; and Mombasa in Kenya. The ghos brings these sites into relation with each other (Glissant 1997), creating a transregionalism that belies national boundaries drawn on land.

Yet the dhow trade depends on the differences created by these national borders. Dhows function as an economy of arbitrage, bringing goods found in abundance in one region to another—the price difference between goods in these distant markets creating value for the trade. This price difference is not only due to distance and the forces of demand and supply but also to government policy in different national contexts. The vahan, through its movement, through each ghos, thus navigates these differences, the ghos being the point at which difference is arbitraged. The ghos is the moment and movement through which profit is made, every ghos being a transaction. It is the ghos that enables the movement of sailors as well as goods that allow merchants to make a profit. It is thus a mode of circulation that allows capital to move and flow.[11] Dhows carry different cargoes, often for different merchants on each ghos—this movement represented as a line on nautical charts and maps.

For sailors, life is lived on this line. The ghos has been represented on every navigational tool sailors have used—from early indigenous maps to nautical charts, and now, even on GPS. Maps created by Kachchhi dhow sailors did not show land and sea in a grid form as nautical charts do; they instead took a view from the deck of the dhow, the coastline drawn in detail to allow sailors to navigate unpredictable rocky cliffs, sudden shallow sand banks, and dangerous whirlpools (J. Mathew 2016). Unlike European maps and navigational charts, distances were not measured and depicted accurately; but the ghos was still represented as a line cutting across land and sea to indicate movement from one known point to another. These maps functioned much like GPS, now the preferred tool of navigation for even the most skilled navigator, or *maalim*. Place names have now become dots

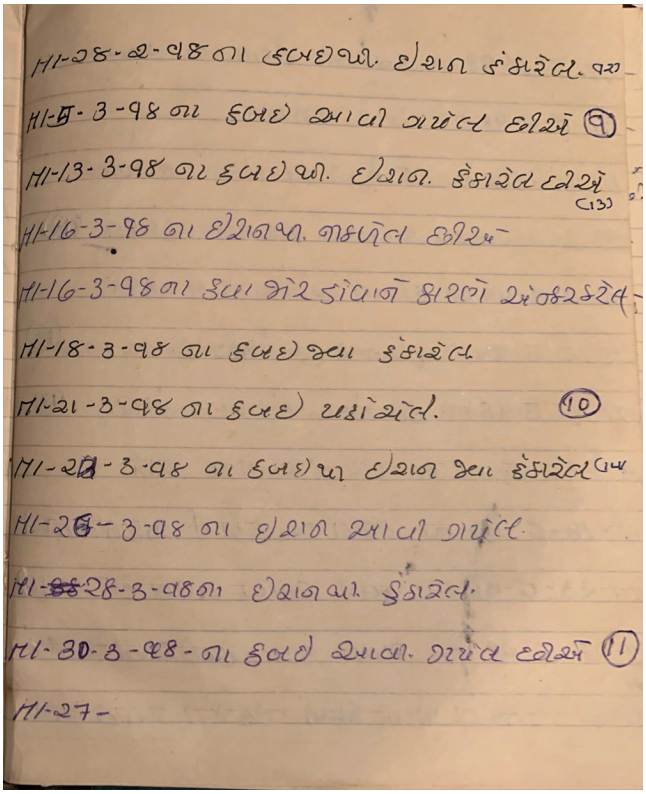


FIGURE 3. Entries listing ghos in a nakhwa's sea log, kept for accounting purposes. Mandvi, 2017. Photo by author.

on a screen, a moving line guiding and marking the ghos. Writing about the logbooks and nautical manuals of Kuwaiti dhow captains in the early twentieth century, Fahad Bishara examines how they charted both spatial and temporal routes across the Indian Ocean, arguing that travel can here be reimagined as "involving a series of crossings along and across the physical space of the Indian Ocean, but also across Indian Ocean history. The routes of the present, then, always bore the sediment of the past" (2021a, 12). Kachchhi dhow sailors today understand their mobility not only as a series of possible routes across different parts of the Indian Ocean but more specifically as distinct voyages from point A to B, these voyages building upon older routes. Contemporary dhow sailors' own logbooks appear as a series, a list of voyages.

Ali Chacha once shared an old logbook with me. The log, written in Gujarati, reads as a list of places where he arrived and departed from, every ghos recorded and counted. One of the entries stated that on March 26, 1998, he arrived in Iran. But much of the log was written in code. As we went through the entries,

Ali smiled at me, and said, "Even though I've recorded every ghos, the place names are not accurate. When I write Iran, I may have been in Iraq." He then laughed. I then recalled that Ali and the dhow owner he worked for had made a fortune smuggling goods across ports that had international sanctions against trade during the Gulf Wars. "For a sailor like me, what matters in these coded records is not the place name—no one needs to know that—but keeping count of the number of ghos I made in a season," he explained.

In these sailors' logs it is the ghos itself that matters, not the exact course or names of places that might interest the researcher or government official. Toponyms can be used by smugglers to purposefully mask what happens between them. A point on the map that corresponds to the name of a place can be a code for another. Place names are written as a mnemonic device to spark the memory of particular ghos. It is these ghos that are used to account for the sailor's life and labor at sea, a season of sail being a series of ghos. A sailor hopes to make the maximum number of ghos possible through the season—his living depends on it. After all, dhow owners who finance the vessel recover costs through freight rates (*nooli*) paid for each voyage. For sailors too, the labor and tips paid by the dhow owner and the cargo consignee are calculated based on the number of ghos they have undertaken in a season. In every season at sail, a sailor would hope for at least seven different ghos, the winds and conditions at sea and in markets shaping how many voyages might be possible for a vessel through the trading season.

The ghos was once dependent on the seasonal monsoon winds, the *mawsim* (in Arabic) or *mausam* (in Kachchhi). The term *ghos* might be related to the Arabic *ghaus* meaning "dive," a designation for pearl diving seasons. It may also be related to the Turkish word *göç*, which refers to an organized, seasonal migration.[12] For Kachchhi seafarers, the year was divided into *aakhar*, when the southwest monsoon began, and *mausam*, when the winds changed. Aakhar is a rainy period during which most seafarers would return home, and mausam refers to the nine months when they were at sea. These days, dhows are mechanized and run on diesel engines that can fly in the face of the winds, no longer dependent on the monsoon for movement. Nevertheless, sailors continue to live in this seasonal way, the ghos deeply entangled with the weather and the monsoon.

Every ghos undertaken during the sailing season is set against the unpredictability of the weather and the ocean: waves, winds, and currents are ever shifting, especially with climate change in the Indian Ocean. The winds have become less predictable, and tropical storms and cyclones ravage the region with growing frequency. For a ship in the middle of a ghos, it is this unpredictability and risk that makes the ghos a unit of focus, a source of value, and a time for profit. But the ghos is not only an economic unit. It is deeply entangled with ideas of temporality, religious beliefs, and markers of life and death, as the living and non-living intercede at different moments of the voyage.

A successful ghos depends not only on a skillful captain, able navigator, functioning equipment, competent crew, good weather, and profitable cargo but also

on the blessings of saints of the sea. In a region wracked by unpredictable weather, the protection and sovereignty of Sufi saints act as a form of insurance. Human agency is limited: in a storm or squall, there is only so much one can do, and the hope of future insurance payments is little comfort for those at sea or their loved ones on land. But where the financialization of risk fails, Sufi saints offer protection as sailors negotiate life and death. And indeed, most sailors departing from India would begin and end seasons of sail by making pilgrimages to Sufi shrines in India.

The ghos is one entry point into the lifeworlds and "social shapes of societies that are mobile, spatially expansive, and interactive with one another" (Ho 2017, 1). Thinking through the shape of mobile societies has the potential to reconfigure how we define society itself. As Engseng Ho argues, much of Western social theory (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) saw society as a bounded unit; society was conceived as a state and vice versa and the problem of methodological nationalism was grounded in this notion of society attached to states. Instead, Ho argues for a mobile method and a "thick transregionalism, a spatially expansive yet integrative account of a mobile society" (2017, 6) that can perhaps lead us out of the "internalist maze" of social theory. Indeed, the ghos as a unit through which to understand mobility and circulation in the Indian Ocean perhaps offers one such concept from the Global South (Menon 2022), one that can shed light on a mobile society of seafarers and the dhow economy of which they are a part.

Yet mobility and circulation are distinct concepts. Engseng Ho, who understands mobility as underpinning travel and long-distance trade, argues that mobility enables relations between different actors across space. Yet it is only with circulation that mobility might be regularized, as circulation implies the repetition of movement across space and over time, giving shape to the reality of external connections. This distinction is crucial because it undoes static models of society, especially in a South Asian context. If circulation shapes societies through a "double movement of going forth and coming back, which can be repeated indefinitely" (Markovits et al. 2006, 3), the ghos is a unit of circulation for dhow seafarers, a season at sail made up of multiple voyages.

Yet the ghos has implications for understanding the history of capitalism at sea. Not unlike premodern European voyages, where costs, risks, and profits were pooled together and then shared by different stakeholders—merchants, ship owners, and sailors—per voyage, so too a ghos is a form of collectivity that becomes a singular transaction and movement in Indian Ocean shipping today. The ghos is the point at which "motion" occurs in the dhow trade, the social labor of moving goods taking place on each ghos,[13] much like a "trip" on a rideshare app. In fact, sailors often referred to the ghos as a "trip." The ghos is thus the basic unit upon which profits might be made from trade, and with which circuits begin and end.

This concept from a mobile society can offer one way to think through circulation and connection that decenters the West. After all, studies of the Indian Ocean provide a counterpoint to Eurocentric histories and notions of universalism

(Hofmeyr 2012, 585). However, even in Indian Ocean studies, these flows and universal ambitions have been viewed as irrecoverably altered and disrupted by the rise of nation-states. Rather than viewing colonial and postcolonial regimes and forms of sovereignty as completely disrupting these flows, this book suggests that not only do dhows, and by extension, Indian Ocean connections, persist, albeit in altered ways, but they are also central to global shipping and hence capitalism today. These forms of circulation continue to be anchored in older circulatory regimes and material practices, which do not remain static but continually transform as they articulate with more fixed notions of territory and sovereignty.

A SEA OF SOVEREIGNS

The vast expanse of the Indian Ocean has long been a theater upon which different forms of sovereignty have been improvised, performed, and enacted. As historians of the Indian Ocean argue, prior to the fifteenth century, the region was a patchwork of multiple states, with no single sovereign claiming authority beyond its coast.[14] Despite piracy and plunder, maritime commerce was not heavily militarized, dhows freely navigating the Indian Ocean at their own peril (Prange 2013; Risso 2001; Subramanian 2014). Notions of sovereignty at sea began to shift as the Portuguese entered this contested space. In 1498, Vasco da Gama became the first European to cross the Arabian Sea from East Africa to Malabar, guided by a navigator of either Indian or Arab descent. Drawing on Mediterranean precedents, the Portuguese introduced the *cartaz* system in the Indian Ocean, which required vessels to obtain a permit for safe passage. While the Portuguese sought to monopolize trade and claim exclusive sovereignty, they were largely unsuccessful. However, they paved the way for the Dutch, British, and French trading companies, all seeking to control the region's vast, preexisting trade networks. European entry into the Ocean was dependent on indigenous groups, these relations marked by conflict and cooperation through indirect rule and treaties with local rulers.[15]

The middle of the eighteenth century saw a shift in notions of sovereignty as the region came to be dominated by the British.[16] Sugata Bose has argued that the British Empire operated with a layered sovereignty and achieved "dominance without hegemony" (2006, 273), the Indian Ocean continuing to be a space in which alternative universalisms and cosmopolitanism were imagined by non-Europeans throughout the imperial period.[17] Thomas Blom Hansen has argued that British sovereignty was less layered than distributed, where each element "in this order drew on different, even incommensurable, legal and symbolic registers of legitimate rule" (2022, 47). The British East India Company relied on alliances, treaties with local rulers, and forms of indirect rule to create a thin hegemony over the Indian Ocean, sovereignty not always tied to territorial control. British power in the regions of Kathiawar (where Jam Salaya is located) and in Kutch (where Mandvi is located), was also based on divisible, distributed ideas of sovereignty.

Lauren Benton (2010) has argued that until the nineteenth century, British imperial sovereignty was layered. Divided centers of delegated legal authority expanded out concentrically with uneven control over territory—law and geography structuring empires as configurations of corridors and enclaves that formed an uneven, disaggregated sovereignty. Empires thus created complex, plural legal orders that were creatively maneuvered through legal posturing by multiple legal actors including both mariners and pirates.

Sailors and mercantile communities continued to trade, navigate, and migrate across the region through these transformations in ideas of sovereignty. Territorial sovereignty became an attribute of statehood only in the nineteenth century in the context of international law based on the recognition of separate and equal sovereign states (Benton 2010; Hansen 2022). After decolonization, this form of distributed sovereignty gave way to the consolidation of national space where the control of mobile people and things posed a particular problem for the sanctity of state sovereignty, which was tied to territory and the making of nationals. Those who moved across borders—such as Muslims from western India—were viewed as a threat to national security (Hansen 2022, 63).

Sovereignty in the Indian Ocean was thus transformed from a distributed sovereignty in the colonial period to an idea of singular, sovereign nation-states grounded in territory in the postcolonial period. While anthropologists have focused on "de facto sovereignty" as well as legal sovereignty or the legal right to rule, as Hansen and Stepputat (2006) have argued, sovereignty is always tentative and distributed, especially in postcolonial states. This is not least due to informal sovereigns, such as smugglers, criminals, and staunch bureaucrats but also to the sovereignty of the market and private corporations. Rather than seeing this informalization of sovereignty as a part of broader networks of power or control that are omnipresent in all relations, this proliferation has specific bearing on ideas of sovereignty. As Audra Simpson has argued, "built into 'sovereignty' is a jurisdictional dominion over territory, a notion of singular law, and authority"; this sovereignty is "nested," the idea of a singular sovereign being incomplete in practice (2014, 12). Indeed, anthropologists have stressed how "sovereignty is forged through relations of interdependency, obligation, and reciprocity among sovereigns and peoples" (Cattelino 2008, 17), producing a paradox whereby sovereignty is performed for an audience who exercise "a kind of sovereignty themselves" (Rutherford 2012, 13).

The forging of sovereignty in the Indian Ocean has been influenced by mobile traders, sailors, and diasporic communities who travel by sea. Dhow networks adapted to, maneuvered, and cocreated forms of sovereignty in the Indian Ocean. While the sea changes in sovereignty are foregrounded here, the pages that follow cut against the grain of scholarship on sovereignty written from above. Instead, in the vein of anthropological approaches to sovereignty that emphasize the lived experience and enactments of sovereignty (Thomas and Masco 2023), I examine

how sailors and traders derive profits by working on the boundaries and in the interstices of different sovereign polities. These sailors and traders capture profits by capitalizing on difference through what I call "geopolitical arbitrage" (chapter three). Dhow networks and state sovereignty are co-constituted, as sailors voyage across multiple sovereign polities. These forms of sovereignty also work relationally with community-based regulatory mechanisms, grounded in religious ideas of divine sovereignty and the informal sovereignty of patrons. This book thus examines how dhow sailors navigate these multiple scales and registers of sovereign power that are braided with global capitalism, the ocean becoming a canvas upon which such entanglements are visible. For the dhow trade, these entanglements between capital and sovereignty are visible through moorings.

ON MOORINGS

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2024) defines a *mooring* as:

1: an act of making fast a boat or aircraft with lines or anchors
2a: a place where or an object to which something (such as a craft) can be moored
2b: a device (such as a line or chain) by which an object is secured in place
3: an established practice or stabilizing influence

A mooring is thus a place, a thing, a practice, and an action by which an otherwise floating, mobile vessel might be attached to land, until the boat is unmoored and sets sail once again, only to be moored elsewhere. A mooring, typically a pile of wood or some permanent structure to which a vessel is secured, may include but is not limited to ropes, chains, anchors, buoys, jetties, and other devices used to attach the vessel temporarily so that it no longer moves. Yet a mooring also implies both past and future movement. Every successful ghos begins and ends on land, the voyage and life at sea for a dhow sailor inextricably linked to the vessel being moored and unmoored in different port cities, contending with multiple regulatory regimes. It is precisely by voyaging and mooring across different sovereign polities that profits can be made.

Mobility is contingent upon the possibilities of mooring. After all, a mooring is a point of arrival, of departure, and a place of waiting. Movement is made possible through temporary stasis and transit, a mooring in one place suggesting other moorings in other times and other places. Moorings imply flexibility through space, and over time. A vessel docked in Mandvi today might be moored in Dubai tomorrow. Moorings thus gesture to a relation between mobility and fixity; where mechanisms such as ropes, cords, and chains are used to restrict and enable movement, the mooring becomes a site upon which contests and relations between multiple sovereignties become visible.

Moorings here refer to regulatory mechanisms, forms of sovereignty, places, and material and social practices around which the dhow trade pivots. The dhow

is an intermediary in the truest sense of the term since it translates and mediates between different forms of social, political, and economic organization in multiple physical moorings, its movement linking not only distant markets but also becoming a site upon which material practices that draw from multiple contexts are brought in relation to each other. A voyage, or ghos, thus entails being moored and unmoored to practices, places, and people that then become sites of moorings—hinges that make mobility possible. These moorings include physical sites such as the home; the dhow itself; the shrine; and port cities, such as Mandvi, Jam Salaya, Mombasa, Dubai, and Sharjah, and yet they extend beyond physical space. The ghos links these sites together and brings them into relation. Economic and political shifts in one of these ports alter the course of the dhow and its connection to other ports. It was nearly impossible for me to ethnographically examine the dhow from one place. Instead, it required mooring fieldwork to different port cities at different times, this itinerancy reflected in the unmoored temporality of this book. Following dhow voyages and sailors across port cities in India, Kenya, and the UAE where multiple forms of sovereignty and social organization are entangled required multiple analytic frameworks or conceptual moorings that organize the chapters that follow.

Moorings as an analytic refers to material and social practices deeply rooted in the social worlds of this seafaring community and the larger political economic contexts in which they sail. The metaphor of moorings is not only descriptive but conceptual and anchors the analysis in this transregional study. Each chapter of this book deals with a different conceptual mooring in a different physical mooring, such as an Indian Ocean port city, over time. These concepts emerge from social and material practices that ground the mobile dhow trade in different places; for example, hospitality at Mombasa's Old Port; shadow economies created through regulations in Somalia, Kenya, and India; geopolitical arbitrage across the Persian Gulf; divine sovereignty at sea moored to Sufi shrines in Kachchh; and patronage, kinship, and gendered forms of labor in homes in Jam Salaya and Mandvi. These moorings transform over time, charting an imaginative, spatial, and affective geography and are in and of themselves sites of local and transregional relationality. Indeed, a "mooring is a relation that accepts the link [made possible by movement], that has no fear of submitting to meaning, to desire, and is happy to let things go" (Vergès and Marimoutou 2012, 34). While Vergès and Marimoutou use the metaphor of moorings to theorize creolization, the moorings in this book are less about creolization and more about a multiplicity of practices and places that make possible both the mobility and immobility of itinerant seafarers. The method here is an "analytic of relation, or a mode of study that attends to the contradictory and tensile entanglements that are the conditions for different modes of social organization in the longer time of the global" (Lowe and Manjapra 2019, 26).

A mooring is also used to connect land and sea. Anchors and buoys may be dropped in the middle of the sea, but a mooring suggests a relationship to land.

While the earth's division into land and sea could be viewed as a barrier to movement, a mooring links the sea to land. Scholars have argued that what was once seen as an elemental distinction between land and sea is murky as property is made on land and sea (Dua 2019). Yet this distinction has been viewed as central to capitalist formations. Capitalism attempts to transcend and channel the distinction between a firm land and a fluid sea through periodic enclosures and "terraqueous territoriality" characteristic of a "distinctly capitalist articulation of sovereignty, territory and appropriation in the capture of and coding of maritime space" (Campling and Colás 2018, 777). Docking, an interface between land and sea, is central to the making of the global economy, as it is the moment in which a vessel out in the open sea contends with port governance and notions of territory on land (Chua 2022). While this idea of docking has referred to logistics transformations since the 1960s, especially with containerization and the rise of securitized, industrialized ports, the idea of mooring contends with relations between land and sea, forms of governance, and community organization that emerge not through container ships or industrial ports but from transformations in Indian Ocean forms of shipping. As Renisa Mawani has argued, the land-sea distinction is a European one and not part of indigenous, non-European cosmologies (2018, 19). Indeed, a view from the dhow shows how both land and sea are constantly in relation with each other, this interplay and relationality offering opportunities for capturing value by voyaging across sea and mooring on land. After all, a vessel must be moored and then unmoored again for circulation to take place.

In many ways, then, a mooring is a "spatial fix" (Harvey 2001). Moorings are not stable entities, but continually need to be made, maintained, and remade. They fall apart and deteriorate if not attended to continually. Yet while spatially constructed, a floating mooring is also temporally fashioned. New moorings might be created in times of need or replaced when old ones are close to ruination. A mooring is thus a space of relation—between land/sea, mobility/fixity, and time/space. A mooring is a place upon which these tangled webs of multiple sovereignties might sit, even if only for a little while. This book is structured as a series of ghos—of arrivals to and departures from different Indian Ocean port cities and places, pausing at moorings that make mobility possible for itinerant Indian Ocean sailors. In moving across these temporal, spatial, and conceptual moorings, I also underline a moral mooring, an ethic of work, religiosity, and relationality that makes an itinerant life at sea possible for Muslim sailors who have been pushed out of a Hindu-majoritarian India, where they have no place or recourse in the national imagination. Instead, they go out to sea, carrying with them a moral mooring imbibed at home, an obligation to which they usually return—masculine labor at sea made possible by the labor of women at home.

The temporality of this book is not linear, because my interlocutors would often frame the why, where, and how of what they were doing in these nonlinear terms. This echoes a "tidalectic" mode of thinking, articulated by Barbadian poet

Kamau Brathwaite, wherein multiple temporalities co-exist at the same time, a relation between land and sea that follows the cyclical patterns of movements of water that challenge linear models of colonial progress and distinctions between land and sea, nature, and culture. Instead of boundaries, "tidalectics are concerned with the fluidity of water as a shifting site of history" (DeLoughrey 2018, 95). Indeed, tidalectics that explode sea onto land are central to theorizing the "ocean as method" (Menon and Zaidi 2023, 2). The dhow makes tidalectics visible. Oceans are a paradigm of history where "historical processes are not fundamentally tunneled, channeled, or directed by national, civilizational, or even societal boundaries but are circulatory, much like oceanic currents" (Duara 2021, 144). Drawing from a tidalectic mode of thinking, the narrative here, and indeed the very structure of this book, is cyclical, following vessels through an interplay between ghos and moorings and mobility and fixity across sea and land, the past folding into the present and the future, even as this form of circulation articulates with transregional and global circuits of trade. Shipping and capitalism at sea are dependent on the labor of marginalized Muslim seafarers from Kachchh, a region made of and from land and sea.

OUTWARD FROM KACHCHH: BHADALA AND WAGHER SEAFARERS

Gujarat, in western India, has been a mooring for trade and exchange in the Indian Ocean since the first century CE. As a manufacturing hub for cotton textiles, by the fifteenth century it became a fulcrum of trade with Egypt and Southeast Asia. Scholars, traders, and enslaved people from across the Ocean settled there as commerce grew (Das Gupta 1979; Ho 2004; Goswami 2011; Sheriff 2010; Chaudhuri 1985). Kachchh, a region in the northernmost part of what is now the state of Gujarat, has had a particularly maritime orientation. One end of the Gulf of Kachchh's coastline allows for easy movement between the different ports that dot the region, while the other edges of the coast lead out to the Arabian Sea.

Kachchh has a distinct relationship to sea, not least due to its topography. It is bounded by the Indus, which flows through Sindh to its west; by desert in the north; the salt marsh of the Rann of Kachchh in the east; a grassland called Banni south of the Rann; and further still, the sea. Surrounded by desert and salt marsh, with low rainfall and few possibilities for agriculture, "economic pressure on the arid and infertile Kachchh land made business endeavor a principal source of livelihood for Kachchhis" (Goswami 2011, 17). Environmental conditions and a series of ecological disasters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries compelled many of Kachchh's residents to migrate elsewhere. As a result, mercantile communities such as Hindu Lohanas, Bhatias, and Goswamis and Muslim Bohras, Memons, and Khojas became diasporic traders across the Indian Ocean, especially in Muscat and Zanzibar.

MAP 1. The Gulf of Kachchh and select Indian Ocean dhow ports.

The sea was a resource harnessed actively by Kachchh's rulers even prior to the nineteenth century. In 1581 the ruler of Kachchh, Rao Khengarji, invited shipbuilders from Nagar Thatta, a port city in decline after being sacked by the Portuguese in 1555, to establish the port of Mandvi (E. Simpson 2006, 39). Mandvi then became the central node for commerce, not only for regional trade with Malwa, Marwar, Sindh, Bombay, and the Malabar coast but also with Muscat, Zanzibar, the Arabian Peninsula, and coastal East Africa. Mandvi's fortunes grew in the eighteenth century, especially as it became a center for shipbuilding and a pivotal node for merchants, hajj pilgrims, and scholars making their way to and from India to other parts of the Indian Ocean.[18] Mandvi and the rest of Kachchh were also closely connected to the neighboring region of Sindh, now in Pakistan. Makhdhum Shah, the Sufi patron-saint of Mota Salaya, now home to many Bhadala sailors, was also

from Nagar Thatta and is believed to have died off the waters of Mandvi upon his return voyage from Mecca on hajj.

Religious identity and caste have been central to the history of capital in Kachchh and Gujarat. Scholars have argued that caste and religion do not thwart the universalizing impulses of capital but that capital attaches itself to preexisting hierarchies. Indeed, "caste and capitalism shared a symbiotic relationship: they leeched off each other" (Shaikh 2021, 5) such that religion, caste, and capitalism articulated in specific historical moments. Theorists of racial capitalism have shown that capitalism, nationalism, racialization, and racism evolved concurrently (Robinson 2000). These insights about racial capitalism have been useful for understanding caste capitalism in the South Asian context. A focus on racialization through caste is central to histories of global racial capitalism, which "developed at multiple 'origin points' only later subsumed within a European colonial frame" (Chhabria 2023, 138), and caste and casteism continue to be central to the production of informality, poverty, and precarity today.[19]

Indeed, caste has been central to the making of mercantile communities in Gujarat. For instance, Vinay Gidwani (2008) has shown that Patels harnessed their status as landowners in rural Gujarat to become a powerful global diaspora, stitching together contingent logics; thus capitalism here is an assemblage that shapes and is shaped by caste and gender identity. This is true not only of Hindus in India but also Muslims across the Indian Ocean world. Studies of caste among Muslims in India as well have emphasized the ways in which caste endogamy, occupational status, and notions of Islamic piety have shaped caste identities and politics (Ahmad 1978; Azam 2023; Lee 2018; Levesque and Niazi 2023). The Kachchhi vahan as a space of labor and capital is structured through caste. Vahan labor and capital are particularly associated with two Muslim communities from towns in the Gulf of Kachchh, the Bhadala and the Wagher, these endogamous caste groups long associated with seafaring, piracy, and fishing.

The Bhadala (also known as Badela or Bhadela) are an endogamous Muslim community of seafarers. Official state gazettes mention that the Bhadala were Sunni, largely inhabited Mandvi district or taluka, and were fishermen and boat captains (Government of Gujarat 1971). Bhadalas themselves claim that they originated in Sindh and moved to Kachchh over 150 years ago, settling in port cities such as Mandvi and Jam Salaya, where they are still largely involved in building and working on board vahans. Although estimates from 1827 suggest that Bhadalas owned seventy-two of the four hundred vessels in Mandvi at the time (Goswami 2011, 41), it is unclear whether these were fishing vessels or vahans. Many Bhadalas in Mandvi recall that they were once primarily khalasis on board Hindu-Bhatia-owned ships. According to Bhadalas in Mandvi and Jam Salaya, many Hindu vahan owners involved in gold smuggling from the UAE had raised enough capital by the 1970s to diversify their businesses and moved out of the vahan trade. In turn,

FIGURE 4. Vahans at the shipyard in Jam Salaya, 2019. Photo by Moad Musbahi.

Bhadalas who worked for these Hindu-Bhatia vessel owners invested profits from the gold trade back into the dhow trade to become owners themselves. Today Bhadalas are both vahan owners as well as khalasis on board vahans, and they live in towns such as Mota Salaya in Mandvi, Jam Salaya, and Bombay in India; Karachi in Pakistan; and Mombasa in East Africa, as well as in other port cities along the Gujarat coast. They are legally classified as "Other Backward Class" (OBC) in Gujarat, alongside Hindu Kharvas who rarely labor on board vahans today even though their community identity is still attached to seafaring.

Across the Gulf of Kachchh, Bhadalas are also known to be the first inhabitants of the town of Jam Salaya where they now live alongside Waghers—the other endogamous Muslim community that is now associated with the vahan trade. Waghers, too, are classified as OBC in India and are made up of both Hindus and Muslims. They were associated with piracy and raiding in the regions of Kathiawar, Sindh, and Okhamandel, especially during the eighteenth century (Subramanian 2014). Waghers in Jam Salaya and beyond continue to refer to this history of piracy and raiding as a central axis around which the community identifies itself. While both Hindu and Muslim Waghers were once associated with piracy and seafaring in the region of Okhamandel, today it is only Muslim Waghers who continue to ply the Indian Ocean on vahans. Much like their ancestors, these Bhadala and Wagher seafarers continue to voyage out to sea, bringing profits back home to Kachchh. Indeed, the Gulf of Kachchh in Gujarat is a central mooring for these seafarers, and its long history of trade in the Indian Ocean continues to shape vahan shipping and capitalism.

Remnants of this long history of trade and exchange with other regions are visible in Mandvi today. The town is filled with large merchant houses, the descendants of these merchants now living in East Africa, the United Kingdom, and North America. Community houses and lodges that once housed different sojourners who passed through the city are now abandoned. As Edward Simpson

(2006) has argued, nationalist historical texts in Gujarati and English highlighting these seafaring pasts have become a flashpoint around which contemporary claims to this maritime past are made. Despite celebrating a history of maritime connection, upper-caste Hindu and Jain residents of Mandvi now look with derision at the shipbuilding yards where Muslim Bhadala sailors continue to build vahans and take them out to sea (Simpson 2006). The space is also heavily surveilled by the state government. "People are very suspicious here," seafarers would tell me. This was not least framed by concerns over security; Kachchh shares a border with Pakistan, and although the entire region once had close connections to Sindh, with Partition in 1947 these connections were severed and the border was securitized (Ibrahim 2021).

While both Hindus and Muslims have kin and affective ties to Sindh, with rising Islamophobia and Hindutva, Muslims in Kachchh have become the object of suspicion. Although Mandvi and Kachchh did not see large-scale violence during the Gujarat Pogrom of 2002 due to a district superintendent of police who acted quickly upon the threat of violence, tensions between Hindus and Muslims in Mandvi continue to simmer. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political front of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization, has been in power in the state for over twenty years. The rise of Narendra Modi as prime minister and the racialization of Muslim citizens in India is felt acutely in the everyday lives of Bhadala and other Muslim families in the town. Not unlike other Muslim communities in Gujarat and India, today Bhadalas and Waghers in Mandvi and Jam Salaya are increasingly marginalized—economically, politically, and socially (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012). In Mandvi, Bhadalas now live in a segregated enclave called Mota Salaya to the east of the Rukhmavati River, while other diverse mercantile communities such as Hindu Lohanas, Kharvas, Goswamis, and Bhatias and mercantile Muslim communities such as Menons, Khojas, Ithnasharis, and Bohras live in the town of Mandvi to the west. Most Hindus in Mandvi do not visit Mota Salaya; even Hindu rickshaw drivers in Mandvi repeatedly refused to take me there, claiming that they did not know the way.

Since at least the 1980s, conflicts between Hindu Kharvas, who once also worked on board vahans alongside Bhadalas, have led to increasing segregation and tension between these communities. Simpson (2006) suggests that these religious tensions were also a manifestation of class conflict as Bhadalas came to own vahans and Kharvas were increasingly pushed into the international labor market, especially in Oman, where they worked for Bhatia merchants and former dhow owners. Yet by 2014, when I began fieldwork in Mandvi, the era of rising fortunes for Bhadala vahan owners had come to an end. Bhadala vahan laborers increasingly viewed labor migration to the Gulf as a horizon of possibility for youth. These class and caste tensions also converged with broader patterns of polarization of Hindus and Muslims in India. Even among other Muslim communities in the region, lower-caste Bhadalas have been ostracized. In response, they

have sought to craft their own religiosity based on Islamic piety in the shipyards as well as within collective bodies such as the jamaat, which manages internal disputes, undertakes charitable work, and builds community institutions (E. Simpson 2006, 93).

While these tensions between Hindus and Muslims were palpable in Mandvi, they are less visible across the Gulf in the town of Jam Salaya, another center for the vahan trade. This is not because of the peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Hindus but because the town itself is cut off from the rest of the Kathiawar peninsula of which it is a part. Jam Salaya has only a handful of Hindu families who continue to live there, many having moved out of the vahan trade and migrated to other parts of Gujarat or to Bombay. The town's fifty thousand inhabitants are predominantly Sunni Muslim Bhadalas and Waghers. Both Waghers and Bhadalas have their own jamaat and live in different neighborhoods, never intermarrying. As a segregated, predominantly Muslim enclave, Jam Salaya is only connected by a single road to Jam Khambhaliya, the nearest town, which is thirty minutes away. Unlike Mandvi, where there were multiple schools for both Muslim and Hindu students, Jam Salaya's public schools were notoriously underfunded, and private schools were located only in Jam Khambaliya, a majority Hindu, Gujarati-speaking town.

Both Mota Salaya and Jam Salaya are segregated, predominantly Muslim towns. Bhadala and Wagher seafarers from both towns work alongside each other on vahans, whether owned by Mandvi-based Bhadalas or Jam Salaya's Bhadalas and Waghers, as well as on vahans owned by Emirati, Somali, and Iranian dhow owners. In India, shipowners organize themselves into local, regional, and national associations. In Mandvi, the Kachchhi Vahanvatti Association, or Kachchhi Seafarers Association, is made up of vahan owners and facilitates paperwork such as registration of vessels and issuing seafarer's cards for vahan labor. A similar association exists in Jam Salaya, the Salaya Seafarer's Association. These local associations are part of the All-India Mechanized Sailing Vessel Federation, an organization that represents the interests of the vahan industry on a national level and mediates with the Directorate General of Shipping. Khalasis continually stressed that these associations acted only in the interest of ship owners, and their efforts to unionize failed continually, sailors relying instead on the patronage of ship owners.

Despite these cleavages between Bhadalas and Waghers and between classes of shipowners and khalasis, all of them face economic, social, and political marginalization. The lack of opportunities to diversify into other kinds of businesses and labor has left them no choice but to continue working in the underbelly of global shipping. "We don't know how to do anything else," sailors would bemoan. Those who were able to invest in education for their sons, hoping for them to become migrant labor in the Persian Gulf, often realized that despite educational qualifications, they lacked the connections and patronage relations needed to be employed in other industries. Like other urban Indian Muslims, only 8 percent of whom are employed in the formal sector (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 3), they continue to work in a trade that moves in and out of the formal economy. Receiving no

FIGURE 5. Vahans voyaging from Jam Salaya, 2019. Photo by Moad Musbahi.

care from a government set to demonize Muslims and marginalize them economically, politically, and socially, Jam Salaya and Mota Salaya's seafaring communities have become part of the detritus of a form of shipping once dominant in the Indian Ocean. Rather than remaining rooted in Kachchh, they continue to turn outward like the generations before them, the ghos becoming a form of circulation for these intermediaries for global capitalism in the Indian Ocean, their marginality extending across space (Chambers 2020). Dhow voyages of capitalism build upon existing social hierarchies of caste and the racialization and marginalization of Muslims in India. These sailors voyage across different moorings in the Indian Ocean, challenging their marginal status in India. Nevertheless, Jam Salaya and Mandvi are the affective and economic center of gravity for sailors laboring on board vahans. Despite their voyages across the sea, these seafarers return home to wives, children, and kin, who remain on shore, making their mobility possible. This is therefore also a story of how seafarers move and yet remain connected to the home, the lives of those who leave dependent on those who stay.

ITINERARIES

While this book follows sailors voyaging out of Kachchh, I did not begin this research in Kachchh but instead in Mombasa, Kenya, where sailors from Mandvi eventually led me to Kachchh. The book is thus an "outside-in" study that traces transregional dhow voyages and maps my own itinerary from Mombasa to the

Gulf of Kachchh. While the first three chapters focus on how sailors contend with forms of state sovereignty, the last two turn to religious- and community-based notions of sovereignty, these working relationally to enable the circulation of capital at sea. In each chapter, the view from the dhow offers a different spatial and conceptual mooring that makes dhow voyages possible. Some chapters are prefaced by poems or dispatches written by me, to gesture to "alternate histories of affect" (Joseph 2019, 17) that orient this book. As poet and anthropologist Nomi Stone argues, poetry offers ways to "do a scene rather than say it" (2022, 6), thereby activating phenomenological experience and enlarging the possibilities of ethnographic scenes. Poetry is also central to Islamicate traditions of the Indian Ocean, and the poems here attempt to capture the rhythms of this world, although in English and in an experimental form.

The first chapter traces the voyages of the vahan, the *Sagar Sanpati* from Mandvi to its mooring in the Old Port in Mombasa. Using hospitality as a key conceptual mooring that describes forms of social life in port, I analyze how sailors arrive, make connections, and conduct trade in port through hospitality on board the dhow. Hospitality smoothens out tensions between dhow captains, sailors, anthropologists, street-level bureaucrats, and brokers. However, a view from the vahan upends traditional definitions of guest and host, as sailors are situated within a longer history of Indian Ocean connections. Using hospitality as a central analytic to understand how my own fieldwork was made possible, a coda to the chapter outlines my own transregional research itinerary and its beginnings in Mombasa.

Following the ghos of the *Sagar Sanpati* out from Mombasa to Somalia, the UAE, and India, chapter two examines how dhows have become implicated in recent debates around security in the Indian Ocean. I situate the contemporary illegalization of dhows and the racialization of Muslim sailors within a longer history of racial capitalism in the Indian Ocean. I argue that both colonial and postcolonial states have expropriated dhows and yet conscripted them into a shadow economy where the lines between legal and illegal trade are blurry. Shadow economies become a conceptual mooring for me as I examine how dhows have contended with colonial rule, economic liberalization in India, the concurrent collapse of the Somali state, and the rise of Hindu nationalism. Dhow sailors have been pushed into a shadow economy through state policies and articulate their own notions of the licit and illicit expressed through the vernacular concept of *daan chori* (tax evasion).

Chapter three traces dhow voyages as sailors and vahan owners trade in diesel across the Persian Gulf, the ports of Dubai and Sharjah becoming physical moorings for transshipment. I argue that geopolitical arbitrage between free trade zones in the UAE, Iran, Somalia, and Yemen offers sailors opportunities for accumulation—this form of arbitrage akin to a historical trade in currencies across the Indian Ocean. Yet geopolitical arbitrage is not without risk as sailors' lives and bodies are threatened at sea. These sailors contend with risk by arbitraging the status

of their patrons. Arbitrage is thus a central conceptual mooring for understanding voyages across a seascape fractured by uneven sovereignties.

Sailors face risk at sea not only at the hands of humans but also with the vagaries of climate change. Analyzing the multiple ways in which sailors and their families grapple with danger at sea, chapter four centers on Cyclone Mekunu (2018), the most powerful cyclone to hit the Arabian Peninsula in recorded history. Rather than thinking about risk and protection in financial terms, seafarers negotiate life and death at sea through conceptions of divine sovereignty and Sufi Islam. The Sufi saint emerges as a patron and sovereign par excellence as the dhow at sea is moored to the Sufi shrine on land. Divine sovereignty becomes a conceptual mooring to understand voyages of capital and their entanglements with religion and forms of sovereignty that are imbricated with the state, and yet exceed state sovereignty.

Finally, chapter five follows dhow sailors as they return home to the Gulf of Kachchh, their profits and capital settling into their homes in Gujarat. Patronage, as a gender- and caste-based form of labor organization, moors mobile dhows and seafarers to their homes and kin through a monsoonal temporality and relationality. This transregional relationality of the dhow trade is made possible not only through the physical movement of male sailors but also through the labor of the women they leave behind. Seasonal dhow labor functions through systems of patronage, women being key economic actors in these patronage systems, as they undertake what I call the "labor of being in relation." Rather than presuming that these forms of labor belong to a different era, I argue that they are the very moorings for global shipping and capital today.

The view from the vahan is one of a relationality forged by the interplay between moorings and voyages. Vahan seafarers contend with their marginal status in India by voyaging out to sea, ghos producing capital in the interstices between multiple registers and scales of sovereignty. These dhow voyages open possibilities for other moorings, in the past, present, and future. The view from the dhow thus offers a nonlinear history of the entanglement of capitalism and sovereignty, voyages and moorings becoming perilous possibilities for sailors.

1

Strangers on Shore

Hospitality and Sovereignty in Mombasa's Old Port

A successful voyage, or a ghos, ends in a mooring close to land, usually a port of call. Not unlike a voyage at sea, moorings can also be risky, the presumed safety of land not always ensuring security for sailors accustomed to the tumultuous sea. Arrival in a new port necessitates making connections—logistical, personal, operational, and governmental; many of these connections are fragile, tentative, and need to be tended to ensure a safe and profitable stay in port. The end of a ghos and the beginning of a mooring thus entails the making of new connections and renewing old ones.

Building connections is not always a seamless process, as twelve sailors from Kachchh who bemoaned their arrival in Mombasa in June 2011 only too clearly understood. For them, communication was difficult—they did not speak Kiswahili and relied on local translators. They did not feel safe enough to wander freely in town, afraid of the many hustlers, thieves, crooks, drug addicts, and pickpockets that were rumored to stalk the streets. Besides, there were not many spectacular buildings or malls to visit—unlike the more familiar port of Dubai. Most importantly, the voyage from Kachchh to Mombasa is a long and arduous one, especially in the months of April to November, when the monsoon winds blow from south to west, strong winds and rain making it difficult to navigate wooden dhows at sea. Despite these troubles, in June 2011 the vahan *Sagar Sanpati* docked at the Old Port in Mombasa and its crew decided to make the most of the city's simple pleasures. The younger ones would walk along the seashore by the lighthouse, the strong *kusi*, or southwest monsoon breeze, welcome on land. It was here that they tasted the coconut water, *madafu*, of East Africa, often sweeter than its Indian counterpart, and munched on freshly fried cassava chips drenched in lime and chili powder, the tart spiciness reminding them of the food they savored at

FIGURE 6. A vahan from Mandvi docked at the Old Port. Mombasa, 2019. Photo by author.

home. The older ones preferred the *paan* houses in town, chatting over betel nuts with the children of seafarers who had left Kachchh centuries ago, making Mombasa their home. These men of the Bhadala diaspora became the "family" of these itinerant sailors while on the Swahili coast.

However, Yusuf, the captain, *nakhwa* or, as he was called in these parts, the *nahoda* of the *Sagar Sanpati* rarely left the vahan, or *jahazi*, as his East African peers called it. The vahan became his sanctuary and his refuge on strange shores. He was acutely aware of his responsibilities and worried about the health and well-being of his crew so far away from home, concerned that Mombasa's infamous nightlife and easily available and affordable sex workers might lead them astray. In other ports such as Dubai, entry and exit from the dhow port was strictly controlled and entertainment was expensive, sailors only occasionally being able to indulge in these diversions. But in Mombasa, movement in and out of the port was relatively easy and leisure more affordable. Yusuf, a pious nakhwa, was particularly concerned about the morality of his crew in an unfamiliar land. So, he led by example, leaving the vahan only to visit fellow Bhadalas, run errands, or attend Friday prayers at the mosque. The dhow was his home, and he carefully tended to its every need. The *Sagar Sanpati* was built in Yusuf's hometown in Mandvi, in the same shipyard where he began his apprenticeship as a young boy, climbing through the ranks until he finally became nakhwa.

Indeed, the MSV *Sagar Sanpati* felt like a home. The main cabin had the warmth of a middle-class Indian living room. It was always impeccably neat and clean—the cabinets that lined the periphery of the room tightly shut, the floors always swept and mopped, the large collection of VCDs and DVDs that kept the crew entertained at sea and in port stacked carefully in the cabinet under the television, along with the DVD player. The tops of the other cabinets acted as a bed and sofa;

FIGURE 7. Cabin in a vahan docked at Mombasa, 2016. Photo by author.

the thin mattresses covered in bedspreads from Gujarat. When sitting on these seats, one could turn around and peer through the windows, out to sea. Even the curtains had been carefully chosen—a decorative arabesque print in maroon and gold—that further created a sense of home. The cabin also had the freezer, where cold drinks, mangoes, fish, bottled water, and all other perishable supplies, typically consumed by the captain and his guests, were stored. The cabinets were full of things that were important for the khalasis, especially large bags of *phakki*—betel nut mixed with tobacco—that they bought from different ports, every man on board making his own mixture as and when he wanted.

Despite acting as a living room, and occasionally bedroom, for the entire crew, the cabin was a place of business. The wall unit that held the TV also had the vessel's navigation equipment—the GPRS, radio, Universal AIS, international phone, and navigational charts. It was from here that Yusuf navigated the Indian Ocean. The cabin was also where most negotiations were conducted with local agents, although major decisions were made over the phone, in consultation with either the owner, or *seth*, in Bombay or more often his Somali agent in Dubai. But it was usually in this room that these cell phone conversations took place, the captain and his crew charging their phones constantly, as they wanted to be easily contacted by friends and family, whether far or near.

The little kitchen behind the cabin was another special place on board. It was in this little alcove with just about enough room for one gas cooker; a shelf of

FIGURE 8. Kitchen on board a vahan, Mombasa, 2016.
Photo by author.

aluminum tins filled with spices; and a tiny, low wooden seat on which Jamal, the *bhandari*, or *rasoiya* (the cook), would sit and roll out rotis; grind fresh spices; fry fish; and stir large pots of rice and lentils, *khichdi*,[1] feeding the crew, guests of the captain, and whoever else would show up at mealtimes in port. While the captain reigned supreme in the cabin, the kitchen was clearly Jamal's domain. Jamal was young and couldn't swim. This was a source of constant amusement for the crew, but he was very well respected, not in the least for the delicious meals that he churned out in that little kitchen. "If the launch [vahan] capsizes, he would drown. But he is an artist in the kitchen. He cooks better than my wife!" Sultan, the *serang*, or foreman, once told me, confessing that he ate better at sea than he did at home because they had more generous rations. The food aboard the *Sagar Sanpati* was popular in port, with even the many government officials and not-so-official brokers who hung about the port making their acquaintance with Yusuf, who would never refuse them a meal. Indeed, the spicy fish curries,

perfectly seasoned vegetables and ample khichdi were perhaps some of the best meals I had in Mombasa, reminding both me and the crew of the flavors of home. When I complimented Jamal and Yusuf on the food in this way, they would disagree and retort, "Nothing here can be how it is at home, especially in Africa."

Practices of homemaking on board were a source of comfort for Yusuf and the crew; a bowl of warm khichdi and mangoes for dessert, the easily available phakki, and the many Indian movies they watched, all helped them remember home, indeed, live it on board. The crew typically spent nine months of the year away at sea, largely in ports that they were familiar with and visited each year, such as Dubai and Sharjah. That season, however, the vahan had been chartered out to Somali merchants based in Dubai, and the crew was instructed to transport household goods—tea, coffee, and pasta—from Mombasa to Mogadishu and Kismayu in Somalia, bringing back dried fish, popular on the Swahili coast and beyond. It was the first time most of the crew had been to East Africa, only Yusuf, in his youth, having previously voyaged to the Swahili coast. When the crew first arrived in Mombasa, the city was strange to them, and they looked for every way to remember home. Most of them even came from the same town—while Yusuf and a young "helper" were Bhadalas from Mandvi, the others were Bhadalas and Waghers from Jam Salaya.

The dhow then became their home, a mooring, a stable space in an unfamiliar land, a space that allowed for building connections, as tentative as they might be. As a home, the dhow was also a place of hospitality, a place where encounters between guests and hosts forged new relationalities and made possible the business of dhows—and so, Yusuf entertained guests and conducted business in the cabin. Indeed, when I first came on board the *Sagar Sanpati*, it was on the floor of the cabin where Jamal laid out a plastic sheet, serving me lunch, upon Yusuf's insistence. Although we were both newcomers to Mombasa, it was during these mealtimes that a friendship was born. Accounts of voyages, stories of home, and tactics to navigate life in Mombasa (which mangoes were juiciest; what doctor to consult in which clinic; and methods to deter Mombasa's fat, persistent mosquitoes) were all discussed in this cabin, usually over plates of food or cups of chai. Our conversations were often interrupted by other guests: Somali merchants, such as Salim; Afzal, a Hadhrami-Swahili shipping agent; a Swahili broker, Hamisi; and George, the assistant jetty inspector of the Old Port. The dhow, as a mooring, and Yusuf and his crew's home away from home, was thus also a space of encounter.

What does it mean for a sailor to arrive in an unfamiliar port city and be able to do "business"? How do Kachchhi sailors, diasporic Kachchhis in Mombasa, Somali shipping agents and merchants, Hadhrami merchants, Swahili brokers, and state officials encounter each other in the ambiguous space of the Old Port? Ports are, after all, border zones, spaces in which the territorial sovereignty of nation-states is contested. How then do negotiations over sovereignty take place in port? Ports are places of encounter, these encounters often tentative, connections being

made and tended in order to make life and trade possible. In the space of the Old Port, hospitality is central to making and keeping connections that make exchange possible. The dhow, as a home, as a mooring in port, offered one such space where rituals of hospitality took place. Yet tensions between guests and hosts are contests over sovereignty. This chapter uses forms of hospitality on board the dhow as a window into thinking about encounters between familiars and strangers, between sailors, state officials, and non-state actors, where the building of connections and negotiations over sovereignty made possible the work of the dhow trade as it was docked in Mombasa.

Ethnographies of encounter typically focus on "how culture making occurs through everyday encounters among members of two or more groups with different cultural backgrounds and unequally positioned stakes in their relationships" (Faier and Rofel 2014, 364). The Indian Ocean arena—long a space of connection across difference—is a particularly poignant place from which to think of encounters. After all, groups across the littoral have interacted with each other since long before the rise of colonial and postcolonial states. Hospitality has historically been central to the making of these connections and trade. In the present, too, hospitality is one mooring for the making of tentative connections, and an entry point into thinking about contestations over sovereignty in an Indian Ocean world fractured by sovereign nation-states.

In the border zone of the Old Port, where state sovereignty appears to be at stake in theory, in practice states and their rules are treated by sailors, non-state actors, and even state actors as an inconvenience. Here, the state and its rules and regulations, its enactment of territorial sovereignty, must simply be navigated, acts of hospitality and sociality at port smoothing out some tensions and raising other conflicts between and among state and non-state actors. In the border zone of the Old Port, the dhow captain, the street-level bureaucrat, and the broker all negotiated their authority and sovereignty through these encounters with one another, the dhow itself becoming a space in which many of these negotiations and the building of connections took place, often during rituals of hospitality.

Studies of borders and migration have emphasized the importance of building personal connections (Chu 2010). For example, commensality outside the workplace amongst customs officials, bosses, subordinates, traders, and smugglers in Fuzhou produced risky yet necessary personal connections imbricated in the "ethics of work and play" (Chu 2019, 208). While Chu focuses on the use of these connections to facilitate bureaucratic processes, hospitality is not a central analytic for her. In the space of the Old Port, personal connections forged through hospitality were required not only to move bureaucratic processes along but also to *live* comfortably in the port. Sailors lived on board the dhow docked in the Old Port, sharing space with officials who worked there day and night. This sharing of space entailed cultivating deep personal connections, relations built through hospitality. Yet hospitality brought to the fore the contested nature of sovereignty in the border zone of the Old Port.

As Brenda Chalfin has argued, the border is a figuration of a distributed sovereignty, characterized through overlaps, uneasiness, and ambiguity such that sovereignty exists in "multiple shadowy presences—including the popular imaginary—and is never fully the state's to give away" (2010, 130). Chalfin's work resonates in the context of the Old Port, where multiple state and non-state actors were deeply entangled with each other. The ambiguity of sovereignty was made visible and yet smoothed over through hospitality, these multiple authorities interacting with each other not only in the filling out of paperwork or through transactions in port but also through commensality on board the dhow and by working and living together in the Old Port.

Hospitality on board the dhow in the border zone of the Old Port entailed an upending of traditional ideas of the role of guest and host, with consequences for understandings of sovereignty. Recent work on hospitality by Jatin Dua (2019) has highlighted how Somali pirates who hijacked dhows to use them as motherships became guests on board. In his account of non-state actors, hospitality is a practice of protection where the role of guest and host remain stable. As I argue in this chapter, however, hospitality smoothed some tensions over sovereignty while producing other types of conflicts as these notions of guest and host were upended, reflecting the muddy terrain of the multiple sovereignties that coexisted and competed at the Old Port and yet enabled dhow voyages and moorings.

Aboard the dhow, Yusuf became host to multiple guests even though he was a newcomer in an unfamiliar land and could have been assumed to be a guest in Mombasa. Here, Yusuf, as dhow captain, was an authority in his own right on board the vessel even as he was subject to the sovereignty of the nation-state—whether Kenya, in whose waters he was docked, or India, where the *Sagar Sanpati* was registered. Yet these overlapping sovereignties were often in tension with each other, these conflicts visible in the Old Port where Yusuf acted both as a host and as a guest. The dhow, docked in the Old Port of Mombasa, was a floating piece of Kachchh and a place of encounters between hosts and guests, with even these definitions thrown into disarray. These understandings of hospitality and definitions of guest and host (whether as individuals or as states)—and indeed of sovereignty itself—were unstable, especially in the context of a longer history of Indian Ocean connections, where Bhadalas and other itinerant Indian dhow sailors in Mombasa in 2011 could never fully be strangers.

STRANGERS ON THESE SHORES? THE PARADOX OF HOSPITALITY AND WAVES OF INTERCONNECTED HISTORIES

The law of hospitality, or the "problem of how to deal with strangers" (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 501), has been understood to be an ambivalent one; it does not eliminate conflict but instead turns potential conflict into a relationship of reciprocity.[2] At

the center of understandings of hospitality is the figure of the stranger or foreigner (*hostis*) arriving on the host's literal threshold, or border, and what one must do with such a figure. As Derrida notes, this question of the definition of a foreigner or stranger is paradoxical: Upon his arrival, the stranger is expected to speak, to ask for hospitality in a language familiar to the host. And if such a stranger is already familiar with the language of the host, are they truly a stranger or foreigner (Derrida 2000, 15–17)? Part of the impossibility of hospitality lies in the difficulty of defining who or what the figure of the stranger is, according not only to Derrida's work but also to Pitt-Rivers's classic anthropological text on the law of hospitality.

The stranger's "social standing in his community of origin is not necessarily accepted by the people of another," such that "you cannot be a Brahmin in the English countryside" (Pitt-Rivers 2012, 504). This view of the stranger suggests that past histories of mobility or social forms may not travel, that communities and societies are bounded, when in fact this is not the case. Caste identity is reproduced in diasporas and even determines paths of migration—one does continue to be a brahmin in England.[3] A Bhadala sailor from Kachchh could not be a stranger in East Africa and was in fact recognized as a Bhadala in Mombasa and inserted into a longer history of transregional connections between South Asia and East Africa.

A connection, once made, can always be reactivated. Although the crew of the *Sagar Sanpati* were new to Mombasa, their arrival in the Old Port of Mombasa was not an aberration. Rather, it was a continuation of a longer history of connections between Mombasa and Mandvi, connections that could "be cultivated, thickened, used, abused, bound, or broken" (Ho 2017, 919). Memories of transregionality—of close connections between port cities like Mombasa, Bombay, Zanzibar, and Mandvi—are not only evident in the architecture of these cities (Meier 2016) but are part of the memories of residents of these "contact zones" (Pratt 1992). After all, "old, mobile societies have pasts scattered and embedded across many places. Moving between them can feel like time travel, as each place activates a different layer of time or collective memory" (Ho 2017, 908). These memories reactivate connections across these cities in the present, especially when a so-called stranger arrives on their shores.

Narratives of hospitality often presume that the guest and the host are strangers, unknown to each other. Yet collective memories of old connections across Asia and Africa, of communities and mobile societies that have shared histories of connection, extend beyond the personal to a recognition of past collective connections. The crew, government officials, other sailors at the Old Port in Mombasa, and residents of Kibokoni, the neighborhood that flanks the Old Port, all actively placed the *Sagar Sanpati* within this longer shared history. These memories buoyed those who were unfamiliar to the people of a particular port city in the present, memories of the past thickening new connections in the present. After all, people are identified not only by their individual names but by their place of

origin, language, and religious and caste identity. A seafarer from Mandvi arriving in Mombasa, despite never having been there before, was not a stranger. His origins in Mandvi specifically, and Kachchh more generally, made him not a cultural other in Mombasa but, tentatively, a "cultural intimate" (Herzfeld 1997), one who comes from a shared history of connection, however tenuous in 2011.

India and East Africa have had a long history of cross-cultural contact, dating back to at least the ninth century. Dhows traded gold, ivory, rhinoceros' horn, tortoise shell, and slaves from East Africa for cloth, grain, and Chinese porcelain from India, especially Gujarat, which became a fulcrum for this trade. Dhows and seafarers were central to forging these historical connections. Indian seafarers have long had a presence in East Africa, predating European contact. Hindu and Muslim Indian merchants and seafarers were crucial intermediaries for European and non-European imperial powers in East Africa, including the Portuguese, the Omanis, and the British.[4]

There is also a long history of Indian diasporas in East Africa. Mombasa became home to merchants from Gujarat starting in at least the sixteenth century under the tutelage of the Portuguese and then the Omani empire. The rise of the Omani empire in East Africa under the Busaidi dynasty in the nineteenth century, with Zanzibar as their capital, accelerated Indian migration to the East African coast as Indians became financiers for the Omanis.[5] Migration continued even after 1888, when the Sultan of Zanzibar leased the ten-mile strip of East African coastline (including Mombasa) to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), the region becoming a British Protectorate in 1895. With British colonialism, Indian migration to East Africa expanded considerably. In the late nineteenth century, British administrators viewed East Africa as "an America for the Hindu," a place for Indians to freely settle while making space for white settlers. The pace of settlement increased as Indians were employed in the building of the Uganda Railway such that "for many traders, East Africa was little more than an extension of Gujarat" (Metcalf 2007, 182). Trade and exchange between East Africa and India shaped port cities on both littorals, not only cities like Bombay but also Mandvi.

Mandvi became the center of the textile industry for the East African market, exporting large volumes of cloth to the East African coast and importing ivory. Shipping from Mandvi specialized in routes to East Africa (Ray 2019, 103; Alpers and Goswami 2019) while Kachchhi capital based in Kachchh and Bombay fueled the East African commercial boom in the nineteenth century as Bombay, Mandvi, and Zanzibar emerged as centers for trade (Prestholdt 2008). In the postcolonial period, some Indians left Kenya, others stayed, while yet others resettled there after the Zanzibar Revolution, especially in Mombasa (Aiyar 2015; Salvadori 1996; Salvadori and Fedders 1989).[6] These different waves of migration made Mombasa a familiar city for Indians arriving even in 2011.

Although this long history of connection between India and East Africa is well known, scholars have largely focused on Indian merchants in East Africa and not

seafarers—the dhow captains and crews—who carried both passengers and goods across these shores.[7] As Abdul Sheriff (2010) has argued, these seafarers were central in forging cosmopolitanism across the Indian Ocean as they traveled to different port cities, often staying for months as they waited for the monsoon winds to change. What is less studied, however, is how community networks and connections to home ports or "network centres" (Markovits 2000) such as Mandvi are central to continuing connections in the present. Historically, many seafarers from India in Mombasa traced their roots to Mandvi and were Bhadalas who settled in East Africa in the eighteenth century, if not earlier (De Blij 1968). Bhadala fortunes were linked to places like Dubai; Bombay; Zanzibar; Mombasa; and more recently, the UK. Seafaring is part of their community history and identity even in cases where they no longer go out to sea. In Mombasa, for example, Bhadalas continue to be identified with their seafaring past, not only by themselves but also by other residents of Mombasa.

For example, Bajuni archeologist Mohamed Mchulla, a resident of Old Town, told me in 2012, "Bhadalas have been here longer than any other Indian community, they used to even intermarry, but no longer. So many of the fishermen you see here in Old Town are Bhadala." Mohamed's own neighbors were Bhadala, and he frequently prayed at the Bhadala Mosque. And indeed, Bhadalas from Mandvi were a distinct group within the Indian diaspora in Mombasa, especially in Old Town or Kibokoni. The Bhadala Jamaat, a community organization, is known for establishing schools and mosques that cater not only to Mombasa's Bhadala population but also others. Indeed, the first time I even heard of Bhadalas was in Mombasa, where I began this project, and not in Bombay, where I grew up. These past connections—of Bhadalas and their movement between Mandvi and Mombasa—often triangulated with other port cities, like Bombay, Karachi, and Dubai, and charted a different cartography of transregional mobility.

For Yusuf, a Bhadala from Mota Salaya in Mandvi, these historical, caste, and community connections were renewed upon his arrival in Mombasa in 2011. He knew many Bhadalas from Mandvi who had distant family connections in Mombasa and found solace and comfort in renewing friendships with these men of diaspora. Although he did not become involved with Mombasa's Bhadala Jamaat, as he saw himself there only temporarily, in port, Bhadalas from Old Town would visit Yusuf and the rest of the crew on board the *Sagar Sanpati*. Through his time in Mombasa, Yasin, a Bhadala fisherman who lived in Old Town, became Yusuf's translator from Kachchhi to Kiswahili. Another Bhadala, Ismail, whose family were once seafarers and who now worked as a mechanic, became Yusuf's trusted friend and helped him navigate the city.

This history of connection gave Yusuf a sense of belonging in Mombasa. "Our ancestors used to travel these same routes with only a *sud* [sail]. But now we rely on the engine," Yusuf would remark. Most dhows from India that now dock in Mombasa came from Mandvi. Altaf, a Wagher dhow owner from Jam Salaya, once

told me, "Mandvi has had a long history of connection to Africa—that is why they still go there. We in Jam Salaya stick to routes to Yemen and the UAE." Yusuf remembered that many elderly people in his town even spoke Kiswahili. In Mombasa, too, an elderly Swahili sailor once told me while we were talking in port in flawless Urdu and Kiswahili, "Mujhe Urdu bhi aati hai, main India kitni baar jaa chuka hoon, khaas kar ke Mandvi, aur Bombay. Lakini sasa nimesahau" (I can speak Urdu, I've been to India so many times, especially to Mandvi and Bombay [in Urdu]. But now, I have forgotten [in Kiswahili]). The arrival of the *Sagar Sanpati* renewed these memories and histories of interconnection for residents of Old Town and for the crew themselves.

In 2011 although sailors from Kachchh voyaging to Mombasa were newcomers in a foreign land, their arrival was framed by these previous histories of contact and migration, making them not strangers or guests but, tentatively, cultural intimates, folded into older histories of connections. As Derrida suggests, the notion of hospitality presupposes a "rigorous delimitation of thresholds or frontiers" (2000, 47–49). What then does it mean to think of hospitality when the host and guest are not strangers to one another but are instead familiar with one another through a shared history connecting South Asia and East Africa, the frontiers between which are not rigidly demarked but instead continually in relation?

Hospitality has been central to making connections between South Asia and East Africa possible to begin with. Across the Indian Ocean, acts of hospitality made connection and commerce possible. In Ibn Battuta's much cited fourteenth-century account of travels between Indian Ocean ports, hospitality emerges as a central theme. Not only were Ibn Battuta's travels made possible by letters of introduction that impressed upon hosts to offer their hospitality to him, but rituals of hospitality were also a central practice recorded by this Indian Ocean sojourner. For instance, when Ibn Battuta docked at the port of Mogadishu, young men greeted the dhow with plates of food to give to merchants on board. He states: "When the dish was offered, the merchant fell under an obligation to go with the man to his home and accept his services as broker. The Mogadishi then placed the visitor under his 'protection,' sold his goods for him, collected payment, and helped him find a cargo for the outbound passage—all this at a healthy commission deducted from the profits. Sea merchants already familiar with the town, however, had their own standing business connections and went off to lodge where they pleased" (Dunn 2005, 29).

Jatin Dua has argued that a relationship of protection was forged through this offering and acceptance of food, the stranger tied to the host (2019, 164), through hospitality as a practice of protection and coercion. While this moment is discussed in the context of Mogadishu, hospitality and patronage, cemented through the sharing of food, is also common practice in South Asia, transfers of food being "biomoral losses and gains" (Marriot 1976, 112) that define caste status. As Raheja (1988) has shown, gifts—whether of food or other tangible objects—produce

reciprocal and yet hierarchical relations among givers and receivers, a bond of patronage produced through this practice.

Hospitality, understood in this vein, is a key practice through which relationships are built between mercantile and seafaring communities—whether sailors, pirates, merchants, or other Indian Ocean travelers. Initiated through the sharing of food, hospitality turns strangers on distant shores into business partners, brokers, coworkers, friends, and even kin. Previous relationships of host/guest build over time and enable movement and circulation, making possible long-term relations between those scattered across the Indian Ocean. However, notions of host and guest do not remain stable in the context of the Old Port, where older histories of mobility of Bhadala seafarers turned dhow captains like Yusuf into both guests and hosts in the Old Port.

Acts of hospitality and uncertainty over the definitions of guest and host are ultimately about "sovereignty over space, whose incompleteness, both as a physical and sovereign space, must be perpetually managed in ways that encourage interaction with outsiders" (Shryock 2012, S30) whether at the scale of the family, village, or state. Hospitality, reframed as a contest of sovereignty, can move us beyond the paradigm of hospitality as impossibility, especially when such acts take place on borders or thresholds. The Old Port of Mombasa was one such territorial boundary in which sovereignty was continually contested and made anew through rituals of hospitality between and among state and non-state actors, unsettling the very categories of guest and host.

NEGOTIATING SOVEREIGNTY IN THE OLD PORT OF MOMBASA

Approaching Mombasa's Old Port by sea, one immediately gets a view of the city's history in its skyline. Built atop a coral ridge, the imposing Fort Jesus reminds one of Portuguese attempts to control the city and its trade networks across the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth century. Past the terraces of the Mombasa Club, with its fading colonial past, lies the relatively new house belonging to the sister of the former governor of Mombasa. Even more prominent, however, is the older stout, pillared house of the former Liwali, or governor, Sir Mbarak Ali Hinawy, an important mediator between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British government in the years leading up to independence. Further, the Leven House, once the base of British antislaving operations, marks another stubborn presence on these shores. Between the Liwali's mansion and Leven House, a couple of sailing vessels or dhows bob up and down, connecting land to sea and reminding one of Mombasa's long history as a port city.

Mombasa's Old Port is used not by containerized ships but exclusively by dhows that traverse the old routes of the Indian Ocean today. At this mooring, dhows dock to load and unload quotidian household goods—cargoes of dried

FIGURE 9. The entrance to the Old Port. Mombasa, 2019. Photo by author.

fish, tea, coffee, plastic bags, mattresses, and dishes—moving between Somalia, Kenya, and Zanzibar.[8] However, what may seem like a coastal East African trade ripples out across the Indian Ocean, as dhows from India such as the *Sagar Sanpati* visit—if only occasionally—the Old Port, going between the ports of Somalia and Mombasa, with the Old Port being the last stop on their journey across the Indian Ocean.

While the jetty of the port opens out to the sea and to these maritime connections, the other end of the port is an entryway into the neighborhood of Kibokoni, or Old Town. The blue gates of the Old Port act as a physical boundary, a threshold between Old Town and the ocean beyond. Guards and police at the gate listlessly sit and watch over the entry and exit of people and goods through the port, dhow sailors requiring an official gate pass to move in and out of the port on a daily basis. The courtyard by the entrance acted as a warehouse for cargo as sacks of coffee husks and tea are piled up by a weighing scale. To the left, a flight of wooden stairs leads up to the offices of the officials who supervise, authorize, plan, and document the dhows, people, and cargoes that travel through the port. The port is therefore a space in which the movement of goods and people between land and sea is regulated.

Regulation of trade at the Old Port extends far beyond its gates to larger government agencies such as the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) and the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). The KPA is responsible for the administration of the Old Port.[9] The city of Mombasa has two ports, the dhow dock, or Old Port, and Kilindini Harbor, a modern port for container ships. The main offices of the KPA are in

Kilindini, a twenty-minute drive from the Old Port. When I first arrived at Kilindini, I went to a large administrative building to get my research permits for the Old Port from the KPA and was struck by the differences between the Old Port and Kilindini. The Old Port, even at first glance, is reminiscent of days gone by, as fleets of dhows would have once docked there, perhaps carrying ivory, rhino horns, and textiles across the Indian Ocean. Its location in Old Town and the relatively easy movement between the Old Port and the neighborhood beyond integrates port and city, despite the guards who monitored entry and exit through the port. In contrast, Kilindini was securitized and industrial. Although it was not located far from the city center, one would only be in its vicinity to conduct business at the port, the space clearly marked off from the rest of the city. Kilindini also ran at a quick industrial pace.

The Old Port felt like a world of its own in comparison to Kilindini. Indeed, most administrators at the KPA headquarters knew little about the Old Port and were confused when I expressed my interest in studying it. "Why not study this, Kilindini? It is the largest port in East Africa!" Wambui, a public relations officer in charge of my permissions, asked me. "This is the place to study. Nothing happens at the Old Port." She wrote my permission letters, quickly dismissing me and my seemingly misplaced interest in the Old Port. Similarly, the collection of revenues at the Old Port was handled from afar by the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), which was responsible for the collection of taxes and duties. Established by the Kenyan government in 1995, the Customs Services Department of the KRA assesses, collects, and accounts for revenues and duties on imports and exports. While the main KRA offices were in Nairobi, the Old Port had a smaller office with three officials onsite who ensured that the goods being received and sent out were being accurately reported on the ground.

The Old Port was a harbor that could cater only to dhows. There was not much traffic outside, or even inside, the Old Port. At any given time, only about two or three dhows were docked at its jetty. In 2011, one of these dhows was owned by a well-known Swahili man from Zanzibar, the vessel a common sight at the Old Port as it voyaged between Mombasa and Zanzibar carrying tea, coffee, mattresses, cement, and plastic household goods. Other vessels were a less permanent presence. Dhows from India, Pakistan, and Iran could be seen seasonally at the port, their arrival and departure unpredictable. The dock was quiet and calm even when it had multiple dhows anchored at its shores. While the KPA with its headquarters in Kilindini regulated both ports, the day-to-day running of the dock took place within the Old Port itself. Offices at the Old Port housed representatives from multiple larger government agencies. These included jetty inspectors assigned by the KPA, customs officials who reported to the Customs Services Department of the Kenya Revenue Authority, Immigration, Health, the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), security appointed by the KPA, the Police, and an Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU). These regulatory authorities treated the port like any other border zone.

As a port of call for international trade, the Old Port is a border point for the state of Kenya. Teafuu, an agent of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit at the port, once explained to me, "This is an entry or border point. It is very strategic. It is my job to prevent the illegal movement of people and bomb products. People can easily move between Somalia and here—it is very easy because there are no roadblocks. This is the sea route and so the port is important for the security of the country." Indeed, the Old Port is a border space in which territorial sovereignty, or "the even extension of power and control of entry and exit throughout a bounded territorial domain," (Chalfin 2010, 55) is negotiated "on the ground."

Yet, as Willem van Schendel reminds us, borders are not fixed spatially; they require continual marking and making as areas in which "state territoriality is dramatized and state sovereignty is paraded," even as "countervailing strategies contesting state territoriality" cluster in these zones (2005, 45). Borders exist to facilitate movement regulated by the state, and any image of borders as static comes up against the reality of legal and illegal flows that cross and disrupt them. Those who live and work at borderlands domesticate these flows on multiple scales, including "scales-we-almost-lost"—that is, "pre-border webs of relations that have weakened under the onslaught of state formation but have not quite vanished" (van Schendel 2005, 56–57). The dhow trade operates in the Old Port on such a scale—as part of a longer history of connections between East Africa and South Asia—and yet is domesticated. It is regulated by the state but is simultaneously part of a different mapping, one that predates the colonial and post-colonial state. If border zones like the Old Port are thus understood as spaces in which multiple cognitive maps and scales become entangled with each other, these entanglements are made visible in moments of encounter, negotiations, and contests between different actors.

The port, as a border point, a threshold, is thus a space of encounters between sailors, state agents, merchants, and shipping agents. It is a place where sailors, government officials, shipping agents, brokers, porters, and even anthropologists might mix and mingle. It is also a space of hospitality. Yet while in traditional invocations of hospitality in discourses around migration the host is defined as the receiving country and the migrant as the guest—where hosts assert their sovereignty over space by receiving strangers temporally and excluding them categorically (Ben-Yehoyada 2016)—in the space of the port, such definitions of guest and host were muddy. Although Yusuf and the crew were newcomers to Mombasa and typically would have been considered guests or outsiders in port, they often acted as hosts. While in the space of the Old Port, the government of Kenya and its officials were sovereigns (and thus hosts), on board the dhow itself, even as it was docked in the Old Port, Yusuf, the captain, reigned as sovereign. Indeed, dhow captains have long acted as agents or representatives of shipowners if not ship owners themselves, acting as "the little god who directs a ship" (Das Gupta 2001, 24), the very term *nakhuda* (*nakhoda*) denoting "the lord (*khuda*) of the

ship/vessel (*nau*)" (Chakravarti 2000, 37). Dhow captains were once well-respected figures who were welcomed in port with ceremonial aplomb, some even becoming governors of port cities such as Mocha in the eighteenth century (Um 2009, 94). The authority of the dhow captain as representative of the dhow owner and a sovereign in his own right mirrors the authority of ship captains elsewhere.

In early European law of the seas, the legal authority of ship captains was folded into an array of semiautonomous and subordinate legal authorities, ships becoming "islands of law with their own regulations and judicial personnel" (Benton 2005, 704), even as they acted as vectors of imperial law in oceanic spaces. This notion of ship captains as sovereigns was visible on board the dhow as Yusuf's authority and jurisdiction was what mattered on board, even as he acted as a representative of the dhow owner based in Bombay. Yusuf typically acted as host while docked in port, as shipping agents, merchants, and even government officials would come on board to eat and drink. The rituals of hospitality—the host or sovereign, sharing food and drink with the guest, was turned on its head—it was Yusuf who would feed his hosts, the so-called guest turning into the host. In these rituals of hospitality, multiple sovereignties became entangled with each other—the sovereignty of the captain, the sovereignty of the street-level bureaucrat, and the sovereignty of unofficial actors in port. Yusuf and the *Sagar Sanpati* were not exceptions on this count. Dhows from distant shores often became the space of hospitality, traditional ideas of host and guest ambiguous on this threshold.

When Alan Villiers docked at Mombasa's Old Port on board a dhow in 1935, he left an account of the kind of sociality and hospitality possible in port. After arriving in Mombasa, the crew of his dhow and those of other dhows docked in port ate and drank together all night, aboard the dhow for "the entertainment of friends of the ship in town" (Villiers 1940, 177). The "guests" on board the ship were not only other sailors docked in port but also government officials who worked in the port. One such government official in attendance was a drunk Swahili clerk who became a spectacle on board, drinking and giving *bakshish* (tips) to others to sing and continue the festivities. This important bureaucrat awoke ashamed (and probably hungover) the next morning, his drunken antics not forgotten. The incident is telling as it gestures to how relationships between sailors and government officials were forged, through commensality aboard the dhow. Here, although the dhow and its sailors were guests, they had in fact played the role of the host, thickening relationships between the different actors who encountered each other in the space of the port.

Even in 2011, a dhow docked in the Old Port was a social place. Mealtimes were especially busy on board the *Sagar Sanpati* as anthropologists, government officials, brokers, and even other sailors on port would come aboard to eat together. It is in these interactions that contestations of sovereignty played out amongst the different actors in port. These interactions were inherently tense and fraught. After all, hospitality is always a contest, a type of war (Shryock 2004). It is in these

interactions that sovereignty is made and unmade, this entire ritual being central to the economic and political life of the port. In what follows, I look at interactions between sailors, government officials, unofficial brokers, and merchants on board the *Sagar Sanpati* to trace how rituals of hospitality were negotiations of sovereignty in which definitions of guest and host were upended. In doing so, I hope to caution against using hospitality "as scale-free abstraction" (Candea 2012) and instead point to how hospitality rituals made contestations around sovereignty visible, creating bonds and connections in some instances and signaling the collapse of relations in other moments.

Hospitality rituals made possible encounters between state and non-state actors, smoothening over frictions in some moments and becoming flashpoints for conflict in others. In a postcolonial context, where state sovereignty and its own rituals were seen as inconvenient hurdles to cross so that "business" could take place, acts of hospitality smoothed over these inconveniences, greased cogs, palms, and bellies for commerce. Hospitality was a social, relational process, in which state and non-state actors, sailors and merchants, state officials, brokers and unofficial actors who shared the same space in port could make sense of their encounters with each other. In these encounters, three different forms of sovereignty became entangled—the sovereignty of the sailor, the street-level bureaucrat (the face of the state), and the informal sovereign, the broker. Hospitality was not only a contest between these sovereigns but also helped smoothen out tensions between them, making the business of the dhow trade possible.

ENCOUNTERING THE STATE ON SHORE

"This is a border point, so there are many different parties involved in running it," Mahmood, the jetty superintendent and the highest-ranking official at the port, explained to me one morning in July 2011. The window of Mahmood's office looked out to the jetty, dhows visible from his perch behind a large wooden desk. Steel cabinets marked "Vessel Calls" and "Dhow Registers" hugged one corner of the room, marking the office as that of a bureaucrat. Mahmood, a portly man in his fifties, sat behind his desk, with the air of someone who had settled into the daily routine of his job. Mahmood had been working at the port since 2002, and ever since then it had been his responsibility to "oversee the operations and administration of the port, ensuring that revenue was collected promptly, looking over the loading and unloading, and security," as he put it. He acted as liaison between different departments at the port, ensuring that the wheels of the port bureaucracy churned smoothly. Given his position as the head of the port, Mahmood only ever sat in his office, signing off on documents that George, his assistant jetty inspector, would bring to him. George, however, was much more mobile and could be found walking around the Old Port, and even aboard vessels.

One afternoon in July 2011, as I was sitting in the cabin of the *Sagar Sanpati*, sipping tea, George appeared, smiling cheerily, and greeting Yusuf familiarly. Yusuf

smiled at him and then said to me, "He always shows up here at mealtimes. He never brings his own lunch to work and just eats here, every single day." At first I did not make much of Yusuf's remark and just saw it as another inconvenience he faced in port. But once George left, the connections between hospitality and regulatory authority and sovereignty at the port became clear. "Everything we want here, whether it's to fill the water tank or to process any manifests and papers, we must give George a *soda*. That's the only way to get anything done," Yusuf said, shaking his head.

The term *soda* in Kiswahili refers literally to a cold drink, a soda, but is slang for a small bribe. The term is telling of the links between hospitality and corruption. On the face of it, to offer someone a soda, to share drinks, indicates a mode of hospitality. This ritual incorporates the guest into the stranger's home and becomes one form of assimilation through reciprocity and can reproduce structures of patron-client relations (Herzfeld 1997). In the space of the Old Port, it also marked the creation of a tentative personal connection. Upon the offer of a drink, food, or cash, the actors are bound to each other, a relationship forged. While this form of hospitality is often glossed as corruption, it speaks to a "politics of the belly" (Bayart 1993), a form of patronage that has long figured in political life in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Yet patronage suggests a vertical hierarchy, and in the border zone of the port, such hierarchies were unstable, hospitality leading not to a fixed relationship of patronage, but instead a tenuous connection. A soda, or a meal shared between Yusuf, his crew, and George, marked a personal relationship that made the work of business run smoothly.[10] Here, in these encounters, the definition of client and patron, just like the relationship of guest and host, was not clearly demarked. Instead, in these acts of hospitality, a tentative connection would be made, with the potential to transform into patronage over time. However, in one sailing season such relationships were inherently unstable and yet smoothed over potential frictions and tensions, creating personal bonds. This kind of close connection was necessary for conducting business and living in the port. Indeed, the importance of these personal relationships was not only clear to sailors like Yusuf but was visible even in the built environment of the port.

THE KENYA REVENUE AUTHORITY: CUSTOMS AND CORRUPTION

A sign outside the office of the Kenya Revenue Authority reads in English, "Do not pay any bribe," and "Kulipa Ushuru ni Kulinda Uhuru" (To pay taxes is to protect freedom). Entering the office of Paul Kamau, a revenue officer, one's attention is immediately drawn to the animations on the notice board that warn against the payment of bribes. While such notices are common in any government office in Kenya, at the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) at the Old Port, they had a particular significance. The visibility of these signs warning against bribes suggested that the

space is one in which such a practice could thrive. These types of signs therefore acknowledged bribe giving and taking as a common practice. Such a sign would not be necessary in a space where corruption was not a part of everyday life.

Corruption is difficult to define, but anthropologists such as Muir and Gupta (2018) have argued that it is a category of transgression in which boundaries are blurred, especially between the public and private—distinctions between the bribe and gift being a performative, perspectival judgment especially when corruption and anti-corruption are part of a complex, dialectic phenomenon. Yet corruption always harnesses the personal and is a social act that is grounded in specific contexts, as "forms of corruption mobilize interpersonal, intimate, and quotidian relations in the service of illicit transactions" (Muir and Gupta 2018, S9), making sovereignty an "intimate, affective, and ambivalent affair" (Muir and Gupta 2018, S10). In the Old Port, bribery was embedded in everyday transactions between traders and government officials. As Paul Kamau, a young and enthusiastic officer, put it, "When goods arrive or leave the port, traders want to maximize profits. Their sole goal is to evade tax." While the KRA systematically charged duties according to the standardized International Harmonized System Code, its actual functioning was far from consistent. Although Paul had only just started working at the port a few months earlier, he had already heard rumors about the illegal movement of contraband—be it harmless licit goods like tea that was underreported to avoid taxes or illicit goods like medicines and weapons that were not reported at all. Upon being asked if he had heard of any smuggling through the port, he fiddled with his pencil and softly said, "I have heard that the people who bring in dried fish have also smuggled in other goods. Were these medicines like Viagra or weapons? I don't know."

While Paul signaled transgression on the part of merchants, others pointed to the KRA being complicit with the movement of contraband. As Hamisi, a shipping agent, once explained to me, "There are many ways to pay less duty, you can underreport goods or report different goods. It depends on the arrangement between the owner and customs officer." Merchants and shipping agents therefore worked closely with customs officials, the passage of not only contraband but also licit, legal goods hinging on personal relationships with officials. These arrangements would have necessitated discernment in practices of documenting transactions; in other words, some things were written and others were purposefully left unwritten. For instance, if there was a shipment of dried fish and contraband medicines, customs officers could record the shipment of dried fish, the cargo of medicine remaining unrecorded. On paper it was only dried fish that passed through the port, but this official may have provided cover for contraband medicines.[11] Regulations were thus easily maneuvered, the greased palms and bellies of customs officials ensuring the smooth movement of contraband.

Suffice to say, bribery was a common practice at the port. This is particularly significant as the port is a border point where the territorial sovereignty of the Kenyan state is negotiated. How then can we understand the entanglement of

government officials with merchants and shipping agents in illegal activity? "Corrupt" officials act as the face of the state, representing "both highly personalized forms of private power and the supposedly impersonal or neutral authority of the state" (Das and Poole 2004, 14), their movement between legal and extralegal enforcement possible only due to their role as representatives of the state. Yet these figures should be seen not as having overturned the power of the state but as a part of it. Akhil Gupta has similarly argued that corruption is not a dysfunction of state organizations but is a "mechanism through which the state itself is discursively constituted" (2012, 78). The corrupt official was likewise constitutive of the state. Shipping agents and brokers at the Old Port were able to harness this feature of the state for their own ends, making "arrangements" with corrupt officials in certain moments for particular ends.

These arrangements often included rituals of hospitality—sharing food and drink alongside giving cash—that transformed relationships between government officials and non-official actors into tentative personal relations, ones that ultimately fueled these transactions in port. Everyone in port, including officers in charge of security, seemed to share the understanding that close, interpersonal, if tenuous, connections made goods and vessels move in and out of port, blurring distinctions between public and private and smoothening tensions between sovereigns in these exchanges. Even a security officer in charge of the Port was aware of how these negotiations took place and pointed to the key role of an "informal sovereign" in the port (Hansen and Stepputat 2006).

BETWEEN THE SHADOWS

Ismail, a high-ranking official in the Security department of the Old Port, once confessed to me, "Anything can pass through the Old Port—anything you can think of—drugs, contraband, general merchandise, arms, and ammunition. There is even human trafficking!" As a security officer, he was frustrated by the lapses in regulatory processes at the port and was conscious of the entanglement of official authorities with merchants and shipping agents in facilitating the movement of contraband. He clearly saw how the sovereignty of the state was fragmented by the arbitrary power of the street-level bureaucrat and by informal sovereigns.

Sitting in his office, the door tightly closed so that others could not hear our conversation, Ismail bemoaned the processes for government regulation at the port. They did not have a scanner to X-ray goods and relied instead on random checks, the officials of the Kenya Revenue Authority searching boxes and sacks arbitrarily. However, Ismail did not trust this process.

"So why hasn't a scanner been put in place already? What is the reason?" I probed.

"I just don't know. But this is a question you can ask the Kenya Revenue Authority; they are the ones who deal most with import and export. All the stakeholders

are involved, but they are the main ones." Ismail then paused, looked at me and added conspiratorially, "You get my meaning?" He was implying that it was in the interest of KRA officials to ignore lapses in security, as they were being bribed to ensure their silence and compliance with the easy passage of goods through the port—legal and illegal.

The entanglement of government officials with non-state actors was so complex that often it was difficult to discern who was who. "You see that office over there?" He said, pointing to an unmarked room right by the office of the Jetty Inspector. He then glanced around to make sure no one could hear us and lowered his voice. "It is the office of B-R-O-K-E-R-S," he spelled out on a sheet of paper. I knew the broker who was often seen around that room. I thought he was a shipping agent because he handled much of the paperwork for most vessels using the port. But Ismail claimed that he was not actually licensed or registered to do this work and that he knew the authorities and the merchants well, his personal relationships allowing him to take on an unofficial role.

The office of the brokers was in fact the busiest one in the Old Port. As you entered the narrow blue gates of the port, the various government departments were all marked clearly. However, there were two unmarked rooms. One was the office of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit and the other, right next to the office of the jetty superintendent, was the room of the "brokers," its large window looking out to the jetty. The room looked empty. There were no papers on the desk and no filing cabinets—the trappings of bureaucracy strangely absent. However, it was in this room that most of the "business" of the Port took place. Hamisi, the unofficial broker and shipping agent, often used it to fill out forms and talk in low voices with merchants he represented. Non-state actors and informal sovereigns such as Hamisi had become not only a crucial part of the process of business and regulating sovereignty at the port but were incorporated into its built environment as well. Even Ismail, the security officer who bemoaned Hamisi's role, was unable to do anything about his presence. Hamisi, however, was forthcoming about his role in the port.

HERE, ON UNOFFICIAL BUSINESS

I had noticed Hamisi when I first arrived in port. He usually sat on a bench by the entrance, chatting amicably with the policemen sitting beside him. He always had a few papers rolled up in his hands. He wore no uniform and had no name-tag. But Yusuf insisted that he was a key player at the port. Yusuf explained, "All the merchants use him to clear their documents. He is the shipping agent." Yet government officials such as Ismail in the security department contended that he was not actually qualified to do the job of a shipping agent. He had taken on that role unofficially.

I finally formally met with Hamisi one slow afternoon at the port. As we sat down together in the unmarked office to chat, I asked Hamisi, "What do you do

here at the port?" Hamisi explained with pride, "I am a shipping agent. All the official documents needed by merchants go through me. I used to work in a five-star hotel, but then I lost my job. I was friends with some dried fish merchants, and they told me about this business." The dried fish merchants in question were the ones who imported dried fish from Somalia. These merchants were of Hadhrami origin, but their families had lived in Mombasa for at least half a century. Hamisi's friendship with these merchants made him a key actor in the port; friendship had transformed into a business relationship. With his experience working in the hospitality business, he was accustomed to welcoming guests and smoothing over relations, which translated into his work as a shipping agent.

"Did you have to do some training to learn to do this job as a shipping agent?" I asked. He smiled, and replied, "No, you learn it on your own." He explained to me that it was his job to fill out delivery orders, pay customs duties, and ensure that documents were properly filled out for exporting and importing goods.

"What are some of the difficulties you face while doing this job?" I asked.

"There are no difficulties. Papers move smoothly. It all depends on your relationship with the officers." Hamisi then paused. "But officers keep changing every few years. That is the only problem." Hamisi, long accustomed to hospitality, to unmaking boundaries, was suggesting that he had established relationships with different officers at the port, but the rotation of these officers every few years was an inconvenience as new relationships had to be built, different types of "arrangements" negotiated. Yet while officers at the port kept changing, Hamisi remained, his unofficial role as a shipping agent, or "broker," never changing.

Hamisi's unofficial role as broker and shipping agent, his relationship with government authorities, and the central role he played in the running of the port signals the complex entanglement of official and unofficial actors at the port. The entry and exit of goods and people at the port is therefore controlled not only by the state and its officials but also by unofficial actors like Hamisi. What are the implications of this entanglement for the territorial sovereignty of the Kenyan state?

BLURRED BOUNDARIES: HOSPITALITY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Government officials across departments recognized that multiple state and non-state actors such as brokers and agents regulated the movement of goods and people from the port. Ismail, the security agent, was aware of the unofficial role of brokers in the day-to-day running of the port. Their role as intermediaries was evident even in the built environment of the port—a room seemingly devoid of bureaucratic files being a space from which these non-state actors operated. The unofficial broker/shipping agent was therefore recognized institutionally. This entanglement of official and unofficial regulatory authorities is not unique to the context of the Old Port.

For instance, Janet Roitman (2005) has argued that the enmeshing of official and unofficial forms of regulatory authority in the Chad Basin represents a pluralization of regulatory authority where both official and unofficial actors are recognized as having legitimate authority and that this pluralization is part of the political logic of the state. She argues that the pluralization of regulatory authority speaks less to sovereignty than to the relational nature of power in a Foucauldian sense. Yet, in the Old Port, the effects of the performance of Kenyan state sovereignty were felt on the ground. For Yusuf and the merchants he worked with, the trappings of territorial state sovereignty were experienced as an inconvenience, smoothed over by acts of hospitality and by the work of the broker. This enmeshment of official and unofficial authority forged sovereign state power and shaped the effects of that power in the port.

People who used the port were familiar with this entanglement of state and non-state power, appealing to both the jetty superintendent on one hand and the broker whose office was just next door on the other. Both officials and non-officials had crucial roles in facilitating the movement of goods through the port, despite their very different legal and official statuses. The interplay between official and unofficial authority was a part of everyday life at the port and did not undermine the power of the state but led to the creation of a blurry zone in which legal and illegal trade and official and unofficial actors were deeply enmeshed, these entanglements visible in rituals of hospitality.

These "political aspects of hospitality"—"feasting, the protection of strangers" (Shryock 2008, 33)—are bound together with practices of sovereignty. While such rituals might be glossed as corruption, which is already a part of the state, what these rituals in effect do is transform the relationships between two unknown figures into a tentative connection, smoothing out the border and making trade possible. Hospitality was simultaneously an actualization, or recognition, of boundaries and borders, of territorial sovereignty, and yet smoothened out these tensions in transgressing the border through interactions in which clear definitions of guest and host were upended.

These interactions did not always go as planned or as hoped, and negotiations often broke down (Dua 2019). After all, "the house, the guest, the host: all have limits that can be transgressed. Their sanctity is insured by the threat of violation" (Shryock 2004, 37). Not all encounters at port went smoothly: limits were transgressed, and business partners quarreled, acts of hospitality also becoming the terrain in which these conflicts were made visible. In the following interactions in port and at sea, I sketch moments in which codes of hospitality broke down between sailors such as Yusuf and other non-state actors such as Somali merchants and co-sailors. In some of these encounters, such as between Yusuf and Salim, a Somali merchant he encountered in the Old Port, the rules of hospitality were transgressed, while in longer periods of interactions between

Indian and Somali sailors, tensions were smoothened over by laboring together onboard a dhow.

HOSPITALITY IN JEOPARDY

On the afternoon of July 13, 2011, Yusuf was tired. It had been a long, hot day of loading cargo for Kismayu onto the vessel. All day, multiple agents argued about the quantities of cargo each of them would be allowed to load, and Yusuf had to intervene repeatedly to remind them that it was dangerous for an overloaded vessel to go to sea. However, the seaman's wisdom was lost on the calculating minds of the businessmen seeking to maximize profits on every voyage. The problem of communicating a different logic was exacerbated by the fact that Yusuf had to rely upon a translator to understand his Somali agents, who spoke no Urdu or Kachchhi and only the most basic Kiswahili, which was what Yasin, a fellow Bhadala from Mombasa, would then translate. As I sat in the cabin, taking my usual notes about the happenings of the afternoon, Yusuf was relieved to finally have a break, chatting with me about the latest Hindi films as Jamal brought us steaming cups of sweet *masala* chai.

A visitor interrupted our tea break. Salim, a Somali merchant and friend of Abdulahi, a cargo consignee, had come to visit on a personal matter. They had met several times, as Salim had accompanied Abdulahi on his visits to the port—Yusuf always hosting him as he would Abdulahi, offering him cups of tea and cold drinks whenever he was on board. Yusuf was surprised to see him come alone—just as Salim was startled by my presence. "Can we talk in private?" Salim, looking in my direction, asked Yusuf through Yasin. "Don't worry about her, she's all right." Yusuf (through Yasin) responded, giving my presence on board legitimacy only the *nahoda* had the authority to give. With an uneasy expression, Salim continued. "Can you carry something small for me to Somalia?" he asked Yusuf.

Yusuf looked perturbed. "There is no space on board."

"It's so small, it can fit right here in the cabin—it's just some rice, a mattress, and water—gifts for my mother back in Kismayu," Salim added, pointing to the space between the seats in the cabin. Yusuf shook his head. *No.*

"No! Look there is no space!" he exclaimed. As the heated voices of Yusuf, Yasin, and Salim in Kachchhi, Kiswahili, and smatterings of Somali rose, I sat there dumbstruck. In previous conversations, Yusuf had always joked about the quality of the water they got in Mombasa, faucets at the port with which they filled the vessel's tanks being full of worms.

"The infrastructure here is terrible, even water in Somalia, which has no central government, is better!" he would complain. As I sat there, the cabin's fan whirring above my head, listening to Yusuf repeatedly and vehemently refusing to carry the cargo, I wondered, *Why would Salim want Yusuf to carry water, rice, and a mattress when there was ample water in Somalia? Why would the request evoke such a*

strong reaction from the usually mild-mannered Yusuf? Carrying gifts for a mother could hardly be the cause of such stress. My mind immediately switched tracks. I had been told that those involved in *magendo* ("smuggling" or "unofficial trade" in Kiswahili) used code names—the names of harmless everyday objects for contraband. *Embe* (mangoes) could be *pembe* (ivory). *Unga*, or flour, was heroin. Perhaps Salim and Yusuf were in fact speaking in code.

After a few minutes of heated debate, Salim gave up. He grabbed a soda from the freezer and angrily stormed off. Yusuf was visibly perturbed. The code of hospitality had been broken—Yusuf being reminded of his precarious situation here in Mombasa, where although the dhow was his domain, he was also subject to the authority of other actors. Yusuf wiped his brow and gratefully picked up his cup of tea, now cold, a thin layer of cream settling atop the cup. "What exactly did he want to send to Somalia?" I asked.

"Nothing, nothing, something small. But I won't take it." Yusuf dismissed the matter and, noticing his discomfort and exhaustion, I did not push him on the subject, refusing to break another code of hospitality. Yusuf then retorted angrily, "These Somalis are *junglis*, even in Somalia they are constantly fighting." Yusuf's use of *jungli* (wild or uncivilized), which has racist and casteist tones and was hurled here as a slur, marked old civilizational fault lines between barbarian and civilized, a discourse of race made visible in the "smaller things" (Shankar 2021, 8). This appeared in a particularly tense moment in Yusuf's interactions in the Old Port—indeed before and after this incident, I rarely heard Yusuf speak of Somalis (or anyone really) in this way. Yusuf typically expressed difference through the dynamics of caste and religion, Bhadalas as a community of Muslims in contradistinction to other South Asians, Africans, and Arabs, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. However, in this moment in which hospitality broke down, he expressed his dismay using a slur that placed him, a Bhadala from Mandvi in a hierarchical position greater than the Somali, despite both being Muslim.[12] In other moments however, difficult encounters and interactions with other non-state actors of Somali descent were smoothened over through hospitality and by laboring together.

Through 2011, as Yusuf made multiple trips between Mombasa, Kismayu, and Mogadishu, his crew was accompanied by two Somali men, Abdul and Mohamed. The two men had been placed on board as protectors—*wardiyas* (in Kachchhi)—sent to safeguard cargo and to communicate with merchants or even pirates in case of a hijacking attempt. When I first met Yusuf, he would complain, "We don't know what to do with these two Somalis! There is no way to communicate with them. They don't speak any Hindi-Urdu. It's exhausting! But they have been put here for our safekeeping." Yusuf's complaints circled around the inconvenience of not being able to communicate with the guests on board who had been sent to protect them.

When he returned to Mombasa from a voyage to Kismayu in September 2011, Abdul, one of his Somali protectors, was missing. He had died of cholera on the voyage back from Kismayu to Mombasa, and Yusuf and the rest of the crew had to bury him at sea. Upon his return to Mombasa, Yusuf was worried about the

paperwork necessary to account for his death. But he was also grieving. He told me, tearily, "Mohamed and Abdul were friends. They both helped with all work on board, even though communication was difficult." Here too, tensions had been smoothed out over time, as hospitality had turned into a connection borne not only through "cohabitation" (Dua 2020) but through laboring together aboard a dhow. It was through shared work on board that the guests (Ahmed and Mohamed) had become friends. After all, one does not remain a stranger if enough time has passed. As Shryock's interlocutors insisted, the relationship of host and guest can turn into kinship: "After forty days, you become one of us" (2008, 49). Hospitality, then, could transform into friendship or even kinship if enough time was spent laboring together on board a dhow, a floating mooring at sea for itinerant sailors and their protectors. Similarly, the crew, having spent enough time in Mombasa, grew accustomed to the city, and their connections thickened.

By the time the *Sagar Sanpati* returned to Kachchh, the crew no longer found Mombasa strange. Instead, they had each charted a relationship to the city, one that was often interwoven with the lives of members of the Bhadala diaspora who had come before them. Yusuf would often eat lunch at his friend Ismail's house in Mombasa, while the others could be found sipping tea and drinks in a local cold-drink house run by Bhadalas. Toward the end of their months in Mombasa, I would often run into Sultan, the *serang*, or foreman, in the main market. One such evening, I saw him arguing confidently in Kiswahili with vendors over sacks of onions, tomatoes, and other provisions for the crew: "Basi, hii ni bei ghali sana!" (That's it, this is very expensive!) Upon seeing me observing this interaction, he gave me his signature toothy grin and greeted me in his newly acquired Kiswahili: "Mambo?" (What's up?) Sultan had been transformed—he was no longer a new foreigner in Mombasa who could not understand Kiswahili or communicate with a large portion of the city's residents. Instead, over time he and other crew members were slowly being folded into the Bhadala and Kachchhi diaspora of Mombasa, even if tentatively and temporarily.

Mombasa was a place, a port city in which ideas of guest and host were muddied, with contestations over sovereignty, authority, and power taking place through rituals of hospitality. In some cases, these rituals enabled connections and yet, in other instances, relations broke down. Yet it is hospitality that became a mooring that enabled voyages of capital on this edge of the western Indian Ocean, where even a new arrival on these shores was a cultural intimate, waves of history shoring up the Old Port.

CODA: HOSPITALITY, PATRONAGE, AND ETHNOGRAPHY

My own work as an anthropologist was made possible by becoming a guest on board the *Sagar Sanpati*. Hospitality changed the contours of my research—my encounter with Yusuf in the Old Port ultimately led to a longer-term relationship

of patronage. I first met Yusuf on a windy afternoon on June 14, 2011. I was walking in Kibokoni in Mombasa when I saw two young Indian sailors leave the blue gates of the Old Port. "There is a large dhow that just arrived from India, you should go see them," my host in Mombasa, Mohamed Mchulla, had told me the previous afternoon. And indeed, just beyond the gates stood a dhow. The timing was fortuitous. After weeks of waiting, I had just received my research permit for the Old Port. When I arrived in Mombasa in 2011, I had expected to study the illegalization of the dhow trade historically, although I was aware that dhows were continuing to move in smaller numbers across the Indian Ocean. Before that afternoon, I did not expect to focus on the contemporary dhow trade. And so, I was thrilled and a bit confounded as I stood staring at the *Sagar Sanpati*, a dhow from Mandvi, there in that moment in Mombasa. Finding my bearings, I asked the young sailors, in Hindi-Urdu, "Are you from India? Working on that dhow?" The two men nodded, visibly surprised to hear my Indian accent on these strange shores. "Can I come and see the dhow?" I asked, and one of them said, "Go talk to the captain. See that man over there, with the beard? He'll help you." The man was the serang of the vessel, Sultan, who smilingly agreed to let me come on board, asking the cook, Jamal, to help me board the vessel.

I tried balancing myself on the narrow thirty-foot plank that led to the *Sagar Sanpati*. It was my first time boarding a vahan, and I was terrified that I would slip and fall off. "Don't look back, and definitely don't look down!" said Jamal. Against his advice, I looked at the water rippling forty feet below. Jamal reached out to me, and I quickly grabbed his hand, "I'm here, don't worry," he said, reassuringly. Yusuf, who was watching from the deck yelled, "You know how to swim, right?" I nodded. "Good, because Jamal doesn't! If you both go down, rescue him!" The rest of the crew, an audience of ten able seamen, laughed at the absurdity of this slow-moving spectacle. *A woman boarding a dhow. That too: an Indian woman in Mombasa. A ship's cook who can't swim*. I finally reached the end of the plank and lifted myself onto the ladder, the captain reaching out a hand to help me climb on board for the first time. "Asalaam aleikum, welcome," Yusuf said as I clumsily landed on the deck, readjusting my *dupatta* (scarf).

I could sense his confusion as soon as we sat in the cabin. *Who is this woman? How did the port authorities allow her in? And what does she want from us?* Despite, or perhaps because of, the oddity of the situation—a woman on board a dhow—Yusuf quickly took on the familiar role of a gracious host. Noticing sweat dripping off my eyebrow, he offered me a seat near the window. Jamal brought me a cup of tea and a bottle of water as I introduced myself as a PhD student from Bombay who was studying in the US. "I'm interested in learning about dhows and hope to write a book about them one day." I said to Yusuf. Yusuf nodded. "You're from Bombay? And you came here to Mombasa to learn about vahans? You're here alone? No family?" He had a string of questions.

"Yes, my parents and rest of my family are in India, I'm here by myself." I said, as I sipped the masala chai that tasted just like home—and unlike the milky chai of East Africa. I noticed a stack of Bollywood DVDs near the television set. This unfamiliar space was suddenly intensely familiar.

As we sat in the cabin, I asked basic questions about the route they had taken, the number of crew members on board, the cargo, and so on. Yusuf patiently responded to each of my questions. I scribbled furiously in my notebook, as I imagined I was supposed to. He even took me on a tour of the vessel, showing me the engine room, the cargo hold, the special holds for livestock, and the living quarters for the crew. Upon our return to the cabin, I saw that a plastic sheet had been laid on the floor. "You must eat lunch," Yusuf insisted, his hospitality continuing as we chatted over khichdi, roti, spicy fish curry, yogurt, *papad* (papadam), and fresh mangoes.

"How long have you been here?" asked Yusuf, curious to know how I had ended up in Kenya.

"I was in Nairobi in March and then came to Mombasa at the first of this month! It's my first time in Mombasa as an adult, though I had been here when I was young!"

Yusuf smiled and nodded. "Mine too! I mean, I had been here when I was about twelve, but I don't remember much. For most of the crew, this is the first time. It's difficult for us to be far away from home, even though we are used to it, isn't it? How often do you go to Bombay, to your family?"

I thought about the academic year cycle and responded, "I'm usually home for about three months of the year and working away for the rest of the nine." Yusuf smiled in recognition, "Your life isn't that different from ours then! We also go home for about a month or three every year!"

Despite differences of class, caste, religion, and gender, a bond was formed through the recognition that both of our lives were seasonal, mobile, and filled with longing for home but also that we were both unable to stay in one place. I quickly became a regular guest aboard the *Sagar Sanpati* as it would dock at the Old Port between June 2011 and September 2011. On my visits, Yusuf would insist that I eat lunch on board the vessel, serving up fresh fish curries, rice, roti, and vegetables or khichdi on most days. As I relished the flavors of home while we talked on innumerable afternoons, Yusuf always played the role of good host, especially on less busy days. After all, the business of sailing has a specific temporality—while the dhow is in constant motion at sea, at port work often comes to a standstill, as papers need to be filed, customers and cargo must be found, and vessels need repairing. It was in these moments that I spent time with sailors, who were bored, waiting for something to happen, on dhows like the *Sagar Sanpati*. On busier days, I would sit in the cabin while Yusuf would supervise the loading and unloading of cargo; negotiate in person with shipping agents, government

officials, and merchants of the Old Port; or discuss plans over the phone with the Indian owner of the vessel based in Bombay. Yet this relationship of host and guest was not always a comfortable one.

On my second visit to the *Sagar Sanpati*, in July 2011, Yusuf and his crew had just returned to Mombasa from Kismayu. The *Sagar Sanpati* was in dire need of repair. The hull had become susceptible to leaks, and seawater was slowly filling the cargo hold. The crew had been busy fixing leaks, ensuring that the engine would run unhindered. Yusuf knew that the minor leaks would be fixed and that the vessel would continue to voyage up and down the East African coast, transporting household goods from Mombasa to Kismayu and Mogadishu for a few months. The crew would bring back cargoes of dried fish from these ports, becoming accustomed to the rancid smell of gigantic carcasses of dried shark. A leak in the vessel was not the cause of Yusuf's anxiety—his concerns lay beyond the vahan.

It had been a few weeks since I had last seen him in Mombasa. As he welcomed me into the small cabin on board, he seemed anxious and preoccupied, fidgeting with the fringes of his collared *kurta*, or long Indian shirt. "You're not from the CID [Crime Investigation Department], are you? You know, I've told you everything," he asked, vulnerable but sounding apologetic at the hint of an accusation. On my previous visit, I had assured him that I was a PhD student and hoped to write a book one day. But the anxiety had resurfaced.

"No, I am only a PhD student," I responded. "But I can understand your worries, I know things are risky. But is something specific bothering you?"

Yusuf put his hands in his pockets, looked down, and confessed, "People are always suspicious here. There is a lot of *hera-pheri* [illegal trade]. All our business is official, everything is official, but still . . ." He whispered, looking up at me, relieved, as we sipped tea and shared news from home. As I left the vahan that day, I heard the crew members and the police debate who I was, talking about my fitness and my body type, the general sentiment being that there was no possible way I could be an intelligence agent—I was not limber or serious enough. Yusuf and the rest of the crew's anxieties slowly dispelled over time, as we continued to meet, talk, share food, and learned how to negotiate life in Mombasa as newly arrived Indians.

These visits to the dhow in Mombasa sparked a long relationship between Yusuf, the crew of the *Sagar Sanpati*, and me, these connections ultimately spanning across the Indian Ocean. Yusuf, however, was more than a "primary informant." While good ethnography is made possible through long-term contacts, how does one imagine the relationship between anthropologists and our would-be others if we fail to seriously consider how our interlocutors view us? For someone like Yusuf, I, an anthropologist in port and another Indian although of a different gender, caste, class, and religious background, was to be treated just as any other stranger might be—whether a visiting sailor, government official,

shipping agent, or broker. For him, welcoming a stranger meant responding in familiar codes of hospitality that were transformed, over time, into patronage. Our initial meetings in Mombasa and the consumption of food on board were one way of initiating and cementing these ties.

While anthropologists have long argued that we are guests in the field,[13] in this case, the "native" anthropologist was not always a guest. Over time she became folded into a familiar form of relationality—patronage—initiated through hospitality. My early meetings with Yusuf and acceptance of food on board the dhow forged a relationship between me and my interlocutors, this relationship beginning as one of hospitality in which the older male Yusuf became my protector on strange shores. However, as I outline in latter chapters of the book, this relationship changed over time as I moved from being a young student to becoming an older professor, in some ways becoming a patron for Yusuf and his family.

This reflection of how I was inserted into preexisting notions of hospitality and patronage by Yusuf and his family is prompted by an attempt to seriously consider our relationship as anthropologists to our interlocutors through forms of relation from within the social and cultural fields in which some of us are born and continue to work. What would it mean to think through our entry into the worlds we seek to represent through the social worlds of our interlocutors, a world that the anthropologist may also inhabit, perhaps even long before becoming an anthropologist? As Kirin Narayan has argued, "We must focus our attention on people we seek to represent in our texts: are they viewed as mere fodder for professionally self-serving statements about a generalized Other, or are they accepted as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas—people to whom we are bonded through ties of reciprocity and who may even be critical of our professional enterprise?" (1993, 672). Moving beyond the binary of native and non-native anthropologist, she argues that our texts must enact hybridity where the anthropologist belongs not only to our professional, scholarly worlds but also to the world of everyday life. And indeed, as any anthropologist knows, one cannot disconnect fieldwork from our own everyday lives, this in fact being the promise of anthropology: it enables all sorts of voyages and returns.

For me, having grown up in a family of Punjabi business owners in Bombay, the dhow in Mombasa allowed for a different kind of homecoming. Hospitality and the protection of a patriarch, so burdensome at home, was immediately legible even on the strange deck of a dhow, with men of different religious, caste, and class identities. Recognizing the form of protection that Yusuf offered and being able to respond in similar codes made this work possible. I, an anthropologist educated in the US and born into an upper-class, upper-caste Punjabi Hindu family, became part of Yusuf's extended kin such that he would introduce me as his "sister" six years after that initial meeting in Mombasa. However, given my caste and class status and as I became a professor in the US, I also became a different kind of kin, one to whom Yusuf would turn in moments of need. It was implicit that in different

moments, we would do what each of us could: him providing me with "safe" contacts at home in Mandvi, while I was to help his son find a job, offer gifts when his daughters got married, and help bail him out of jail. While I succeeded in my role as patron in some moments and failed in others, the central issue here is that Yusuf and his family inserted me, the anthropologist, into a familiar relationship of hospitality and patronage, which made my work possible.

Hospitality on board the *Sagar Sanpati* as it was docked in Mombasa prompted a web of relationality that spanned across the Indian Ocean. When I began this project in East Africa, I had imagined doing a very situated study of Indian Ocean networks in East Africa, a place that had been treated by some scholars as peripheral in the longer histories of the Indian Ocean, whereas India has often been treated as a center. However, my encounter with the *Sagar Sanpati* altered the course of this research. Over a span of sixteen months of fieldwork at the dhow dock and in the cities of Mombasa, Lamu, and Zanzibar, Yusuf became a key interlocutor and insisted that I would have to travel to other ports to understand the vahan. He would introduce me to friends and family in these ports, my relationship with him making possible my entry into this world.

This sparked long-term fieldwork across the Indian Ocean, as I spent over two years in Dubai and Sharjah (continuously from 2020 to 2022, with previous visits in 2017 and 2019) and multiple years in India between 2012 and 2023, in Bombay, Mandvi, Mundra, Jamnagar, and Jam Salaya, with visits to Sikka and Tuna. I have elsewhere called this multisited ethnography an "archipelagic ethnography," as it is "wet with the sea but still attuned to dynamics on land" and examines relationality forged across these spaces through dhow voyages (Mahajan 2021, 15). Fieldwork was supplemented with archival research—in India, the UK, Kenya, and Zanzibar. While seafarers spoke Kachchhi at home and with each other, they were also fluent in Hindi-Urdu, the lingua franca of the ports where they would dock, and some sailors were also conversant in Arabic and Kiswahili. As I too was fluent in Hindi-Urdu, with intermediate Kiswahili, Kachchhi, Gujarati, and a smattering of Arabic vocabulary used in ports, sailors would speak to me in Hindi-Urdu, code switching when needed—our communications with each other reflecting language practices in the polyglot world of Indian Ocean ports.

My methodology incorporated forms of communication that sailors would use with their families and loved ones. This was less an attempt to *do* digital ethnography and more a way to continually be in touch with itinerant men and to care for their families, as they did for me. My relations with them continued long after I left Indian Ocean ports, maintained through weekly calls, photos, videos, WhatsApp voice notes, and visits to each other's homes in India. Relations of hospitality and patronage meant being in communication not only when "in the field" but also when away, just as seafaring families used new technologies to keep up old connections, relations, and forms of sociality. This mix of languages and communication across the littoral reflects how East Africa, South Asia, and the Middle

East cannot be studied separately from one another. The social spaces of the vahan destabilize the very notions of periphery and center, as they move flexibly across the Indian Ocean.

When I began research on board the *Sagar Sanpati* in Mombasa, Yusuf thus insisted that for me to understand how this economy functioned, I would have to be as mobile and itinerant as the dhow itself. He suggested that I interview dhow owners such as his seth, the owner of the vessel, in Bombay; visit seafaring families and Sufi shrines in Mandvi and Jam Salaya; understand how policies in ports such Mundra and Tuna functioned in India; and compare these to the dhow ports of Sharjah and Dubai in the UAE and to their connections to Somalia.

In October 2011, as Kenya began a military incursion, Operation Linda Nchi, into southern Somalia, trade between Kenya and Somalia came to standstill. The *Sagar Sanpati* had already left the Old Port, now quiet and empty. *The Somali merchants and agents are scared and have left the city*, I would hear in Old Town. And so, like the merchants and the *Sagar Sanpati*, I, too, left, travelling to India to understand how dhows came to be part of a shadow economy in Somalia and the western Indian Ocean.

Dispatches from the Shadows

May 8, 2022
Six hundred Muslim fishermen from Gosabara, near Porbandar in Gujarat sought permission from the state's high court to collectively kill themselves. They complained that they had been unable to make a living due to religious discrimination. Allarakha Ismailbhai Thimmar, who had filed the petition on behalf of the community insisted that all they wanted was to continue fishing. But fishing privileges were given to the local Hindu Kharvas, owners of trawlers that had already depleted fish in the waters of the Gulf of Kachchh, creating a scarcity exacerbated by climate change. Local authorities did not allow Muslim fishers to dock boats in their village of Gosabara, citing environmental protections. In Porbandar, a nearby fishing harbor, Hindu Kharva fishers would not let them dock. Local politicians and the right-wing government of the BJP were intent on marginalizing Muslims. Their plea was not heard in court (Saikia 2022). The Muslim fishers of Gosabara cannot fish, nor can they die.

December 14, 2018
The Gujarat State government banned the export of goats from ports such as Tuna in Kachchh. Cargoes of goats once made for quick, swift, and profitable voyages by vahan from Tuna to Oman and the UAE. Since December 2018, the gates of Tuna port have remained closed, not even a kid goat permitted to enter. Representatives from the All-India Mechanized Sailing Vessel Federation and livestock traders petitioned the court to overturn the ban. In its ruling, the Gujarat High Court cited the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act from 1960 to uphold the ban (Jitendra 2018). The vahan owners, sailors, and livestock traders are predominantly Muslim. The ban is yet another attempt to economically marginalize minorities in India. Meanwhile, livestock continue to be flown to slaughterhouses in the Gulf from India on planes, making profits for larger, Hindu-owned businesses. Vahans now search for other cargoes to take to the Gulf from India, or leave the country with empty holds.

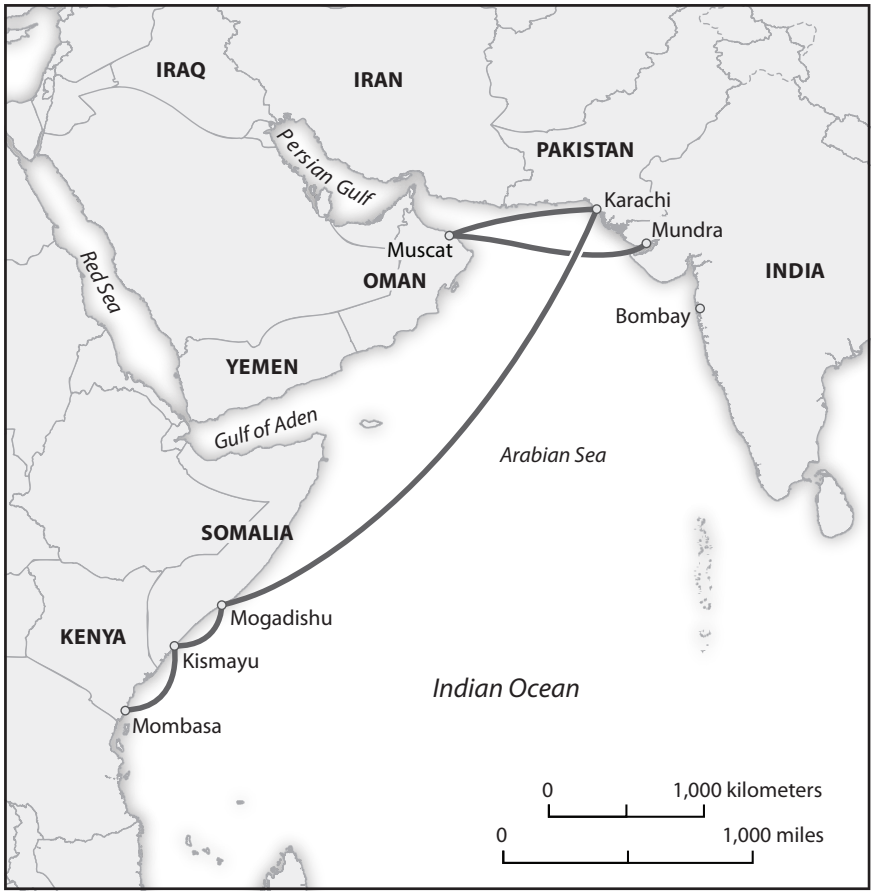
September 21, 2021
Nearly three tons of heroin were smuggled into the container port of Mundra, run by the Adani Corporation with close ties to Narendra Modi, the BJP, and RSS. The port continues to boom (BBC News 2021).

2

Dhow Itineraries

Racial Capitalism and the Making of Shadow Economies in the Western Indian Ocean

In late September 2011, the *Sagar Sanpati* left the Old Port of Mombasa, never to return. Filled with cargoes of tea, coffee, plastic household goods, and mattresses, the ship, along with Yusuf and his crew, made one final voyage to Mogadishu, their seasonal contract to ply routes between Mombasa and Somalia coming to an end. While the sailors did not know where they would go next, they knew that their time in Mombasa was over, and they would now move ghos by ghos, voyage by voyage. The ghos entails a continual search for cargoes and markets, no ghos set in advance, no itinerary fixed for any season. Instead, the vahan must always be flexible, its routes contingent on demand, supply, wars, government policies, the weather, and prevailing rates of freight. Vahans, after all, draw profits from differences between markets and jurisdictions. Voyaging across a large seascape meant that when one trade ended, new opportunities elsewhere might become available. The crew were excited to leave Mombasa, even though they were going to Mogadishu where they would never leave port, simply because it meant that that they would eventually voyage to the more familiar ports of the UAE or India from Somalia. And indeed, after offloading goods in Mogadishu, they departed for Dubai, their holds filled with charcoal destined for barbeques and shishas for a city that never stops entertaining. The crew were accustomed to this lucrative trade in charcoal, transporting electronics, diesel, and other household goods to Somalia from UAE ports and bringing back charcoal. However, when they finally set off from Mogadishu for Dubai in December 2011, little did they know that even this profitable trade would decline. Instead, a confluence of forces in India, the UAE, Kenya, and Somalia would compel them to once again search for new cargoes, new markets, and different routes.



MAP 2. The *Sagar Sanpati*'s itinerary in 2011.

A shadow looms large over the western Indian Ocean. This shadow has a haunting presence, lurking in the waters that vahans traverse, appearing in moments of intense tension in the international order and, at other times, disappearing, biding its time as the rhythms of the monsoon winds lull trade and life along the littoral into routine. However, every now and then, the figure of the shadow, the figure of violence, becomes visible in most spectacular forms. Events in East Africa such as the attacks by Al-Shabaab at the Dusit D2 complex in Nairobi in 2019, Garissa University College in 2015, and Westgate Mall in 2013; the bombing of an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa in 2002; Al-Qaeda's attacks on American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998; and intermittent attacks by Al-Shabaab in northern Kenya have brought into sharp relief the region's long entanglements with the Global War on Terrorism.[1] On other shores across the Indian Ocean, the siege of Bombay, India, by gunmen allegedly associated with the militant

group Lashkar-e-Taiba on November 26, 2008, impacted mobility in the Indian Ocean as reports indicated that the maritime movement of weapons and people were crucial in planning these attacks (Rahman 2008). The events of 2008 intensified securitization of the coast and Islamophobia in India, which had been hypervisible in the 2002 pogrom in Gujarat in which thousands of Muslims were killed (Ghassem-Fachandi 2012), the state complicit in the violence.

Amid these events, governments and media have assumed that arms and militants can move easily across the Indian Ocean, especially through largely Muslim-owned and operated vahans. Dhow networks have also been implicated in funding the long, protracted conflict in Somalia. Reports indicated that charcoal from Somalia transported on dhows helped finance Al-Shabaab, a Somalia-based militant insurgent group (United Nations Security Council 2011). Since 2011, the UN and international authorities have assumed that dhow circuits converge with financing for militant groups and banned the export of charcoal from Somalia in 2012. The ban came on the heels of other kinds of violence.

In October 2011, the Kenya Defense Force (KDF) and later the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) began a military incursion into Somalia looking to suppress Al-Shabaab, allegedly responsible for increasing insecurity within Kenya's borders, especially on the coast.[2] One of the prime targets in Operation Linda Nchi (literally, Operation Protect the Nation), was the port city of Kismayu, long considered to be an Al-Shabaab stronghold and the main source of revenue for the group. Kismayu was also a bustling dhow port, with vahans such as the *Sagar Sanpati* loading cargoes of livestock and charcoal for the Gulf or dried fish for Mombasa and bringing back diesel, electronics, and household goods. It was this lucrative port that the KDF and its allies sought to take over.[3] Much of this trade—especially in charcoal—took place through dhows that were a part of a complex trade network made up of predominantly Muslim Somalis, Swahilis, South Asians, and Arabs across India, Pakistan, Kenya, Somalia, Oman, and the UAE.

These dhow networks were severely affected as Operation Linda Nchi led to greater insecurity around Kismayu. This does not mean that this entire network was involved with Al-Shabaab. A disentangling of the complex network of people embedded in this trade suggests that many of these actors were simply conducting business as usual. Dhow owners and sailors began to transport charcoal and other goods to and from Somalia in response to the economic precarity produced by economic liberalization, securitization, and the rise of Hindutva in India. This trade sustained the industry, allowing it to make profits, even as it unintentionally led to revenue generation for Al-Shabaab. Since 1991, dhows have found an economic niche in Somalia, where they have been a crucial mode of shipping ever since the collapse of the central government. Between 2005 and 2011, these dhows became the targets for pirates operating off the coast of Somalia, where they were hijacked to be used as "motherships" for larger and more profitable targets (Dua

2016, 2019). Yet vahans continued to act as connectors, legally bringing essential household goods, hardware, electronics, rice, other foodstuffs, and even UN aid to Somalia, deriving profit by voyaging across a region of instability, where sovereignty and jurisdiction were unsettled. After 2011, when the charcoal trade came to be associated with Al-Shabaab, vahans were forced to seek out other cargoes to carry back from Somalia to the Middle East.

How did dhows come to trade in charcoal that eventually funded Al-Shabaab in Somalia? And relatedly, how did predominantly Muslim-owned and operated dhows become a flashpoint for state and international security and counterterrorism policies? How do sailors and vahan owners understand their participation in this economy? After 9/11, Engseng Ho (2004) argued that there is a need for an anthropological understanding of the history of relations between mobile Indian Ocean societies such as the Hadhrami diaspora and Western empires, the two being inexorably entangled with each other. The charcoal trade in Somalia offers a window into thinking about the relationship between states and mobile Muslim dhow networks in the longue durée, as relationships shaped by racial and caste capitalism.

Since the colonial period, dhows have been viewed as threatening to state sovereignty, even as they have been useful connectors in global shipping. Colonial and postcolonial states have associated them with racialized others—whether with the broad category of the "native" in the colonial period or with the Muslim in postcolonial India. In the colonial period, dhow networks across the Indian Ocean were pushed into a shadow economy and made illicit through imperial policies. This process of illegalization was central to racial capitalism as the British expropriated dhows by linking them to "crimes against humanity" such as piracy and the slave trade and yet depended on them in times of need, especially during the world wars. In Kutch and Kathiawar, dhows were also vilified and monitored for smuggling, even as maritime commerce became a flashpoint for negotiations of distributed sovereignty between princely states in India and the British colonial government. Dhows that voyaged across multiple jurisdictions were illegalized in some moments even as the colonial government relied on them as connectors in others.

While historians have focused on the illegalization of the dhow trade across the Indian Ocean—viewing the process as central to the making of a market in the Arabian Sea (J. Mathew 2016), or outlining how dhows came to be associated with tradition rather than modernity in East Africa (Gilbert 2004)—I argue that this process of illegalization should be viewed as a form of expropriation central to racial capitalism. After all, "expropriation works by confiscating capacities and resources and conscripting them into capital's circuits of self-expansion" (Fraser 2016, 166), the illegalization and destruction of dhows in the colonial period reordering this trade through its conscription into the shadow economy.

Similarly, in postcolonial India, long-standing histories of racial and caste capitalism come to the fore as dhows, now owned and operated largely by Muslims, have been viewed with suspicion and made illicit, even as the postcolonial state continues to depend on the connectivity offered by vahans in times of crisis. In the early years after independence in India, dhows, or "country crafts," were viewed as an artisanal form of shipping that could be harnessed for nation-building; nevertheless, they came to be associated with smuggling and were seen as a threat to state sovereignty especially along the India-Pakistan border. With economic liberalization in 1991, efforts to bolster the trade through cargo reservations came to an end, and dhows were viewed with increased suspicion. The securitization of India's coast further restricted dhow mobility even as rising Hindu nationalism, twinned with crony capitalism, has expropriated the dhow trade. This is especially visible through corporate land grabs in historic dhow ports in Gujarat. Furthermore, bans on the livestock trade that vahans in India once depended on have also made the dhow trade more precarious. Dhow itineraries are thus shaped by colonial policies, altered and adopted by postcolonial states, caste and racial capitalism defining the contours of their expropriation, conscription, and reordering.

Racial and caste capitalism depends on both the mobility and immobility of racialized bodies, including racialized Muslims in India. As Muriam Haleh Davis argues, French colonial policy in Algeria was grounded in a tension between a rational, modern European *Homo economicus* and a "native" Muslim *Homo islamicus*. This was a "racial regime of religion," in which "Islam did not merely justify unequal access to economic value but rather constituted the very terms in which economic policies were envisaged and implemented" (Davis 2022, 3). Similar forms of racial thinking were evident as the British expanded into the Indian Ocean and sought to control and organize the transregional dhow trade—both Hindus and Muslims as "natives" being subject to forms of racialized control, expropriation, and subordination. This form of colonial racial capitalism is also layered with caste and racial capitalism in India, the postcolonial state continually expropriating lower-caste communities and Muslims, while casting Muslims as racial Others (Baber 2004; Chakrabarty 1994). Indeed, "racism and racialization in India operate at the intersections of caste supremacy, brahminism, coloniality, Islamophobia, and Hindu fundamentalism, all of which are calibrated through shifting capitalist political economies" (Cháirez-Garza et al. 2022, 194). With Partition in 1947 and the minoritization of Muslims in India, racial and caste capitalism have exacerbated the racialization of Muslims by Hindu nationalists, whereby the figure of the Muslim is seen not only as threatening but as having no place in the nation. Hindutva has cast racialized Muslims as "outsiders" to the Hindu *Rashtra*, even as Dalits are constructed as internal others (Natrajan 2022). Hindu nationalism, twinned with crony capitalism, has then configured the Muslim as a racialized Other, the effects of racial capitalism and Hindutva in India

visible in the expropriation of land and port facilities by corporations with close ties to the BJP government.

Even as states perform sovereignty by simultaneously enabling and restricting the movement of dhows, seafarers and dhow owners respond by operating in a shadow economy as they voyage across a vast seascape, extracting value and earning profits by trading in zones where state sovereignty remains contested and fractured, especially in places of conflict. Within these broader dynamics, sailors and dhow owners forge their own meanings and practices of licit and illicit trade. The shadow economy—the blurry interstices between the legal and illegal, licit and illicit—has thus become a mooring for this trade. While moorings typically offer stability, a place to anchor between land and sea, moorings themselves may not always be permanently fixed; they may be contingent and floating, dependent on tides, waves, wind, weather, and conditions on land. Similarly, the shadow economy, with its blurring of boundaries, offers a contingent mooring and has become an arena across which dhow voyages are maneuvered as dhow seafarers continually search for new markets and cargoes that elide neat distinctions between legal and illegal and licit and illicit. This shadow economy does not always subvert state control but is still shaped by state policy and ideas about sovereignty, states and shadow economies being mutually constituted. The shadow economy is thus a space in which those who have been expropriated become conscripted into global circuits of capital.

MOORING IN THE INTERSTICES: SOVEREIGNTY AND THE SHADOW ECONOMY

The term *shadow economy* emphasizes the connection between regulated and unregulated economic activity. In writing about Africa's relationship to the world, James Ferguson states: "A shadow, after all, is not a copy but an attached twin—a shadow is what sticks with you. Likeness here implies not only resemblance but also a connection, a proximity, an equivalence, even an identity. A shadow, in this sense, is not simply a negative space, a space of absence; it is a likeness, an inseparable other-who-is-also-oneself to whom one is bound" (2006, 17).

The term *shadow economy* thus suggests relationality: an intimate link between legal and illegal, licit and illicit. If the formal economy is the visible figure, the informal is its attached shadow. Indeed, scholars have long argued that shadow economies do not exist in a vacuum but are inexorably linked to the so-called formal economy.[4] This shadow economy is not a preexisting entity but is actively produced by the law and regulation. As Foucault noted, "The existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices" (1977, 280). While the very existence of a law defines something as illegal, a focus on the rule itself does not emphasize the active social and economic processes involved in the production of the law and of illegality, the law being produced and enforced unevenly along the

contours of power (G. Bhattacharyya 2005; Das and Poole 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Portes et al. 1989). Legalization and illegalization need to be understood as socio-political projects, forged both by the accumulation of capital and by state policy. For instance, neoliberal reforms across the globe since the 1990s have created new forms of illegality, with excluded and disposable populations increasingly criminalized (Ferradás 2013). These forms of illegality have emerged in response to economic precarity produced by neoliberal reforms, shadow economies sustaining those who now have no place in the global economy. This conscription into the shadow economy is a consequence of expropriation from other forms of economic activity.

Shadow economies are also historically produced by visions of imperial and national sovereignty. As Ritu Birla has argued in the case of the regulation of financial speculation and the bazaar in colonial India, the British sought a "juridico-economic framing of the market" (2015, 405), establishing the rule of law to govern the market, making vernacular forms of speculation illicit in some moments and complicit with the state in others. Elsewhere, she also poignantly argues that colonial law on the economy "distinguished between legitimate forms of capitalism and local ones embedded in kinship" (2009, 3) such that political economy became a "practice of colonial sovereignty" through rules of law and "market governance" (2009, 22). Although Birla's argument is not couched in terms of race, undergirding British attempts to control vernacular trade were forms of racial thinking that associated "natives" with disorder; the colonial state was seeking to create a rational, organized, economic subject. These practices of colonial sovereignty and racial capitalism, not unlike the practices of the postcolonial nations that followed, saw the state as the sole sovereign governing a particular territory, including its economic activity, and simultaneously cast "native" subjects as racial others.[5] Not unlike racial capitalism in the colonial period, since Partition in 1947, the minoritization of Muslims in India, and the rise of Hindutva, state policies in India have socially and economically marginalized and expropriated Muslims and cast them as racial others, layering these forms of racial thinking upon caste hierarchies.

Nevertheless, sovereignty remains contested on land and at sea, especially in postcolonial states.[6] Empires and postcolonial states continue to perform sovereignty in their attempt to regulate the movement of goods and people, with shadow economies being created through these regulations. The image of the shadow is perhaps instructive here once again. The size and shape of shadows shift, and the change is based on different factors—like the type of light, the angle at which light hits an object, and even the surface on which the shadow is cast. Most of all, the shape of shadows is determined by the object or the figure that casts the shadow in the first place. Dhows, then, move in and out of the shadow economy as they navigate multiple regulatory regimes, shadow economies not created through an evasion of government policy but through state and international policies that expropriate certain types of economic actors—whether "natives" in colonial India

or Muslims in postcolonial India. Yet "sovereigns and subjects are cut from the same historical cloth" (A. Subramanian 2009, 4), dhow owners and sailors reworking older networks of trade, at times working with state authorities and forging state sovereignty, and at other moments evading state control.[7] The shadow economy thus offers a mooring for the dhow trade in the murky interstices between the legal/illegal and licit/illicit.

Sailors and dhow owners emphasized how broader political-economic shifts since independence in India, such as economic liberalization, were forms of expropriation that had pushed them into a shadow economy. And so sailors who transported gold, charcoal, and other cargoes understood their participation in these trades as one entry point into the global economy still open to them.[8] Such licit yet illegal practices that blur the lines between legal, illegal, licit, and illicit in the context of the Indian Ocean have a deep history and are framed by multiple forms of expropriation including colonial expansion, economic liberalization, the rise of Hindutva in India, war, and securitization.

Dhow sailors had their own views of what was morally acceptable or licit within the shadow economy. For sailors, *daan chori* (tax evasion, smuggling) while transporting cargoes that do not directly harm the user (charcoal, gold, diesel) are considered *halal*, or licit, while other practices that destabilize social hierarchies are considered *haram*, or illicit. As van Schendel and Abraham (2005) argue, there needs to be a distinction between trades and flows of goods and people considered legitimate and legal by states and those considered licit or legitimate by participants in transregional cross-border trades. In what follows, I trace how sailors normalized daan chori by couching the practice in moral terms based on the types of contraband being carried—classifying the goods as either haram or halal. While framed in Islamic terms, these classifications were also based on social dynamics between and among crew members and their patrons, blurring the line between licit and illicit.

A SAILOR'S VIEW: NAVIGATING THE BOUNDARIES

Babu Ahmed was a retired Wagher sailor in his seventies. He once sailed along the coast of India from Jam Salaya and Bombay to Mangalore, Calicut, Cochin and beyond to Dubai and Basra. In his older years, the light had left his eyes and his mobility was limited, but the memory of past voyages and adventures came alive behind the sunglasses he always wore even as he sat in the courtyard of his house surrounded by grandchildren. When we met in his home in Jam Salaya in October 2017, he regaled me with stories of his youth. As a young sailor he had worked for a famous gold smuggler from Jam Salaya, a man known as "Jakku Seth."

Jakku Seth was a notorious gold smuggler in the 1970s, and Babu Ahmed became his trusted aide, transporting gold smuggled in from Dubai. While larger vessels would bring in gold to points off the coast of India, smaller vessels such as the

one Babu captained acted as feeders, transporting contraband gold off sand banks, mangrove swamps, and other locations near the coast into port cities such as Jam Salaya. The gold trade was immensely lucrative. "People thought I had become rich, but I only made money in honest ways, I never engaged in *do number ka kaam* [duplicitious, cheating, illicit ways of work]." Babu insisted that he had his conditions and would do daan chori but would not transport drugs, weapons, fake currency, or passengers. He had different reasons for refusing to transport each of these cargoes. As he explained to me, "smuggling gold only harmed the government, and no one else. Drugs harm the user and are therefore haram." Arms smuggling and transporting counterfeit currency were illicit because they undermined the state entirely and were the work of *desh-drohis*, or traitors. Transporting humans, however, posed a different kind of risk. While gold or other forms of cargo could be jettisoned at sea in case patrollers were on the horizon, human beings could not be thrown overboard and therefore were a greater risk to his own safety in the face of interception by the authorities.

Despite these prohibitions and notions of licit and illicit, Babu once agreed to carry migrant workers to Dubai. While the original order given to him was to carry about four hundred passengers, Babu thought it would be safer for the vessel to carry three hundred people to avoid capsizing, taking no more money than the regular fee for passenger traffic by dhow across the Arabian Sea. Despite his initial misgivings about passenger traffic, in this case Babu insisted, "I tell my children, too, that they should work hard in order to eat. Do any work in order to make a living as long as it is not haram or *do number ka kaam*."

For him, like many other sailors, daan chori and *kala dhanda* (working in the black market) were legitimate, licit forms of trade depending on the type of cargo carried. Goods like gold, charcoal, and diesel that did not harm the user were considered licit, while weapons, drugs, and counterfeit currency were illicit. Even the complex negotiations between state authorities and smugglers were understood within a relational framework. As Babu explained, "It is the job of state authorities to catch smugglers, and it is our job to evade them." Even so, state authorities and smugglers were often entangled with each other. Babu recalled many instances in which customs authorities were bribed to overlook shipments of contraband gold, explaining, "I had many friends in Customs and made arrangements with them." For him, smuggling was a legitimate form of earning a livelihood, as was the work of government authorities: "One must do whatever one can to make a living. It is hard work."

Babu Ahmed and other sailors framed daan chori as a licit practice, especially if it entailed transporting cargoes considered halal. Babu's legitimization of daan chori, his moral concerns with haram and halal, and his commitment to working honestly with his patrons reveal multiple broader framings of the functioning of shadow economies. Although daan chori was illegal in the eyes of the state, it was a licit practice from the viewpoint of sailors, while cheating the dhow owner

FIGURE 10. Aerial view of empty vahans in Jam Salaya, 2019. Photo by Moad Musbahi.

or patron or transporting harmful goods was considered illicit. Yet even these distinctions between legal and illegal, licit and illicit were muddied, typically to produce higher social standing.[9]

While sailors like Babu placed goods such as drugs, arms, and counterfeit currency in the realm of haram or illicit wealth, which could easily be lost, many acknowledged that wealthy sailors gained their wealth and status through such haram trades, however short-lived their success. Trades in more halal substances such as gold, diesel, and charcoal offered socially sanctioned ways of gaining wealth and status. This was related to socially acceptable behaviors on board the vessel itself. Young sailors told me that what they carried as contraband depended on who else was on board. In cases where family members, relatives, or more pious sailors were part of their crew, they were less likely to carry goods considered harmful. The definitions of the licit and illicit, moral and immoral, were thus contingent on socially acceptable behaviors on board, even if such behaviors were couched in terms of the Islamic principles of haram or halal. Even individual consumption practices, such as drinking alcohol, were socially sanctioned, as some crews accepted alcohol consumption on board or in port, while others viewed drinking as haram, especially if the captain or a majority of the crew were teetotalers.

This extended beyond individual consumption to the kinds of cargoes carried, some dhow captains and owners being known to carry illicit contraband, while others toed the line. But, more broadly, daan chori for goods that did not harm the consumer was considered socially acceptable and illegal arms and drugs were

illicit. Part of the reason for this was that "fast money" was seen to be lost quickly. Those who engaged in such trades were often seen as more susceptible to spending their wealth on sex workers, alcohol, and other expensive pleasures than those who engaged in licit practices of daan chori, where margins for making a profit were much narrower, making illicit pleasures out of reach financially. These definitions of licit and illicit, legal and illegal were framed by broader shifts in the way the state and mobile dhow networks related to each other, working together in some moments and in opposition in other moments. In each case, however, the dhow trade derived value by trading in zones of instability, voyaging between and across a wide seascape with fractured jurisdictions and sovereignties. The trade in charcoal from Somalia offers a window into thinking about how dhows functioned in these blurry interstices as seafarers were expropriated from other trades through state policy in India. These policies and wider geopolitical transformations shaped trade with Somalia.

AN OCEAN OF SHADOWS: FROM INDIA TO EAST AFRICA

When Yusuf left Mombasa, he also left me with a piece of advice that would transform my research itinerary. As Yusuf often impressed upon me, trade with Somalia, whether from Mombasa or from the Gulf, was the most profitable sector of the dhow trade in 2011–2012. To understand how and why Somalia came to be such an important center for vahans, he insisted that I meet the owners of the *Sagar Sanpati*. "If you really want to understand vahans, you need to return to India and eventually go to the UAE. You must meet the owner of the vahan based in Bombay." And so, as the *Sagar Sanpati* left Mombasa for Somalia in September 2011, I returned home in December 2011 to Bombay to meet the owner of the vahan, Narain Doshi.

The office of Doshi and Brothers Shipping Agents is tucked into a by-lane in Bombay's busy, largely Muslim neighborhood of Dongri. The neighborhood is not far from ports in which dhows once docked, such as Hay Bunder and Mallet Bundar. As I attempted to navigate this part of my hometown, the shops selling sweets and household goods gave way to transport offices and warehouses, the hustle of porters as they loaded and unloaded trucks reminding me of the Old Port in Mombasa. Narain Doshi, the managing director and owner of *Sagar Sanpati*, had warned me that the office was difficult to find—it was marked by a sign for a different business, under a different name. The interiors were less evasive. Maps and nautical charts of the western coast of India, the Gulf, and the east coast of Africa covered the walls, the voyages of the *Sagar Sanpati* mapped from these two small rooms in Bombay.

While these old offices had been renovated recently, the Doshis have engaged in maritime commerce as far back as family history is remembered. The structure

and fortunes of their business have been shaped by wars; weather; accidents; death; and the vagaries of supply, demand, and government policy. As Kachchhi Jains, they had traditionally been brokers in Kachchh but had moved to Bombay over two generations ago. In the 1950s, they began to buy small country crafts, or wooden sailing vessels, of one hundred to two hundred tons that plied along the Indian coast, from Gujarat to Goa. However, in 1961, as Indian and Portuguese forces fought over the territory of Goa, the Doshis' country crafts sank. The loss of these assets forced the family to move back into their role as brokers until the early 1990s, when they had enough capital to build and own their own dhows once again. Indeed, the Doshis were one of the few Hindu and Jain vahan owners (*seths* in Kachchhi) who had continued in the business. They reentered it after losses in the 1960s at a time when most Hindu, Jain, and mercantile Muslim vahan owners moved on to more profitable trading and sold their vessels to Bhadala and Wagher sailors who worked with them. The *Sagar Sanpati* was the Doshis' first vahan and the smallest of their current fleet of four. While the family business's past was clear, its future was less certain. "We have been in this industry for generations, but now, this is a dying business," Narain explained to me, shaking his head in dismay. Narain insisted that to fully understand vahan transformations, I must meet a dhow owner, Abdul, based in Kathiawar, in the city of Jamnagar. And so, my own research routes altered again as I tried to trace the swerves of dhows flying to Jamnagar to meet with Abdul.

Jamnagar, in Gujarat, was once an important port city for dhows carrying cargoes and people from Gujarat to East Africa. Today, it is home to the world's largest oil refinery, owned by Reliance Industries, India's largest publicly traded company, and yet another refinery owned by Essar, another multinational conglomerate. In April 2014, I was sitting in a restaurant in Jamnagar with Abdul. His family had long been in the dhow trade and these days transported charcoal between the UAE and Somalia. However, on that day Abdul was frustrated. Digging into a bright pink ice cream sundae, Abdul confessed to me, "Representatives from the UN and the CID [Criminal Investigation Department] came here a few months ago. They told us that dhows from Kachchh were dealing in charcoal and that this was funding terrorists. Was he calling us terrorists too? How are we supposed to know that charcoal in Somalia funds terrorists? They even threatened us as if we were terrorists. As though Narain and I were in Somalia, guns in hand." We both laughed at the image of soft-spoken middle-aged Narain and Abdul, with a penchant for Indian Ocean history, strawberry ice cream, and History channel documentaries, running through the arid scrubs of Somalia alongside Al-Shabaab. But their vessels did transport charcoal from Kismayu in Somalia (once an Al-Shabaab-controlled port) to the UAE.

Abdul expressed his helplessness over this development: "What else are we supposed to do? We used to carry dates, but now those go on containers. There is no

other cargo for us to carry anymore." Abdul's dilemma was borne out of economic liberalization in India that had expropriated the dhow trade, made it precarious, and pushed it into the shadow economy in Somalia. This was not his only frustration with state policy and its effect on dhows. Earlier that month, he had been in Bombay for a meeting with the director general of shipping of India. As soon as he walked into the meeting room, he was asked by the director general (DG), "So how is the gold business these days?" The DG was referring to the period from the 1950s onward, when dhows were associated with gold smuggling. The question infuriated Abdul. "The government knows nothing about our industry. They assume we were all smuggling gold back then. But most of the gold wasn't coming in through our date-carrying vahans but on *manjis*!" These manjis were not large dhows. Only forty-five feet in length and with typical capacities of fifty to one hundred tons, they could easily speed across choppy waters, evading patrol boats on their way to Bombay, contraband gold being offloaded onto fishing boats, which would then bring in glistening bricks and biscuits of gold along with their daily catch. In the DG's eyes, however, there was no distinction between manjis and the larger vessels—they were the same. While Abdul was attempting to distinguish manjis from vahans, we both knew that both types of vessels were used to smuggle gold—vahans across the Arabian Sea and manjis as feeders along the Indian coastline.

Even so, Abdul refuted the conflation of the entire dhow industry with smuggling. "Some sailors and owners may have smuggled gold in the past. But what about planes, trains, and trucks? Drugs, gold, and cash come in through the airports all the time. Does it mean that all airlines should be shut down?" he asked, exasperated. He was also battling other forms of restrictions. As incidents of piracy off the coast of Somalia began to increase around 2008, the director general of shipping released a circular that aimed to discourage, if not ban outright, Indian vessels from visiting ports in the northwest Indian Ocean. Abdul began listing ports that the government now forbade them to visit (without much success). "They are trying to place a ban on minor ports that our vessels typically service—places like Salalah, Mukalla, Berbera, Mocha, Aden, Bosaso, Mogadishu, and Kismayu, from where we get over 90 percent of our profits." As Amir explained how the government of India had drawn an invisible line prohibiting vessels from travelling to these ports in northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, I recalled a historical precedent for these restrictions.

Less than a year before this conversation, I had been researching the illicit slave trade in nineteenth-century Zanzibar. As I was talking to Abdul, the parallels between efforts to suppress the slave trade in the nineteenth century and current prohibitions on the dhow trade became clear—not only were lines being drawn in the same geographical region, but a familiar logic of expropriation and racialization seemed to be in operation, with similar effects. Indian state efforts to

regulate the movement of dhows today have produced policies and discourses of suspicion and illegality that have been damaging for the industry and racialized its largely Muslim workers and shipowners. This is not unlike how British efforts to suppress the slave trade in the nineteenth century led to the indiscriminate destruction of dhows and to a lasting association of the dhow trade with illegality. British efforts to suppress the slave trade in the nineteenth century serve as a historical precedent for the long-standing tensions and collaborations between flexible dhow routes and state control, exemplary of an expropriation that is "confiscation-cum-conscription-into-accumulation" (Fraser 2016, 167). While dhows were once vilified by the British for trading in slaves—and yet used by the British in times of need even as participants in the dhow trade were racialized as disorderly "natives"—dhows today have become associated with smuggling and a mode of funding for militants racialized as Muslim. But these dhows also became vectors for state-run trade in moments of distress. Dhows today, as in the past, were thus operating in a shadow economy where they were both complicit with state power in some moments and made illicit in others, the racialized figure of the "native" and the Muslim emerging through this process. In both cases, too, dhows derived profit by voyaging between and across blurry, muddy sovereignties and jurisdictions, all the while remaking practices of sovereignty.

DHOWS IN THE SLAVE TRADE: MAKING BRITISH JURISDICTION AND A SHADOW ECONOMY

In the early nineteenth century, questions of British sovereignty, jurisdiction, and subjecthood were hardly settled matters. Alongside the conquest of India by 1857 and the suppression of the Qawasim in the Gulf in 1819,[10] historians have argued that the tying together of slavery and piracy was an important tool of British imperial expansion in the Indian Ocean. Both piracy and the slave trade were seen as "crimes against humanity," and hence reprehensible in spaces of British influence. However, as Benton (2010) argues, in the nineteenth century the expansion of British commerce and naval dominance were made possible through a labelling of all maritime violence not sanctioned by Britain as piracy, the vague legal meaning of the term becoming an important tool of imperial policy. Similarly, humanitarian concerns were used to justify British intervention at sea, despite the continuance of an illegal slave trade between coastal East Africa and Muscat (Crouzet 2014). The expansion of British imperial interests was made possible through a series of treaties with the rulers of the Trucial States, Muscat, and Zanzibar.[11] These attempts to suppress "Arab" piracy and the slave trade led to an increased British presence in the western Indian Ocean through surveillance and patrols at sea, the Indian Ocean giving birth to global maritime law (Bishara 2018).

Historians have argued that although the slave trade through Zanzibar was abolished in 1873, evasion was common, as slaves continued to be shipped by

dhow as servants, passengers, or crewmembers—the slave trade being completely banned only in 1890 (Hopper 2015; J. Mathew 2012).[12] Even so, until the abolition of slavery within the Sultan's domain in 1897, motley crews of merchants and sailors consistently found ways around these treaties and laws, adapting deftly to the changing legal environment, as British patrollers charged with surveilling the Indian Ocean were to discover. Enforcing the antislavery treaties required a contingent of naval officers to patrol the sea in order to search, seize, detain, and destroy suspected vessels. However, patrollers were spread thin across a wide maritime space, and dhows easily evaded surveillance. These patrols lacked not only material resources but also knowledge of the slave trade and its nuances on the East African coast. For British naval officers at sea, the particularities of the East African slave trade were often illegible, the lines between legal and illegal, enslaved and free on board being indecipherable for patrollers. Nevertheless, dhows were indiscriminately labelled as slavers by patrollers and destroyed in exchange for rewards by the British Treasury.

Historians of East Africa have argued that these antislavery campaigns irreparably damaged the dhow industry. Abdul Sheriff has estimated that in the years 1868–1869, at least ninety-eight dhows were destroyed, despite it being unclear whether they were carrying enslaved persons (Sheriff 1987, 233). Along similar lines, historian Erick Gilbert has argued that antislavery campaigns had piratical qualities, officers in the Royal Navy benefiting from misrepresenting legitimate trading vessels as slave ships. As a result of these campaigns, "dhows became associated in the minds of colonial powers with illegal trade rather than with legal trade" (Gilbert 2004, 65). Antislavery laws and naval action therefore led to the undiscerning destruction of dhows while simultaneously linking them to illegality and to the disordered trade conducted by "natives." This indiscriminate seizure and destruction of dhows as well as vilification of all dhow trades should be understood as a process of expropriation since British patrollers were able to receive rewards from the British Treasury for the indiscriminate destruction of dhows, in effect making the entire dhow trade suspect.

While the British sought to suppress the slave trade and expand their sphere of control across the Indian Ocean, dhow sailors and owners derived profit by voyaging across different jurisdictions. For instance, dhow owners and captains from the port city of Sur (Oman) sought to prevent British intervention at sea by flying the French flag, over which the British had no jurisdiction. This led to the now famous *Muscat Dhows Case*, which was taken to the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in 1905. Historians have argued that this case revealed a dense web of social relations across the Indian Ocean (Sheriff 2010) grounded in transformations in a regional economy (J. Mathew 2016). As Bishara (2018) has argued, the case resulted in making international maritime law rest on the flagging of vessels and on definitions of subjecthood and sovereignty. By using the French flag to bypass British surveillance, dhow captains, nakhodas from Sur, were

articulating a vision of sovereignty in which protection might be sought from different political authorities across the Indian Ocean as they traded across multiple jurisdictions, even as a shadow economy was created through the illegalization of the slave trade by one sovereign. These scholars have largely focused on these transformations in the Middle East and East Africa, but closer to Indian shores, similar struggles over sovereignty and the assertion of British dominance in the Indian Ocean associated dhows with piracy and smuggling in some moments, while relying on the connectivity offered by dhows in others.

SOVEREIGNTY AND SMUGGLING IN THE GULF OF KUTCH

British power in the region of Kathiawar and in Kutch where Jam Salaya and Mandvi are located was based on distributed, divisible ideas of sovereignty. At the outset of the eighteenth century, the regions of Kutch and Kathiawar were made up of small kingdoms that paid tribute to larger ones (McLeod 2007). In each case, the ruler—the Rao of Kutch and the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar in Kathiawar—was established through treaties with the British in the early nineteenth century to bring an end to piracy in Saurashtra and Kutch, where pirates preyed upon British East India Company ships.[13] By 1820, the entire region came under British administration. While typically ruled by the monarch, the states were also subject to the "paramount power" of the British (McLeod 2007, 6). Sovereignty remained distributed, with certain rights falling under the authority of local rulers while others fell under the British. Following the establishment of the Raj in 1858, debates arose around the nature of British sovereignty in Kathiawar. While the governor of Bombay argued that the region was a part of British India, the viceroy argued differently, suggesting that the region under the Jam Saheb was not British territory but still owed allegiance to the Crown (McLeod 2007).

The viceroy was drawing on ideas about limited sovereignty and divisible sovereignty most clearly articulated by Henry Sumner Maine, who went to India in 1862 as a law member of the Governor General of India. In 1864 Maine published the influential Kathiawar minute, in which he argued that while sovereignty is divisible, independence is not. Maine argued the British government was the only independent sovereign for Kathiawar, which was made up of several kingdoms and was viewed as anarchical by the British, while smaller rulers held some sovereign rights—such as limited civil and criminal jurisdiction, immunity from foreign laws, and the ability to mint coin. Although British laws did not apply in the region, the British were the "paramount power," with the right to intervene to maintain peace (Saksena 2020, 15). Divisible sovereignty entailed indirect rule through alliances with local rulers and their subjects, who would continually challenge British jurisdiction even as they were hemmed in by British ideas about sovereignty (Benton 2010, 246–50). The Kathiawar minute and these ideas

about divisible sovereignty came to be foundational to how the sovereignty of princely states was construed in Kathiawar, Kutch, and other parts of India as well as the Persian Gulf and Zanzibar, the law becoming the terrain on which these rights were adjudicated and negotiated.[14]

Maritime commerce became a flashpoint for negotiations of distributed sovereignty and jurisdiction, especially in the twentieth century. The states of Kathiawar and Kutch had many seaports, which led to disagreement with the British about the collection of customs revenues. From 1917 onward, states such as Nawanagar sought to increase revenue through their ports by lowering incidental charges and customs dues and by increasing the quality of their port facilities for dhows and steamers. As a result, ports such as Bedi were used by merchants to transship goods to British India. The British sought to put an end to this reexport, or transshipment trade by creating restrictions and tighter controls on customs duties and attempted to control smuggling of goods through these ports into British India (McLeod 2007). This was seen as an affront to the rulers of states such as Nawanagar. At stake in these disagreements were not just matters of customs revenues but the very meaning of princely state sovereignty. The region, then, was always marked by distributed sovereignty, where pirates gave way to monarchs, who in turn, fell under the suzerainty of the British but continued to assert their sovereignty even until their incorporation into India with independence in 1947. Dhows thus operated between and across these princely states and British India, capturing value by moving across jurisdictions.

This was made especially visible during the world wars when ports in princely states circumvented restrictions on trade, dhows capitalizing on differences in jurisdiction. Not unlike dhows elsewhere in the Indian Ocean (J. Mathew 2016), during World War I the British were concerned that dhows from princely states were being used to evade blockades on different routes, including from Aden to Italian-controlled Massawa.[15] Similarly, during World War II they were concerned that ports in Kathiawar such as Okha, Bedi, Salaya, and Jamnagar were being used to smuggle out gold sovereigns, food grain, sugar, and motor parts.[16] The British also saw the ruler, the Jam Saheb, as complicit with these acts and pressured Kathiawar states to take stricter measures to ensure that key commodities were not being smuggled to "enemy vessels."[17]

Despite the vilification of the dhow trade and its associations with piracy, slave trading, and smuggling, the British authorities and other colonial powers also came to rely on dhows to act as feeders for minor ports. During the world wars, the British sought to use country-craft vessels from Kathiawar and Kutch as connectors for trade along the coast of India and beyond. They created a Country Craft Organization in January 1942 to optimize the use of country crafts to transport commercial, military, and government goods, and to connect the railways to the sea. The British then sought to create stable freight rates for country crafts and appointed shipping agents for cargo transported between Bombay and Karachi to

Kathiawar and Kutch as well as from Bombay to Cochin. Although prior to the war, country crafts were seen as potential competition to the British India Steam Navigation Company and as vectors for smuggling during the war, simultaneously, country crafts were seen as necessary to ensure the smooth running of war-time logistics and supply chains.[18] Throughout British rule, dhows were simultaneously vilified and conscripted as connectors for trade.

Efforts to suppress piracy, the slave trade, and smuggling, and dhow sailors' maneuvering of multiple jurisdictions are historical precedents for how dhows came to operate in the blurry interstices between legal and illegal trade, voyaging across multiple jurisdictions. Just as British colonial regulations led to the creation of shadow economies, by 2011 dhows had been pushed into a shadow economy in the charcoal trade in response to legal interventions by the UN and the Indian government that sought to restrict mobile dhows.[19] Not unlike colonial governments, states and international authorities today continue to view dhows with suspicion, while simultaneously relying on dhows in times of need, especially during wars or periods of conflict. Dhows now move between legal and illegal trade based on regulations and draw on profits between jurisdictions and distributed sovereignties. This is the case not only in the present but also in the years immediately following independence in India.

INDEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION

Prior to economic liberalization in 1991, the Indian economy, under the control of a "developmental state," functioned through a complex set of regulatory policies (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 2011). Ever since independence in 1947, the state had adopted protectionist, economically nationalist policies that sought to achieve economic independence through the development of heavy industries. These policies resulted in an economy that was neither entirely "open" nor designed along completely centralized-planning lines. Instead, the state assumed a large role in certain heavy-industry sectors, while other economic activity was left to private enterprise, protectionist policies being put in place to develop domestic industries (Kaviraj 2010).

This general policy of protectionism translated differently for each industry: subsidies, import barriers, export incentives, lower tariffs, and quotas being used in different combinations. In the case of the vahan industry, whose boats were classified in India as mechanized sailing vessels (MSVs), the most significant protectionist policy was that of the quota. In 1948, the Indian Ministry of Commerce organized a Sailing Vessels Committee to assess how dhows could be utilized to "sustain and develop the Economy of the country" (Sailing Vessels Committee 1949, 1). After a year of research, the committee recommended that the government reserve certain cargoes to be exclusively transported by dhows to protect the industry. Based on this report, published in 1949, the importation of wet and dry dates was exclusively restricted to dhows, or country crafts (Rao 1979, 8).

The Indian government's protectionist policies on the importation of dates enabled the dhow industry to survive by transporting a cargo with a long history in the Indian Ocean.[20] For example, because of this policy, until 1991 many dhow owners traded in foodstuffs: legally importing dates into and exporting rice, wheat, onions, fruits, potatoes, mangoes, and watermelons from India. In the period immediately following independence, the government also took other measures to harness the trade by sailing vessels. In 1949, the Ministry of States sought to encourage trade by country crafts in Kachchh. Even as they were building a large port in Kandla, they planned to develop minor ports such as Mundra, Mandvi, Jangi, Jakhau, Koteshwar, and Lakhpat such that country crafts could act as feeders for the port of Kandla. They saw the construction of these minor ports as beneficial to the dhow industry but also to the people of Kachchh as the port of Kandla would largely service central India. They also sought encourage the local shipbuilding industry, which they saw as an artisanal form of trade.[21]

In their rationale for developing the port in Mandvi, they also gestured to the history of shipbuilding in Kutch and the importance of Mandvi as a once-thriving port city with historic links to East Africa and a long tradition of shipbuilding. Officials recognized that the country-craft industry had declined due to lack of encouragement, competition with steamships, the migration of merchants to Bombay, a general decline in trade, and deterioration of port facilities in Mandvi, Mundra, and Jakhau. They therefore underscored the artisanal nature of shipbuilding in Kachchh and encouraged the revival of what they saw as an inherently Indian form of shipping, encouraging the dhow trade as part of broader nationalist policies.

But soon after independence, the mobility afforded by these vessels was seen as potentially threatening to the state, especially when the vessels were operated by Muslims. For example, even as the princely state of Junagadh was being incorporated into India, the movement of people and goods between Junagadh, Portuguese-ruled Diu, and Pakistan was seen as a potential threat. While Pakistanis and Indians saw permit-free Diu as a meeting point for relatives and friends on either side of the border, rumors of the transshipment through Diu of arms and ammunition, which could potentially be used in Junagadh, began to circulate. Diu (under the Portuguese) emerged as a potential nodal point for the smuggling of arms and ammunition for radical, right-wing Hindus and Muslims.

One such rumor concerned a Pathan named Abdul Raheman who was believed to have links to Muslims in support of a free Junagadh based in Karachi (including the Provisional Government of Junagadh in Karachi) as well as to the Muslim League and their supporters in Bombay. Even though such rumors were dispelled, there continued to be fears that Diu, a buffer state with permit-free travel for Indians and Pakistanis, would become a transshipment point for arms smuggling.[22] Nevertheless, the reports hinted at the difficulty Muslims had moving within and beyond Indian borders. The government recognized that many Indian Muslims were unable to receive permits to travel or were subject to greater scrutiny by

authorities and therefore used Diu as a nodal point to connect to families and others in Pakistan. Government concerns, however, extended beyond Diu.

Vanakbara, a port close to Diu, was a center for the country-craft trade. The government saw the wealthy Muslims of Vanakbara as dangerous, "communally-inclined," and sympathetic to Pakistan. Furthermore, even Muslim-owned fishing vessels plying from Vanakbara to Bombay were seen as threatening as it was rumored that they smuggled in goods from Karachi, even though both Hindus and Muslims were involved in smuggling goods through Diu. As it turned out, however, many of these rumors were spread by one right-wing Hindu man, Vithaldas Divecha. Divecha was a businessman from Diu, who was once an informant for the state and was employed as a head constable by the Saurashtra police and had multiple pending criminal cases against him. It was believed that he had spread many anti-Muslim rumors and had also become close to the Diu government. Eventually, the government dismissed these rumors and recognized that the Muslims in the region were small in number and poor, largely employed in fishing (National Archives of India, Ministry of States, File No. 1 (7)-P (S)).

Concerns over smuggling continued, however. In 1953–54, intelligence reports suggested that Hindus and Muslims smuggled goods such as opium, tea, cloth, and spices between Sindh and Kachchh, especially through the port of Lakhpat. The government also suspected that people moved illegally between Sindh, in Pakistan, and Kachchh, including via country craft. The government became especially concerned about the movement of Muslim smugglers and fishermen from Pakistan without passports. Despite these fears, the government continued to highlight the importance of harnessing the connectivity provided by country crafts while simultaneously creating greater controls and surveillance of these vessels.[23]

For example, in 1955, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian consulate in Muscat recognized that over 50 percent of the trade between India and Muscat was carried by vahans or country crafts because of their low freight rates and the need for greater connectivity from ports such as Okha, Bombay, and Karachi to ports such as Muscat and the Persian Gulf more generally.[24] The ministry saw the movement of country crafts as filling this need and even stated that it was "heartening to see these purely small Indian shipping concerns holding their own against the big steamship companies in the present-day conditions and thereby rendering a very useful help to the cause of Indian trade with neighboring countries" (1). While they recognized that there were incidents of smuggling, they sought to reduce these traffics by enforcing a rule whereby dhow captains would have to report to the Indian Consulate upon their arrival in ports such as Muscat and Muttrah. The ministry was also afraid that there was no means of distinguishing Pakistani from Indian seafarers and of stopping repatriation from Pakistan to India, so it began issuing seaman's identity cards to Indian seafarers and a service register to each country craft. The practice continues today.

Through the period of protectionism, however, the state sought to bring mechanized sailing vessels under greater control while encouraging the trade in some

moments. In 1970, the Ministry of Shipping and Transport began issuing loans for the construction of a small number of mechanized sailing vessels.[25] Yet dhows became associated with smuggling of luxury goods, such as gold and electronics. In keeping with the government's protectionist policies, a 300 percent tax was levied on imported electronic goods in India and the movement of foreign exchange and gold was tightly regulated from the 1960s on (Charles 2001). In this period, dhows that were already frequenting Dubai, where both gold and electronics were available on the cheap, began to smuggle these goods into India.[26]

Neither the legal trade in dates nor the smuggling of gold and electronics was to last. In 1991, facing a balance of payments crisis and international pressure from the WTO, the government of Narsimha Rao spurred economic liberalization. This included reducing import tariffs and subsidies, creating a flexible labor market, privatizing industries (Kaviraj 2010), and—in the case of mechanized sailing vessels—lifting the monopoly on the importation of dates. Containerized shipping now emerged as a more cost-effective form of importation. The smuggling of gold and electronics also ended, as import barriers on both were lifted. While dhows continued to carry dates even after 1991, they did so less profitably. Liberalization had set into motion transformations in the economy that forced dhow owners to look for new markets.

After 1991, dhow owners such as the Doshis continued to import dates, although on a much smaller scale. They sought out new markets, travelling along different routes, searching for a new economic niche. Within a decade, their industry had transformed. They reached further west to Somalia and substituted one seemingly innocuous commodity for another: the trade in dates turned into a trade in charcoal. By 2011, their business was structured to serve the trade in charcoal between Somalia and the UAE.

FROM DATES TO CHARCOAL: ALL ROUTES LEAD TO SOMALIA

In 2011, the Doshis chartered out their vessels to Somali merchants based in the UAE. Contracts lasted for about five months, during which the vessels made multiple trips between the Gulf, Somalia, and Mombasa. The details of the trade were left up to the Dubai-based contractor. Narain did not interfere with the vessel's functioning while it was contracted out, saying, "It is up to them. They pay for the vessel, and we give it to them. I have never been to Somalia; I don't know what happens there." Nevertheless, the survival of the Doshis' business depended on their successful entry into this new niche market.

Trade with Somalia emerged as the most profitable sector of Indian Ocean dhow trade not despite but because of the crumbling of the nation-state. Ever since the collapse of Siyad Barre's regime in 1991, southern Somalia has been governed by fragmented authorities, no single authority claiming vast tracts of territory. This has led to the flourishing of an essentially liberalized economy, with all sectors being

privatized.[27] This "unplanned liberalization" (Hagmann 2005, 528) has transformed Somalia and its openly "informal" economy into what Ken Menkhaus has called the "world's largest duty-free shop" (2004, 51). While economic liberalization in India closed many routes for the dhow industry, unplanned liberalization in Somalia had the opposite effect—it created new opportunities for dhows in the charcoal trade. With the collapse of the central government in Somalia, the once tightly regulated export trade in charcoal was reopened, especially from the port of Kismayu, and the cargo came to be transported by dhows (Bradbury et al. 2001, 115).

Dhow sailors grew accustomed to navigating Somalia's ports and the multiple regulatory authorities that govern them, voyaging in a region with multiple sovereigns and docking in places that would allow them to make greater profits. While the *Sagar Sanpati* was plying between Somalia, Kenya, and the UAE, the two main ports, Kismayu and Mogadishu, were under different administrations. Al-Shabaab controlled Kismayu, and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the internationally backed government of Somalia, governed Mogadishu. Kismayu emerged as the port of choice for dhows, as duties charged by Al-Shabaab were lower than those charged in Mogadishu. Yet Kismayu's fortunes were constantly in flux.

The port city of Kismayu serves a large part of southern Somalia and is a major source of revenue—and hence a site of contestation between multiple groups vying for power. Until 2007, the TFG had control of Kismayu, only to be ousted by a local clan faction. This transition was short-lived. On August 22, 2008, Al-Shabaab, in alliance with other competing clan factions, besieged and gained control of the city. Commerce thrived under the relative security offered by Al-Shabaab. As commerce thrived, so did Al-Shabaab's tax revenues from ports.[28] Although the charcoal trade was illegal due to environmental concerns even according to Al-Shabaab's regulations, the trade was reported to be Al-Shabaab's "most lucrative source of income" (United Nations Security Council 2010, 181)—so much so that in February 2012, the UN Security Council banned the import of charcoal from Somalia.

While Kismayu was no longer under Al-Shabaab control after 2012, the trade continued. Charcoal exports from southern Somalia even increased that year, a UN report attributing the increase to higher demand for charcoal in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which had been slow to implement the ban. Moreover, vessels that brought goods and even aid into Somalia carried charcoal illegally on their return journeys from the ports of Kismayu, Merka, or Baraawa so as not to operate at a loss (United Nations Security Council 2011). The takeover of Kismayu by Kenyan authorities after Operation Linda Nchi in 2012 only resulted in increased traffic through other ports, while the charcoal trade also continued through Kismayu under the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) administration.[29]

Despite Operation Linda Nchi, many dhows continued to ply this route—no longer sailing to Mombasa, as the Kenyan government had embargoed trade between Somalia and Kenya. Yet, business between India, the UAE, and Somalia

continued, dhow owners continuing to deal in both charcoal from Somalia and foodstuffs from India. While economic liberalization in India no longer made the date trade from the Gulf a profitable one for dhows, concurrent, unplanned liberalization in Somalia created new opportunities in a shadow economy. In a study of friction in global connections, Anna Tsing reminds us that "heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (2005, 5). In the case of dhows, government regulation in India had expropriated dhows and pushed the trade into a shadow economy, which eventually led to greater suspicion of dhows, as the charcoal trade in Somalia came to be controlled by the militant group Al-Shabaab. In India, this development went alongside new counterterrorism policies in the aftermath of the events of November 26, 2008.

SECURITIZING THE COAST OF INDIA AFTER 2008

Hypersecuritization haunts dhow owners like Narain, as dhows have now become the focus of counterterrorism policies. "Nothing has been the same since 26/11," he explained. On November 26, 2008, gunmen linked to the militant group Lashker-e-Taiba in Pakistan opened fire in the popular Leopold Café; the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, one of Bombay's main railway stations; Nariman House (a Jewish center); and the prominent Oberoi Trident and Taj hotels. The siege lasted for over three days. Investigations later revealed that the attackers had arrived in the city by sea. Setting off from Karachi, they hijacked a fishing trawler near the Porbandar in Gujarat and arrived ashore in south Bombay on a dinghy. Following these attacks, Indian intelligence and defense agencies attempted to secure India's long coast through new surveillance mechanisms, increased patrolling, and new warning mechanisms for boats in distress. These new mechanisms have raised costs for dhow owners, who are now expected to equip their dhows with new, expensive instruments such as Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders, Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID), and other tools to ease surveillance by patrol boats and strategic ports along the coast. Narain complained, "These tracking devices are unnecessary, and terrorism has led to our harassment."

Indian government attempts to tighten maritime security have also altered the routes that dhows traverse. Prior to 2008, dhows would dock at ports in Bombay. By June 2013, the dhow docks were closed for "security reasons" by port authorities, who redirected all dhows to the port of Mundra, in Gujarat. This was no simple rerouting. Government policies and news agencies were increasingly suspicious of dhows, finding them difficult to regulate. When Narain bemoaned, "Why can't the government give us an incentive to export? Support us as a cottage industry?" I did not have the heart to point out the obvious: dhows were viewed as a threat to the nation-state, their mobility allowing for the evasion of state surveillance and for operating outside of government control.

The dhow trade is in a double bind: on the one hand, the industry has become more precarious, and on the other, the entire dhow industry has become an object of suspicion as media and governments have increasingly come to assume that dhows are used to move people and weapons across international boundaries. What then becomes of families such as the Doshis, whose roots lie in the business of the sea? Like other capitalists, they adapt. Narain's young nephew, Harish, entered the family business with the aim of diversifying. He abandoned the dhow trade and dealt in freight, forwarding foodstuffs and medicines from India to Somalia through both dhows and containerships. Harish explained that Mogadishu had emerged as the center for this trade, goods arriving in the port and then being sent to Sudan and other inland countries. I asked him, "Why Mogadishu, a port in a region wracked with instability, where leadership changes hands regularly? Why not Mombasa, with a more stable government and a well-established port?" He responded, "Mogadishu is much more convenient; there is much less government interference and things run smoothly. In Mombasa, the government interferes too much, and you have too many people to deal with all the time."

One would assume that a port with government authorities to handle infrastructure and shipping logistics, like Mombasa, would be convenient. Yet Mogadishu emerges as more business friendly, and it is precisely the lack of what Harish calls "government interference" that makes Mogadishu a friendlier port. Somalia, where state sovereignty remains contested, is where dhow networks habituated to operating amidst distributed sovereignties can continue to function and operate, deriving profit from instability. India, on the other hand, has become unfavorable for vahans, as they are viewed with suspicion, their mobility increasingly restricted, even as economic incentives have become non-existent. In response, dhow owners and sailors have found alternate routes and cargoes, simultaneously engaging in both legal and illegal trade. Hypersecuritization, Hindu nationalism, and crony capitalism in India have led to further expropriation and a shrinking of spaces in which dhows can operate. This is visible in many of the ports in Gujarat through which dhows once traded.

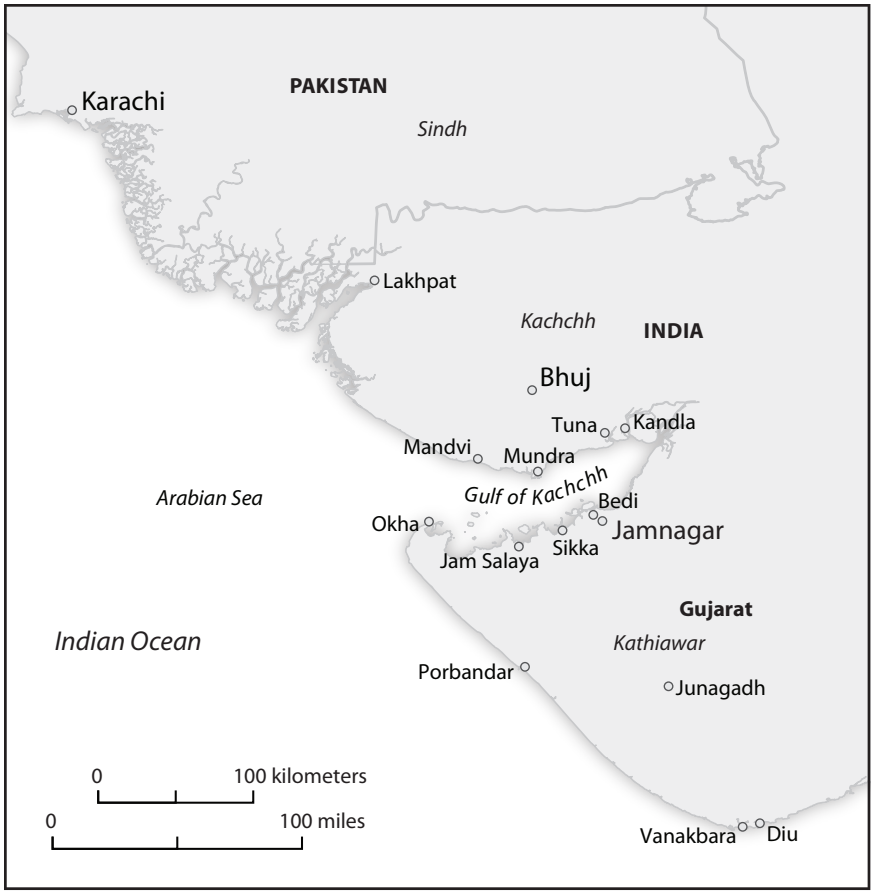
PORTS, CRONY CAPITALISM, AND HINDU NATIONALISM IN GUJARAT

Across the state of Gujarat, in many of the minor ports that were deemed to be vital connectors for the region in the postindependence period, corporate power aligned with the state has made inroads into the very spaces where vahans were once built and would be docked. At first glance, this appears to be a common story of industrial development—old infrastructures giving way to new. Yet in Gujarat, the laboratory of Hindutva, these shifts mark an expropriation made possible through the conjoining of neoliberalism and authoritarian nationalism (Murty 2023). As Christophe Jaffrelot (2015) has argued, when Narendra Modi

was the chief minister of Gujarat, powerful media campaigns upheld and pushed the image of Gujarat as a model of development. Gujarat under the Modi government saw an increasing growth rate due to collaboration between the corporate sector and the government—long a feature of the politics of Gujarat. However, under Modi and the BJP, crony capitalism intensified. After the pogrom of 2002, when over two thousand Muslims were killed in the aftermath of Hindu-Muslim clashes at Godhra, Modi (who was chief minister of the state at the time and complicit in the violence), set in place new industrial policies in Gujarat, conjoining "Hindu cultural nationalism and market liberalization" (Kaur 2020, 247). This included a rolling back of labor protections and antipollution regulations and an easing of procedures to transfer agricultural land to industrialists. Since the Gujarat Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act of 2004, land acquisition was made easier for industries, and subsidies and concessions were given to corporations such as the Tatas; the Essar Group; and Modi's close Gujarati business allies, the Adani Group and the Ambanis' Reliance Industries (Jaffrelot 2021).

Crony capitalism went alongside rising inequalities for Dalits, Muslims, and Adivasis. Religious polarization also grew under the Modi government, as did other social inequities as the government spent less than most other states on welfare, including in the education and health sectors. Modi and the BJP, like their base in the Sangh Parivar and the RSS, consistently rejected the Nehruvian state. Under the BJP, Muslims in Gujarat not only have suffered "communal" violence, which was most cruelly visible in the Gujarat Pogrom of 2002, but also have been marginalized and are amongst the country's poorest, with less access to education, welfare programs, and employment; their ghettoization continues in urban and rural areas of Gujarat alike.

For Muslim dhow seafarers, who already live in segregated enclaves—whether in Mota Salaya in Mandvi or in Jam Salaya—economic and social marginalization, racialization, and casteism is felt acutely in everyday life. Many seafarers would report that the coast guard out at sea would force them to sing the national anthem to show their allegiance to India and that they would be treated with suspicion in various ports in India. As one vahan owner from Jam Salaya said to me, "We could be the eyes and ears of the state along the coastline, but instead, we ourselves are suspected, unnecessarily, only because we are Muslim." Rather than being co-opted into securitization projects along the coast as the vahan owner suggested, these mobile Indian Muslims in BJP-led India have become suspects. Even in the towns of Mota Salaya (the Muslim hamlet in the town of Mandvi where Bhadala seafarers live) and Jam Salaya, residents would tell me that they felt compelled to vote for the BJP. If they didn't, their neighborhoods would be singled out and not receive any basic services for the tenure of the BJP leader who was bound to win anyway, given that the BJP has predictably been in power since 1998. Crony capitalism and Hindutva have also led to a shrinking of spaces in which the largely Muslim-run vahan trade can operate, the expansion of corporations like the Adani



MAP 3. Minor ports of Gujarat.

Corporation and Reliance Industries made possible through the expropriation and conscription of those in the dhow trade. This expropriation is visible in the spatial geography of dhow ports in Gujarat, as was made painfully clear on my multiple visits to these ports.

Port 1: Tuna

The port of Tuna lies about seventy kilometers east of Mandvi, nestled among salt factories that reflect the white glare of the sun. These days, the port is heavily securitized—large fences, watch towers, and an imposing gate prevent easy entry into and exit from the port. I unsuccessfully attempted to visit the port on September 1, 2017, when streams of bleating goats were being herded in to be loaded into animal holds built on deck of a vahan and shipped off to the Gulf. The port gates had been closed to visitors, and ever since 2008, even sailors needed a shore pass to be able to move in and out. The port had also become associated with gold

smuggling after a stray case in which gold was found to have been smuggled into the port by a vahan in 2014. Securitization then included strict regulation of the port, which was officially designated as a node from which only cargoes of goats could be transported.

A year later, in 2018, even the trade in goats was banned through the Tuna port, after activists associated with the BJP, cited animal rights violations, and called for a ban on the trade, just as Hindu nationalists often did for cow protection. Others saw this as yet another method of economically marginalizing Muslims and Dalits in Gujarat, since the trade in goats was largely run by these minorities. Sailors also believed that the port had been heavily securitized and eventually closed because the Adani Corporation had bought up land around the port. Indeed, Adani Kandla Bulk Terminal Private Limited built a new port in Tuna, thereby expanding their reach beyond the town of Mundra about seventy kilometers away where a port owned by the Adani Group, which has close ties to the Modi government, was booming.

Port 2: Mundra

The town of Mundra lies about twenty-five kilometers west of Tuna and has been an important center for Indian Ocean trade since the seventeenth century—especially between Kachchh and East Africa. Many famous merchants such as Jairam Sewji, who farmed the customs house in Zanzibar, once owned huge mansions in the heart of the city. These days, the mansions lie locked, crumbling even as peacocks roam the rooftops of these once glorious houses. Mundra is now best known for being home to India's largest commercial container port and for its status as a special economic zone. The Mundra port was known locally as "Adani Port" and run by the Adani Group. Not far from Adani Port lies a small jetty for vahans. Known colloquially as the "GMB port" since it was run by the Gujarat Maritime Board, it is along this jetty that all cargo on board vahans (except goats, which only went through the Tuna port) left India for the Gulf and East Africa. The port was a hub for exporting rice to the Gulf and Somalia and importing used tires. The continued existence of this small port for vahan traffic in the shadow of a multinational conglomerate with close ties to the ruling BJP and RSS demonstrates careful maneuvering by seafarers to ensure that they can continue to operate, it being in the interest of the state to have these vahans act as feeders in times of need. Yet in other ports, the interests of corporations and the state jostled against the vahan industry.

Port 3: Jam Salaya

Across the Gulf of Kachchh, south of Mundra, lies the port town of Jam Salaya. Home to over fifty thousand Muslim vahan seafarers and fishers, it is now a center for vahan building in the region. Yet even here, inroads were being made by the Essar Corporation, a steel-to-ship company that was planning to build a jetty to transport coal and raw materials to a thermal power plant close by. The jetty would

cut through fishing grounds for Jam Salaya's many fishermen. Although courts ordered a stay on the construction of the jetty in 2011, building continued, ultimately leading to protests and clashes between Salaya's fishermen and the authorities (Jitendra 2016). While construction now continues in fits and starts, Salaya's fishermen continue to protest the building of the port.

Port 4: Sikka

In March 2014, across the Gulf of Kachchh near the port town of Sikka lay two lone vahans. They sat in the Hoda Nar creek, now a thick sludge of mangrove swamp with shallow pools of water that hinted at the sea that lay beyond. Sikka was not always a deserted port. As seafarers would tell me, even in the 1970s, the port was full of vahans. The two vahans that now stood resolute formed just one old sediment of the multiple layers of claims being made to this land, the port, and the waters that lay beyond. The mangroves were battling the slow construction of a road in their midst, while Reliance Industries' oil refinery, the largest in the world, towered up behind us, greasily encroaching upon this old dock.[30] Reliance was looking to seize this land, upon which both the mangroves and the docks now precariously stood, this corporation making quiet inroads by slowly building raised roads amidst India's first Marine National Park.

"This road they are trying to build is illegal. No construction is allowed here, since the port and creek are within the limits of the Marine Park. But of course, Reliance has its ways." Bilal, a seafarer from Sikka reminded me that the land on which Reliance Industries now stood had been illegally seized. Even on the road down to the jetty, Reliance had already made its illegal claims—a large fence and signs stating, "Property of Reliance," lined the road, a suspicious watchman standing at the entrance of the jetty. Despite these signs, Bilal assured me that the area did not belong to Reliance—it in fact belonged to the Marine Park. Despite this, Reliance continued its construction work. A lone worker stood operating a bulldozer amidst the swamp, trying to pave a road even as the tide resisted its construction. The sun had set behind the vahan, the reflection of crude oil silos glimmering in the pools of water around us. "We will find a way to stay here," Bilal reassured me, smiling, ever hopeful.

These land grabs and illegal encroachments by corporations such as the Adani Group, Reliance Industries, and the Essar Corporation are made possible by their close ties with the BJP government and Modi. Hindutva and corporate interests have aligned, and it is lower-income Muslims and Dalits in Gujarat and the rest of India who have been marginalized politically, economically, and socially, Muslims being racialized in the process. Even as spaces for vahans to operate in India shrink, dhow sailors and owners have responded by finding alternative spaces, new markets, and new routes in which to operate both within and outside India, sometimes in collaboration with the state, which has conscripted them in a time of need.

In 2021, a small group of vahan owners came to use their vessels as feeders for the public sector Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), run by the Indian Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Earlier, fishing vessels acted as feeders for the ONGC operating off the coast of Bombay, but conflicts between these fishers and the ONGC led to vahans being used as feeders. Although this trade is still nascent, a dhow owner whose vahan had been used to ply off the coast of Bombay expressed his excitement: "This is the first time my vessel has been able to ply off the coast of Bombay since 2008!" In a time of need, the government once again turned to conscripting vahans. As supply chains and containerized shipping across the world were slammed with delays during the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities finally opened ports near Bombay temporarily for some dhow traffic, seeking to harness dhows in a time of supply chain disruptions. Even as spaces for dhows to operate shrink with the expropriation of crony capitalism and Hindutva, dhows continue to offer the state a mode of connectivity, dhow owners and sailors strategically moving across and between the zones of licit and illicit, legal and illegal, within India and beyond.

CODA

Four years after the *Sagar Sanpati*'s voyage to Mombasa, in June 2016, another Kachchhi dhow, the MSV *Azam* docked at Mombasa. Rather than the usual Kenya Port Authority officials who oversaw the arrivals and departures of vessels at the port, this dhow was met by a horde of reporters, the Criminal Investigations Department, and a large police contingent. Someone had been tipped off that heroin was being smuggled into Mombasa in this dhow. While it is not clear whether this was true or not, the MSV *Azam* and its nakhwa, Azghar, were let go after some questioning. Azghar continued to make trips between Mombasa and Somalia that season, carrying consignments of UN food aid to ports like Kismayu and Mogadishu. The same dhow—in one moment a threat to international security and state sovereignty by transporting contraband—was in another moment a crucial vehicle for transporting state and UN sanctioned cargo. Dhows therefore continue to move in and out of the shadow economy based on a shifting relationship with states and international authorities across coastal Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, being simultaneously expropriated and conscripted into larger global circuits of capital.

Take, for example, the case of the dhow, the *Asma*. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic the *Asma* was placed on a blacklist in the port of Dubai. One of its crew members was suspected of having COVID. Although the dhow was not allowed to dock in the port of Dubai, the dhow owner and crew found a way to return to port. They had two different registration papers for the dhow and so quickly changed the name of the vessel to the *Al Noor* and promptly began plying through the Dubai port, now transporting legal cargoes for a former colonial

power. In October 2020, the *Al Noor* was contracted by the British firm MNG Marine to act as a feeder for its vessels anchored in the Red Sea. On October 21, 2020, as I stood at the gates of the dhow wharfage in Dubai, the captain of the *Al Noor*, Mohammed, said to me excitedly, "I am now a salaried man, working for a multinational corporation!" The vessel had been chartered out for a year, transporting food, diesel, and weapons for British vessels that patrolled the Red Sea. The crew was excited that they now received monthly salaries in US dollars, working legally for a British corporation. On that day, they were scheduled to voyage toward Djibouti, to transport diesel and food to a British container ship. Nevertheless, the work of acting as feeders often took a toll on the crew. Mohammed explained to me, "The only problem is that we do not get to go to port much, unless there is paperwork. We typically just stand in anchorage in ports like Massawa, Eritrea, or in Djibouti and that's it." Yet they were thrilled to have a monthly salary, guaranteed work, and no dealing "with legal-illegal," as Mohammed put it.

Two months later, the *Al Noor* exploded. Mohammed and the crew had been transporting weapons and diesel to a British ship in the Red Sea. Laden with flammable goods, a small malfunction in the engine had caused an explosion. Fortunately, the entire crew was able to escape on a lifeboat and watched the dhow burn at sea, the crew eventually rescued by the British navy. Upon his return home, Mohammed said to me, "Every ghos or voyage is a risk. Whether legal or illegal." While Mohammed and his crew had fortunately been saved, other vessels that voyaged the blurry interstices of the shadow economy were not as fortunate.

Habibi, Come to Dubai

"We are bored here"
You and your brothers say
As you wander the familiar streets of home

Your mother cooks your favorite dish
Your sister gives you some of her share
Still you hunger for elsewhere

Where the sea kisses the sand
Where glass and steel skim the sky
As fountains sing and dance for joy

You know of streets—Rolla, Marfa, Sabkha
Where men from home huddle over kadak
Salaya here, Mandvi there, and Sikka elsewhere

You've heard of dance bars where rich men from home
Showered money on girls
Swirling as if on screen

Of hardware stores turned hawala
Of the chicken karahi at Pak Liyari
And where to buy supari

You know the streets are clean
Even in corners where those who lose their visas
Sleep and eat

As sharks swim in shopping malls
In the shadow of souks of sequins, spices, and gold
That once filled jackets, vahans, and suitcases

You get a job. A seaman's card. An STCW.
A ticket out.
Your father brings you there.

But now you're bored again.
Behind the walled gates of a port
You cannot leave.

Maybe once in 21 days,
(With a slip of paper)
Maybe never.

Still, you dream of spinning liquid gold
For the world
Spins on hope.

3

A Burning Sea

Risk and Geopolitical Arbitrage across the Persian Gulf

And by the sea set on fire!
Indeed, the punishment of your Lord will come to pass—
None will avert it,
On the Day the heavens will be shaken violently,
And the mountains will be blown away, entirely.

—KORAN 52:6–10

Among the particularities of the Sea of Fars is that sometimes, at night, when the waves are rough and break against one another, one sees them sparkle, and one would swear that one was crossing a sea of fire.

—BUZURG IBN SHAHRIYĀR

On August 22, 2017, the dhow *Al Fiza* disappeared. Gujarati newspapers reported that the fully loaded Dubai-registered dhow was heading towards Somalia when it vanished off the coast of Oman. All ten crew members from Jam Salaya were missing; one article included the passport photographs of Nazir Karim Bhaya, Idris Changda, Siraj Bhaya, Irfan Bhaya, Mubarak Ker, Shabbir Bhaya, Osman Belai, Ibrahim Kara, Ismail Fakir, and Nazir Chamdi. *As if a photograph could make the absent present*. The news of the missing dhow circulated on WhatsApp. *How did this happen? What would happen to the families of those lost at sea? Who would be responsible for them?* Many in the seafaring community in Jam Salaya wondered as they mourned the loss of ten young men from their town. Alongside the cryptic news report circulated a video on WhatsApp that seemed to explain the dhow's disappearance. The video was that of a dhow burning at sea, only the hollow skeleton of the vessel visible through plumes of dark, black smoke. The *Al Fiza* had exploded.

A week after the devastating incident, I was at the bus stand in Jam Salaya with Azghar, a dhow captain. He was uncharacteristically quiet. The last time I had seen him, a year earlier in Mombasa, he had regaled me with stories of his voyages from India to the UAE and East Africa. But on that day, he was thoughtful and visibly perturbed. "What happened? You seem very preoccupied," I asked.

He nodded and whipped out his phone. He then showed me an image of the same dhow on fire at sea. "My friend Nazir was the nakhwa of that vessel. I saw his launch explode at sea, and we couldn't do anything, just uselessly film the explosion from our vessel that had been running close to theirs. It all happened so quickly," Azghar said, holding back tears. He continued, "Only a day before this happened Nazir sent me a picture of the cargo on board." He then showed me an image of a blue dhow filled with red gas cylinders—cheap LPG (liquid petroleum) from Iran, destined for Somalia. The vessel carried no other cargo—just cylinders of gas to be used for cooking. "They had loaded it all in front of me in Dubai. We were running in a convoy till Oman, where Nazir was to go west towards Somalia while I turned towards home. Now, I'll never see him again." Azghar said, staring at his feet.

I tried to make sense of the devastating incident, taking the pictures and videos to dhow owners in the hope that they might have explanations and resources that could help the families of those lost at sea. Ahmed, a dhow owner in Jam Salaya, looked closely at the video and pointed at the visible structural bones of the dhow. "This isn't a Kachchhi vahan, but an Iranian launch, made of fiberglass. Fiberglass vessels explode, unlike wooden ones that burn much more slowly, making it possible for the crew to escape," he said matter-of-factly. Visibly affected by what he had seen, he added, "When the end is near, the sea will be set on fire. Some say that in this *kalyug*, or age of apocalypse, the fire under the sea is diesel, and the sea can come ablaze in an instant." Ahmed was referring to passages from the Koran and the Puranas, a burning sea symbolizing the end of the world. But the portents of an apocalypse to come where diesel set the sea on fire presented both a risk and an opportunity for dhow owners and sailors.

Setting off on a ghos is risky business. For sailors carrying diesel and LPG across the Indian Ocean, often against sanctions regimes, the hope of profit entails contending with the dangers of being caught by authorities or being set aflame with flammable cargo on board. Indeed, many sailors leave Jam Salaya and Mandvi and never return, their families referring to them as "missing" even years after their bodies disappear into the ocean. The numbers of those missing had increased in the past few years, as malfunctions on diesel-powered dhows had become common, especially with flammable cargoes of cheap diesel and LPG from Iran on deck and in cargo holds. Despite the dangers of being blown up at sea, or arrested

FIGURE 11. Image of a dhow burning at sea that circulated on WhatsApp, 2017. Anonymous photographer.

by patrollers, dhow sailors and owners continue to transport diesel within and beyond the Strait of Hormuz, the port of Dubai acting as a hub, a mooring for this transregional trade. Kachchhi vahans and other mechanized dhows are buoyed by diesel, both in the sense that they use it to run their engines and also that they trade and transship diesel at sea and between the ports of the UAE and Somalia. This trade in diesel functions through arbitrage, a careful interplay between profit and risk. The ghos is, after all, the point at which arbitrage occurs, where goods are transported from one place to another, making profit through price differentials. How does this trade function as a mode of arbitrage? What are the conditions under which arbitrage is made possible? What kinds of risks and opportunities does arbitrage provide both dhow sailors and owners?

In what follows, I trace methods and modes of arbitrage in the dhow trade, underlining how the geopolitical conditions of sanctions and wars have led to the creation of a transregional trade in diesel across the Indian Ocean. This transregional contraband trade in diesel is a form of what I call "geopolitical arbitrage," by which sailors and dhow owners capture value through price differentials created by geopolitical conditions across the Indian Ocean as they transship goods across spaces impacted by war or sanctions. This geopolitical arbitrage is made possible through a stable mooring, a place of transshipment, such as the port of Dubai, that acts as a central node or pivot for this trade.

Arbitrage is inherently risky, profits for merchants and diesel traders being made possible by risking the lives of those who transport diesel. These sailors, who depend on profits made through arbitrage, risk their own lives, navigating their own precarity in difficult times by arbitraging the status of their patrons (Mahajan 2023b). Arbitrage as a practice is a mooring for sailors and dhow owners, while Dubai is a physical mooring for this trade. Although arbitrage and the type of contraband trade described here might seem unstable and dependent on shifting geopolitical climates, arbitrage as a strategy has long been used in

Indian Ocean trade and has become a predictable method of capturing value. This chapter thus also traces historical modes of arbitrage in the Indian Ocean, especially the trade in currencies and gold, to show how diesel trading is one iteration of this longer history of arbitrage, the ghos becoming the point at which arbitrage occurs.

GEOPOLITICAL ARBITRAGE AT SEA

Arbitrage depends on the movement of goods from one place, where they might be found cheap, to another, where the same goods can be sold at a higher price. Definitions of arbitrage in financial theory have stressed that it is in theory riskless, since arbitrageurs do not use their own capital and profit from price differences across markets. Yet even in financial theory, the meaning of arbitrage now includes risky practices such as risk arbitrage, tax arbitrage, and regulatory arbitrage (Billingsley 2006, 3). Arbitrage, then, is only riskless in theory and not in practice. As Hardin (2021) argues, risklessness in arbitrage is an oxymoron, as it goes against another principle of financial economics: that profit is correlated to risk—that is, profit is predicated on undertaking risk—making true arbitrage as it is understood in financial theory impossible.

Anthropological and social science studies of arbitrage have highlighted its riskiness and extensibility beyond financial derivatives (Miyazaki 2013). For example, Aihwa Ong (2006) has argued that the practice of hiring cheap labor in one part of the world for the same skills available for higher pay in another is a form of "labor arbitrage." The term arbitrage has also been central to understanding dynamics at sea.[1] The term has special valence for the maritime labor market, where both seafarers and shipping companies engage in "existential arbitrage" (Mannov 2023), whereby seafarers on board cargo ships trade off the risk of poverty in their home countries for the risk of piracy that they face at sea—the shipping industry in effect transferring risk to seafarers. These seafarers exploit risk for potential gains such as additional compensation, although wages in international maritime labor, which are often set based on race and ethnicity, are unequal. While Adrienne Mannov's work focuses on seafarers on board containerized cargo ships, the notion of existential arbitrage extends to dhow sailors, who similarly risk their lives in the dhow trade.

Jatin Dua has argued that the dhow trade operates through regulatory arbitrage, "going to places where other ships cannot go due to insurance and hazard pay costs or legal sanctions" (2019, 156). This is a very useful framing of the dhow economy, although the term "regulatory arbitrage" draws from financial theory (Riles 2014). To move away from financial theory terminology and to underscore how regulatory frameworks are forged through wider geopolitical conditions, I argue that dhow owners and sailors engage in "geopolitical arbitrage," in which profits in some sectors of the dhow trade are made possible by maneuvering

geopolitical conditions—of war, sanctions, and jurisdictional struggles at sea. Regulatory frameworks emerge from these geopolitical conditions and dhow sailors and traders negotiate not just the nitty gritty of regulation but also the unstable geopolitical conditions that frame regulation across the Indian Ocean and beyond.

The diesel trade I examine in this chapter offers a vantage point for thinking through this geopolitical arbitrage. Here, profits are made by risking the life of the dhow sailor who navigates shifting geopolitical conditions to capture value for himself, diesel traders, and dhow owners. While the diesel trade enumerated here can also be understood through frameworks of smuggling, I join other scholars who have used the lens of arbitrage to understand contraband trades, moving away from state-based views of the illegality of smuggling and focusing instead on the ways in which arbitrageurs who smuggle goods derive value by capitalizing on difference. For example, Kevin P. Donovan has argued that the contraband trade in coffee between Kenya and Uganda is a form of arbitrage, profit being made by the "cultivation and capitalization of the disjuncture of jurisdiction, measurement, and appearance" (2021, 112). Not unlike "marginal gains" (Guyer 2004), it is through translation between different commodities and currencies that profits might be made. Similarly, Carolyn Hardin has argued that the cigarette smuggling trade from New Hampshire and Virginia, where taxes on cigarettes are low, to New York, where taxes are high, is a form of "money-machine arbitrage" in which value is captured through a predictable, long-term price discrepancy, making this the most effective form of arbitrage (2021, 87). The diesel trade, however, is not always as predictable and is predicated on shifting oil prices in global markets (the price of oil itself determined by geopolitical concerns and the value of the US dollar) and requires constant negotiations of broader geopolitical transformations to be profitable. Amidst geopolitical instability, this form of arbitrage depends on a stable place, a mooring for transshipment, with ports in the UAE becoming pivots for this trade in which sailors risk their lives in the hope of profit.

MARFA: IN THE CITY OF GOLD

Months after the tragic incident of the *Al Fiza*, in November 2017, I was in the dhow port in Dubai, known officially as Mina al Hamriya and colloquially by sailors as *marfa* ("port" in Arabic) or "Hyatt jetty," after the hotel that stood near the gates of the heavily guarded port. I was visiting Ali, a young oilman who was working on an Emirati-owned vessel, the *Al Hamza*. As I stood on a ladder climbing on board the *Al Hamza*, Ali warned me, "Don't step on that barrel, it's full and can easily explode. Move to the right!" I averted disaster and jumped onto an empty barrel. Landing on board, I saw that before me lay hundreds of blue barrels each filled with 220 liters of diesel, glistening in the sun. One stray flame or spill, and the dhow could explode. As I stood speechless at the sight before me, the nakhwa, Sidik laughed and said, "We have loaded over 130 barrels of diesel for Somalia. All of this is contraband, brought here by Iranians. We are only

FIGURE 12. A vahan loaded with barrels of diesel. Dubai, 2017. Photo by author.

halfway done with loading and are waiting for more supplies. We have nothing to do until then!"

The crew were bored. They didn't have permission to leave the port, and so they spent their time on their phones or watching movies. Filling a dhow with diesel requires patience. They had to wait as Iranian fishing vessels and dhows brought small quantities of diesel into UAE waters, this diesel making its way onto ocean-going dhows like the *Al Hamza* by way of even smaller vessels that would peddle diesel within the port, linking buyers and sellers. The diesel trade thus depended on three different types of vessels—fishing vessels and dhows from Iran, small dhows that moved within the port often run by Kachchhi sailors, and larger Kachchhi vahans. The legal status of diesel would change at each point in this supply chain, going from illegal to legal. As Sidik explained, fishing vessels smuggled out cheap diesel from Iran. This diesel would then make its way to small dhows that operated within the port, paying no duties but engaging in ship-to-ship transfers of diesel in port. They would move this diesel onto larger Kachchhi vahans that would then pay duty, a small sum of 10 dirhams a barrel as they left the port, the diesel then reexported to Somalia. At every step of the supply chain, there were opportunities for arbitrage, with sailors, dhow owners, and diesel merchants making gains on every transaction.

For instance, in 2020, if an Iranian vessel procured diesel at AED 100 (approximately USD 27) per barrel, they would sell it to intermediary vessels in port for AED 250 (approximately USD 68). These vessels would then transfer the diesel onto larger oceangoing vessels at the rate of AED 320 (approximately USD 87). This diesel, which then cost 330 AED (approximately USD 90) including the 10 AED paid as a reexport fee, would then be sold in Somalia for about USD 170. Yet these

prices were subject to change, depending on global oil rates, and dhow sailors and owners checked oil prices daily and tracked geopolitical shifts that might affect them. Profits were made through price differentials, with dhow owners and Iranian, Somali, or Emirati diesel traders gaining the most from these exchanges. "The merchants who manage this trade here in Dubai must be Emiratis—no one else will be allowed to enter this business. It's too dangerous—the authorities make sure of it. Somalis based in the UAE or Somalia then handle the business once we are in Somalia," Sidik explained. However, for sailors, too, there were opportunities for arbitrage. Sailors acted not only as wage laborers on board these vessels but also as traders, profiting through pilfering and peddling.[2]

Many sailors underscored that they supplemented their income through the diesel trade, this additional income allowing them to support families at home. As Sidik and Ali explained, "There is no contraband that moves anymore, only this diesel. It is diesel that makes our lives possible. This contraband trade gives us profit." It is this income that supplemented their wages and tips and transformed the risk of going out to sea into an opportunity. For one thing, diesel-trading dhow owners based in the UAE paid higher monthly salaries than those in India or occasionally operated according to a *patti*, or share system, whereby sailors received shares from the profits of cargo sold, these profits being greater than salaries paid in the salary system of renumeration whether on Indian or Emirati-owned dhows. But this trade also allowed sailors to peddle diesel for themselves. When a vessel procured diesel, often from an Iranian fishing vessel at sea, the crew would either pilfer or buy diesel on their own. This included tinkering with measurements: as diesel was transferred by pipes from other vessels, meters that measured quantities of diesel would be "set" in advance to show smaller quantities of diesel than was being transferred. Sailors would also play with measurements when transfers were made from Iranian vessels. These vessels used barrels of 220 liters while vahans held diesel in tanks that carried one thousand liters of diesel, enabling them to manipulate amounts during a transfer. These profits, made without the dhow owner's knowledge, would be shared by the crew based on the patti system, the captain and engineer receiving two parts of the share of profits while the rest of the crew received one part. Indeed, this kind of share system has long been seen as a more equitable way of renumeration in maritime labor. Even pirates in the golden age of piracy preferred a share system of distributing profits rather than being exploited as wage labor (Rediker 2001).

Opportunities for arbitrage thus operated on two levels—on the level of trade undertaken by the dhow owner and on the level of peddling diesel by sailors. It was this opportunity for arbitrage that enticed sailors to work in this risky business. For example, Hanif, a dhow engineer I met in Mombasa in 2011 and again in Jam Salaya in 2017, had spent two years working on an Iranian vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, trading solely in diesel. When we met in 2017, he was adamant that he would never work for a dhow owner again. Instead, with his earnings from the

diesel trade, he was able to buy a fishing boat and work for himself, rather than be a wage laborer.

Trading in diesel, in the unit of a barrel or *barmil*, provided opportunities for profit, but at some risk. Like any other form of arbitrage, profit could be made by playing with measurements, taking advantage of differences in the price of diesel, and trading based on the prevailing price of diesel in different markets. Yet the price of diesel, and other commodities, was set not only by demand and supply but also by regulatory regimes framed by geopolitical conditions such as war and sanctions, dhows operating as intermediaries in wartime supply chains. Central to arbitrage are larger geopolitical considerations such as war and sanctions regimes that frame questions of jurisdiction, regulation, and punishment—geopolitical arbitrage being bound up with the logistics of war and trade, which provide opportunities for profit-making.

CHAINS THAT BIND: THE LOGISTICS OF WAR AND TRADE

> *I was in class and after I had drawn a pitcher and written an essay on "The Happiest Day of My Life" I raised my hand and asked the teacher: "How do you build a supply chain?" I read in* Fortune 500 *annual that what makes a business great is not production, not distribution, not HR, but a great supply chain.*
>
> —MOHAMMED HANIF

Momo, the teenage protagonist of Mohammed Hanif's novel *Red Birds* understood that what matters most in business is the supply chain. Momo's precocious sense of the importance of supply chains can be attributed to his growing up during a protracted conflict: *Red Birds* is set in a refugee camp in the Middle East during a time of war. The novel is filled with references to the importance of logistics in a supply chain during war: from the difficulties of procuring petrol, to Momo's mother continually complaining about having to cook without salt. It is perhaps not only because of *Fortune* but also because of his own mother that Momo aspired to become a wartime entrepreneur who could manage logistics and build a supply chain. Logistics—or the science of moving goods and people—is a crucial element of "supply chain capitalism" (Tsing 2009) and is deeply imbricated in war-making. Logistics as they operate today emerged through war-making.

Deborah Cowen (2014) has shown that business logistics originated in World War II military concerns about moving weapons, supplies, and soldiers to war fronts across the globe. Much of this is visible in the world of shipping today. The shipping container, the basic unit through which 90 percent of the world's goods move, was a World War II US military invention. The world's shipping lanes today also follow the currents of war, especially in the Indian Ocean. As Laleh Khalili

(2020) has argued, the rise and fall of port cities and shipping hubs in the Persian Gulf is linked not only to the oil industry but also to strategic concerns during times of conflict. Global shipping is thus a crucial "sinew of war and trade" (Khalili 2020), maritime routes at sea shaping and being shaped by conflicts that extend across land and sea.

While container ships and oil tankers at sea offer one perspective on wartime logistics, the dhow provides another. Oil tankers and container ships traverse predetermined routes along the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean, with wooden dhows moving alongside them, running not in the strict lanes marked for shipping but just outside those lanes. Unlike container ships and oil tankers, whose routes are planned, dhows do not follow strict itineraries. Dhows simply go where there is cargo to be loaded and unloaded, what shippers would call "tramp shipping." Dhows are in many ways, therefore, the ideal vessel for logistics: flexible, always just-in-time, able to carry small volumes of cargo, and able to service shallow, minor ports where container ships cannot dock. Yet these dhows not only act in parallel with shipping lines but also become feeders for container ships and even naval vessels at sea. For instance, in 2021 dhows would bring supplies—food, and even weapons—to naval vessels stationed at different locations in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. This flexibility and adaptability have made them effective sinews of war, from the colonial period to the present (see chapter 2).

For example, dhows were used for war efforts in India during the 1971 war with Pakistan and were crucial hinges for trade during the Gulf Wars. Dhows continued to ply the Persian Gulf through the Gulf Wars, including the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), the Gulf War of 1991, and Iraq War of 2003 (*New York Times* 1984). During the Iraq War, dhows that were already supplying foodstuffs to Iraq transported dates from Iraq and smuggled oil out. Indeed, one of the best-known dhow-owning families in Mandvi used to import dates from Iraq, but their business flourished as they smuggled oil alongside dates and foodstuffs during the Gulf Wars. Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, the ports of Somalia were especially important after the collapse of the Somali central government in 1991 (see chapter 2). Once container shipping was widely available in Somalia in 2013, Yemen became an important market for dhows that already serviced its minor ports on a smaller scale.

Since the war in Yemen began in 2015, dhows have been central to the logistics of war for all sides: for the Houthis, as well as for the internationally recognized government of Yemen and their Saudi and GCC allies backed by the US. News reports indicated that Iranian-owned-and-operated dhows transported weapons to the Houthis, Somali ports being important transshipment points (Houreld 2016). Meanwhile, dhows have brought in cars and supplies from the UAE to ports controlled by Saudi Arabia and their UAE allies in southern Yemen. When I arrived in Sharjah in November 2017, the creek was filled with Indian and Pakistani dhows bound for Mukalla and for minor ports controlled by the UAE and their allies such as Shihr and Nishtoon. On their return voyages, many of them would dock at

the island of Socotra, loading limestone and coral for heritage projects in the UAE. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have become involved in Yemeni ports in an attempt to project greater power across the Middle East and Horn of Africa; the UAE in particular plans to develop ports across the region and secure maritime hubs for its own interests.

Amid the imperial ambitions of these Gulf states, visible in their port-building, and under the long imperial shadow cast by the US across the region, dhows continue to operate in the context of war in the Indian Ocean. One could of course view this as a typical story of wartime smuggling (Nordstrom 2004), but unlike many other smugglers, dhows have a larger field in which they can operate. When a war ends in one place, they simply move to another, tracking geopolitical conditions across a vast seascape. War and conflict offer risks and opportunities for dhows.

Sailors clearly understood this relationship between war, profit, and risk. "We will go anywhere. Wherever there is war, where there is danger. We were in Iraq during the Gulf wars, we have been in Somalia, and now we are in Yemen. Although there is always fear, we go where others don't dare. We have no choice," Aslam, a dhow sailor, told me in 2017 as he was loading cargo in Sharjah for Yemen. Dhows are buoyed by conflict, opportunities for geopolitical arbitrage being greater when there are restrictions on trade. Jamil, a dhow owner from Mandvi, succinctly explained to me, "Where there are restrictions or bans, that's where we go. The greater the restriction, the bigger the risk, the higher the profit." Geopolitical conditions of conflict, sanctions, and protectionist measures create opportunities for dhows that maneuver around these conditions by operating in a shadow economy that capitalizes on difference. This is perhaps most clearly captured by the way dhows operate in the Persian Gulf in the face of multiple sanctions imposed on Iran.

SANCTIONS AND SMUGGLING IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Since the revolution of 1979, the US has imposed sanctions on Iran to limit its influence and power.[3] These sanctions have operated on various scales depending on relations between Tehran, Washington, and international bodies such as the EU and UN. They include trade embargoes, financial and banking sanctions, bans on arms and weapons-technology transfers, and sanctions on Iran's energy sector, all of which have produced economic, environmental, and health crises in Iran. Although economic sanctions have been in place since the revolution, they intensified in 2006 and again in 2012, when an embargo was placed on Iran's oil exports by the EU and the US.[4]

New transregional shadow economies have emerged to sidestep sanctions and restrictions and enable the movement of goods and capital to and from Iran. As Narges Erami and Arang Keshavarzian (2015) have argued, the revolution in Iran led to an increase in informal trade and smuggling, not only because of

US-led international sanctions but also due to regulations in postrevolutionary Iran that simultaneously restricted trade and led to the creation of new free trade zones in the Persian Gulf. This facilitated new networks of smuggling through maritime trade in the Persian Gulf, these networks built upon Iranian merchants' long-standing connections to Dubai and other ports in the UAE. This smuggling trade is often tolerated by Iranian officials, as it provides essential goods as well as opportunities for state agents to profit from corruption and patronage.

Sanctions and their attendant smuggling networks have created a different kind of economy for the dhows that operate between India, East Africa, and the Persian Gulf. While dhows from Iran (smaller than Kachchhi vahans and made of fiberglass rather than wood) move most goods between the UAE and Iran, vahans from Kachchh are also involved in transshipment, especially in the movement of cheap diesel from Iran. A combination of sanctions on Iran's oil and gas sectors and long-standing fuel subsidies in Iran have led to diesel from Iran being cheaper than global prices, as smuggling accelerates in times of tighter sanctions.[5]

This contraband trade depends on profits made possible by price differentials. Here diesel is sold not only on land but also at sea, in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman. Some of these Kachchhi-run dhows spend months at sea, engaging in ship-to-ship transfers of diesel, purchased from Iranian fishing vessels and dhows and then sold even to container ships in the Persian Gulf. Other dhows might carry diesel from Iran alongside other legal cargoes loaded in the UAE for the ports of Somalia. Alongside this diesel traded under the patronage of Indian, Emirati, and Iranian dhow owners, dhow crews engaged in a diesel trade of their own. Dhows thus literally and figuratively run on contraband diesel, the unit of a barrel of diesel becoming a medium of exchange—a currency and a commodity—for dhow owners, merchants, and sailors.

The diesel trade at sea is one example of how Iranians and their exchange partners, such as Kachchhi sailors, navigate sanctions regimes. While sanctions produce a particular opportunity for dhows to transport and deal in cheap diesel, the trade also highlights larger dynamics produced by sanctions whereby the distinction between commodities and currency falls away. As Emrah Yıldız (2021) argues, in the face of sanctions post 2012, when the Iranian rial fell such that it could no longer function as a medium of exchange, smugglers, state agents, and ordinary citizens in Iran turned to more stable currencies and commodities to store wealth and conduct financial transactions. In highlighting how Iranians came to use commodities as currency, Yıldız argues that anthropological distinctions between commodity and currency cannot be rigid, and he charts a more dynamic process by which in the face of sanctions and other barriers to trade, Iranians "used commodities to effect asymmetrical exchanges among different general purpose moneys by manipulating the scalar distinction between currencies and commodities" (2021, 606) such that gold, tobacco, and even petrol became money—not as barter but as a form of currency that could be traded across markets. While

Yıldız focuses on the false distinction between currency and commodities, what he describes is in fact a form of arbitrage, whereby currency becomes commodity and vice versa, value extracted through this translation process.

For example, in the diesel trade, the unit of the *barmil* becomes a medium of exchange across Iran, the UAE, and Somalia. This trade, in which diesel is bought and sold in UAE dirhams (pegged to the US dollar) and US dollars, provides both Indian dhow sailors and their Iranian counterparts access to a universal currency, with the barmil of diesel becoming an interface between local, regional, and global markets and thus providing an opportunity for arbitrage. For sailors and merchants in the diesel trade, diesel is therefore valued as both a commodity and a form of currency that can allow them to enter global trade and create profit through differences in currency values and in the price of diesel (based on global oil prices pegged to the US dollar). Diesel functions as both commodity and currency and, through arbitrage, a liquid conduit to global exchange networks. This form of arbitrage has a long history in the Indian Ocean and exemplifies a form of exchange in which translations between commodities and currencies offered opportunities for arbitrage across local and transregional markets, producing multiple constellations of exchange.

ARBITRAGE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: COMMODITIES AND CURRENCIES IN AN INTERREGIONAL ARENA

The historical origins of arbitrage lay in long-distance mercantile trade in ancient markets that offered opportunities for risky arbitrage (Poitras 2010).[6] Indeed, arbitrage is central to trading across distances. As Aristotle (1998) understood, trade occurs when one place or person has something that the other does not, goods being exchanged for their use-value (in Marxian terms). Money came into being to facilitate this kind of exchange based on use-value and eventually led to a different kind of exchange: commerce for the purpose of wealth acquisition. In Marxian terms, then, wealth and capital came into being from deriving profit through exchange-value rather than use-value. Arbitrage, or deriving profit through price differentials, was repugnant to Aristotle, who saw it as unnatural. Nevertheless, for traders, it is in this kind of arbitrage that value is produced. Indeed, Marx's "'General Formula for Capital,' M-C-M′, describes in the abstract what financial economists call an arbitrage opportunity in which an identical commodity has two different prices" (Meister 2016, 157).

In the vast transregional arena spanning the littorals of East Africa, the Middle East, Southeast and South Asia, and the hinterlands to which the coasts are connected, arbitrage was a calculated, intentional trading strategy. Arbitrage is "associational" (Beunza and Stark 2004, 376), as it "exploits not only gaps across markets but also the overlaps among multiple evaluative principles" (Beunza and Stark 2004, 374). The Indian Ocean region, with its local, regional, and

transregional spheres of exchange provides for plentiful opportunities for arbitrage through relationality and association across markets. Its mechanisms are perhaps most visible in the trade in currencies, not just paper money and coins but also commodities that were used as a medium of exchange in different parts of the littoral and beyond. For example, pepper from the Malabar coast was used as a form of currency in Europe in the Middle Ages, as well as in China in the fifteenth century (Prange 2010). Commodities were used as currency in the precolonial Indian Ocean arena, but no single commodity or currency became the universal form of exchange.

Instead, in the precolonial Indian Ocean there were a variety of competing currencies, including coins of gold, silver, and copper; cloth, salt bars, shells, beads, grain, and cattle; and promissory notes and bills of exchange. Each of these circulated in the areas in which the currency was socially and culturally understood, and the currency system was "shaped by the tension between the local and the transregional" (Serels 2019a, 2). For example, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, gold, silver, and copper coins, as well as cowry shells circulated across India as media of exchange. In this period, there was not yet a single, universal currency even within India, which offered plentiful opportunities for arbitrage.

Questions of political authority and sovereignty were also embedded within the system of exchange as states exclusively minted gold, silver, and copper coins, although traders who moved between different states used a variety of different currencies to exchange goods across the region. In the Red Sea, for instance, as Steven Serels (2019b) has argued, imperial European currencies such as the Italian lira, French franc and the British-backed Egyptian pound displaced several other dynamic currencies in the twentieth century, often resulting in a widespread loss of local capital. As imperial currencies lost value in the aftermath of the world wars, imperial governments sought to deal with balance of payments crises at home by expanding the use of their currencies in the colonies. Local and transregional traders were hesitant to switch to imperial currency systems, although many had no choice as other currencies once available to them become more costly alternatives.

However, the imperial system did not completely dominate exchange, as traders continued to arbitrage between currencies as they traded locally, regionally, and globally. For example, as Johan Mathew (2019) has argued, despite the imperial push for uniform currency systems in the early twentieth century, merchants continued to find opportunities for arbitrage by working across multiple jurisdictions, often through illicit trade and smuggling. Merchants rejected and subverted new currency forms that assumed bounded economies, their behavior shaping monetary policies across the Arabian Sea. For example, in the nineteenth century as the rupee became the de facto currency of trade and taxation across the Arabian Sea, merchants continued to use other currencies locally.

The trade in gold in the twentieth century provides another instance in which opportunities for arbitrage were exploited through smuggling. During World War II,

as prices for precious metals soared in Europe, gold stored in India (traditionally seen as a sink for gold) was smuggled out by dhows, this gold making its way to Europe via the Arabian Peninsula. This led to new anti-smuggling measures across the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, even after the war, merchants continued to smuggle gold back into India, signaling a careful strategy whereby gold was stored and traded when opportunities for arbitrage arose (J. Mathew 2019).

Not unlike gold, the case of the Maria Theresa Thaler (MTT) offers another window into thinking about arbitrage. In the Red Sea area, the Maria Theresa Thaler, a coin made of fine silver originally minted in Vienna, remained in circulation long after it was produced there. It was especially popular in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Arabian Peninsula, its value exceeding the official price for silver.[7] Akinobu Kuroda has argued that the MTT remained popular through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because it acted as a "complementary interface between multiple markets" (2007, 89). It was used in the slave trade in the nineteenth century, in the coffee trade after World War II, and in the trade in hides in the twentieth century. The reason for its popularity lay in its use in interregional trade, especially when multiple currencies were used. While the pound sterling or rupee flowed in international and interregional trade, and salt, cloth, the lire, and copper coins were used in more local trades in the Red Sea region, the Maria Theresa Thaler acted as a buffer between these currencies and linked local markets to interregional and global exchange systems as merchants arbitraged between currencies used in these different spheres of exchange.

In the 1940s, a young Gujarati clerk and trader, Dhirubhai Ambani, based in Aden, bought up hundreds of thousands of Maria Theresa Thalers from the neighboring Imamate of Yemen. Noticing that the price of silver had spiked in London, he melted down the silver coins and exchanged them on the London market, arbitraging a currency as commodity across Aden (where the British pound sterling was in circulation), the Imamate of Yemen where the exchange value of the MTT was low, and London where the price of silver had increased. While colonial officials were concerned that this kind of arbitrage could undermine currency reserves, Ambani made a pretty profit (J. Mathew 2019). Ambani, of course, went on to found Reliance Industries, now India's largest private sector company, with close ties to Modi and the BJP government, responsible for land grabbing in Gujarat and elsewhere in India (see chapter 2).

This broad history of arbitrage in currencies frames current modes of arbitrage between different currencies and commodities. Unlike most accounts that view the making of national and international currencies as settled, present dynamics in the diesel trade from Iran offer a glimpse into the ways in which arbitrage tactics allow for an entry into global trade and access to more universal forms of currency such as the USD through a commodity whose value is also determined in USD.[8] Yıldız has argued that "sanctions have thus in effect formed a regional and trans-border 'sphere of exchange' with attendant special-purpose moneys

(Bohannan 1959)—commodities with intrinsic value that can serve as media of exchange in a specific context," (2020, 220) such that Iranians are "nested within" global spheres of exchange through cross-border commodity trade. But the case of diesel trading highlights how geopolitical arbitrage produces an effect whereby a commodity (diesel) becomes an interface in these spheres of exchange, this commodity offering access to a universal currency (USD). Diesel, then, becomes a way for dhow sailors (from India and Iran) to buy goods where they can be found cheap and sell them where they can be sold at a higher price (in Somalia). Indeed, this trade also has larger implications for thinking about how spheres of exchange come into being in the first place—not only through demand, supply, and price but also through the actions of traders and transporters who track and respond strategically to state and international policies, capitalizing on differences in price, jurisdiction, and geopolitical conditions. Yet this form of arbitrage, the making of spheres of exchange and routes of entry into global trade, also requires a pivot, a stable place where currencies, commodities, people, and ships can come to rest before they move again. Ports in the UAE, such as Dubai, offer one such mooring for arbitrage.

DUBAI AS A MOORING: A PLACE OF TRANSSHIPMENT

Port cities such as Dubai act as a mooring, a stable location of transshipment, a node through which goods can be arbitraged. Yet this mooring is made possible not only through an advantageous geographical location on the Persian Gulf with proximity to other ports and oil-producing regions but also through political stability and policies favorable to trade and transport. The Persian Gulf is dotted with port cities that have risen and fallen based on the trade policies of the authorities that have governed them. The rise of Dubai as an entrepôt is linked to the decline of ports on the Persian coast such as Bandar Abbas, Lingah, and Bushire, which were all important Indian Ocean trade centers until about the mid-nineteenth century (Al-Sayegh 1998). However, with increased taxes levied in these ports beginning in 1902, Dubai's ruling family, the Maktoums, strategically applied policies to attract Arab and Persian merchants to this once sleepy town, then known mostly for pearling.[9] Indeed, in the Trucial States, customs duties were low—2 percent on imports for goods that could be easily assessed (such as standardized measures of rice or dates) and 1.5 percent flat rate for piece goods (Heard-Bey 1982, 191–92)—while many other goods were not taxed at all since there were only two customs posts, in Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah. Dubai, already a center for pearling with an influential merchant community from India and the Persian Gulf, became even more prosperous as Sheikh Makhtoum abolished taxes (Al-Sayegh 1998, 90). By the turn of the twentieth century, Dubai had come to be known for its free port. The discovery of oil in the 1960s enabled the ruling family to develop multiple ports and facilities, such as Port Rashid, the free trade zone of Jebel Ali, a dry dock, and a "world

trade center," with traffic increasing through these ports since then. As oil reserves in this Emirate dried up, Dubai further developed its ports to become a logistics hub, the world's third largest reexport or transshipment hub after Singapore and Hong Kong. Governments across the world have viewed Dubai's ports as a model of success.

Much of this success has been attributed to the UAE's ease of customs procedures, low administrative costs for import and export, and efficient infrastructure. The development of free trade zones such as Jebel Ali also offered merchants multiple advantages, including no taxes, 100 percent foreign ownership of companies, minimal export requirements, and low import duties (only 5 percent) for goods destined for the local market (Shayah and Qifeng 2015). These policies enabled swift, cheap transshipment—with the political stability of Dubai and other ports in the UAE making them even more attractive. "No one bothers us in Dubai or Sharjah," Ali, an annoyed and frustrated dhow captain, once told me in Mombasa, Kenya, as port officials came on board the dhow we were sitting on. "There, we are free! Not like here, where these officials keep coming to us, to file this paper or that, or then to ask for 'soda' [a small bribe] so that we can do mundane, regular things like fill drinking water from the tap for our tanks. Business booms where government is small, where it makes things easier for trade." Ali was echoing a common sentiment I had heard amongst dhow sailors and owners: that government should just leave businesses alone. Yet these are not mere neoliberal ideas about the role of government and trade but are deeply embedded in the old trading systems of the Indian Ocean.

The UAE's policy of encouraging reexport, for example, echoes ideas that were long prevalent in precolonial Indian Ocean port cities. Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1995) has shown that in the precolonial era Indian Ocean port cities were governed to encourage trade; major entrepôts such as fifteenth-century Melaka, and later Hormuz, were characterized by policies such as low customs duties. These old logics of trade characteristic of Indian Ocean port cities have become entangled with neoliberal ideas about trade everywhere: in Dubai, Sharjah, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Although British coercion of course played an important role in the making of these entrepôts, it is no coincidence that these, the world's largest reexport centers, are all Indian Ocean ports, which have long traditions of enacting similar policies. Port cities in the Gulf are especially historically suited for these mercantile connections as the Gulf became the frontier of the British empire in India (Onley 2007), with Indian merchants financing the pearl trade and moving goods and people between India and the Gulf.

Indeed, Dubai's rise as a port city is linked to this policy of enabling cheap reexports, and not just of oil. As Nisha Mathew (2020) argues, even before the discovery of oil, starting in the 1940s, Dubai was already becoming a hub for the transshipment of gold. In the new international order created in the aftermath of the world wars at the Bretton Woods conference of 1944, there was a shift away

from the gold standard and toward the adoption of the US dollar as the singular currency of trade, and Dubai became a location from which gold could be arbitraged, linking producers and consumers. Imported cheaply into Dubai and Sharjah from Europe, much of this this gold was shipped by dhows to the port of Bombay. This trade continued long into the postwar era. After Indian independence in 1947, the movement of foreign exchange and gold was tightly regulated until economic liberalization in 1991. Gold smuggling between Dubai and Bombay flourished. Gold was transported on planes; on ships; and most notoriously, on dhows, which are still associated with gold smuggling in India.

Indeed, dhows that docked in Dubai and Sharjah became central to the transportation of gold, port cities such as Dubai and Sharjah being transformed by the capitalization of arbitrage opportunities that this gold trade offered. The gold trade was central to the metamorphosis of Dubai from a sleepy town into a modern port city, one that capitalized on arbitrage opportunities (N. Mathew 2020). Yet while scholarship has focused on the role of merchants, sailors from Jam Salaya and Mandvi were deeply involved in this gold trade, many of them employed on board dhows that smuggled gold between Dubai and Bombay. Haji Mastan, the famous Bombay-based gold smuggler of the 1970s, employed sailors from Jam Salaya and Mandvi (see also chapter 2).

For many on both sides of the Indian Ocean littoral, the UAE's success story is thus linked not only to the oil economy but to the gold trade as well.[10] Bilal, a retired Emirati bureaucrat who had been jetty inspector of Sharjah creek in the heyday of the gold trade with India between 1960 and 1980, explained much of this to me as we sat in the living room of his house in Sharjah, leafing through his scrapbooks filled with certificates of good standing and photographs with members of the Al Qasimi family, which ruled Sharjah. "The UAE—especially Dubai and Sharjah—are *wasl*, a hub, a center for global trade. We, located here in the center of the western Indian Ocean, between South Asia and East Africa, with deep yet sheltered harbors, are natural entrepôts," Bilal explained, echoing comments I had heard from other officials at the port as well as sailors and traders who used Dubai and Sharjah to transship goods. Yet the growth of Sharjah and Dubai as port cities was not just geographic felicity; it is linked to the reexport policies that were first tested with the gold trade.

Bilal explained to me how gold transshipment worked in Sharjah. In Urdu (the lingua franca of the creek), he said to me, "Here in Sharjah, the import and export of gold was always legal. Importation was illegal in India. What have we got to do with the laws of India? Smuggling was their problem, not ours." Bilal had captured the crux of trade policy in the UAE: import goods for a low fee and reexport them for an even lower fee. Revenues were to be made not from taxation on goods and services but from the small fees on every transaction, the larger volumes of imports and exports making up for "lost" revenue. Scholarship on the Gulf has focused on how this policy has led to a thriving reexport trade, Dubai

becoming a hub for smugglers looking to transport all kinds of goods: gold, clothing, cigarettes, weapons—and now—diesel (Davidson 2008). Indeed, Dubai and the UAE more generally has become a safe, stable, business-friendly mooring for geopolitical arbitrage, a node, an entrepôt, a classic Indian Ocean port city where goods, people, and vessels can move easily and be traded. Dubai connects local, regional, and transregional actors to global commerce. It is then no wonder that Dubai and Sharjah are also hubs and moorings for the dhow economy.[11] Yet this geopolitical arbitrage is not without risk. Dhow sailors face multiple threats when moving goods across the Indian Ocean, the risk of arbitrage falling upon the bodies of laborers. It is through the risk undertaken by these sailors that value is produced in arbitrage.

ARRESTED AT SEA: LABOR, RISK, AND VALUE IN GEOPOLITICAL ARBITRAGE

The Indian Ocean is liquid terrain upon which geopolitical conditions shape the ways in which regulatory authorities move, expanding their jurisdiction and hence sovereign power. It is through geopolitical arbitrage at sea that the full value of price differentials might be realized and captured by dhow sailors, owners, and merchants. This form of arbitrage, however, is not without risk.

Yet while risk in arbitrage has been understood to be largely financial (MacKenzie 2003), arbitrage in long-distance trade also entails risking the laboring body of the sailor who goes out to sea. In the case of seafarers on board container ships, labor arbitrage in the global shipping industry has transferred risky seafaring jobs to lower-paid seafarers from the Global South for whom the risks of facing danger at sea are "wagered against the security that a steady income brings" (Mannov 2021, 42); this is a form of "existential arbitrage" (Mannov 2023). While Mannov is concerned with relatively higher paid seafarers on container ships, for dhow sailors, these risks operate at an even greater scale, for a much smaller income.

In the case of the diesel trade, it is this laboring sailor who will always be culpable because he will be the one caught "red-handed" while smuggling goods—unlike other actors involved in the transaction, such as dhow owners in India and merchants and shipping agents in the UAE. For the latter, the risk is entirely financial (none of them would be arrested or imprisoned). For the sailor, being caught smuggling goods results in both their finances and their bodies being arrested in place. Arbitrage, even in the case of long-distance trade produces value not only through price differentials and jurisdictional issues but also through the classic mode of value creation typically associated with production—labor—with the sailor's body and life held in abeyance in arbitrage.[12] This labor at risk in arbitrage is what produces value.

Yet the substance of this risk and the value it produces can only be understood by examining the lived experience of the laborer whose body bears the brunt

of this risk. In what follows, I offer two scenes in which sailors were arrested at sea, their potential to produce value through arbitrage interrupted by risk. How does the risk involved in arbitrage feel? What happens when possibilities for profit disappear? And how do sailors, ever aware of the risks of their work, negotiate between risk and opportunity? While both scenes offer different examples of geopolitical arbitrage, the first through diesel smuggling amidst sanctions and the second through a moment of smuggling during pandemic restrictions, both highlight an arbitrage strategy used by sailors to mitigate risks. When confronted with risks produced through geopolitical arbitrage, sailors arbitrage between patrons, risking the status of dhow owners and merchants to gain freedom. Sailors therefore not only arbitrage themselves, diesel, and other commodities, but also the status of their patrons.

Scene 1: Liquid Gold

LOCATION: SOMEWHERE IN THE GULF OF OMAN,
IN OMANI TERRITORIAL WATERS.
AS NARRATED BY THE CREW OF THE *CHEETAH I*

The *Cheetah I* dropped anchor in the middle of the sea. Altaf, the nakhwa, was in the cabin, tuning the radio to different stations, playing Hindi songs on air. However, he was not a floating radio jockey at sea. Altaf was calling for someone, hoping for a response. After fiddling for a little while, he finally heard it—another Hindi song at the end of the line. A signal. Looking at his GPS, he paused the song and called out his coordinates over the radio. He then beckoned the driver (the ship's engineer), Shiraz, and the oilmen Aijaz and Rizwan. *Get ready*. Aijaz and Rizwan flung pipes overboard as a fishing vessel drew close to the vahan and dropped anchor by its side. The two vessels bobbed up and down, bound together by pipes. The fishing vessel from Iran was moving diesel into empty plastic tanks in the holds of the vahan. Aijaaz gave Rizwan a questioning look. Rizwan nodded, signaling to him that their work had been done. He had tinkered with the meter so that it would mark a lower quantity of fluid than had been transferred. Anything more than what had been agreed upon with the dhow owner would be traded by the crew, profits being distributed between them.

Even as the pipes drew this liquid gold into the holds, the *gherporiya*, the man on watch, noticed patrol boats heading in their direction and called out, "They're here, they're here." Shiraz, Rizwan, and Aijaz quickly leaped into action, drawing back the pipes that dripped flammable diesel off the sides of the vessel and onto the deck. The fishing vessel was free, its engine roaring as it escaped the patrollers. Shiraz started up the engine in the hold, Altaf ready at the ship's wheel. The *Cheetah I* was known for its speed, and on a normal day could outrun any patrol boat. But not that day. The engine roared and then sputtered, the vessel barely moving. Shiraz cursed at the propeller and rudder of the vessel. He knew they were

broken. Wings clipped, the *Cheetah I* would no longer fly. Moving slowly across the water, Altaf hoped that they would eventually be able to disappear into the night.

A bright light shone directly on the vessel—their cover was broken. Altaf squinted at the wheel as gunshots echoed in the sea breeze. Altaf turned the wheel right and left trying to dodge the patrol boat as it came closer. Over the drone of waves and wind, he heard, "Stop or we will shoot." The gherporiya, standing at the back of the vessel shouted at him, "There are two more boats at the back!" Altaf had no choice but to surrender. The engine sputtered to a halt as they dropped anchor. A patrol boat was right by their side, armed guards clambering on board. They made their way to the engine room, where Shiraz was dripping with sweat. Pointing an AK-47 at him, Guard no.1 said to him, "Start the engine." Guard no. 2 was in the cabin, holding Altaf at gunpoint. "Move here," he said, pointing at the GPS, a location in Iranian territorial waters. Altaf raised his hands helplessly.

In the engine room below, Shiraz pointed at the engine. "It's not working," he gestured to the guard, pretending to start up the engine to no avail.

Guard no. 1 kicked him. "Do as I say. Start the engine." Shiraz tried again. The engine sputtered to life, and then died.

"Try again," the guard said. This time, the engine didn't even sputter. Grabbing Shiraz by the sleeve, the guard brought him up to the deck, where Altaf, held at gunpoint, was standing next to Guard no. 2. The rest of the crew stood in silence as a complex negotiation began. Altaf and Shiraz insisted that the vessel would not move. Try again, Guards 1 and 2 insisted.

"No," said Shiraz, stubbornly sitting down on the deck, resisting movement. Guard no. 2 hit him on the head with the back of the gun. Bleeding, Shiraz laid down. They were at an impasse.

An hour went by. And then two, and then four. Eight hours later, Guard no. 2 forced Shiraz up. Try again. Tired, Shiraz fumbled his way into the engine room, and the engine finally came to life. Still at gunpoint, Altaf steered them into Iranian territorial waters, where they were promptly arrested on charges of diesel smuggling. The entire crew was moved to an armed patrol boat and taken to the nearest police station, in the port city of Minaf.

Months after this incident, on December 13, 2020, my phone rang, an unknown +98 number flashing on the screen. It was a stranger on the other line. He said to me in Hindi, in a rehearsed, formal tone reminiscent of petitioners in the offices of bureaucrats in India, "Madam, my name is Altaf, and I am from Jam Salaya, I am the nakhwa of the vahan, the *Cheetah I*." I could not remember this sailor, nor his vahan, and so I paused, trying to think if we had ever met in Jam Salaya or the UAE. Sensing my confusion even over the phone, Altaf said, "We've never met, but I am calling from Bandar Sheriq, in Iran. Seven other crewmembers and I were in jail in Minaf city for a month for smuggling diesel, before being released, but for the past ten months have been sitting on the launch, waiting. Kabir, of the launch *Al Imran*, gave me your number." Surprised and curious to hear why he was calling

me, I asked him what I could do for him. The formal tone with which he had started the conversation melted. His voice brimmed with desperation as he went on to tell me that ever since their release from prison, they had been waiting and waiting to hear about when they might be able to go home, but the Dubai-based dhow owner had been unresponsive.

"We have been waiting for so many months. The *arbab* [trader] has someone here who brings us rations, but we have nothing else. We keep calling the arbab but we receive no response." He started sobbing on the phone. My heart sank. Still crying, he continued:

> The arbab got us out of jail, but the problem now is the launch. They must pay the fine for the launch. And here, they only give us food, but what of our families back home? We are not getting paid. Talk to the arbab. Tell him either get us out or pay us our salaries. Please help us . . . ask the arbab . . . What is the problem? Why can't he free the launch? Ask the arbab, please call him and ask him and tell us what he says. Please pressure him. Let him know that it's not just about us but also our families. They keep calling and asking us, "What does your arbab say? " And when we contact him, he says, "It'll happen, don't worry, it'll happen. You'll be free." Ten whole months have passed like this. Put pressure on him, let him know that the Indian embassy is also involved.

He sniffled, with resolve.

"You know, I don't work for the Indian embassy, I don't know anyone at the embassy—in Iran or in Dubai. I don't have any government connections at all. I'm only writing a book about vahans—there may not be much I can do. But I will try, I'll try to at least call him," I said, helplessly.

His voice quivering on the phone, he said:

> You should still call him. This is the arbab's number: +971888888. Call him and ask him what's happening. He will tell you something at least. Whenever we talk to the arbab he keeps saying, "It'll happen in one week, it'll happen in one week," but over ten months have gone by like this, and we have received no information. He gives us food, but we aren't receiving any salary. We need the salaries; we have big families. When we ask, he keeps saying he'll send us our salaries, but he doesn't. At first, he gave us half-salaries for three months . . . we won't lie to you. First, he gave half our salaries for three months, not the full salary. But now so much time has passed, and he hasn't given us anything. And we don't know what's happening. Ask him and see what he says.

He paused, his pitch getting higher and higher as he spoke rapidly:

> And madam, ask him to get us out of here, with or without the launch. If he gets us out of here with the launch then it's fine, we know how to get home, we can come to Dubai. Call him and ask him, he will talk to you. We asked him about the salary, and he said, when you come to Dubai, we will do the full *hisaab* [accounts]. He told us this, but really all we need is to get out of here. If we come to Dubai, he will pay us our salary, [but] even if he doesn't, we must get out. It is imperative that we get out.

He sobbed. Unable to find the words to comfort him, I kept repeating. "Keep hope alive. You will not be there forever. The arbab must do something, he will want his investment in the launch back. Things take time, especially in Iran, you know how the bureaucracy there is. Stay strong. *Hausla rakho.*" The words felt hollow and empty even on the phone. I assured him that I would do as he had asked and call the arbab the next day.

After Altaf hung up, I tried to imagine what it must be like, sitting on a vahan, in unfamiliar territory, being unable to leave for ten months. Sailors were accustomed to waiting, in ports, at home, and in isolation at sea. Voyages after all, were preceded and followed by periods of dead time, waiting for cargoes and for instructions on where to go next. But the uncertainty of this situation must have made the hours, the days, weeks, and months stretch and blur. No work, no money, just rations that could feed the crew twice a day. Bare survival. Altaf must have tried to keep the crew busy, but without any access to supplies to carry out any repairs or maintenance, what could the crew be doing? Altaf sent me pictures of the crew on WhatsApp, with their names and passport details. All of them looked so young, only one of them over the age of thirty. Their youth arrested, the crew must have been sitting listlessly in the cabin of the vessel, every day hoping for a call for their release, their wives and families at home sharing in their helplessness.

The following morning, I called the number Altaf had given me, not expecting a response. But surprisingly, after only two rings a man answered the phone. Unsure of what language to speak in, I began in Urdu. "I am calling to check on the crew of *Cheetah I*." I then repeated the question in English.

The man on the other end of the line paused and then responded in heavily accented Urdu, "Who are you?"

"I am a friend of Altaf's from India, his family is very anxious about his return, they haven't had any income for the past ten months," I said.

With no hesitation, the man explained that it would only be a week or even ten days until the crew would be released. They had already paid a fine of over AED 400,000 (approximately USD 109,000) to release the dhow and were simply waiting for the paperwork for the release of the vessel and the crew. I was relieved—I hadn't expected any details, but since he was being so obliging, I asked. "And what of the salaries? When will they be paid?"

Here, the man hesitated and said that I would have to contact the vessel owner directly, that he was simply his agent and was only helping with their release. "But don't worry, they will be released in a week." I hung up and called Altaf immediately. "Thank you, thank you Madam! Inshallah we will be released!" He was so grateful and excited that there had been an actual response this time. But I was still unsure, knowing fully well that owners and agents often stretched the truth, growing tired of sailors calling them, asking for their release and the money owed to them.

A week later, I received a message from Altaf. He had made it to Dubai. They had just docked at the port, and upon completing security checks would head

FIGURE 13. A vahan being repaired at Jaddaf Dry Dock. Dubai, 2023. Photo by author.

to the dry dock, Al Jaddaf, where they would make repairs to the vessel and await their salaries. And so, a few days later, I drove to the dry dock of Al Jaddaf. I had, of course, been here before. Nestled at one end of the Dubai creek, the dry dock was an area where dhows were repaired and docked in times of long waits between voyages, since berthing here was much cheaper than berthing at the port. The dock had also become an important field site for me, since it was free for anyone to enter and leave, unlike the dhow port in Dubai. Entering the gates of the dry dock, flanked by hardware stores and the office of shipping agencies on either side, I drove to one end of the dock where large dhows stood, like fish out of water, standing upright on land. Parking next to the vessel, Altaf met me with a smile. The rest of the crew joined him.

"Thank you, Madam. After you called, we were released in a week!" Altaf said, beaming at me. I assured him that I had not done anything—my calling made no difference—they had already paid the fine to the Iranian authorities and my calling hadn't changed much. But Altaf was convinced. "He was afraid. Your call signaled to him that there are other people thinking about us. It shamed and scared him a little. You see, the dhow owner is an Emirati, but he is of Iranian origin—an Ajami. If word went out that he was involved in diesel smuggling, his reputation would be destroyed."

Altaf had understood an aspect of his dhow owner's identity that had been obscure to me. A simple phone call became a way to appeal to the owner's status—as a patron for seafarers but also as an Ajami in the Emirates, who despite being a citizen could easily become a suspect owing to his deep-rooted connections to Iran. Caught in the risks of arbitrage, their bodies and lives in one uncertain pause, dhow sailors clearly understood that one way to negotiate their release was by putting their patron's status on the line. The risks of geopolitical arbitrage could only be mitigated by risking the status of patrons, for whom dhow sailors worked. Arbitrage then extended beyond trade into a practice of risking the status and positionality of patrons. This was abundantly clear to Altaf—and to Yusuf, as described in the next scene.

Scene 2: Locked Up in Lockdown

Ding, ding, ding. One missed call. *Ding, ding, ding*. I scrambled for my phone and finally found it under a pillow, answering, "Salaam Alaikum." Ahmed, Yusuf's brother in Mota Salaya, Mandvi, was calling. It was May 24, 2020, and I assumed he was going to wish me Eid-al-Fitr Mubarak. But Ahmed wasn't calling in celebration. Rather than beginning the call as we usually did with a five-minute-long greeting asking each other about the well-being of our family members, our own health, and news about home and work, Ahmed uncharacteristically jumped right into it.

"Have you heard what happened to Yusuf?" he asked, tentatively.

"No, what happened? I spoke to him . . ."

"He's been picked up! They've all been picked up . . . and arrested!" Ahmed interrupted me, his voice quivering over the phone.

"By whom? Where?" I asked, biting my lip.

"They were taken by the Iranian coast guard—all eleven of them, and the vahan has been impounded too. Yusuf is in jail in Qeshm! We knew he shouldn't have gone to work for them!" he lamented.

I was confused. "But I just spoke to him a few days ago. . . What happened?" Yusuf had called me five days earlier to tell me that he was about to set off on a voyage to Karachi. He had been hoping to come home, but both ports and flights to India were closed due to COVID-19 lockdowns, and so he stayed on to continue working despite not being home for over a year and half. Although he hadn't sent me updates on his voyage as he normally would, I assumed it was because he was still enroute, without any cell phone service. Besides, his phone would have been impounded by authorities in Karachi, communication being limited for Indian sailors in Pakistani ports, given the tensions between the two nations. I had also spoken to Noora, Yusuf's wife, only a day ago, and she had said Eid celebrations at their house would be subdued that year because of the COVID-19 lockdown. She had said nothing of Yusuf's arrest.

Ahmed remarked, "What could she say?" I pictured him shaking his head. Both of us paused for calm. He took a breath and told me what happened:

> Two days ago, the *Al-Imran* had set off from Dubai towards Pakistan. It was loaded with electronics—TVs, fridges, cigarettes, and even medicines. Although they had manifests issued for Karachi, they were not going there—they had been given a location on the GPS. They dropped anchor at this location at sea and began offloading the cargo onto fishing boats from Iran. Even as goods were being transferred, they were intercepted by the Iranian coastguard. The Indian crew and the Iranian fishermen have all been arrested. The cargo and the vessel have been impounded. But they weren't even in Iranian waters! They were in international waters. But now, what to do? Yusuf and the crew are being held in Qeshm. You know he hadn't gotten a job for over year; he knew they [the vessel owners] were always up to shady business. But with Anisa, his youngest daughter, due to get married next year, what choice did he have? But now, this?!

I didn't know how to console Ahmed. The line was silent, but I had so many questions. *How was Yusuf? What would happen now? Why was the Iranian coastguard patrolling outside territorial waters? And what were the conditions in jail? What could we possibly do?* Despite the shock of the crisis, I thought to ask Ahmed the most pragmatic question.

"What about diesel? Was there any diesel being traded?" I asked.

He sighed, "No, no diesel. *This time.*" A relief, since the sentence for diesel smuggling was harsher than for smuggling other contraband. But there were other worries. Yusuf was not young or healthy. He was fifty-three and diabetic, so Ahmed and the rest of his family were worried. *Did he have his medication? And what of COVID-19?* Images of the news from Iran came in waves: hospitals with no beds; doctors trying to treat patients without medication or oxygen; patients gasping to death even as overworked doctors tried to keep their morale up by dancing in their scrubs in the face of this undefeatable virus whose effects were amplified by sanctions that blocked access to life-saving medication. COVID-19 could not be contained—either within prison walls or within the country, which was itself closed. There were no flights in or out. No one could even go check on him.

I thought of Noora, whose stoic silence screamed. She was home, doing what she knew best—taking care of those around her. In the aftermath of this news, she would have squat in a river of soap bubbles in one corner of the courtyard, scrubbing furiously at the dirt from her youngest son Rashid's collar. After wringing her father-in-law's white *kurta* dry, she would have served her diabetic and now immobile mother-in-law breakfast in bed, a soft smile on her face. Her youngest daughter Anisa would be calling out to her from the kitchen, "How much chili should I put in the *salan* [curry]?" Meanwhile, her chatty sister-in-law, Ahmed's wife, Salma, was on the phone with me, "Who knows what has befallen this family? We are beyond words." I hung up and shrank into bed, in the room I could not leave. We were all still in an apocalyptic lockdown—them in Mandvi, me in

Bombay, and Yusuf locked up in Qeshm. I stared at a map of the Indian Ocean on my phone, imagining the *Al-Imran* in the blue space of the Persian Gulf between Dubai and Bandar Abbas, arrested in place even as warm waters flow the distance between Mandvi and Qeshm.

MAY 27, 2020

Ding. A +98 number flashed on my phone. Iran. Yusuf was calling from a detention center in Qeshm. "I'm fine. They are giving us three meals a day, including meat, and conditions are not bad," he said. Yusuf's inclusion of the detail of being provided meat was important: It marked for him the availability of a food that, in India, would have been less accessible in jail. Meat consumption marked his caste and religious identity—that of a Bhadala, an OBC Muslim from Gujarat. The other crew members were with him, including four members of the dhow owner's family. It was a relief that they were together. "Maybe since the family is involved, the dhow owners will move faster in doing what needs to be done. There is no COVID here, don't worry." Yusuf was, as always, reassuring. But also, practical. "Take the dhow owner's number and call him. Maybe you can do something." I quickly jotted down the number of his employer in Mandvi. His niece's husband was also with him. "You know them. You've been to their house," he reminded me. "See what information you can get from them." Yusuf could not talk long but reassured me that he would call again in a few days.

After hanging up, I remembered that this was not Yusuf's first experience of being in prison. I recalled a confession he had made to me years ago, in 2014. As we had stood near the shipbuilding yard in his hometown of Mandvi, in the shadow of a half-built vahan Yusuf had told me softly, "You know, *Ben* [sister], I've spent a year in Tihar jail. My father was so angry." I nodded, not pressing for details. "I was caught smuggling gold worth 10,000,000 rupees." He then looked down ashamed. "Who was it for? Did you ever tell?" He shook his head no. And how could he ever snitch on the vessel owner and merchants under whose instructions he had smuggled the gold? After all, they knew where his family lived. But this case was different.

Aziz, the Mandvi-based dhow owner, was shocked and felt helpless about the arrest. Four of his brothers had also been arrested. He could not go to Iran as flights were closed and he was relying on Husain, the Iranian-Emirati merchant whose goods they were transporting, to follow up on the case. Indeed, over the fifteen months that the crew was imprisoned, Aziz was caught between Husain, and sailors and their families, all of whom petitioned Aziz for the quick release of the sailors. Aziz was after all, their employer and patron, and thus responsible for ensuring the crew's release, his ability to do his duty delayed by pandemic restrictions on movement and by lockdowns in Iran.

In response, Aziz attempted to find a political patron of his own, one who could petition the Iranian government and assist with logistics. He appealed to multiple

political authorities in India, including the chief minister of Gujarat, the shipping minister of India, media, and the Indian embassy in Iran to hasten the process. As a minoritized lower-caste Muslim in India, however, his efforts to find a patron in the Hindu nationalist government failed. Yet in the Iranian courts, the question of who was to be held responsible came to the fore, with patrons negotiating their status through the case.

While Aziz and his family were the dhow owners, and the sailors' main patron, the responsibility of paying fines for the release of the cargo and vessel fell upon the cargo consignee—in this case, Husain, an Iranian who lived between Iran and the UAE. When we met in Sharjah, nine months after the arrest, he admitted, "The transaction has been a bigger financial loss for me than for anyone. I know the crew are in jail, but the fine must be paid by us all. Aziz needs to send me his share of the money. My finances and my family's future are at stake too!" After many delays due to lockdowns in Iran, the case finally went to court, the judge placing an exorbitant fine of USD 8,000 for the release of each crew member, alongside an additional fee for the release of the cargo and the vessel.

Over the fifteen months that followed, Husain and Aziz appealed the case in court and argued over who would pay for what, their status as patrons being redefined through this process. For the imprisoned sailors, this negotiation between patrons produced deep uncertainty. Neither Aziz nor Husain were forthcoming about the progress of the case, and for Yusuf, stuck in jail, this was anxiety producing as it signaled the potential transformation of patronage into exploitation.

Fifteen months of waiting, during which Yusuf was moved from a detention center in Qeshm to a prison in Bandar Abbas. Fifteen months of trying to get news of the progress of the case, waiting for a verdict. Fifteen months of trying to send money through brokers in the UAE to Iran to get Yusuf a jail card so that he could make phone calls and supplement meagre prison meals. Fifteen months during which Yusuf's nineteen-year-old son, Mohammed, suddenly found himself the sole breadwinner for his family, as he received reports from others in prison that Yusuf's health had turned for the worse. Fifteen months during which Yusuf's oldest brother Iliyas, died suddenly of COVID-19 during India's deadly second wave. Yusuf's wife, father, and daughter also contracted COVID, his father spending weeks in the hospital. Fifteen months of trying to get the dhow owner in India, the Iranian merchant, and the Indian shipping agent in Dubai to give us information about their case, the disappointment of unanswered phone calls stinging every day. Months of calling the Indian consulate in Tehran and Bandar Abbas to see if they could help with the logistics of finding lawyers and brokers in Iran, only to be told, "Madam, these are smugglers, they have broken the law. They are degenerates and we can do nothing to help them." Months of petitioning authorities in India—from Gujarat's chief minister to the shipping minister of the country, with no response. We talked to journalists in India to raise the issue as a

humanitarian cause, and they dejectedly told us that the right-wing government would do nothing for the sailors, because many of them are Muslim. After all, the Indian government had recently proposed the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens that would strip many Indian Muslims of citizenship. They didn't even view these seafarers as Indians. Fifteen months of daily calls between Bandar Abbas and Mandvi to make sure that families across the Indian Ocean were still alive. Sixty weeks of being told that maybe, just maybe, this week they would be released.

Fifteen months later Yusuf was finally released from prison after the dhow owner paid the fine of approximately USD 8,000 per head. Nevertheless, a year and half passed in uncertainty, cycles of death and birth folding upon themselves even as Yusuf's life itself was under arrest. Going out to sea on a voyage to make arbitrage possible meant that the sailor was always at risk of being stuck, his body, and indeed, life, being the price of profit.

LOCKED IN DEBT AND OBLIGATION

Yusuf and the crew believed that it was the dhow owner's obligation to pay the fine to release them from jail. While Aziz insisted that he did not have the funds to pay the exorbitant fine, Yusuf was adamant: "They have the money—they own land, houses, and just built another dhow. Besides, it is their duty to free us." Underlining Aziz and his family's obligation to bail out the crew, Yusuf was reminding them that the relationship between dhow owner and sailor far exceeded that between boss and wage laborer; it was one of patronage, a "tie of concern and personal obligation, which involves practical support as the embodiment of care and love" (Piliavsky 2020, 27). Acutely aware of how patronage works, Yusuf appealed to the dhow owner by making his moral obligation clear and by making his status as a patron precarious. Yusuf negotiated between different patrons involved in the case, such as the Kachchhi dhow owner Aziz and the Iranian-Emirati cargo consignee Husain, by transforming his friend, the anthropologist employed in the US, into a patron who could negotiate between the two, in effect creating a competition and arbitraging between patrons.

Yusuf appealed to Husain as a patron and insisted that I remind him of his obligation to the crew. When Husain and I met in Sharjah in November 2020, six months after the arrest, Husain asserted that he was doing all that he could, including negotiating the exorbitant fine of $8,000 per person that the court had levied. Indeed, Husain later provided land in Iran as collateral to the Iranian court, mitigating the final dollar amount for the crew's release. Yet this was a long process. Tired of waiting, Yusuf then appealed to me as a patron. Over the phone, we concocted a plan whereby I would offer to bail Yusuf, and only Yusuf, out of jail. Yusuf hoped that this process would be immediate, and he would no longer be bound to either Husain or Aziz. But he also hoped that by finding a competing

patron, he would be able to shame Husain and Aziz into bailing him and the rest of the crew out immediately. And indeed, this is what came to pass.

Upon hearing that Yusuf had found a different patron who would "front" the money for his release, Aziz became anxious. What would the rest of the crew, including his own brothers and family, think if Yusuf were to be released before any of them because of the intervention of a different patron? Aziz risked losing his status. If word of delays in releasing the crew spread, his position as respected dhow owner would be jeopardized. How would he hire and retain khalasis in the future? Fearing this loss of status, Aziz immediately got to work and found the funds to pay for the crew's release. In November 2021, Yusuf and the rest of the crew finally returned home.

CODA

Arbitrage has long buoyed long-distance trade in the Indian Ocean, commodities, currencies, and commodities *as* currencies producing value for merchants and creating transregional spheres of exchange. In a world of sanctions and war, the ghos enables geopolitical arbitrage, dependent on the stable mooring offered by port cities such as Dubai and Sharjah, with their policies that emphasize reexport. Yet this form of geopolitical arbitrage is not without risk. While sanctions, restrictions, and war have made the possibilities of arbitrage riskier, geopolitical arbitrage has also allowed dhows to create new opportunities, openings in a world of seeming endings. While the fire under the sea is a metaphor for the end of the world, even in times of war, restrictions, and sanctions, sailors who are long accustomed to living with risk learn to negotiate a route out of captivity by playing with the hierarchies of patronage and arbitraging between patrons. Alongside geopolitical arbitrage, patronage also creates both the risk and the possibilities for its abatement for sailors navigating complex geopolitical conditions, capitalizing on differences in price, jurisdiction, and status. Sailors who labor across the Indian Ocean are all too aware of the risks to which they are subject and attempt to mitigate these by being not only wage labor for a patron but also traders in their own right, spinning liquid gold into profit. Yet as sailors move across a fiery ocean in the hopes of profit, each ghos bringing with it new risks and opportunities, they also confront dangers of other kinds—storms, cyclones, and an unpredictable sea. Through these hazards, they are buoyed by faith and moored to notions of divine sovereignty that operate on registers that are simultaneously deeply imbricated in and yet move beyond the sovereignty of nation-states. It is to these spiritual moorings that we now turn.

Mausam—At Sea

Bidi, dawa, and mawa, his needs at sea
A photograph, a taveez, and many DVDs—
Traces of me, for him, at sea.

Six-hour shifts, starting at noon,
Checking water and oil, winds and waves—
It's lonely working, at sea.

GPS, AIS, DAT, radio and Thuraya
SIM cards and mobiles—
New ways of sailing, at sea.

A fannaa dancing in the waves, a duraa
Filled with rice, wheat, cars and dates—
The drone of diesel engines, at sea.

Somalia, Sharjah, Mukalla, and Mombasa,
Bosaso, Oman, Dubai, and Aden—
His world that I won't know, at sea.

Monthly majdoori, uphar and paghar,
The association does no patti for vahanvatti—
Calculating insurance and risk, at sea.

Sign on, Sign off, Seamen's Identity Cards,
Passports, manifests, and gate passes—
To go from port to port, at sea.

Women, wars, waves, the wind,
Diseases, debts, death by drowning—
Dangers to his life, at sea.

Men and women, women and women,
Men and men, the lonely shelter—
surreptitiously in lovers' arms, at sea.

I pray every morning, to Him for his safety,
The white marble of the dargah—
Cooling my fears of loss, at sea.

And I, Misriya, light up as my phone
Glows at each WhatsApp—
What will I, the Nakhwa's wife, do if he is lost, at sea?

4

Of Sailors and Sufis

Divine Sovereignty and Danger at Sea

> We knew the cyclone was coming. There were signs everywhere. The wind was blowing strong, and the sea was swirling with it. Foaming, and frothing angrily. Rain burst from the skies. Waves rocked the vahan, the *Shiv Shankar*, from all sides. Do you know what these waves feel like on a wooden vessel? Can you imagine ten-, fifteen-meter high waves spilling on to a tarpaulin-covered wooden deck amidst beating rain? There wasn't much we could do. In the middle of the night, at 2 am, we began jettisoning cargo, throwing sacks and whatever we could lift quickly overboard. In the morning, we brought the vessel to the anchorage. The wind started up again, in never-ending, untiring gusts. All day, and then again, all night. In the morning, the *sukhan* [wheel of the ship] blew off, flying through the sky until it landed on the shore. The crew and I then jumped ship and took a lifeboat to the shore. What can you do if you can't steer? Five other vahans sank, right there that day, anchored near the shore. We were saved, as were those who were moored right next to us. The vessels at the jetty sank too, and they lost all their men. The storm lasted a whole night, a whole day, and then yet another night. But Alhamdulillah, the crew and I were saved.

Kasim, an aging nakhwa recounted this harrowing incident two months later in Jam Salaya in July 2018, in the safety of his sister's home. As he showed me pictures of his return to India on board an Indian naval mission sent to rescue sailors shipwrecked off the island of Socotra, his sister Zainab, also a wife and mother of vahan sailors interjected, "When news of the storm reached us here in Jam Salaya, the women rushed to the *dargahs* [Sufi shrines]. Masum Shah, Hasim Shah, Ghulab Shah. All the dargahs were full of women. For two days and two nights, all we did was pray. No one had ever seen a storm like this. What else could we do? But He answered so many of our prayers. Kasim is safely home now." Zainab paused as the memory of a moment when the life of a loved one hung by a

FIGURE 14. Masum Shah Dargah. Jam Salaya, 2018. Photo by author.

thread returned. Kasim then raised his palms to the sky and added, "hum Allah ki rehem se jaate hain" (We go by the grace and mercy of God).

The storm they were referring to was Cyclone Mekunu, which devastated the island of Socotra, Yemen, on May 23, 2018. Although the cyclone was being monitored closely by meteorologists and sailors such as Kasim on weather apps such as StormWatch and Windy.com, its effects were deadly and unpredictable. Indeed, it turned out to be the most intense tropical cyclone to hit the Arabian Peninsula in recorded history. In Socotra, the cyclone sank 120 fishing boats and over five vahans from the Gulf of Kachchh, with twenty-four sailors reported missing. The cyclone then moved toward Salalah, Oman, flooding the streets and sinking seven more Kachchhi vahans. The impact of the cyclone was felt not only in Salalah and Socotra but across the Indian Ocean in Kachchh, especially in the ports of Mandvi and Jam Salaya. The days of the cyclone were trying times for those who had loved ones at sea. While the men battled the storm out at sea, the women rushed to local Sufi shrines, praying for the safety of their loved ones.

Although Cyclone Mekunu was unusually devastating, vahan sailors from Jam Salaya and Mandvi and their families are accustomed to living with risk and danger. After all, these towns have long histories of seafaring, and their residents know only too well that going out to sea on a ghos entails grappling with stormy weather, gusty winds, and treacherous waves. The perils of the sea haunt sailors. Since I began this research in 2011, sailors have many times expressed to me their

fears of being at sea. My phone often lights up with WhatsApp messages of videos and images of dhows mid-voyage. Most often, these are images of a tempestuous sea: of storms, of cyclones, of dhows and even container ships being tossed around viciously by waves, winds, and torrential rain. Unlike other messages I received that would include voice notes with updates of how sailors might be doing or details of the last voyage they took, these messages were sent without any explanation. These images and the videos that circulate silently among sailors represent a shared understanding—that being at sea meant subjecting oneself to danger, an uncertainty in excess of anything that can be controlled, tamed, or predicted. Despite communication technology, phone apps that can predict weather and wind-patterns, and even GPS, sailors would often tell me *lakdi ke jahaz ko darya mein kuch bhi ho sakta hai* (Anything can happen to a wooden vessel at sea). The types of danger, risk, or *jokham* (Kachchhi) could take many forms. There were, of course, the dangers they experienced at the hands of other humans—for example, being hijacked by pirates, arrested by authorities, or being stuck in a port during conflict—but these were human-made mishaps that could, ultimately, be managed. What they feared the most were the dangers of the sea: unpredictable storms, cyclones, and accidents such as fires.

These fears have been exacerbated with climate change. Sailors often discussed how weather patterns have become less predictable and more treacherous than in the past. *The monsoon now begins a month later than it once did*, they would tell me matter-of-factly. However, the worry was not so much a delayed but still predictable monsoon but the frequent occurrences of unpredictable cyclones and a more turbulent ocean. *The waves are much higher now, and winds stronger*, elderly sailors would remark. And indeed, with climate change, the Indian Ocean, the fastest warming ocean, has seen rising sea levels, an increasing frequency of tropical cyclones, and other adverse weather events.[1] How then do vahan sailors and their families grapple with increased danger and uncertainty at sea, every ghos racked by the possibility of disaster? What forms of protection are sought when life itself is always understood to be in danger, especially for those laboring at sea? What can these notions of life and death tell us about different dimensions of sovereignty?

Historians have underscored that laborers across South Asia and the Indian Ocean world have linked their work to religious practices, including Sufism (Chakrabarty 2000; Pandey 1996; Sevea 2020). For instance, Muslim artisans in colonial North India challenged their marginalization by asserting that their work was an expression of Islamic piety, consolidating their class, caste, and religious identity. This is central to an "artisan Islam" (Lanzillo 2024, 2), which has included the role of Sufi pirs (saints) as protectors of knowledge across generations. Similarly, as Edward Simpson (2006, 2008) has argued, Bhadala seafarers in Mandvi continue to configure their religious, class, and caste identity by linking their labor practices to Islam, their relationship to Sufi saints determined by social context. While Simpson's work focuses on religious practices in shipyards and processes of

reform in Mandvi, sailors out at sea view their lives and labor as shaped through religious practices on board the dhow itself, the dhow at sea moored to land through the Sufi shrine. This mooring gestured to multiple scales and dimensions of sovereignty across land and sea.

This chapter examines how notions of divine sovereignty undergird labor at sea. I focus on moments of danger at sea as an entry point to examine how those who risk their lives laboring at sea understand life, death, and sovereignty. I argue that they manage danger at sea not through secularized financial notions of risk management and insurance but through Sufi Islamic ideas of divine sovereignty and the "unity of life" according to which life and death are seen as open-ended. In articulating a different vision of life and death, seafarers also link mobile dhows at sea to a constellation of Sufi shrines on land, especially those in their homeports in Kachchh. The Sufi shrine on land and its material life at sea become a portal through which one can examine ideas of divine sovereignty. The Sufi shrine on land becomes a spiritual, political, and economic mooring for those at sea, as well as for their kin who remain home. Divine sovereignty undergirds the laboring life of the seafarer, shaping class, caste, and religious identity on board the dhow, and back at home. These religious practices are grounded in Islamic pasts and enable voyages of capital in the present.

Seafarers from Kachchh historically negotiated danger at sea in multiple ways including through astrology, kinship relations, and by drawing upon Sufi sacred geographies. Not unlike dhow sailors of the past, in the face of natural hazards at sea, sailors today seek protection from saints and God. This reverence of saints who act as mediators between humans and God evoke past histories of travel by sea and offer an entry point into thinking through registers of divine sovereignty that make continued mobility across the Indian Ocean possible. These dimensions of divine sovereignty are imbricated with the making of state sovereignty in South Asia, but they also exceed the sovereignty of the nation-state and offer a mooring for dhows voyaging at sea. While various financial instruments such as insurance have been used to manage risk and danger, for vahan sailors, these techniques of risk management are bound to fail, as they are unable to grasp the affective and religious dimensions of loss and danger at sea. Instead, risk and danger at sea are confronted through a faith rooted in the authority and sovereignty of God and through Sufi saints who act as other moorings of sovereignty that make this trade across the Indian Ocean possible.

RISK, DANGER, AND PROFIT AT SEA

A voyage, a ghos, is an adventure, marked by danger and yet opportunity. After all, profit-making entails taking a chance, and those willing to take greater risks are also the ones who stand to make the most profits (Dua 2019). Risk, danger, and profit-making are thus tied together, especially at sea. However, some dangers are

more manageable than others. For sailors on board a vahan, on a ghos, dangers are classified into two types: natural hazards that cannot be tamed by humans and dangers caused by the action of humankind, which are more manageable. Dangers caused by the action of humans such as war and conflict in ports, piracy, and even mishaps caused by human error are hazards over which humans have some agency and are considered more manageable. These risks are understood to be necessary for a voyage to be profitable. As Javed, a dhow owner from Mandvi once explained to me, "We go where there is risk. The greater the risk, the greater the profit." Indeed, vahans serviced ports in times of conflict, often in spaces where containerships could not or would not go, and thus the risk created by conflict offered opportunity and profitability for vahans.

For example, at the height of conflicts in Kismayu port in 2011, dhows that were plying routes between Dubai, Kismayu, and Mombasa saw great margins of profit. Vahan sailors managed precarity in port by not leaving the vessel at all; they would say, *We can hear gunshots on land, but at sea, all is peaceful*. Moreover, between 2007 and 2012, when piracy off the coast of Somalia was at its peak, dhow owners found that it was those very risky waters that held the possibility of profit. Although the Government of India issued a notice stating that vessels were not to cross into the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters to prevent hijackings by pirates, sailors and dhow owners insisted that it was precisely in those regions that vahans were in demand. *What can we do? We have no choice but to ply ports in these restricted areas, it's where the profit lies*, sailors and dhow owners would say. However, the risk of being hijacked by pirates, a common occurrence since dhows were often used as motherships (Dua 2019), was viewed as manageable. Dhow owners and sailors understood that even in the case of a hijacking or capture by pirates, during which sailors faced discomfort and the threat of violence, this danger could be negotiated and even averted. For one, many vessels plying along the Somali coast would include Somali supernumeraries on board. These protectors, or *wardiya*, would ensure the safety of the cargo and, in the case of an attempted hijacking, would appeal to the pirates' *diya* or clan group and in general act as translators. In other cases, sailors realized that they would be released by the pirates once they had achieved the pirates' goal of transporting them to larger vessels, the risk of piracy temporary and not necessarily life threatening.

Given these ways of managing the risk at the hands of other humans, piracy and conflict were not what sailors feared the most. Rather, they feared natural hazards at sea: fires, storms, and squalls. In this respect, they were not that different from sailors of yore. Writing about the early modern Indian Ocean, Michael Pearson (2012) argues that piracy was a mere "pin prick" in the costs of maritime trade as natural hazards and human incompetence were bigger threats. Kachchhi seafarers have historically attempted to mitigate these natural hazards and uncertainties in multiple ways—some of which are recorded in sailors' manuals, or *maalim ni pothi*, transliterated and published by the National Museums of India (Rajeshirke 2014).

These *maalim ni pothi* written by Kachchhi seafarers are dated between 1655 and 1900 CE. Some of the later ones are daily logs in a form like European sailors' logs and speak of weather conditions, travel distance, and time taken to voyage across Indian Ocean ports.[2] However, the earliest pothi, or manuals—dated from about 1655 CE—take a rather different form. These pothi are more instructional manuals that focus on navigation techniques, astrology, and strategies for mitigating uncertainty. This is not surprising if one considers that navigational methods in the Indian Ocean emerged from the concurrent development of astronomy and astrology, sailors following the movement of the stars for navigational and astrological purposes. Astrology, however, was also a way to predict danger and calculate risk. Astrology, after all, is nothing if not speculation in the face of uncertainty and prescriptive of how to mitigate it. Chhaya Goswami has summarized much of these pothi and the significance of their astrological charts (Goswami n.d.).

Goswami shows that the pothi indicate that even before beginning a voyage, forecasts of the success of the voyage were made based on prevailing constellations and their impact. These forecasts were made using hybrid Indo-Arab astrological methods, including the use of the Hindu *Panchang* almanac, which was consulted before making big decisions such as undertaking new business ventures and voyages and to predict the weather. Astrology and astronomy thus played a key role in navigation. Tools of navigation, especially those that relied on reading a changing seascape, were also used to predict and guide the fortune of a ghos. For example, mid-voyage, the sighting of snake-shaped fish known as *mareja* was used to navigate. Other natural formations such as sea-foam and cloud formations were also markers used in navigation. More unconventional navigational aids included the use of tame birds, as well as sightings of birds on deck. The sighting of birds on deck indicated good or bad omens; birds were even domesticated and brought on board, their chirping (*kaak-vani*) used to predict fortunes and mitigate uncertainty. For instance, the sounds of birds such as the duck could be interpreted as *Gau chhe te haath laagse chata ma karis* (Whatever is lost will be recovered so do not worry) or *kharid m karis labh nathi jiaan thase te mate m kari* (Do not make any purchase, it is not profitable and it is harmful, so do not do it) (Goswami n.d.). A peacock's sounds could indicate *Khadthi va chhe pan utavale m thais* (the trip is beneficial but do not haste) or even *vepar karje e vepare labh gano hase chapi karje* (do business and the trading will be highly profitable, but do it carefully) (Goswami n.d.).

Despite all these ways in which futures could be speculated about and dangers averted, contingency remained. The pothi have refrains such as *sahi sacho dhani a surv jane che, bija badha bhama che*, "the master of the universe knows everything, and all others are ignorant," and *sahi sacho ek khuda che*, "Only God is Right, and all knowing," (Goswami n.d.) indicating that even these methods of managing danger are subject to God's will. Premodern and early modern Kachchhi conceptions of risk and danger thus relied on notions of fate and God's will, even though

methods of navigation and forecasting sought to reduce harm. Risk and danger, understood as *jokham*, were not disentangled from each other.

DANGER, RISK, AND INSURANCE

Anthropologists have argued that risk is culturally constructed in both seemingly "modern" societies as well as those once labelled "primitive."[3] Despite this intervention, risk has taken on a cultural meaning of its own, especially in secular understandings of the financialization of risk. Danger and risk have now been disentangled from each other; uncertainty and danger have come to be understood as immeasurable and risk as calculable, profit being contingent upon undertaking both uncertainty and risk.[4] However, risk has been separated from danger and has now come to mean "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself" (Beck 1992, 21). In this conception, modernity has given rise to a risk society whereby the production of wealth is inevitably linked to the production of risk and humankind is no longer at the mercy of God's will and nature (Bernstein 1996; Giddens 1999). Against this background, studies of risk have focused on how groups understand and intervene in the threat against loss (Castel 1991; Levy 2000; O'Malley 1996). While this disentangling of risk from danger is useful in thinking through the increased financialization of risk and its "productive life" in finance (Zaloom 2004), for the Muslim seafarers of Kachchh, fate and a moral order grounded in faith continue to be important. For them, the disentanglement of risk from danger is unnecessary and naturalizes the financialization of risk, itself a product of other historical contexts. This disenchantment of risk can perhaps be made clear by focusing on a key instrument of risk management: insurance.

Risk management technologies such as insurance, which has maritime origins, have been central to controlling calculable risk.[5] As Francois Ewald (1991) has argued, the concept of risk merges with chance, hazard, and probability as well as ideas of loss and damage such that through insurance, every hazard appears to be an accident. In Europe, the development of insurance led to a reconfiguring of the relationship between humankind, God, and nature. Individuals and humankind became responsible for insuring against accidents, instead of viewing them as a consequence of fate, nature, and the will of God (Ceccarelli 2001).[6] However, in the Indian Ocean, forms of insurance developed in accordance with religious principles, and for dhow sailors and merchants, it did not alter the relationship between humans and God but, instead, worked according to principles of sharia and continued to underline the importance of God's will.

Forms of risk-pooling and insurance in the Indian Ocean dating at least to the tenth century were grounded in Islamic principles of finance and forms of social insurance that sought to hold together God's will and sharia. These took the form of *musharakah* and *mudarabah* or risk- and profit-sharing partnerships for

cargoes (Dua 2019). In Kachchh, other forms of insurance and financial instruments to protect against risk at sea (*dariyai vima*) have been traced to at least the seventeenth century. As Chhaya Goswami (2016) shows, ships and cargoes were insured separately, insurance contracts becoming part of elaborate systems of credit, which were bought and sold in the bazaar much like today's insurance policies. These contracts included insurance for the ships, but only for the hull, resembling the ancient Greek practice of bottomry. Nevertheless, despite these tools to mitigate financial losses at sea, forms of insurance were based on Islamic principles that highlighted God's will and did not separate financial transactions and risk from religiosity.

Even today, most dhow owners, Hindu and Muslim, use *takaful*, "cooperative," forms of risk and profit sharing to build and operate vessels. These are elaborate partnerships that distribute risk across partners, whether they are from the same *atak* (lineage) or are Hindu and Muslim. Dhows are owned in "partnerships," *musharakah*, to reduce the risk of investing all of one's capital in one vessel. Cargoes, too, are insured and transported by different merchants on different vessels. In addition, from 2014 onward, the Indian government made it compulsory for all Indian registered mechanized sailing vessels to insure the hull and machinery aboard. While dhow owners initially viewed this as an unnecessary expense, this regulation was lifted by 2023, as insurance companies refused to insure dhows given the large numbers of claims filed by dhow owners.

Yet from the perspective of khalasis who are employed as contract labor on these vessels, the insurance of cargoes or of the vessel itself is completely insignificant. For them, it is life and death itself that matters, financial insurance being unable to safeguard against contingency and danger. Life insurance, too, was ineffectual, and in fact, completely unnecessary. Life insurance as we know it today developed from a history of slaves-as-cargo in an Atlantic context. It became institutionalized in eighteenth century Britain and then the US, in an attempt to capture the surplus value of labor (Ralph 2012) via the vested interest in the body of the worker. Scholars have argued that life insurance cannot account for passion, affect, or that which is in "excess of life" (Lobo-Guerrero 2014) and instead renders life itself as commodifiable. Still, compensation "can never pay back what is conceived as lost, because compensation itself relies on the mystification that life can be monetized" (Patel 2017, 315).

In the Indian Ocean, historically there was no custom of insuring lives lost at sea. Provisions for life insurance did not exist until about 2015, when the government of India made life insurance for each crew member compulsory—but this stipulation was also lifted by 2023. However, dhow owners believed that life insurance was unnecessary and simply increased costs for running a vessel. Even sailors and their families were not comforted by life insurance. They believed that life insurance was inadequate not only because the claim amounts were too small but also because insurance did not deal with the affective dimensions of loss—life simply

being commodified for small sums of money. Instead, the relationship with the patron or dhow owner acted as a form of social insurance for seafaring families.

Seafaring crew members and their families were embedded in relationships of patronage and debt bondage, with dhow sailors working with the same owner for many years (see chapter 5). In the case of sailors lost at sea, their kin believed that the owner would compensate family in some way and continue to provide work for other male members of the family—who in turn would work off past debts and incur new ones. Another way of mitigating the risk taken by a seafaring family was by distributing uncertainty within the family—typically no two male members would work on the same vahan in case the vessel met with an accident, or one male member of the family would not go out to sea to ensure that there was always a bread-winner alive in the family.

Underscoring all this, however, was "God's will" and ideas of divine sovereignty, because in the end who lived and who died depended on God. These notions of divine sovereignty together with a sacred geography of Sufi shrines and historical narratives of Sufis who moved across the same sea not only provided comfort for sailors but also ultimately pointed to conceptions of sovereignty and life that are imbricated with and yet operate on a different dimension than secularized ideas of nation-state sovereignty. Much of this becomes clear if one looks closely at Sufi sacred geographies across Kachchh and Kathiawar, the oral histories of saintly miracles (*karamat*), and quotidian practices aboard vessels, especially in moments when human agency is limited.

DIVINITY AMPLIFIED, AT SEA AND ON LAND

A ghos, while subject to danger and risk, can also be monotonous. In calm weather, a sailor's life at sea is exceedingly dull. The day is broken up into six-hour shifts. The crew works in different parts of the vessel and the sounds of waves, gusts of wind, and the drone of diesel engines all turn into an indecipherable roar on board. It is also incredibly lonely—sailors would only see other crew members at mealtimes, and even then, what was there to say? Ali, a young khalasi from Jam Salaya who worked with Kasim, anticipated the boredom of calm days at sea, even before setting off on a voyage. When I met him and Kasim for the first time in August 2017, they were waiting to begin their season of sail at the port of Mundra in Kachchh. At the time, little did any of us know that the season would end with a disaster at sea. Instead, Ali was dreading the drudgery of life on board, "We get tired of looking at each other's faces!" He nodded toward an unsmiling Kasim and said, "Look at his face! Can you imagine staring at that for months on end?!" He laughed and added, "Even if we had something to say, we'd have to yell to be heard," the sound of engines whirring, waves crashing, and the wind blowing often drowning out even necessary conversations. The humdrum and drone of everyday life on a vahan is quite different from any romantic notions we may have of life at sea. And so,

sailors tried to keep themselves entertained, turning on music in the cabin as they steered the ship's wheel, taking videos of their voyage on their phones, and texting loved ones at home as soon as they had cellphone network. Yet these videos also served another purpose.

Ali often spent his time at sea making videos and images of life at sea. "I get bored at sea; the work can be repetitive, and there is nothing to do during the little free time we get," he told me. He then whipped out his phone and showed me one of his videos. He had filmed a dhow that they were moving in convoy with as the "*fannaa* [bow] was dancing with the waves." However rather than the drone of the dhow, he had overlaid the video with a song that began with a *kalima* (Islamic phrase or prayer) and was followed by a *dua* (Islamic invocation) in Urdu. "What is this *gaana* [song]?" I asked, struck by the music. He looked at me and rolled his eyes disdainfully at this unbeliever. "It's not just a *gaana*—it's a *naat* [recitation praising Allah]." The naat praised God, but also asked for God's protection. In the video, as the dhow dances through the waves, a line of the naat states, *Ya illahi har jagah teri ataa ka saath ho; jab pare mushkil sha'e, mushkil kusha ka saath ho* (God, your benevolence is everywhere, and in the face of difficulties, may the divine, The Conqueror of all Difficulties, be with us).[7] The naat, and Ali's use of it in this video, implied that he was imploring an omnipresent God for protection at sea and also marking himself as a pious laborer. Protection of saints and God was sought not only through devotional practices such as pilgrimage and prayer but also through the production of these videos on board the dhow, where the power of the divine was amplified by new technologies of communication—videos, WhatsApp messages, and recorded songs.

Improved technologies of navigation and even weather apps have not superseded notions of divine will. Although dhow sailors today rely on GPS, radio, and weather forecasts on phone apps such as Windy.com to navigate and to plan voyages, these technological shifts have not replaced enchantment, the importance of miracles, or the protection of Sufi saints as "sanctifiers of travel itineraries" (Green 2003, 203). Sailors such as Kasim and Ali would often tell me, "Hum Allah ki rehem se chalte hain" (We go by the grace of God). Indeed, in moments of distress at sea, Kachchhi sailors would turn to the Sufi saint Abdul Qadir Gilani (also known as Ghous Pak), the founder of the Qadriyya Sufi order, who was born in Persia and buried in Baghdad.[8] Abdul, a dhow owner from Jam Salaya once said to me, "When my crew face difficulties at sea, they turn to Ghous Pak! The invocation of his name in times of crisis and his flag keeps the vessel safe." Even in the face of technological shifts and changes, the intervention of the divine and the protection of saints was central to ensuring safety at sea, with new forms of technology used to intensify and exhibit the power of saints on board the vahan.

While industrialization has often been linked to rationalization and the disenchantment of religion, historian Nile Green (2011) has argued that industrial technologies were also used in more customary ways, the power of miracles triumphing

even over mechanical agency. Industrialization thus did not lessen the importance of miracles and religious belief; instead the latter took new forms. They were carried in and on industrial mechanisms, enchanting new maritime technologies. As Green argues, industrial shifts in the nineteenth century made sea travel more available to Indian Muslims and intensified the "demand for miraculous protection on the ocean" (Green 2011, 109), especially as sea travel (even on steamships) continued to be dangerous. This remains true for vahans today.

It is this supernatural insurance that guides sailors and their families rather than any financial notion of insurance or risk, which cannot account for the lives and deaths of these subaltern laborers at sea. Sufis are pivotal interlocutors between dhow sailors and an increasingly unpredictable sea. Saints are spectral presences on board vessels, sailors looking to them for protection at sea, even as they become patrons of Sufi shrines on land. While financial instruments like insurance seek to mitigate risk at sea, for dhow sailors it is only the saints who can intervene in matters of life and death. The dhow as an object that's constantly on the move is thus dependent on the Sufi shrine as a mooring, an object that does not move but makes mobility possible. This imbrication has had economic consequences, both in the past and in the present.

Across the Indian Ocean, seafarers have turned to Sufi saints for protection from the hazards of the sea. Most famously, Ibn Battuta recorded a custom whereby dhow sailors and merchants would pledge an amount to the Sufi saint Abū Isḥāq al-Kāzarūnī of Khurasan (died 1033 CE) for safe passage to India and China (Prange 2018, 253). In exchange for a successful voyage free of pirates and perils of the sea, upon arriving at their destination, they would pay the promised amount to agents of the Kāzarūniyya order. These agents were scattered across the Indian Ocean, forming a religious and commercial network like other Sufi orders that made up a distinctive Indian Ocean "monsoon Islam" (Prange 2018, 3), with trade and faith traveling along the same routes. While this form of spiritual insurance has been dismissed as "baraka-exploitation" (Trimingham 1998, 236), it in fact points at a notion of divine sovereignty that undergirds these forms of ritual and commercial practice even today.

Sufi shrines at home and dhows at sea are bound together through networks of patronage. Dhow owners, who often do not go out to sea, seek the protection and patronage of these saints for their investments at sea, and in turn, they become patrons of both sailors and shrines. For example, dhow owners, especially in Jam Salaya, donate large sums of money, funding the repairs and reconstruction of dargahs or paying for public events and festivities during Muharrum and Eid. A good dhow owner, a "good patron," was one who was able to "give well"—not only to the sailors who worked for him but also to local shrines—his fortunes dependent on the blessings or *barakat* of the saints and God. Wage-laboring khalasis also gave regularly to dargahs. Before departures from Kachchh and upon arriving, sailors would make pilgrimages to shrines in different parts of Kachchh and beyond,

making donations in these shrines. Every year, the Bhadala and Wagher jamaats in Jam Salaya and Mandvi would also collect set sums of money from seafarers and their households, which would be used for celebrations and rituals in local Sufi shrines. These collections for dargahs and the dargahs themselves were central to community identity. After all, towns like Jam Salaya were founded on the blessings and miracles performed by Sufi saints.

"Salaya is protected on all sides by dargahs," say its residents, for whom the boundaries of the town are marked by Sufi shrines. The dargah of Masum Shah and Hasim Shah sit on the northern edges of town and that of Mahmud Shah and Ghulab Shah on the western edges. Dargah Ghulam Husain Sirazi Kitliwale and Shah Mushafir Dargah are on the east. Many of these Sufis are known to have been from elsewhere—Iraq, Persia, Bukhara. While their exact origins might be unknown, their devotees remember that most of them had arrived here on sailing vessels, earlier models of the vahans that continue to be built in these parts. This narrative is also part of an understanding that Salaya had always been oriented outward, and in fact, its settlement was made possible through the blessings of a saint from elsewhere.

According to local legend, when the town's earliest residents, a group of Bhadala seafarers from Kachchh, settled there, they found that every year their homes would drift off to sea, floods turning land into water. It was only when the patron saint of the village, a Sufi known as Masum Shah, arrived in Salaya (on a vahan, as residents say) that their houses stopped floating out to sea. As the story goes, Masum Shah, with the powers bestowed on him by Allah, heard of the villagers' troubles with floods during the monsoon and used his divine powers to clearly mark land from sea so that houses were no longer swept away with the changing of the seasons. A large white shrine on Salaya's western shore now marks Masum Shah's presence; it is not only the most important local shrine and landmark but also a boundary between land and sea for its inhabitants. The town itself was thus born from a miracle performed by a Sufi saint who now lies buried on the same land that he recovered from salt water.

The power of Sufi leaders such as Masum Shah is exhibited by their ability to perform miracles, or karamat, that defy natural order. As Annemarie Schimmel (drawing upon the Hadith Qudsi) notes, "It is through the blessings of saints that rain falls from heaven; on the places touched by their sacred feet plants spring up, and thanks to their help the Muslims will gain victory over the unbelievers" (1975, 203). The ability to perform such miracles depends on the Sufi's intimacy with God. *Wali*, the term used for Sufi saints, denotes not just a friend of God, implying closeness or intimacy, but also intercessor, protector, or guardian. The wali is a protégé of God, an intermediary between God and his followers, becoming a patron for those below him and interceding on behalf of his clients before God (Cornell 1998). It follows that vahan sailors turn to Sufis for their intercession, these intermediaries making appeals to divine authority on behalf of their

clients.[9] One such saint is Daryapir, the saint of the sea, who Kachchhi sailors revere throughout the year, especially during the start of the sailing season.

IN ABEYANCE AT SEA, BUOYED BY FAITH

> *He it is Who enables you to journey through the land and the sea. And so it happens that when you have boarded the ships and they set sail with a favorable wind, and the passengers rejoice at the pleasant voyage, then suddenly a fierce gale appears, and wave upon wave surges upon them from every side, and people believe that they are surrounded from all directions, and all of them cry out to Allah in full sincerity of faith: "If You deliver us from this we shall surely be thankful."*
>
> *But when He saves them, at once they commit injustice upon the earth without right. O mankind, your injustice is only against yourselves, [being merely] the enjoyment of worldly life. Then to Us is your return, and We will inform you of what you used to do.*
>
> —KORAN 10:22–23

Upon his return to India after Cyclone Mekunu, Kasim rushed to the shrine of Masum Shah, in Jam Salaya, to thank the saint and God for bringing him home safely. His devotion did not end there. Perhaps drawing on the passage from the Koran above, Kasim understood that he could not turn to God only in his time of need but would have to be steadfast in his faith. Kasim's faith was expressed daily, but especially on occasions such as Nava Naroj, New Year's Day, which marked the beginning of the sailing season. While Kasim was always a fixture in ceremonies for Nava Naroj, in 2018, after his harrowing experience at sea, he played a more prominent role.

Nava Naroj is supposed to mark the end of the monsoon and the beginning of a new sailing season, and typically takes place sometime in mid-July or August. Based on a solar year, the calendar marks not only a new year for seafarers but also a new accounting year for Gujarati merchants across the Indian Ocean (see chapter 5). While its origins are unknown, for seafaring communities in Kachchh, Nava Naroj is a day when the Lord of the Sea, or "the god that disappeared" (E. Simpson 2006, 112), is venerated—by Muslims as Daryapir and by Hindus in India and Pakistan as Dariyalal, Uderolal, or Jhulelal (Boivin and Rajpal 2017). Daryapir is a contested figure. In Sindh, he is often believed to have emerged from syncretic traditions and was once associated with the waters of the Indus. In some traditions, he is the prototype of the wali and is believed to be the figure of Khizr or Khidr who was the companion of Moses and the guide of wayfarers in the Koran (Schimmel 1975, 105). He is also revered by Hindus in Gujarat, especially by mercantile and seafaring communities such as Lohanas, Bhatias, and Kharvas by whom he has been Sanskritized and "reinvented as a defender of Hinduism against Muslim predation" (E. Simpson 2006, 115).

FIGURE 15. Nava Naroj procession. Jam Salaya, 2018. Photo by author.

In Mandvi, Daryapir and Nava Naroj celebrations have a become a flash point of religious tensions (E. Simpson 2006). But Dariyapir continues to be widely venerated in Jam Salaya, which has a small Hindu population and has kept both right-wing Hindus and reformist Muslims at bay and has not seen widespread religious violence. For Bhadala and Wagher seafarers in Jam Salaya, Dariyapir was understood to be a continually living saint (*zinda pir*), the guardian of the sea, as was Khizr from the Koran. Khizr is said to be immortal and is associated with maritime crossings by Muslims.[10] It is to him that Muslim Bhadala and Wagher and Hindu Kharva seafarers turn, not only in times of distress but also in rituals such as Nava Naroj.

Every Nava Naroj, Bhadalas, Waghers, and Kharvas in Jam Salaya pay homage to Daryapir. The ceremony begins in the graveyard, where prayers are said; a green flag marking Daryapir's authority is unfurled; and offerings of coconuts, rotis, sugar, and fish are made to Daryapir. The procession then moves through the town. As sailors and their families carry his flag, drums beat and the smell of *loban* (frankincense) fills the air. Daryapir is evoked in the streets of Jam Salaya, his blessings spreading through the town, reminding its residents of the power of Daryapir to keep those at sea safe. The procession ends at the shrine of Masum Shah, where Hindu Kharvas from across Kathiawar sit in one section and Muslims, both Bhadala and Wagher, from Jam Salaya fill the dargah and the space outside it. An imam then reads from the Koran and blesses the congregation.

In 2018, after his brush with death, Kasim led the procession through the streets and sat right by the imam during the sermon. In his sermon and prayers, the imam

specified, "People like this man here [Kasim] have been saved by Allah's grace. We hope for His benevolence. You who go out to sea, and brave innumerable dangers, may God always be with you." Kasim looked solemn as he finished his prayers and returned home. This Nava Naroj was especially important for him—much could have been lost, and yet, here he was, still alive.

On Nava Naroj, sailors thus pay homage to Daryapir, seeking his patronage and protection. It is also a day on which construction begins on new vessels. Dhow owners invite the imam of the mosque or shaykhs attached to shrines like Masum Shah to the shipyard to inaugurate and bless new vessels by hammering in the first nail on a new ship. As patrons of shrines, and clients of Sufis, they seek the protection of God, a series of patronage relationships coming to the fore including that between women and men, clients and Sufis, and God. These relationships between living and non-living beings materializes in the form of a material object—a flag that is placed on the bow of the vessel, not by men but by girls. On Nava Naroj, the younger female children of every dhow owning family are brought to the jetty. This is an unusual day for these girls. On every other day of the year, they are told to stay away from the shipyards and are scolded if they follow their brothers and male kin who regularly rush to the creek to play, swim, and splash around in the cool waters of the creek. But Nava Naroj is not like any other day.

On Nava Naroj 2018, Zahra and Zeenat, the daughters of Akeel, a vessel owner, woke up excited. "We get to go to the vahan today, and you get to come with us!" Zahra said to me excitedly. We got dressed and made our way to the shipyard. As we sat on a rowboat to approach the dhow anchored some distance from the shore, Zainab and Zeenat suddenly grew quiet. Their father gently rowed, as Zahra stared at the plastic bag on her lap, while Zeenat kept adjusting her dupatta, which was noisily flapping in the breeze. As we hauled ourselves onto the vessel, Akeel quietly gave them both instructions. We walked to the bow of the vessel and said a prayer, reading the *fatiha*, the opening passages of the Koran.

Zahra and Zeenat poured milk over the bow, cleansing and blessing the part of the ship that leads the way through a voyage. They wrapped some fish and sugar into two rotis and flung them into the sea: offerings for Daryapir. Then, the bow was showered with rose petals and a garland of marigolds was hung over it. Finally, Akeel took out a green flag that had been blessed by the imam who gave the sermon that morning at Masum Shah and helped his daughters hoist it onto a pole near the bow, marking the blessings of God, Daryapir, and Masum Shah. While no female kin past the age of puberty were allowed on the vessel, on Nava Naroj the presence of girls was not only seen as auspicious but also marked a series of patronage relations—between men and their female kin and between living seafarers, Sufi saints, and God—these relationships made tangible in the material object, the flag that was placed on the bow of the vessel. The green flag that marked these relationships of patronage was what Anna Bigelow has called an "Islamic object," something emplaced to "facilitate or inhibit transactions between religious actors

and their conceptions of the divine" (2021, 12). These flags not only protected against danger but also signified a notion of divine sovereignty mediated through the Sufi saint. In moments of crisis, sailors would use these flags to call upon the saints to intercede on their behalf.[11]

FLAGS OF NO NATION

Irfan, a nakhwa, knew he had done all he could in the face of the cyclone that was approaching. As of May 25, 2018, he had anchored the wooden vessel at the jetty in Salalah in Oman for over week, closely following weather reports that indicated a storm was approaching. Only two days earlier, they had heard of the destruction Cyclone Mekunu had caused in Socotra, and they were growing anxious as the cyclone was now heading their way, gathering strength. They had off-loaded all cargo for safekeeping and to prevent the vessel from capsizing. The vahan was securely anchored, all crew members on board. As the storm approached, the sky began to churn, winds moving clockwise with speeds as high as 185 km/h. Safely on board the vessel, Irfan took out a small green flag and tied it to a banister near the cabin, chanting along with the entire crew, "Ya Ghous," calling for the protection of the Sufi saint, Abdul Kadir Gilani. The flag they unfurled called upon another Sufi saint for protection: Shah Murad Bukhari, now buried in Mundra, Kachchh, not far from where the sailors call home. The green fabric of the flag was cut from a *chadar* (sheet) that had once covered the tomb of Shah Murad Bukhari, also known as the "the Second Saint of the Sea," and patron saint of seafarers from western India. The flag carried the blessings of the saint and marked his sovereignty at sea on board the vahan.

When the storm abated, Irfan and his crew found themselves safe, even as seven other Kachchhi vahans sank in the waters that lay beyond Salalah port. Once the sea was calm again, Irfan and his crew continued their ghos, transporting second-hand cars from Sharjah to Nishtoon in Yemen. Upon completing the voyage back to Sharjah, Irfan returned to Jam Salaya and made a pilgrimage to the dargah of Shah Murad Bukhari to thank him for keeping him and his crew safe during their voyage. For Irfan and his crew, the tying of the flag in a moment of danger, when human "agency is in abeyance" (Miyazaki 2000), marked their faith and the potential for its fulfillment, Sufi saints making possible the safe movement of dhows. The recollection of this moment by Irfan recalled for me not a functionalist notion of religion but instead a moment in which the divine sovereignty of saints and God became ethnographically accessible (Miyazaki 2000), the flag opening a series of questions about sovereignty and the relationship to the divine.

The importance of Sufi saints is visible to anyone on board a vahan, or even looking at a vahan from afar. In any dhow port, one immediately notices that all vahans, like any other ship, have flags. Indeed, scholars have emphasized practices of flagging on ships, with a particular concern for flags of convenience (Khalili

FIGURE 16. Flag from Shah Murad Bukhari's dargah on the bow of a vahan. Mandvi, 2017. Photo by author.

2020; J. Mathew 2016). Yet these works are overwhelmingly concerned with the flags of states. Like other vessels, vahans fly flags of the country they are registered in and the country whose waters or port they are in at the time. But vahans also have a different kind of flag, a flag that is placed prior to the flag of any nation state. This is the flag of a patron Sufi saint placed on vessels during the ritual of Nava Naroj. Often, this flag not only goes where the other flags go, visible to patrollers on top of the cabin, but also on the bow of the vessel—in the direct line of view of the ship's steerer, as if to say, "lead the way." These flags are most often from local Sufi shrines. But sometimes they come from further afield: from shrines that are part of a broader Sufi sacred geography, including Haji Ali in Bombay and Ajmer Sharif, the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti, a Sufi saint from the thirteenth

century who travelled to India from Persia and established the Chishti order. Practices of flagging extend beyond the flags of states and in fact underscore a form of divine sovereignty.

The first flag to go on a vessel is always a flag from a dargah of a Sufi saint. This flag is constant. While the nation-state flag of a ship keeps changing based on location and registration of the vessel, the flag of the Sufi saint is a constant protection. It is a light that leads the way, insuring mobile sailors against the dangers of being at sea. After all, for them, it is God who decides who should live and who should die. It is the green flag that guides sailors confronting danger at sea, comforting not only those at sea but also their loved ones at home. Shrines of Sufi saints in India become local moorings, spaces in which these saints can be called upon to protect vessels at sea. While a green flag atop a dhow at sea marks the saint's blessing, the donations given and pilgrimages to shrines taken by sailors before a voyage—and by their loved ones during a voyage—keeps the vessel in the saint's sphere of influence, especially in moments of danger. It is in one such moment that Irfan unfurled the flag of Shah Murad Bukhari, seeking his intercession.

However, at the same time, this moment also marked a "threshold of life" (Singh 2015) and resuscitated a notion of sovereignty and an older form of authority. In a moment of crisis, the green flag marked the authority and sovereignty of Shah Murad Bukhari, the Sufi saint who, as an intermediary of divine sovereignty, would decide "whether to let live or die" (Foucault 2003). After all, the term for Sufi saints, *wali*, implies not only a closeness to God (*walaya*) but also, as the cognate *wilaya* suggests, "sovereignty," "sanctity," or "authority"—sovereignty rooted not in the nation-state but in a notion of divine sovereignty mediated by Sufi saints (Jacob 2019). This sovereignty is also territorially grounded, since *wilayat* are spaces in a Sufi's sphere of influence. The flag that is placed on a dhow marks the wilayat of a Sufi saint and, at the same time, marks the seagoing vessel's relationship to the shrine of the Sufi affixed to land. Matters of life and death lie at the center of these ideas of divine sovereignty when seafarers turn to Sufi saints as they face natural hazards at sea. Yet this intermediary role was not limited to matters of faith; it also applied to more earthly concerns.

Take, for example, the case of Shah Murad Bukhari, who is associated with miraculous protection not only at sea but also on land. Shah Murad Bukhari is the patron saint of Kachchhi vahan sailors and fishermen of Kharva, Bhadala, and Wagher origin. He arrived in Mundra—an old port city and now home to one of the only ports from which Indian dhows can go out to sea—from Bukhara in around 1660 CE (Goswami 2015). It is said that during the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar, Shah Murad Bukhari was sent to negotiate tax payments from the Rao of Kachchh to the Mughals. Even as the Mughal collector was sleeping, he had a dream in which his bed drifted out to sea and that he was dangerously floating in the middle of it. In the dream, Shah Bukhari came to save him. The next day, the tax collector woke up and decided to waive the taxes for the region, indebted to the miracle that Shah Bukhari had performed. After the saint's passing, women,

FIGURE 17. Tomb of Shah Murad Bukhari. Mundra, 2018. Photo by author.

men, and children travelled to this shrine, worried about the safety of those at sea. They would enter the "Window to the Sea" and Shah Bukhari, the Saint of the Sea, would let them know if their loved ones were safe. The window is now boarded up, the saint no longer serving this function, as WhatsApp carries messages across the sea. Yet Shah Bukhari is still invoked to protect seafarers and their families. This protection is marked not only by intercession in moments of danger at sea but also through his ability to wave away tax-collecting imperial hands, implying that he had authority comparable to any emperor. These days, models of vahans are left at the shrine, as offerings to the saint, a plea for protection. His ability to perform miracles at sea and intercede between rulers and ruled made him an authority figure in his own right, not unlike other Sufi leaders, including the Bukhari shaykhs who came before him.

As Simon Digby (1990) has argued, Sufi shaykhs were nominators of sovereignty, especially during political transitions. For instance, in the fifteenth century, Shah Alam of Sarkhej, a descendant of Jalal-al-Din, or "Makhdum-i Jahaniyan," who was a prominent Sufi during Feroz Shah Tughlaq's reign, played a key role in the installation of Mahmud Begarha as the Sultan of Gujarat. Mahmud Begarha was the nephew and stepson of this shaykh. In 1554, king Ahmad III was led up to the throne by Sayyid Mubarak Bukhari, the descendant of Makhdum-i Jahaniyan (Digby 1990).

The Bukhari shaykhs were key actors in the religious and political realm in medieval Gujarat (Kapadia 2018; Sheikh 2010). They are depicted as such in accounts from the time, such as the Persian chronicle *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, as well as in oral histories in the present. As Jyoti Gulati Balachandran (2020) has argued, Sufi networks were central to the formation of the region. As she argues, they also helped form a Muslim community in fifteenth-century Gujarat; the Gujarat Sultans had a close relationship to Sufi masters and patronized their shrines such that state formation went alongside an expansion of Sufi networks. Elsewhere in medieval and early modern India and the Muslim world, Sufi shaykhs have been well documented as having authority that often overlapped with, sometimes paralleled, and at other times opposed that of kings (Eaton 1993).

SUFI SAINTS AND SOVEREIGNTY

A large body of scholarship on South Asia and beyond has emphasized the crucial role of Sufis as intermediaries of spiritual, political, and economic power.[12] Sufis held land, became crucial arbitrators in conflicts between different populations, and were also intermediaries between rulers and the ruled, even as they mediated between God and their followers. In precolonial South Asia, spiritual sovereignty paralleled and intersected with political sovereignty, the term *dargah* being used to mean not only "shrine" but also "royal court" (Eaton 2003, 274). This turned Sufis at some moments into intermediaries and even collaborators and at

other moments into seeming threats to imperial power. Muslim rulers such as the Mughal emperor Akbar even fashioned themselves as Sufi saints and holy saviors, this sacred form of kingship being used to express sovereignty (Moin 2012).[13] As Waleed Ziad (2021) argues regarding the Mujadeddi saint-scholars whose networks extended across Central and South Asia, these Sufis became mediators, brokers, and political intermediaries in an interregional arena of fragmented sovereignties. Ziad usefully draws on Sufi theology to argue that sovereignty and authority in the Muslim world across central and South Asia was split into the *zāhirī* (manifest) and the *bātinī* (hidden) caliphates. The hidden caliphate of Sufi networks maintained a transregional balance over multiple small states in the region (Ziad 2021, 3). While Ziad's analysis deals primarily with the period up to the twentieth century, he, like others, sees contemporary resonances in South Asia today.

For instance, in Pakistan, pirs and the institution of the dargah became crucial mediators between different state powers and local populations, the postcolonial state governing with and alongside saints (Ansari 1992; Kasmani 2022). Local pirs were representatives of God as well as a distant Muslim ruler, such that "government support of the shrines was one way of ensuring the legitimacy of the ruler among the population" (Ewing 1983, 256). As Anand Taneja has argued, in India as well, in the absence of a Muslim sovereign, the "intimate sovereignty" (2018, 4) of jinns and saints is seen as offering justice and care that reaches beyond the possibilities of postcolonial states.

The role of saints and deities across South Asia has led anthropologists and historians to move beyond secularized notions of sovereignty. Bhrigupati Singh (2012) has focused on the Hindu deity of Thakur Baba, revered in Central India, whom he characterizes as a minor sovereign to argue that anthropology needs a string theory of life that can move between different dimensions and thresholds (in the Deleuzian sense), ultimately opening up a pluralized sense of *theos*, and by extension, sovereignty. Through his analysis, the sovereignty of minor deities such as Thakur Baba emerges as bipolar; force and contract are transactions that occur at various thresholds of life (Singh 2012). While Singh's conception of life and sovereignty draws from Hindu conceptions of force and coercion (Varuna and Mitra), his suggestion that conceptions of life need to have a string theory and operate on different registers and dimensions is useful here for thinking through the multiple registers of sovereignty that govern ideas of life and death for dhow sailors.

These arguments about sovereignty and the role of saints or deities can be extended from land to sea. For Muslim Bhadala and Wagher sailors, the divine sovereignty of God and Sufi saints operate in another dimension or register where the power of the divine determines life and death, the Sufi shrine becoming a spiritual, political, and economic mooring on land for sailors out at sea. This is a sovereignty marked not only by nation-states but grounded in an older dimension of sovereignty that has underlined Indian Ocean mobility. As Wilson Chacko Jacob (2019) has argued, although notions of divine sovereignty began to

fall away in the nineteenth century as modern forms of absolute, indivisible sovereignty that bolstered claims of political authority across territories (now associated with nation-states) came into being, the splintering of political authority from the divine was never complete. Although figures such as pastors and sayyids were increasingly relegated to private domains, Sufis and saints were pivotal in the making of modern sovereignty; at the same time, they articulated a different form of sovereignty and life, which drew on Sufi Islamic traditions.

This is what Jacob calls "sayyid sovereignty" (2019, 21): God was understood to be the ultimate, exclusive sovereign, the sayyid being a "shepherd," a source of pastoral power. In doing so, he also outlines another notion of life itself that undergirds sayyid sovereignty. This vision of life is grounded in Ibn Arabi's concept of *wahdat al wujud*, the "unity of life" (2019, 8–9) in which the force of nonliving things (corpses, shrines, flags) is channeled into the living and vice versa. Life, here, is open, permanent, and perpetually unfolding; past, present, and future, the living and nonliving imploding unto each other. In this unity of life, the grave and the shrine are key sites for sovereignty and the visibility of this unity of life. It is at the grave (*qabr*), which becomes the dargah or shrine, that "life becomes death becomes life again" (Jacob 2019, 7).

Although Jacob's analysis focuses on the mid-eighteenth century through the nineteenth century, he suggests that this vision of life, and of sovereignty, continues to be salient even today, the shrines of Sufi saints and sayyids still being spaces in which these ideas bubble to the surface, as they do in karamat or miracles where this unity of life might be made present. While Jacob beautifully traces the histories of encounters between imperial sovereignty and sayyid sovereignty across the transregional arena of the Indian Ocean, his analysis is also useful for thinking through issues of labor and political economy. The "sayyid sovereignty" he refers to and the forms of divine sovereignty that emerge through the role of Sufis persist today and are relevant for thinking about ideas of life and labor at sea for dhow sailors.

For dhow sailors, the "unity of life" is made present in moments of danger at sea. Unlike insurance and financialized notions of risk that approach life in a commoditized, biopolitical sense, a turn to God and Sufis, an appeal to the pastoral power of the wali in moments of danger at sea, make visible a theory of life, death, and sovereignty that is grounded in the divine and the mystical. Sufi saints and God, who on land are invoked through pilgrimages, rituals, and donations, are also invoked at sea, materially through the flag and, in moments of danger, through worship. Here the Sufi as a sovereign accompanies sailors through multiple thresholds of life, which are understood through wahdat al wujud. This is especially necessary at sea, which is the literal Sufi *barzakh* or "isthmus between the oceans of this life and the next" (Jacob 2019, 9). In moments of danger at sea, the saint and God's protection are sought not only for the preservation of life but also in death and for the continued patronage of the saint for the loved ones a sailor may leave

behind—wives, daughters, sons, parents, and other kin. In moments of danger, the material concerns of a biopolitical life and the conception of the "unity of life" thus hang in abeyance, and it is in these moments that faith can be fulfilled (Miyazaki 2000) and one can glimpse the unity of life. The moment of danger at sea provides one such glimpse into this unity of life, marking a register of divine sovereignty that is made visible through a material object that symbolizes this unity of life—the flag and devotion to Sufi saints such as Shah Murad Bukhari. Yet this divine sovereignty does not operate only in the private spiritual realm.

Sufis also continue to be imbricated in the economic and political life of the dhow economy. This is visible by following the lineage of Shah Murad Bukhari himself. Shah Murad Bukhari has long passed and his shrine and his descendants have long acted as intermediaries not only between seafarers and God but also between seafarers and state authorities in matters of revenue collection. The shrine of Shah Murad Bukhari acted as a collector of tax (*chungi*) revenues under the ruler, the Rao of Kachchh, and even during British rule, farming customs through the dhow ports in Mundra and Mandvi. This was indeed a common practice in Kachchh, where Sufi shrines often collected revenues for princely states, as Farhana Ibrahim (2009) has shown in the case of Sankarwara Dargah. The state's relationship with its mobile citizen-subjects was mediated through pirs in the institutional context of the dargah, saints at dargahs acting as an "alternative axis of authority in the region" (Ibrahim 2009, 130). While the dargah could be coopted into the state through patronage relationships where rulers would establish land grants for such shrines, the dargah would act as revenue collector for rulers. In turn, the shrines were expected to bestow barakat, or blessings, in the form of grace and redistribute resources through the giving of food (*niyaaz*) on key religious holidays.

Although the official intermediary role that shrines played between sailors, traders, and the state came to an end in 1947, when India became an independent sovereign nation-state, the shrine and Shah Murad Bukhari's descendants continue to play a pivotal role in trade through ports such as Mundra.[14] The old port in Mundra is only one of two ports in India from whence dhows can travel out to sea, and the sole shipping agent and merchant who handles all cargo through the port of Mundra continues to be a descendent of Shah Murad Bukhari.

In a region of many sovereigns (such as the independent princely states of Kathiawar), multiple Sufis have played these intermediary roles and have become part of a constellation of wali who are still remembered for their spiritual, economic, and political authority, these being central to the making of community and even caste identity. Take, for example, the story of Mehboob Shah Motiwale, whose dargah lies in Jamnagar, about an hour and half from Jam Salaya. The dargah is an important site of pilgrimage for the seafarers of Jam Salaya, especially for Waghers. Ahmed, a seafarer, a *khalasi* who was at the shrine when I visited it in July 2018, described to me the miracle of the saint:

> Mehboob Shah Motiwale came here on a vahan, with two young children. As they were arriving here, the crew asked for his *bhada* [fee for passage]. Mehboob Shah couldn't pay it. He then threw the young children out of the vessel, much to the crew's surprise and consternation. But the children resurfaced! They brought with them many pearls. The crew happily accepted the pearls as payment and realized the power of the man on board. But that is not all. When he arrived in Jamnagar, he was summoned to the *darbargadh* [the palace] by the Jam Sahib. But the Jam Sahib had not sent any transportation for him! So Mehboob Shah broke off a wall and rode it right up to the palace gates, where the Jam Sahib fell at his feet. See that wall there? That is the wall that he turned into his carriage! Mehboob Shah is the one who brought all us Waghers to Islam.

Ahmed then pointed at the wall that stood in the middle of the dargah, the wall that Mehboob Shah Motiwale had ridden to the ruler's palace. The shrine of Mehboob Shah Motiwale is especially significant for Waghers all over this part of Kathiawar, as this Sufi is known to have brought Waghers into the fold of Islam. He is revered not only because of his religious leadership or the miracles he performed at sea, but also because he was able to bring the sovereign of Nawanagar, the Jam Sahib, to his knees. Indeed, other Sufis that seafaring Waghers revere have similarly been known to challenge political authorities.

Haji Kirmani is another such revered Sufi. His dargah lies on Beyt Dwarka, an island in the Gulf of Kachchh, its waters lapping the edges of the shrine. In June 2018, I took a trip to this dargah from Jam Salaya with Zainab, her son Ali, and friends Misriya and Meena (both daughters and wives of seafarers). When we arrived at the dargah, Zainab offered her prayers to the saint and then immediately rushed to a corner near the courtyard of the dargah. Lying in the corner was a cannonball. "You see this cannonball? This is Haji Kirmani's karamat!" Zainab then picked up the cannonball and lifted it high above her shoulders. "Heavy! But a true believer will always be able to lift it!" She said, and then dropped the ball on the floor with a big thud. "You know, when the British came here, they saw the walls of the dargah, here right by the sea and thought it was a fort. They began firing at it with their powerful cannons. But the magic of Haji Kirmani! None of the cannons burst into fire. They just landed here, beyond the walls, completely harmless. Even the British cannot defeat Kirmani!" Zainab smiled as she recounted this karamat. Haji Kirmani marked an anticolonial presence, as even the British, armed with guns and cannons, fell at the power of the saint. Political authorities—whether the Jam Sahib or the British—were no match for these saints who were intermediaries for the Divine.

These stories of miracles performed by Sufi saints, such as Shah Bukhari and other Sufis who arrived in Gujarat, work for sailors on multiple levels: The body of the saint from elsewhere evoked "absent geographies" (Green 2003), the movement of these Sufis providing historical precedent for sailors themselves, who would tell me "Sufis like Shah Murad Bukhari arrived here safely on a vahan, using only sails.

If they can do it, so can we, with their protection." The saints thus not only sanctified travel but, through their corporeal presence in local sites, became prototypes for sailors on the move (Green 2003).

After all, if the sovereign is understood to be the one "to make live or let die" (Foucault 2003), insurance and the regulations of nation-states did not offer the protection of the sovereign to these seafarers who faced danger at sea. In matters of life and death, they understood God to be the ultimate sovereign, the one who decides who lives and who dies, with the Sufi saint acting as an intermediary between the people and God. Yet these intermediaries also have political consequences on land and represent other dimensions or nodes of sovereignty that are deeply imbricated with state sovereignty and yet exceed it.

The continued relevance and importance of these alternate nodes of authority can perhaps be understood as all "too easily knowable," especially as a form of power that mirrors feudal authority from an earlier era (Singh 2015). Rather than seeing this as simply the survival of an older source of feudal or medieval authority in India, it might be useful to think through how such older forms of sovereignty merge, morph, and transform in the contemporary period, enabling trade and mobility today.

In the cabin of every vahan I have visited, I have noticed images of the shrine of Moinuddin Chishti. Sailors would often remind me of the unwavering power of Moinuddin Chishti, commonly referred to as Gharib Nawaz, "the patron saint of the poor," and the "Badshah of India," the Sultan of India. Sailors and their families would constantly tell me that any political kingpins in the state of India ultimately deferred to this Sufi saint, that the true ruler of India was not the prime minister but Moinuddin Chishti. Abdul, a vahan owner, once said to me, "The thing with India is, if any political ruler tries to consolidate too much power, Moinuddin Chishti knocks him down. Chishti is the true ruler of India. All newly elected prime ministers go to the dargah before taking up their post, even Narendra Modi. You know, he went in the dead of the night when no one could see him. They need his blessings. It is a grave that rules India." For these sailors, in the absence of the living body of a Muslim sovereign, the dead saint—such as Moinuddin Chishti—becomes the sovereign. As Ewing notes, "Sufism, like all other religions, is a social and political practice, despite modern efforts to relegate religion to the private sphere" (2020, 10).

Ultimately then, ideas of risk and danger at sea are linked to notions of divine sovereignty, Sufi saints acting as mediators between both political authority and God, the ultimate sovereign. This divine sovereignty operates on a different register than nation-state sovereignty but is braided with it. Anthropologists such as Bruce Grant (2011) have long argued against "closed" notions of sovereignty, seeing sovereign power not as stable but as functioning more like a field that is constantly negotiated and contested by multiple actors and logics. Sovereignty does indeed need to be understood as "open," the struggles for rule never-ending; but

there also exist other registers of sovereignty where divine sovereignty cannot be splintered from political authority, the figure of the Sufi emerging as a mediator between both political and divine sovereignty for those who labor at sea.

These notions of divine sovereignty buoy the vahan, a crucial intermediary in global shipping, and are therefore key to circuits of exchange in the Indian Ocean. After all, sailors who face danger—whether human or natural—ultimately do so to transport goods to minor ports across different sovereign nation-states, especially when other forms of shipping and transport are not available. Sailors thus navigate the multiple registers of sovereignty, at the level of the nation-state as well as divine sovereignty. The form of sovereignty I outline here not only represents a sovereignty rooted in pasts when Sufi saints were also arbitrators of kingly power but also points to the continued relevance of a divine sovereignty and mobility that in some moments can challenge state sovereignty and at others moves in tandem with it, becoming incorporated into global capitalist circuits of exchange. These conceptualizations of life and sovereignty, which draw on Sufi traditions, function alongside methods of financial risk management and become spiritual, economic, and political moorings for dhow sailors on the move. Just as these shrines of saints moor vahans on a ghos to land, so too are seafarers moored to the home, through patronage relationships not only with saints but also with their living women kin. Women enable mobility by staying ashore, as the seasonal monsoon winds dictate rhythms of life across the Indian Ocean.

Aakhar—At Home

Chocolates and clothes, gifts for children at home
Scented soaps, attar, and a new Samsung phone—
Traces of me, for her, at home.

Credit and debit, hawala and angadiya
A season's accounts settled—
Yet tethered to debt, at home.

Flags of saints, and garlands for the mod,
Sugar, fish, and roti for Daryapir—
New beginnings for Nava Naroj, at home.

Cries of children at fajr, my sister's haziri
Wives cooking, cleaning, pressing and primping—
The rhythms of the day, at home

The dusty streets of Salaya sing with joy
Sagans, shoraats, and nikkahs—
Wedding season begins, at home.

Thirds of meat, eaten, gifted, and donated
Remembering sacrifice, Eid Mubarak—
Celebrations with family, at home.

Asleep at dawn, at the dargah at dusk
A saint who once sailed across the sea—
But now rests here, at home.

Fragranced mawa, chai not kahawa
Dried fish from the sea, crab from the shore—
The flavors of Niyaaz, at home.

Mourning at Moharram, shiny tazias
Sunday bazaars, dhamaal and chokora—
Zuljanah and Buraq flying to Paradise, at home.

Family, fishermen, feline friends
A sick mother, hospital bills, fees—
Filial responsibilities, at home.

And I, Naushad, think of her laughter,
Her desire alive in my arms. What does she do when—
I, the Nakhwa, am not, at home?

5

Those Who Stay

Patronage, Kinship, and Seasons of Sail in the Gulf of Kachchh

Every April, the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean blow from the southwest, and every November, they turn, blowing from the northeast. With the monsoon winds come other tidings: of friends, lovers, children, weddings, the settlement of old debts, and the negotiation of new ones. After all, as the winds blow from the southwest, sailors begin their voyages to India from East Africa or the Middle East, hoping to return home by June, usually after spending nine months at sea. Upon their return, sailors feel the tangible effects of their labor at home—their wages, and profits from seasons at sail sustaining the kin they leave behind. And every April, women and children in seafaring towns on the Gulf of Kachchh in western India await the return of their male kin and the possibility of renewed intimacies, interrupted by seasons of sail.

As the winds turned in April, Elina, the youngest daughter of Iliyas, a Wagher sailor from Jam Salaya, would await the return of her father, usually by June. "He always returns in a *chotta hathi* [little van; literally, small elephant], filled with gifts for those of us at home: soap, perfume, household goods, clothes and jewelry for the women; toys and chocolates for the children. He is so generous, handing out presents to everyone in the neighborhood." Elina fondly recalled her father's many seasonal returns one afternoon in June 2017. But gifts were not the reason Elina looked forward to her father's return. As her mother, Nasreen once told me, "Elina is married into a rich family. Her household is full of wealth—but there is no love there. It is an empty home."

Unlike the home she was married into, the home in which she grew up in was full of love and familial comfort. When Iliyas returned, the entire family would celebrate. His three married daughters would spend nights in the family home,

cleaning and occasionally—when their father would let them—cooking delicious meals. "He would rarely let us cook, even! He himself would go into the kitchen and cook for us all instead," Elina told me, her voice brimming with affection and admiration. Afternoons would be spent playing with Iliyas's six grandchildren and many nephews and nieces, catching up on family news. In the evenings, they would lay sheets and pillows on the living room floor and the entire family would chat late into the night, until they fell asleep. After a month of celebrations, Iliyas would get to work. He would spend his time making repairs to the house, even adding another floor to the home to accommodate his growing family. Every April Iliyas would thus begin his return journey home—either by vahan or by plane—the profits he had made at sea having material effects at home. And every September, as the winds began to change, he would leave again to work on dhows that plied routes between India, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa, this monsoonal mobility constituting kinship, gender, caste, and class relations at home.

Iliyas and his family are just one among many in an Indian Ocean seafaring community whose lives have moved with the rhythms of the monsoon winds. After all, seafarers have long harnessed these predictable winds to voyage between East Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia. As sailors and scholars of the Indian Ocean know only too well, from November to January, high pressure builds over the landmass of Asia blowing winds from the northeast. Dhows then depart on ghos from South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula toward the Horn of Africa and the Swahili coast. And from April to August, high pressure builds in the southern hemisphere with winds moving from the southwest to the northeast. With the onset of the southwest monsoon, sailing vessels move eastward from East Africa to the Arabian Gulf and India, attempting to reach their ports of call before heavy rainfall and turbulent waters appear in South and Southeast Asia (typically by mid-June). This regular, predictable pattern of winds has been central to drawing the Indian Ocean littoral into a transregional arena over the longue durée.[1]

Using Braudelian frameworks of geohistory, historians of the Indian Ocean have long viewed the monsoon as a canvas for history, an environmental precondition that enabled the historical movement of people and things. Since the pioneering work of K. N. Chaudhuri, who emphasized that the monsoon "brought the whole area within the operation of a single global variable" (1985, 23), almost every study of the Indian Ocean begins with an explanation of how the monsoon brought unity to a large, diverse region, becoming "a setting for history" (Alpers 2013, 5). Yet the monsoon brought unity to the Indian Ocean not only by creating a single climatic zone but also by enabling sustained social interaction between sailors and their hosts, as sailors awaited winds to change in one part of the littoral to move to another. This, as Abdul Sheriff (2010) argues, contributed to the rise of a cosmopolitan culture across the Indian Ocean. The monsoon thus shaped historical possibilities in the region, drawing it closer together via not only a shared environmental condition but also the sociality it afforded.

In other important accounts, the monsoon emerges as an unpredictable, untamable agent, one that state authorities would try to subjugate through meteorology or hydraulic engineering (Amrith 2018; D. Bhattacharyya 2018; Roy 2012). Given that agriculture in South Asia has been deeply dependent on the monsoon, colonial and postcolonial governments have worked consistently to predict and tame it, aiming to transform its uncertainty into calculable risk, as Sunil Amrith (2015) has argued. Alongside these important narratives, which frame the environment as either a crucial, non-human agent that shapes human interaction or as a site upon which the power of state and capital are enacted, it is necessary to consider how the monsoon has shaped the quotidian lives of seafaring communities for whom life itself is coterminous with the monsoon. For them, the monsoon not only enables the tangible movement of goods and people through a series of ghos but also produces relationality and modes of production; transregional trade with a monsoonal temporality shapes relations at home.

In this chapter, I argue that the monsoon not only provides an environmental backdrop for mobility across the Indian Ocean but also is part of an historical experience that continues to shape prevailing relations of production (Tadiar 2009), especially labor, patronage, kinship, caste, and class relations for Muslim Bhadalas and Waghers in the Gulf of Kachchh. This is made visible through a monsoonal financial calendar that regulates life for seafaring communities in which some people move and others stay home. A monsoon temporality and relationality forges exchange and sociality within these communities (Mahajan 2020), ultimately enabling mobility across the western Indian Ocean and drawing the ocean into a networked space in which profits made abroad settle into the home, shaping community identity and status. This transregional relationality comes into being through not only the physical movement of sailors, all of whom are men, but also the women who do not move with them—their capital, kin relations, and labor enabling this relationality along a monsoon temporality. While women in other contexts have moved across the ocean as wives and as enslaved, indentured, and free labor, in seafaring and scholarly communities it is largely the men who move. For example, in the case of the Hadhrami diaspora, men who travelled married women who were "stuck" in different port cities, women's local kin relations enabling men to become "natives everywhere" (Ho 2006). Undoing the myth of "women who wait" as men move and migrate, Kalyani Ramnath has argued that in the case of Muslim trading families across the Palk Strait, women did not simply wait but also "lived and thrived" (2023, 149), influencing legal battles around questions of inheritance, political attachment, and citizenship. However, in the Gulf of Kachchh, women not only "lived and thrived" at home, they also became a mooring for voyaging sailors. The labor of women at home and their imbrication in debt and patronage relations were central to enabling the mobility of khalasis on board vahans.

In its method, then, this chapter seeks to center not only transregional mobility (which, in this case, is largely the mobility of men) forged through the ghos

but also the experiences of women who stay home. By examining women's labor at home and men's labor at sea together, I argue that mobility across the Indian Ocean is moored to the home, especially through relations of patronage between dhow owners (as capitalists) and sailors (as labor), as well as between men and women as kin, and that these relations are central to community identity. Seasonal vahan labor functions through patronage and women are key economic actors in these patronage systems, as they are the ones who undertake the labor of being in relation and create new relationships of patronage. The labor of being in relation ultimately allows men to move across the Indian Ocean while still being moored to the home or the "network centre" (Markovits 2000). The monsoon regulates these relationships of patronage, suggesting that the dhow economy, as an intermediary in global shipping lines, requires cultural and environmental forms that elide binaries of nature/culture and change/stasis. Instead, the entanglement of nature, culture, and the contours of gendered labor are at the heart of global shipping and capital.

By examining these relations of production that are seemingly out of place in alienated capitalist forms of exchange, I also argue that patronage (and its attendant debt relations), gendered labor (men at sea and women at home), and the labor of being in relation are central to Indian Ocean trade networks and capital today. These forms of labor are often presumed to belong to economic systems that characterized different eras—feudalism or nonwage markets—but I argue that they are the very moorings for capitalist production. These forms of production do not simply disappear with the rise of a global capitalism but in fact moor capitalism to an Indian Ocean setting that extends from the home to the ship, the monsoonal financial calendar becoming a mode through which global capital articulates with the local.

FROM THE AGE OF SAIL TO SEASONS OF SAIL ON THE GULF OF KACHCHH

Sailors and merchants on the west coast of India and across the waters beyond have long had a clear understanding of the monsoon winds. The monsoon pattern determined the seasonal sailing calendar for trade across the littoral of the Indian Ocean and commerce in Kachchh. Merchants and mariners of Kachchh divide the year based on the shifting monsoon winds. The calendar indicates that the northeast monsoon, or *saji mausam* in Gujarati, begins in September, this being the fair season (*mausam khulvi*), and vessels sail from ports such as Mandvi to East Africa (Goswami 2016). The southwest monsoon, known as the *aakhar mausam, cheli gos*, or *safar* in Gujarati, begins in April. Historically, contracts between merchants were dated based on the monsoon, payment and repayment following the winds along with the cargoes that moved with them. For example, a contract between two Gujarati traders in Zanzibar that was registered in 1876 states that payments needed to be made in future periods of *mausam* and at the end of the *aakhar* period (*demani*).[2]

This would have been practical, as these payments would have corresponded to the voyages of vessels that carried goods and people based on these winds. For Kachchhi seafarers and merchants, then, the year was divided into aakhar, when the southwest monsoon began, and mausam, when the winds changed. Aakhar was a period during which most seafarers would return home, while mausam referred to the nine months that they were at sea. Seasonality also shaped indigenous maritime insurance, or *dariyai vima*, as insurance claims on cargo could be valid only if the trading occurred during the mausam season (Goswami 2016).

The monsoon has also shaped government regulation around shipping, with successive colonial and postcolonial regimes attempting to reduce the risks of being at sea during the monsoon. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Portuguese in Gujarat and Mozambique sought to restrict movement between India and Africa between November and December to avoid shipwreck and vessels being blown off course. Ships were not allowed to sail west after January 31, to the chagrin of merchants who saw it as an undue interference in their trade (Machado 2014, 100). Nevertheless, sailors and merchants could not ignore the monsoon system and had to abide by a schedule; they sailed for the Delgoa Bay between October and November or January and February, returning between mid-May and mid-June (Machado 2014, 97–8). British authorities also became familiar with this pattern of movement and the delicate equilibrium that merchants and sailors would maintain between the demands of the trading season and weather patterns, and therefore ports would be closed for traffic during the monsoon months. These restrictions continue, as dhow ports in India remain closed during the monsoon. As recently as 2015, the government of India's Directorate General of Shipping restricted movement of mechanized sailing vessels to and from India between June 15 and September 1, although vahans no longer rely on sails for movement (Mahajan 2020).

These days, modern Kachchhi vahans continue to traverse the old Indian Ocean routes. Because they are no longer dependent on sails, vahans can run powered by diesel in the face of the winds. However, they rarely do so, because the risks are greater as is the cost, with diesel consumption increasing as one moves against the winds. Most vessels thus continue to run with the monsoon, going from India to the Gulf and East Africa during the northeast monsoon and returning home to India or plying routes along the relatively calmer Persian Gulf with the onset of the southwest monsoon. Many vessels remain docked in the UAE throughout the year, returning to India only if they can expect cargoes to be loaded or if major repairs are needed. Otherwise, vessel owners prefer to save the cost of diesel and port dues and dock their vessels in Dubai or Sharjah, both transshipment hubs between India and East Africa. However, the mobility of sailors themselves is no longer restricted by the monsoon.

Most of them now fly back and forth across port cities in the Indian Ocean—especially Dubai and Sharjah—to India on airplanes. Where aakhar was once the

time of year that sailors would come home and mausam meant that they were away, this seasonal pattern has shifted as voyages and movement are no longer determined only by the monsoon, air travel offering khalasis flexibility of movement. Moreover, the monsoon has become more unpredictable with climate change. Sailors are acutely aware of this; they know the rains begin a month later than they once did. This unpredictability is intensified by the increasing frequency of cyclones and tropical storms in the Indian Ocean throughout the year. However, the old seasonal maritime calendar that divided the year into aakhar and mausam still matters, often in subtle but important ways, seasonality shaping the quotidian life of seafarers and their kin, both at sea and at home. This is not only a mnemonic trace (Joseph 2007) of an earlier era when vessels and people were carried by the winds but an historical experience that continues to shape relations of production (Tadiar 2009). Kachchhi seafarers continue to have a "dual morphology" (Mauss 2004), as they quickly adapt to changing conditions—of climate change, weather, labor, capital, markets, governments, and even family obligations. Lives in the seafaring towns of Mandvi and Jam Salaya are thus shaped by a monsoonal relationality and temporality, this being visible not only in the topography of the towns but also in seasonal social life in both towns.

JAM SALAYA: A NETWORK CENTER FOR PIRATES, SMUGGLERS, AND SAILORS

It is difficult to point out precisely where the waters of the Gulf of Kachchh end and the town of Jam Salaya begins, even on a map. The Gulf of Kachchh stretches its arms deep into the town of Jam Salaya. One attempts to count its reach—one, two, three, and four inlets appearing blue on a map shaded brown and blue, the colors bleeding into each other on this aqueous northern edge of the Kathiawar peninsula. The inlets themselves are not fixed, many of them shifting with the mangroves that surround the shores of the Gulf, the tides never letting one clearly distinguish land from water. Like many parts of Kachchh, land and water merge here, until the many inlets and creeks give way to the Arabian Sea.

One of the inlets, known as the *farda*, opens out each season to the Gulf and the Arabian Sea beyond, vessels setting off on voyages through this opening. Another ribbon of water meets this inlet further upstream. This is the *dora*, or thread, through which Salaya's fishing boats go out to sea, resting at this node between voyages. Yet another inlet, once used by oceangoing vessels, is now more land than water; it has silted up and is no longer able to carry vessels out to sea. Between this tangle of land, water, and mangroves lies a shipbuilding yard, in which the tide enters and leaves at different times of the day, allowing both for a dry dock and for areas to fill with water such that vessels can float out to the farda and ultimately to sea.

While the northern parts of the town are connected to the sea, the town is also connected to the mainland of Saurashtra by road. One road (Highway 93)

FIGURE 18. Aerial view of Jam Salaya and its shipyard, 2019. Photo by Moad Musbahi.

connects Jam Salaya to the town of Jam Khambhaliya, the closest railway and bus terminus, and a hospital. It is here that Jam Salaya is also connected to a multilane highway that runs through Kathiawar, the road being smooth near the towns of Vadinar, where Essar has an oil refinery, and Sikka, where Reliance Industries has built the largest oil refinery in the world. This road also leads to Jamnagar, the closest airport. To the west, the same road leads to Dwarka and then Okha, important sites of pilgrimage for Hindus and as well as Muslims, as the region is home to temples and Sufi shrines, such as Hazrat Sayyed Haji Daud Kirmani Rahmatulla on Beyt Dwarka, an island off the coast of Okha.

Jam Salaya is a "network centre," a locale or a cluster of localities where merchant capitalists might raise capital and have their main residence (Markovits 2000), known for its seafaring. The majority of the town's thirty-thousand-strong population are of the Sunni Muslim Wagher and Bhadala castes, most of whom are either seafarers on vahans or fishermen. The handful of Hindu families in town run local shops. "There is no other work in Salaya, other than building vahans, working on them, or fishing. Nothing else at all," its residents say. The maritime orientation of the town is visible even in its street names. The two main arteries of the town are known as Bandar Road (Port Road) and Customs Road, after the customs office located at the end of the street. Unlike the villages that surround the town, there are no farms here. Houses are built close together. Like any town, it has small groceries; corner shops that sell tobacco and betel nut and leaf; stores

that sell shoes, clothing, and household goods; pharmacies; and ice-cream shops, all along one street. But along Customs Road, one can also find highly specialized stores for all things maritime. Here, hardware stores sell motors and fishing equipment, and wood traders' stores and carpenters' workshops are full of large pieces of *sal* wood from Malaysia, used to used build vahans, which connect this seemingly small town to the rest of the Indian Ocean world.

As Jam Salaya's vahans and their crews ply the Indian Ocean, its influence extends outward across the Indian Ocean. "Dubai is full of Salaya people! When you go there, you will see!" a nakhwa who was home from working on a dhow cruise vessel in Dubai said to me one afternoon on a short preliminary research trip I made to Jam Salaya in March 2014. And indeed, everyone I met in town on subsequent periods of research was more familiar with port cities like Dubai, Bosaso, and Sharjah than they were with cities in the hinterland of India. A local internet celebrity—a man who was well known in town because of the comedy video clips he made and circulated on WhatsApp—said to me, "I am not only famous in Jam Salaya. Even if you go to Somalia, Berbera, or Bosaso, everyone knows me!" This was not just a comedian boasting his alleged fame; it was exemplary of how Jam Salaya extended outward. Even the women in town—many of whom had never physically left it—could vividly describe streets in Dubai and gossip about the so-called seductive ways of the women of Bosaso. Jam Salaya was thus connected to other Indian Ocean port cities through the movement of its vahans and seafarers.

While Salaya's seafarers are habituated to a world beyond Salaya's territorial boundaries, Jam Salaya itself remains elusive to outsiders. Alam, a vahan owner based in Jamnagar, only an hour and half from Salaya, once told me, "I never go to Salaya. My father had always warned me not to go there. You be careful when you go, these people are the descendants of pirates! Anything can happen! They are such roughnecks!" Alam, also a Wagher, was referring to the community's historical identity as pirates and mercenaries (L. Subramanian 2016) who had long operated in the region. Despite this shared history, Alam warned me to never enter Salaya.

Indeed, visitors to Salaya were rare. There was not a single hotel or guesthouse in Salaya; the closest one was in Jam Khambhaliya, fifteen kilometers away. My requests to rent a room in town were met with peals of laughter. Friends in Salaya would tell me this was because Salaya had a bad reputation. From the 1970s onward, Salaya had the reputation of being a smugglers' haven, with gold smugglers such as Talib Sanghar, "Jakku seth," and Jakku's son, Salim Kara, notorious across India. "The business is over, and these men are dead and gone, but Salaya still has a bad reputation. No one comes here, and why would they?!" was a common refrain amongst the town's residents. Even friends in Mandvi who worked with sailors from Jam Salaya would tell me, "Salaya people don't just speak differently from us. Things there are different. People there start fighting at the drop of a

hat. And these fights are violent—they won't hesitate to kill their own brother." Friends from Salaya too would tell me, "What can we say about Salaya! Everything is fine, but then suddenly there will be a fight. There are fights all the time. And robberies. Why? Just the other day, young boys robbed the customs house! Imagine, they stole contraband cigarettes that were confiscated by the authorities! Cartons and cartons of them. The customs officers could do nothing." These stories about the slippery ways of residents of Jam Salaya were supposed to act as a deterrent for those visiting from elsewhere, but they also signaled a community identity for those from Salaya, who associated themselves with the practice of daan chori, or stealing from the authorities, as part of their identity as mercenaries, pirates, smugglers, and sailors.

The majority of Jam Salaya's population are Sunni Muslim Waghers, who are governed not only by local government authorities but also by their caste association or jamaat. A minority Sunni Bhadala population in town also had their own jamaat, the two communities living in segregated parts of town. Both Waghers and Bhadalas are endogamous communities that practice hyperlocal, consanguineous marriage. While Waghers practiced only cross-cousin marriage, amongst Bhadalas parallel cousin marriage was also common. Both communities typically married locally. Although Waghers could be found elsewhere in Kathiawar, Wagher residents of Jam Salaya preferred to marry their sons and daughters off within the town. Similarly, Bhadalas lived not only in Jam Salaya but also in Mandvi, and while sailors from both towns worked together on board vahans, they tended to marry within not only their caste (*jāt*) but also their town. Despite moving transregionally across the Indian Ocean, marriages were thus typically endogamous and hyperlocal.

Yet akin to sailors of yore who may have had a wife in each port they visited, some sailors chose differently. I had heard stories of such men—especially in the past when sailors could move freely out of ports and into cities in Somalia, the Gulf, Yemen, or East Africa, which is now much more difficult, given the securitization of ports and the unpredictability of dhow itineraries. Fawaz was one such Wagher from Salaya I heard about in Sharjah. In his youth, he had been married to a woman in Jam Salaya, even as he plied vahans across the Indian Ocean. As he got older, he got a job manning an *abra*, a water taxi that plied across the Sharjah creek. Over time, he developed an extramarital relationship with a migrant Bengali woman. "She brings him lunch every single day," sailors docked in Sharjah would tell me. Some of these sailors had extramarital relations as well, but Fawaz's infidelity was unusually sustained. Fawaz had not returned home to Jam Salaya in over twenty years. Yet every month he sent part of his wages to support his family back home, still bound to his wife.[3] Indeed, while extramarital affairs abroad were common, getting married within the caste and community was necessary to prevent excommunication by the jamaat and one's own kin. I heard stories of men who had married women in Somalia or Yemen and abandoned their wives

at home, only to be excommunicated, never hearing from their families again. If a sailor was polygamous and had a wife elsewhere—a practice condemned by the Wagher and Bhadala jamaats and community members—he did so secretly and was still expected to support family at home.

These endogamous communities were thus not that different from many other Muslim communities in India. Marriage practices have been central to asserting community, caste, and religious values and identity for Muslims in India (Ahmad 1978). As Carla Bellamy (2021) has shown, Muslim Chhipas remain deeply endogamous and articulate endogamy as proper Islamic behavior that also consolidates caste identity. Caste-dependent family structures offered security and sustenance: for men this meant cultivating the self and status through religious education, caste identity offering connections and networks amongst other Chhipas, while for women, the practice of cousin marriage offered the continued support of natal family. Waghers and Bhadalas in Mandvi and Jam Salaya were not unlike the Chhipas on this count. An endogamous marriage at home bolstered caste identity and status for men at home, while women, moving between their natal homes, homes of marriage, and kin networks in Jam Salaya and Mandvi, harnessed their networks for their own benefit as well as that of their families. Weddings and marriages were thus key markers of caste identity but also had economic repercussions. Wedding season during aakhar then was a pivotal moment for Jam Salaya's residents each year.

A SEASON OF WEDDINGS: AAKHAR IN JAM SALAYA

Despite the intense segregation of Jam Salaya, only a few days after I arrived in Salaya in 2017, staying at a hotel in a nearby town, Iliyas's family took me in. Iliyas and I had known each other since 2011, when I was conducting research in Mombasa. Now, years later, this connection was rekindled by his family. During aakhar in 2017, I became privy to the warmth of Iliyas' family and the seasonal sociality of Salaya. I was struck by how different Salaya felt than on my previous visits during mausam. The narrow winding lanes of the town, which were usually filled with children playing, women walking to neighbors' houses or local shrines, and men idling away at tea stalls, had a more festive air. Bamboo poles mounted with swathes of fabric—white, pink, red, and gold—formed arched tents through the streets flooded and muddied by the rain. Plastic chairs lined the streets. And the sound of *garba* music filled the evenings. Large pots of food were cooked on the street outside homes. Aakhar, after all, is the only time of the year that anyone gets married in Jam Salaya.

"There can be anywhere between three to thirty weddings in a single day during aakhar!" Elina, told me, one afternoon in July 2017. We were on our way to visit Azghar, a nakhwa I knew from Mombasa. Our long walk turned into an even longer one as a wedding procession moved through the streets. Hesitant to enter the procession, we stood aside watching the groom on his horse and his dancing

FIGURE 19. A street in Jam Salaya decorated for a wedding, 2017. Photo by author.

friends followed by women and children, some dancing, some walking slowly to the wedding venue. The DJ blasted an old Hindi film song on gigantic speakers mounted on a pickup truck. The song was a popular one from the movie *Don*, a famous crime thriller from the 1970s about an elusive crime boss and police killings in Bombay. The song seemed to have never outlived its popularity in Jam Salaya, unlike elsewhere in India, harkening to the port town's notorious and still-lingering past as a node for gold smuggling.

As the procession moved past us, Elina told me, "See, this is just one wedding. There's another one tomorrow, and another one the day after. Every single day, someone gets married during aakhar." I joked with her and said, "So are all babies born at the same time too?" Elina laughed. "These weddings are so tiring! Each one goes on for a week: there is a shauraat, the shagan, the baraat, the nikaah, the reception . . . it just goes on and on. People here are crazy about weddings." She shook her head disapprovingly and then added, "But at least the food is good."

As we entered Azghar's house, we met his oldest daughter, Rehmat, who had been married a year ago. She and her husband were visiting her parents that day,

as Azghar had recently arrived from Dubai. Azghar welcomed us and introduced me to the rest of his family. The first time we met was in Mombasa in 2016, under very different circumstances. He had been working on a vessel that plied between Dubai, Somalia, and Kenya. On those shores, he had regaled me with stories of good times in Mombasa, showing me pictures of him, his crew, and his Kenyan girlfriend in local bars and on the beach. Other sailors in town often reproached his behavior abroad as un-Islamic and loose. But in his home, he very much played the role of the pious, faithful husband as his wife Hasina ran the show.

After offering us tea and snacks, Hasina popped a DVD into the player as we all gathered in their living room to watch Rehmat's wedding video. As the videos panned across images of men sitting and eating snacks and biryani, of Rehmat being wrapped in a *kombi*, the traditional green mirror-work Kachchhi wedding dupatta, and of family members showering the bride and groom with money, they would point out different people who appeared on screen. "There's Nargis Chachi, and there's baby Noor. Look! That's Reshma Masi and her three daughters. And there's Sultan Chacha—he looks so much younger here," Rehmat commented. The video then switched to a close-up of Rehmat being tearily given away by Hasina. As mother and daughter embraced, a passport photograph of Azghar flashed on the screen. I suddenly realized that he was not in the video at all, until that point.

"Azghar was in Dubai at the time, and I had made all the wedding arrangements." Hasina explained to me. "You know, he had not been back for two years! Two whole years. Earlier all the men would come back during aakhar, but now, especially if they work on a vessel based in Dubai, they rarely come back." The passport photograph in the video gestured to Azghar's presence, to say that this wedding was made possible through his absence. Elina then whispered to me, "You know, they needed the money! So he continued to work even through the wedding." Azghar stared at the screen and then said to me softly, "I couldn't be there—at my only daughter's wedding. I was upset, but I knew I would be more help if I could continue to work and send the money for all the loans we had taken for the wedding."

While aakhar was once a time when sailors would be home, today sailors like Azghar can be away for years on end. But weddings continue to take place during aakhar. Aakhar, after all, is still a time in which debts are settled and salaries are paid, the seasonal financial calendar still regulating cycles of payments and social life for this seafaring community. Much of this was made clear to me not by sailors themselves but by the women they would leave behind.

MEN AT SEA, WOMEN ON SHORE

"The life of the man who goes out to sea rests in the hands of his woman on shore," (Pillai 2018, 8) narrates Chakki, a fisherwoman, in the classic Malayalam novel *Chemmeen*. Indeed, for sailors spending long months, and even years, at

FIGURE 20. A sailor's wife and child on the beach in Mandvi, 2018. Photo by author.

sea, having a wife at home is not only a religious duty, a societal norm, perhaps a source of comfort, but also an economic necessity. Women enable men to move. Not only do they do the work of social reproduction and care for those at home, but they also manage finances and are key actors in determining the status of men. Vahans may be offered to women by their families as part of their dowries, these vahans then being run by their husbands. Women also handle all remittances and family savings. Indeed, it is often solely the women who have bank accounts. It is not unusual for women to play this key role in seafaring communities.

In other times and other places, it was often sailors' wives who managed salaries, debts, and legal contracts—and not their husbands. For example, historian Margaret R. Hunt has argued that in seventeenth-century England, sailors often used legal instruments to provide wives and other trusted kin with the equivalent of the power of attorney to receive payments onshore and act independently in all financial and legal matters. Sailors thus found it crucial to maintain close emotional and financial ties to women on shore. This was especially important

because sailors were typically only paid once their ships returned to their home port. But often, sailors did not return for many years, or payments would be delayed. In this situation, to avoid long delays in payments, "it was women who typically retained the tickets [promissory notes] and the Powers [power of attorney and wills], kept track of when the payouts would occur, and stood in line at the pay tables. It was women who negotiated with the landlady, or for food to feed the family, and generally nurtured the increasingly desperate credit arrangements that barely kept these communities afloat" (Hunt 2013, 155).

In Mandvi and Jam Salaya, women not only did the work of social reproduction and care, they also received monthly payments and managed family finances. They would find ways to stretch household finances and often supplemented family income with their own small businesses: trading in fabric, artificial jewelry, and perfume; taking in sewing; setting up food stalls. Women were thus key financial actors. They not only managed the household income but also maintained social relations with patrons, creating the networks that allowed men to move. It is perhaps for this reason that when I began research in Jam Salaya, I found that it was often women, and not men, who were most insightful about the economic structure of the vahan trade, some of them even having a critical sociological view of their own communities.

Take, for example, Shehnaz, an elderly matriarch of a well-known dhow-owning family in Salaya. Shehnaz comes from a long line of Jam Salaya's seafarers. Her grandfather was a sailor on a vahan; her father owned vahans; and for the past thirty-five years, she had been married to Amjad, who was also a sailor. He had worked on vahans and British cargo ships; operated a tugboat in the UAE; and for many years, had been back in Salaya. When he married Shehnaz, his family acquired a vahan as part of her dowry, and based on this initial capital and his savings, he built a vahan that he operated with his two sons. Their family is well-known in the town and amongst vahanvatti (seafarers and usually dhow owners) across western India. When I arrived for several weeks of fieldwork in Salaya during aakhar in 2017, I had assumed that Amjad would be my main point of contact, as I had known him for a few years from previous trips to Salaya. Yet it was his wife Shehnaz who became the more crucial interlocutor. Although she had never been out to sea, she had an acute sense of the industry's workings and was Amjad's trusted advisor both in domestic matters and in business dealings. She was also (like most women) hyperconscious of how the rhythms of life in Salaya and beyond changed as vahans sailed into and out of the harbor.

One afternoon, sitting in their home chewing on dates from Iran served by her daughter-in-law while a beautiful Persian cat her son had brought back on a dhow from Dubai purred at her feet, Shehnaz said to me, "Earlier, our lives were dictated by the monsoon. The year was divided into aakhar and mausam, but now, these distinctions don't exist. Sailors come and go based on their contracts. They sign on and sign off as they need. Sure, vessels can't leave here between

June and September, but then those in Dubai are always running." Amjad then added, "You're right. No one really thinks in terms of aakhar and mausam anymore." Shahnaz looked at him thoughtfully, "But then isn't our accounting year still running on that calendar? Salaries are paid when sailors come home during aakhar." Amjad nodded silently at being corrected. Shehnaz then got up and took the Gujarati calendar hanging on the wall and showed it to me. "Look, there are sixty days during aakhar. In mausam, there are three hundred." Salaries for the year, as she explained, are still typically paid to sailors during aakhar, the financial calendar continuing to function based on a monsoonal rhythm. Although the age of sail had gone by, seasons of sail continued to be central in dictating the temporality of labor and production. After all, it is not just salaries but also cycles of debt that run on a monsoon temporality. This is not a new practice, but an old one—one that continues to have deep consequences for seafarers in the region. To understand how this works, it's useful to examine the structure of labor and payments to crew on board the vahan itself.

SEASONS OF LABOR AND CYCLES OF DEBT ON BOARD A VAHAN

A vahan, like any other ship, functions on a strict hierarchy. The duties and responsibilities of each crew member are clearly defined, movement across the ranks being possible only after years of training, experience, and apprenticeship (E. Simpson 2006). The top rank is, of course, the captain, or nakhwa. The nakhwa is responsible for managing all the crew, the loading and unloading of cargo, the finances, the itinerary, and communicating with the vessel owner (seth), brokers (dalals), port officials, and shipping agents. The nakhwa is thus the highest paid member of the crew. He not only receives a larger monthly salary than anyone on board, but for every trip, he also gets a *baksheesh*, a tip or bonus, from the merchant whose cargo is being loaded. Nakhwas are also known to be traders themselves, buying goods in one port and selling them at a higher price at the next. Often, in Jam Salaya, the nakhwa is a member of the owner's family—a son or a nephew, for example. Keeping control of the vessel in family hands is meant to reduce the pilfering of diesel, rations, and freight. The second-highest paid crewmember is usually either the *maalim* (navigator) or the *rasoiya*/*bhandari* (cook). He is followed by the ship's engineer or driver who maintains the diesel engine; the *serang*, or foreman; the *sukhani* (the one who steers the vessel's wheel); the oilman; and helpers such as the *gherporiya*, or watchman. On board there is usually also a young unpaid apprentice, or *petoriya*, who does all the odd jobs. These crew members (apart from the captain) are collectively known as the *khalasis*, or laborers.

All crew members (except the apprentice) receive a monthly salary. This is usually a rather nominal amount, ranging from 20,000 Indian rupees (USD 300) for the nakhwa to 3,000 (USD 40) for a helper, as of 2018.[4] What matters most

then is not this salary but the *hamali* or *majdoori* ("labor" in Kachchhi and Hindi-Urdu), which is paid for by the merchants or the cargo consigner for each ghos made. The cargo consigner typically pays AED 10 (around USD 3) per ton of cargo loaded, and this amount is split between the khalasis (excluding the nakhwa who receives a bonus). Typically, on a large vahan of about 1,200–1,400-ton cargo capacity, this meant that each crew member would receive around 18,000–20,000 Indian rupees (USD 250–300) for each ghos undertaken. This is significantly larger than their monthly salary, and so most sailors think of their financial success or failure in terms of the number of ghos they make during the term of their contract. It is the amount earned as hamali on each voyage, which they then remit to their family.

This complex system of compensation emerged out of an older system that similarly used a combination of monthly salaries and compensation per ghos. Records from 1880 indicate that when sailors from Kachchh sailed to India's eastern coast, they received a monthly salary. However, for other voyages, sailors would be compensated in a lump sum for every voyage they undertook. This lump sum was known as the *khalas*, from which is derived the term *khalasi*, which refers to the crew members even today. In that system, the captain was paid twice as much as a khalasi and also received a customary fee known as the *káyado* (*Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 116). Serangs would receive 1.25 the share of the khalasi (Goswami 2016, 53). In addition, every sailor would receive an allowance of the cheapest grain—rice, wheat, or bajra (pearl millet)—called a *bhatta*. Some elderly sailors recall that this bhatta was paid in the form of cash until the 1980s and suggest that the salary and hamali system only emerged when vahans began servicing ports in Iraq during the Gulf Wars and made large profits.

This form of maritime labor organization resembles historical forms of organization in agriculture in Gujarat, especially the hali system of labor bondage. In this system, the hali, or lower-caste, landless agricultural laborer would be pressed into the service of an upper-caste landowner, the landless laborer accepting bondage after taking a loan, usually for marriage expenses (Breman 1974). The hali would undertake work as a farm servant until the payment of his debt, the low levels of compensation preventing him from ever clearing the debt. Nevertheless, this functioned as a patronage system whereby the elite landowner was expected to provide for lower-caste bonded laborers who would be allotted land for a house and would be entitled to some meals, medical care, alcohol, clothes, and ornaments at the expense of the landowner. Until the late nineteenth century, the hali was rarely compensated in cash—and was only given cash as a favor to cover expenses that may not otherwise have been covered. For every day that he worked on the landowner's farm, he was compensated in grain, also known as a bhatta, like khalasi at sea who received a monthly bhatta but also a lump sum for every trip undertaken.

The hali system is rooted in the older jajmani system that bound service castes to land-owning elites, each having mutual obligations to the other, although

land-owning elites gained at the expense of the laborer. As Jan Breman has shown, this system of patronage required the patron, the jajman, to provide "total care" for the laborer, and laborers often preferred it to wage labor as it provided for the laborer and their family throughout the year, even in seasons when work was scarce (Breman 1974). While the jajmani and hali system gradually shifted, elements of this patronage and debt bondage system remain in maritime labor.[5]

Today, the payment of monthly salaries typically occurs on a cyclical basis—a cycle that follows the accounting year, which in turn follows the seasonal sailing calendar. This seasonal cycle regulated not only salaries (*paghar*) but also debt (*uphar*). Nakhwas and khalasis are often indebted to dhow owners, typically to pay for weddings—their own or those of their sisters and daughters—that took place only during aakhar. Moreover, given that salaries were often only paid as a lump sum at the end of the year, crew members would often take a loan from the dhow owner or seth even before going out to sea. While the lump sum often ensured some savings for the crew member and his family through the year, typically, the crew member would end up indebted to the owner and would continue to work for him for the next season, unless another dhow owner was willing to pay off the original debt and contract the sailor (who would then be indebted to the new owner). Hashim, a retired nakhwa in his 60s, explained to me how this worked:

> See, when you go to a vessel owner, you make an agreement to work for them for nine months or then twelve months. You then decide if you need an advance so that your house can run even before you get your first installment of hamali. You then take an advance on your salary from the owner. Then you make an agreement with him whether the salary should be paid monthly. In Mandvi, they are usually paid every month. But in Salaya, owners make a fuss about this. Salaries for the whole year are typically paid only at the end of aakhar—this is when all accounting takes place. Then, if at the end of it, you owe the vessel owner money, you work for that same owner again to pay off the debt, unless another vessel owner is ready to pay your debt and then you are indebted to the next seth. And so, it continues. Sometimes we like that salaries are paid during aakhar—it ensures some savings through the year, and this is especially helpful of there is a wedding to plan or house to build. But then you also realize that you invariably end up taking loans from the vessel owner. You always end up indebted to the owner.

His middle-aged daughter, Shabana, then added, "Woh apne aap ko girvi kar dete hain" (they become bonded laborers). She explained that sailors pawned themselves to the owner, the seth. Salaries, paid at the end of the season (during aakhar) were therefore intricately tied up with cycles of debt and labor recruitment. Cash-strapped khalasis and their families invariably looked to dhow owners for loans, who, in turn, expected sailors to work for them to work off these loans by the next season. This cycle of debt runs according to the seasonal accounting year, which in turn also determines social life in the village. Seasonal social obligations

often forced sailors to take loans during aakhar, a cycle of debt continuing alongside the monsoon. This cycle of debt, articulated most clearly by Shabana, who had never been out to sea, seemed just like debt peonage, an exploitive form of labor organization that locked khalasis into debt bondage to dhow owners.

Debt bondage and indebtedness have plagued dhow labor not only in this system but even in the share system used by dhow labor in parts of the Arabian Peninsula—for example, in pearl diving—and in East Africa. In these spaces, labor on board a dhow functions according to what Kachchhis call the *patti* system. Not unlike the share systems used by pirates (Rediker 2001) in the Atlantic, which are often viewed as more egalitarian than wage labor, in this system the nakhwa received two shares and the serang received 1.5 shares, whereas khalasis received equal shares of profits. While it is unclear whether this system existed at some point in the dhow trade in India as well, many seafarers from Salaya and Mandvi would hope to find employment on dhows owned by Emiratis in the UAE who worked in this system in order to assuage indebtedness. But these jobs were difficult to come by, and many even in the patti system ended up in debt in the long run.

Indeed, colonial ethnographers also believed that debt bondage plagued the dhow trade. Writing about the organization of *mtepe* trade (a type of dhow used on the East African coast), the assistant district commissioner of Lamu in Kenya described how debts and profit sharing functioned on board a dhow in 1924.[6] Every season, sailors would contract to work for an mtepe owner, from whom they typically also took a loan to secure the contract for work. The nakhoda and the crew would then work the dhow through the season, with the owner taking one third of the net profits and the rest of the crew sharing the remainder—two shares going to the nakhoda and the others dividing the remainder. As the district commissioner states, at the end of the season the debt was likely to remain unpaid: "It is only fair to say that some debts get paid but others are undoubtedly carried on from year to year and increased till the man sinks into a state of semi slavery to the mtepe owner" (23). The district commissioner imagined that dhow owners knew full well that getting loans repaid was unlikely and that they only gave loans "to induce the sailor to sign a contract for service" (25).[7] Labor on board a dhow has thus long been tied to a form of debt peonage—in both the share system and the seasonal wage system. These cycles of debt have consistently been viewed as exploitative by government officials ranging from a district commissioner in Lamu in the 1920s to contemporary officials in India.

In 2017, a government official at the Directorate General of Shipping expressed to me a similar feeling—that the dhow owners exploited their crew. Sitting in his office, with photographs of national icons such as Ambedkar and Gandhi on the wall, he said to me, "The real problem with these vahanvatti is how they treat the crew—they really try and squeeze all they can from them! Not only do they go out and labor in such dangerous conditions, but they get paid very little. The khalasis are always in debt." Despite my urge to begin a conversation about how

government policies had put dhow sailors out of work, I found myself in the unusual position of agreeing with a government bureaucrat—cycles of debt led to the bondage of laboring dhow crews by dhow owners.

This is, of course, a familiar theme in studies of credit and debt. Anthropologists have long studied how credit benefits creditors while burdening debtors, creditors and debtors being locked in a hierarchical relationship (Peebles 2010). Take, for example, the influential work of Michael Taussig. In a study of what he calls an "economy of terror" in Putomayo, Taussig argues that debt peonage served to coerce labor. In the absence of a labor market and in a space where "Indians with their quite different forms of exchange and evaluation coexisted with the various forms of colonial domination: patronage, concubinage, slavery, and debt-peonage" (Taussig 1987, 53), terror and debt peonage served to extract labor. However, rather than seeing debt peonage and slavery as the same thing (as colonial officials even in this case were wont to do), Taussig suggests instead that debt peonage was a way to lure Indians into trading, not into slavery, these relations of credit and debt being the vines that bound the vast Amazon basin into a singular unit. Debt became an instrument in which indigenous gift economies meshed with colonial and capitalist economic forms.

Unlike the case Taussig is speaking of, however, in this setting there is no split or articulation between the Indians' gift economies and colonial capitalist exchange. Here, indigenous labor (in the form of dhow crews) and indigenous capital (dhow owners who are of the same caste) are bound together through debt and labor, this relationship being not just between creditor and debtor but perhaps captured more fully through patronage. In this case, when khalasis become indebted to dhow owners, they become not just laborers or debtors but also clients, and dhow owners become not only creditors/capitalists but also patrons, with a whole other set of duties and obligations. It is through patronage, and not just through debt, that sailors were bound to dhow owners. While debt relations have long been thought to connect distant parts of the Indian Ocean, drawing it into a networked space (Bishara 2017; McDow 2018), patronage has been a key element in making some actors mobile to begin with.

Writing about maritime labor on pearling dhows in the Persian Gulf in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Fahad Bishara has focused on the *barwa*, a written declaration exchanged by dhow captains about the amounts of debt that divers owed them and the terms in which they could be hired out. He poignantly argues that credit regimes in the pearl dive reflected a form of creating wealth in people that could then bleed into wealth in property in the "maritime bazaar," divers demanding the ability to enter credit relationships so that they could be included in the maritime economy. Bishara thus shows how maritime actors navigated the boundary between free and unfree labor through these credit relationships. For him, however, "wealth in people was not simply about building a client base that could sustain a patron's position in urban politics; it was also

about building a strong pearling business" (Bishara 2021b, 522–3). In the context of the dhow economy in Kachchh, it is useful to frame this relationship between maritime laborers and owners of dhows as one of patronage, especially given how patronage, constituted through debt, has long been a form of labor organization in maritime and agricultural sectors in the South Asian context.

Scholars of South Asia have long argued that studies of debt bondage have overemphasized the debt element of the relationship. Anthropologist Jan Breman (1974) argues that patronage relationships typically came into being when a laborer accepted bondage for a loan taken for marriage expenses. Nevertheless, the relationship between patron and client exceeded the debt relationship. He defines patronage as "a pattern of relationships in which members of hierarchically arranged groups possess mutually recognized, not exactly stipulated rights and obligations involving mutual aid and preferential treatment. The bond between patron and client is personal and is contracted and continued by mutual agreement for an indeterminate time" (Breman 1974, 18). In this understanding of patronage, laborers and landlords were pressed into a master-servant relationship whereby the servant as a client had certain rights and obligations: his master as patron was expected to be affectionate and generous and to promote the interests of his client. The servant in turn was expected to be loyal and respectful, providing not only labor but also serving the general interests of his patron. In this conception, while patronage was initiated through debt, the debt was never one that was expected to be fully paid off. Rather, it was this relation of mutual dependence that was key, even though the relationship was more beneficial to the patron than to the servant.

Patronage similarly defines the seafaring community, in which capital and labor also operate as patron and client, respectively. These caste-based relationships have transformed only recently, the status of patrons being still emergent and unstable in many cases. In the case of the vahan trade, traditional patrons such as dhow owners were once upper-caste Hindu Bhatias or Jains or were from mercantile Muslim communities like Bohras, Memons, and Ismailis. However, by the 1970s, many of these dhow owners had moved on to other businesses, selling off their vahans to Bhadala and Wagher sailors in Mandvi and Jam Salaya who once worked for them. These new dhow owners now worked with sailors of the same caste status, and class emerged through a relationship of patronage, instantiated in the form of debt. This debt, however, pressed certain obligations not only upon the debtor but also upon the creditor, who was expected as a patron to provide continued lines of credit as well as protection and support. This was often viewed as burdensome by both parties, in this case the creditor being a newly monied dhow owner of the same caste status as the laborer.

Dhow owners would often complain to me that they were beset by requests for advances that made it difficult for them to run their own, now cash-strapped, businesses. Take, for example, Talib, a Wagher dhow owner from Jam Salaya who once

said to me, "These people [dhow crews] and their families keep asking for more advances. Not only during aakhar, but sometimes even during mausam. When a khalasi is away, a family member may come to me to ask for money. And I often don't have any money to give, and probably will never be paid back. Yes, he may work it off, but that doesn't solve my cash problems given that this business is not always profitable at all." I was initially inclined to dismiss Talib's remarks—because he was complaining about "the help" in a way that elites in South Asia often do. But perhaps by taking him more seriously, one can think more clearly about this patron-client relationship constituted by debt.

Just as khalasis were obliged to work for dhow owners based on the promise of salaries at the end of a season, which could help repay an old debt, so too were dhow owners duty bound to provide work and cash for sailors and their families upon request. The obligation to work, follow instructions, and be loyal on the part of debtor-laborer and the obligation to provide work, social security, and credit bound both patron/capital as well as client/labor together. While debt created an economic bond between patron and client, their obligations to one another often exceeded economic transactions and exchange, as is typical in relationships of patronage.[8]

Patronage was a key element in constituting and cultivating the self in Jam Salaya and Mandvi. Recent work on patronage has suggested that although patronage produces a hierarchical relationship in which clients are aware of their lower status being produced through the act of receiving, they continue to engage in this practice because patronage becomes a key method of self-definition even for lower-status groups, who are fashioned not only by their occupation but by their patrons as well (Piliavsky 2015). Both patrons and clients are thus defined through these obligations—caste identity being constituted through these exchanges (Raheja 1988). For Wagher and Bhadala sailors, class and gender identity is fashioned through their role as clients to dhow owners, even when their patrons are of the same caste status. Patronage is the central axis through which the self is fashioned. This system of patronage extends through all levels of the community—from dhow owners who compete with each other as patrons to khalasis who also seek prestige and hope to become "big men" within their class, even if they are clients of dhow owners.

Iliyas, for example, would distribute gifts to friends, kin, and neighbors whenever he returned home from his voyages. While his daughter, Elina, saw this as a sign of his generosity, it was also tied up with his own reputation as a successful sailor and "big man" among his kin. In his work on seafarers in Mandvi, Edward Simpson argues that upon their return after a season of sail, sailors engaged in all kinds of exchange practices. This included the sale of goods procured abroad, the giving of "gifts," and paying off of debts. These exchanges were valued not only for their utility but for the "public representations of less tangible forms of wealth" they afforded: these representations "display an individual's power to extract booty

from the world economic systems" (Simpson 2006, 149). These goods serve as a source of prestige and are used personally, given as "gifts," and sold to individuals and wholesalers.[9] Ultimately, the purpose of these goods is not just to provide a source of income but also to create relations of debt and power—a way to acquire status in the form of a "big man" or patron. Here the function of patronage is not just economic but also creates spheres of influence outside of exchange relations as well. As Simpson argues, patronage is a key system that structures relations among and between sailors and ship owners. In Simpson's account, women play a key role in this system, often acting as brokers and wholesalers, selling goods brought in by sailors. Yet women were not just mediators and brokers of exchange in goods that circulated; they played an important role in initiating, maintaining, and often even ending patronage relationships that created bonds between dhow owners and crew and between men and women and extended kin, especially of the same caste. This is perhaps, most visible during weddings.

Weddings are not just one of the reasons sailors go to sea; weddings are instrumental in how they became and remained indebted to their creditors/patrons. These obligations to kin and social reproduction more generally pushed dhow sailors and their families into relations of debt and patronage with dhow owners. While dhow owners became capitalists/patrons/creditors of sailors as laborers/clients/debtors, sailors themselves, as men, were viewed as patrons for their female kin and were expected not only to finance their own weddings but also to assist with the weddings of their sisters and daughters. This form of patronage was not a simple economic form but had affective and moral dimensions as well, distinguishing patronage from purely credit relations.

In a classic study of patronage in Greece, J. K. Campbell (1964) argues that the relationship of debtor/client and patron/creditor has affective content that far exceeds those typical of simple market exchanges, since creditors are morally obliged to their debtors, their own prestige depending on this status. More recently, Piliavsky has argued that patronage is at the heart of political life in India and is not just a "transactional network" but a moral idiom of relatedness (2014, 22) that extends beyond profiteering. In fact, patronage is inherently mutual and slips into slavery or indenture if it turns coercive. Yet within this moral idiom of relatedness, a key aspect of patronage has often been overlooked: the labor it takes to be in relation—that is, the labor it takes to maintain existing social relationships, including those of patronage, and to create new ones, especially in contexts in which the traditional patron has moved on and been replaced by newly monied elites of the same caste. Much of this labor of being in relation was undertaken by women—a fact that was acknowledged by men, making men not just financially but morally obligated to women.

Within this patronage system, which shapes masculine maritime labor across the Indian Ocean, the labor of women, who do not move across the sea with them, is largely invisible. The labor of being in relation involves maneuvering

systems of patronage in ways that benefit their households and kin. It was often women who found new patrons/dhow owners for their male kin to work with; it was women who went to dhow owners to ask for credit during the year; and it was often women who ensured that khalasis were paid the salaries owed to them at the end of the sailing season. Although women did not move with men, their labor of being in relation, which included their movement between homes, social reproduction, care-work, and maintenance of social networks, made the movement of men across the ocean possible. Women thus acted not only as care givers in the absence of male kin but also harnessed their networks, which extended from one household to another to shape family fortunes.

WOMEN IN BETWEEN: PATRONAGE AND THE LABOR OF BEING IN RELATION

Sailors took on debts not only because of the basic need for an income but also to fulfill their roles as fathers, brothers, and husbands.[10] Their duties and moral obligations to kin moored them to the family unit. These obligations to kin coincided with the seasonal monsoonal maritime calendar and accounting year, ensuring the continuation of these cycles. Weddings, for instance, only took place during aakhar. Prior to a wedding in the family, a khalasi would work to save his salary for wedding expenditures. Unable to fully finance the wedding in aakhar with his earnings, he would take a loan from the vessel owner during this period, becoming indebted again and working it off during the next mausam.

The cycle of debt and obligation to kin was best explained to me by Rahim, a serang, whom I met in Sharjah Creek in 2017. Rahim was a good-natured middle-aged Bhadala from Mota Salaya in Mandvi. He had worked as a serang and maalim for over twenty years and hoped one day to become a nakhwa, although he knew that it was unlikely. He had worked for the same owner for many years, but it was the owner's son, Alam, who was the nakhwa now and not Rahim. Alam was young and not as experienced as Rahim, so he relied on him for help with the everyday matters of managing the crew and running the vessel. Clearly, Rahim had settled for the lesser position because of debts to the seth and obligations to kin. As we sat on board the vessel chatting one afternoon, he showed me two videos on his phone and told me, "My daughter was married last year, during aakhar. She's my only girl, so I had told her, whatever you want, you get." The video he shared with me clearly depicted how this promise was fulfilled.

One video panned across his daughter's trousseau—over seventy new, shiny *salwar kameez* (loose trousers with matching tunics), still wrapped in plastic, laid out in a row. Compacts, makeup, hair ties, powder, soaps, shampoos, jewelry—he had brought her everything she might need for many years to come. Another video displayed household goods and furniture for her kitchen and bedroom—a bed, dresser, night table, vases, plastic flowers, stainless steel cooking pots,

pressure cookers, knives, cups. He confessed, "I spent over 300,000 rupees [USD 4,000] on her wedding! I of course had to take a loan from the seth for this, so now I'll be working here, paying it off! What can I say, she's my only daughter?!" Rahim laughed, sounding both proud at having fulfilled his obligation to his daughter and helpless because it had put him further in debt. While the giving of dowry was seen as optional among Muslim Wagher and Bhadala sailors, it was a common practice that marked one's own status and offered comfort and economic and social capital for the bride entering a new home. Rahim, like many others, was fulfilling his duty as a father to care for his daughter, bolstering his and her social status, while entrenching himself further in his role as client to the dhow owner.

But Rahim's obligations to his kin did not end there. I asked him about his sister, who lived in Mandvi and whom I had known for many years. "How is Maryam these days? I went to her new house when I was in Mandvi! It's beautiful!" Maryam had been widowed when she was very young as her husband, who was also a sailor had drowned during a shipwreck. She had three young children at the time and was supported financially by her parents and her brothers while she contributed to the household finances by making *bandhnis*, tie-dyes, for additional income. Maryam had lived with Rahim and their parents for many years, and only now had managed to move into a place of her own, with her son and daughter-in-law.

"You liked the house?! I helped her build it!" Rahim said proudly.

He then added softly, "I took a loan from the seth earlier for that as well. I'm still paying some of it off. After all, we live by the blessings of women." The "blessings" that Rahim was referring to were not just metaphorical. He was making it clear that he understood that his ability to move depended on women who stayed. Indeed, his sister, Maryam, his wife, and daughter had made it possible for him to continue his work. Not only did Maryam take care of their aging parents, but she also helped his wife care for their son, who had a congenital heart condition. Maryam was also especially adept in her duties to the household. As a widow, she did not keep strict *purdah* (seclusion from public spaces) as did many other women in Mota Salaya. Instead, she was the one who ran errands, visited family members, and created a social network that had proved to be advantageous to her family. As a result of her social skills, her two daughters "married well," to prominent dhow owners, and she was able to leverage her connections to secure the same for Rahim's daughter. This had ensured not only his daughter's financial well-being but that of his extended family as well. He and his extended family could now be employed on vessels owned by their daughter's husbands' kin. Maryam's "blessings" thus included not only care work and the work of social reproduction but also her labor of being in relation, which afforded Rahim prestige and status and also enabled his mobility—both physically and socially, especially as Maryam's labor greased the wheels of patronage at every level.

This gendered labor of being in relation turned women at home into mediators (Tadiar 2009)—between homes, between dhow owners and laborers, between interlocutors and anthropologists. Anthropologists such as Annette Weiner (1992) have argued that women are often in control of valued inalienable possessions that make them agents who reproduce social relations. While Weiner's work focuses on women's control of material objects, other feminist theorists have also emphasized the role of women in controlling more intangible assets and their invisible, affective labor and roles in social reproduction. For instance, in a study of translocal householding—that is, "the ways multiple generations in geographically dispersed locations provide livelihood and care" (2018, 1001)—Gidwani and Ramamurthy insist that social reproduction cannot be seen as separate from capitalist modes of production in agrarian societies across the urban-rural divide in South Asia. They cite Cindi Katz, who uses the concept of social reproduction, the "social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis and through which social relations and the material basis of capitalism are renewed" (cited in Gidwani and Ramamurthy 2018, 1000), to suggest that labor is produced through meaningful social processes. Along similar lines, Julia Elyachar has argued that that women's "phatic labor" is essential labor that "produces communicative channels that can potentially transmit not only language but also all kinds of semiotic meaning and economic value" (2010, 453) and is central to creating forms of relation that are often glossed as patronage or corruption. Yet in her work on phatic labor the emphasis is on verbal forms of communication and informational infrastructures rather than on the slow-moving nature of the building of such relations. Elsewhere she argues that market expansion and economic value are made possible through a co-opting of "relational value" understood to be a positive value attached to the "creation, reproduction, and extension of relationships in communities" (Elyachar 2005, 7) naturalized in kinship relations, cosmologies, and deep histories that make communities viable. While relational value can extend to any type of relationship, the labor of being in relation highlights the kind of work that is necessary for producing and maintaining economically crucial patronage relations that are hierarchical yet based on mutual dependence for all.

In Jam Salaya, this labor often falls upon women and involves not just talking but creating a network, providing long-term care, communicating, emotional work, and even critical understandings of one's family position. This labor of being in relation thus contributed to "mobility capital" or assets and competencies (Chatterji 2017) that both anchored men to the home and allowed them to move across the Indian Ocean. The labor of being in relation undertaken by women is essential economically to cultivate, nurture, and tend to the relations of patronage that link men to women and sailors to dhow owners. Yet this labor of being in relation does more than reproduce this system. It allows women to critique the forms of labor to

which their families are subjected; and it is often women, not men, who are able to maneuver this system to their families' advantage even in adverse situations.

CODA: MEDIATING FORMS OF LABOR AND PATRONAGE

Many women recognized that patronage as a form of labor organization could slip into coercion, and they sought alternatives. Shabana, who had first explained to me how debt could lead to bondage, was one such woman. She saw her father, even as a nakhwa, continually in debt and did not want her husband in the same situation. So, she used her natal family connections and, through her brothers, managed to get her husband a job as a captain on a dhow cruise vessel in Dubai. This, she believed, would ensure a regular monthly salary for the household, debt no longer haunting them so long as her husband received his wages. As she explained to me, "In the end, it is only your natal family [*maike*] that help. I have changed the fortunes of Ali's family!" Her husband, Ali, recognized that the only reason he was able to have this job was due to his wife's labor and her kin relations. Unlike many others who worked on cargo dhows, Ali considered himself lucky not to have to brave the dangers of open waters and to be comfortably paid every month as he cruised along the Dubai Creek—the vessel full of tourists and entertainers. Unlike many others, he had moved from debt bondage and patronage to wage labor, a successful migrant in the Gulf. While Ali was well respected within the town, Shabana was often made fun of. Younger men in her family would tell me, "Shabana doesn't do anything! She's like Elina—pawns off the housework to others and then roams around, talking to this one and that!" Shabana's labor of being in relation was not legible to them, until a moment of crisis.

In 2020, just as COVID-19 lockdowns were beginning across the world, Ali decided to leave Dubai to return home. He was afraid of falling ill away from home as a working-class migrant in the UAE, so he took unpaid leave from work. Yet one month stretched into two, and then three, and then four. International flights from India to the UAE had been suspended—as had his wages. As the months stretched on, unexpected expenses began to crop up. His sister became very ill. They had already tapped into some of their savings during the months of unpaid leave. Now whom could they turn to for a loan? They couldn't ask friends or family, since everyone was struggling during the lockdown. Many had already taken loans from their dhow owners. As a wage laborer, Ali couldn't turn to the owner of the tourist boat. They simply did not have that kind of patron-client relationship.

Instead, Shabana realized that she could now leverage her relationship with an anthropologist she had known for many years. And so she turned to me, asking me for a loan for their medical expenses. Although I assured her that the amount was not large and that I did not expect to be paid back, she kept insisting that it was a loan. She even said to me, "If you don't let us pay you back at some point,

then how can we ask you to help us if we need it again later? You must let us pay you back." The many hours she had spent talking to her friend the anthropologist now slipped into a financial obligation in a moment of crisis when other patrons or creditors were not available. Together, we debated the merits of wage labor and patronage systems. "In the end, you do what you can. The rest is up to God!" Shabana would tell me, exasperated that even the seeming security of wage labor was now under threat. As soon as Ali was able to return to the UAE to resume work, Shabana used some of the loan she had received from the anthropologist to open a small shop selling chewing tobacco and other sundries from a window in their home in Jam Salaya. "This corona has taught us that we cannot depend on one person's job for a living," she told me resolutely. Patronage, too, had failed for many others. "How much can one person do? One needs many connections. The government does nothing, of course." Shabana told me on the phone during the lockdowns. Shabana mediated between systems of wage labor, debt peonage, and patronage, ensuring her family's well-being even in times of global crisis, the future always on the horizon.

But if one were not able to get a wage-paying job like Ali, at what point would patronage and debt come to an end? Debts are often only cleared after a death of a sailor. In June 2017, even as Elina awaited her father's return, she received news that Iliyas had had a heart attack while he was working for a dhow owner, Anmol, in Dubai. Her brother, Imran, who had been working as his assistant returned home with his father's body. All three of Iliyas's daughters, and especially Elina, and their mother, Nasreen, were distraught and in mourning. Elina would spend her days in the house that Iliyas had built, quietly chewing tobacco, unable to sleep for days on end. Her oldest sister would tell her, "Go and see the gifts that our father had bought for us through the year." And Elina would refuse. "I don't care about things; I just want my father back." Imran, his son, would spend his days at the graveyard in Salaya, while Nasreen saw streams of visitors at their house, coming to pay their respects and offer condolences to the family.

After the period of mourning was over, Elina and Nasreen refused to let Imran return to work, as he was now the only living male member of the family. They insisted that he remain home. How would Nasreen manage if he met with some calamity at sea? Imran then settled all debts with the owner, Anmol, who also gave the family Iliyas's life insurance claim money (after subtracting debts owed). Imran settled back into life in Salaya, trying his hand at different businesses. Although he was no longer bound to Anmol, Nasreen insisted that they "keep good relations with the owner." She would tell me, "Anmol has been kind to us. Sure, we could have used more money after Iliyas died, but it is enough that Anmol came to see me from Bombay and offered condolences. It is the relationship that is important." The debt was gone, but the relationship of patronage and its obligations remained. Nasreen, who had long been keeping the family together with her own labor, was highly attuned to this. The debt may vanish, but the moral

obligation and relationship does not, and this connection could easily be activated again in a future time of need.

Anthropologists since Mauss have been acutely aware of how relations of credit and debt build "group solidarity," as well as hierarchy and dominance. Indeed, historians have argued that debt created unity and solidarity across different parts of the Indian Ocean. In many parts of the Indian Ocean littoral, however, debt relations were part of broader relationships of caste and class-based patronage that continue to be important long after debts have been settled. A focus on the form of debt—the relation between creditor and debtor—often obscures these other relations. It veils the ways in which debt functions through patronage, kinship, and the labor of women who often sustain these relationships. These women act as brokers and mediators for this monsoonal relationality, which has long tied the Indian Ocean together. It is through the labor of women who stay home that an Indian Ocean mobility through the ghos is made possible. This focus on women's labor of being in relation indicates, as feminist economic anthropologists and historians have long argued, that the economic and the social cannot be separated from each other (Bear et al. 2015). Instead, by focusing on the entanglements of seemingly unrelated relationalities, binaries such as nature/culture, stasis/change, mobility/immobility fall away, making visible a complex set of production processes that depend on the labor of both those who leave and those who stay across the Indian Ocean.

Epilogue

Even as vahan sailors voyage out to sea, risking their bodies and their lives to sustain kin who moor them to homes in Gujarat, the right-wing BJP government in India is actively planning to destroy them completely. They are doing so not only through the legal violence of liberalization and hypersecuritization, which has pushed vahans into a precarious shadow economy; not only through the closure of dhow ports due to crony-capitalism or the policies of so-called animal rights activists that have demonized Muslims; not only via a failure to support communities grappling with the slow violence of climate change and global pandemics such as COVID-19—but also through the more immediate violence of Hindutva. Although Bhadalas, Waghers, and other Muslims in India were racialized and marginalized in Hindu nationalist discourses even before Partition, new threats are on the horizon with the deepening of authoritarianism in India under Modi, the BJP, and RSS. This became painfully clear to me as I visited Yusuf's family in Mandvi in September 2017 when he was working onboard a vahan in the Persian Gulf.

On that visit to Mandvi, I met Hamid, a retired Bhadala nakhwa. He had spent much of his life working for a dhow-owning family who had made their fortune transporting dates and diesel during the Gulf Wars. After retiring, he spent his days outside the offices of the vahan owner, reminiscing of his times at sea and doing odd jobs. I had been looking for someone to help me translate maalim ni pothis—seafarer's logs from the seventeenth century. A few days after our chance meeting in the shipyard, I shared these with Hamid, who was able to decipher some of the seafaring terms in the text. But much of what was written remained incomprehensible to him. "I know someone who can help you—this is all he does!

Translate old documents, you'll see." A naïve, trusting, and earnest anthropologist armed with treasured archival documents, I sat on his motorbike one morning as he led me to the home of Mahesh Jani, a local businessman.

As we drove on the highway that connected Mandvi to the regional headquarters of the state government in Bhuj, Hamid pulled into a large, quiet field. Sensing my trepidation, Hamid got off his bike and reassured me, "This is where we will find Mahesh." But there was no one in sight. Hamid then pointed to a little concrete structure with a saffron flag on top—a temple. We entered this temple to Ram and saw Mahesh napping in a corner. Hamid nudged him awake and introduced me, explaining that I was looking to translate old manuscripts. Mahesh flipped through the manuscript and made a phone call. A few minutes later, an elderly man named Ratanji entered the temple.

Ratanji was a chronicler, or *bhat*, from a caste of hereditary genealogists who travelled across Kachchh, collecting oral and written family genealogies. He could read and write old Gujarati, Modi script, decipher astrological charts, and knew the ways in which chroniclers before him encoded texts. Flipping through the manuscripts I had in hand, he said, "Of course, I can translate this for you." Mahesh smiled, pleased to have been a successful patron. "Ratanji has been living on my property for the past two years, translating documents. Would you like to see?" Always curious, I said yes. Mahesh, Ratanji, and Hamid then led me down a path through the fields into a two-story concrete house, still under construction. Mahesh explained, "I am building this house for people like Ratanji. He sits here all day long, doing these translations." Ratanji's room was filled with manuscripts that he translated by hand into large ledgers.

Ratanji opened one of these manuscripts. Beautiful swerves of handwriting ran through the pages, line by line, uninterrupted. Ratanji then explained, "These are family genealogies. Lists of people's names." As I flipped through the pages, they nearly crumbled at my touch. The text was interspersed with symbols and figures. One looked like a hill, another was an ox, and yet another was a large, beautiful horse, decorated for battle or perhaps a wedding. "See this symbol? It means that this person moved," Ratanji said pointing at a little bump drawn between two names. As Ratanji kept turning pages decoding the text for me, Mahesh received a phone call and left us, Hamid following him. Ratanji then opened his notebook and showed me his neat and impeccable translations. In blue and red ink, Ratanji had carefully sketched out a family genealogy, lines linking names and generations. I stared at the neat lines handwritten by Ratanji, comparing them to the beautiful, long lists and drawings of the original manuscript. *Why are they doing this?* I wondered.

Ratanji saw the puzzled look on my face and immediately said, "We are looking at when Hindu names turned into Muslim ones here in Mandvi. This is for *gharwapsi*." Ratanji beamed. I stared at him, shocked into silence. These names were being traced to forcefully "reconvert" Muslims and other religious minorities en masse to Hinduism, a project that the Hindu right-wing, led by the RSS, has long

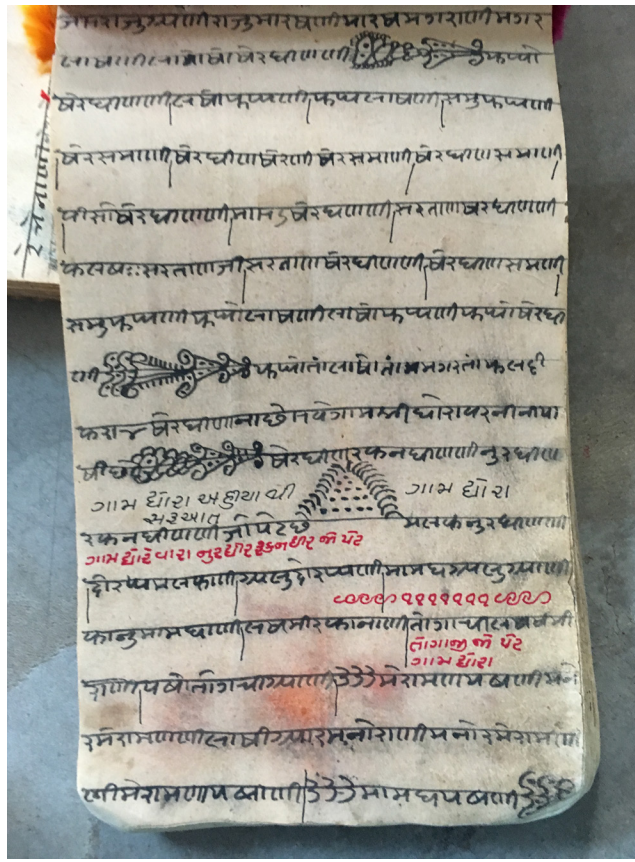


FIGURE 21. A genealogy in Mandvi, 2017. Photo by author.

supported as one way to create a Hindu Rashtra, or state. According to them, all religious minorities in India were once Hindus and can be brought back "home" to Hinduism in order to belong in the nation. This process extends beyond a "reconversion" to Hinduism and entails rituals of purification since religious minorities are seen as "defiled" by other religions—ghar-wapsi, "a reiteration of caste, rather than religion" (Vijayan and Gabriel 2015, 23). This forced conversion program has already led to violence and death (Katju 2015). It may lead to genocide.

Ratanji excitedly continued, "Mahesh is our RSS man here in Mandvi." I continued to turn the pages of the manuscript, staring at sheet after sheet, biting my lip. For Mahesh and the RSS, these genealogies could become weaponized to violently erase entire communities. I was desperate to leave Mahesh's half-built office and half-made plans and never return. But then Mahesh and Hamid reappeared, and Mahesh began to narrate a history of Indian Ocean Mandvi. "Before there was Mandvi, there was another port city here, that traded with the Romans. It's all

silted up now but every now and then, villagers find antiquities—amphoras, coins, and even skeletal remains." Mahesh was referring to the ancient port city of Nani Rayan, dating to the first century CE, which lay three kilometers from Mandvi. "The oldest temple we have in the region is there. Come tomorrow afternoon and I will take you there," Mahesh said. I stared at him, still tongue-tied by the thought of the RSS's plans for forced mass conversions. I could not confront Mahesh in that moment of shock and fear. I looked at the time on my phone and turned to Hamid, making an excuse, "I must meet someone for lunch. Can we leave?" Hamid nodded. "Come back tomorrow," Mahesh said pointedly, looking at Hamid.

When we were safely back on Hamid's motorbike, I began to quiz him, panicking, "Did you know? They are doing this for ghar-wapsi. As a Muslim, aren't you alarmed? What will they do to everyone in Mota Salaya?!" I exclaimed. Hamid laughed. "No, no, it's not like that, that's not what they are doing. Mahesh is a good man." He waved his hand, vaguely dismissing my worries. I was dumbstruck and didn't know how to trust him. "But we must go back tomorrow. I'll take you," Hamid insisted as he dropped me off at my hotel.

I spent the evening staring at the two pictures of the manuscripts I had taken on my phone, thinking of how these genealogies that traced caste and religious identity could so easily be harnessed for large-scale violence. Yet, I wanted to know more—how did the RSS function in Mandvi? What were Mahesh's plans? And why was he insisting on taking me to the temple? Having been shocked into silence that afternoon, I thought that if I returned, I might be able to learn more and perhaps even counter some of Mahesh's claims.

The next afternoon, Mahesh drove Hamid and me to Nani Rayan. This was an archeological site that had no excavations or buildings; it was just an empty field where pottery shards and remains often resurfaced. Not far from the main site was an old temple. Mahesh insisted that we stop there. "This is the oldest temple in the region—you must see it." Walking up the stairs that led to multiple rooms where idols of many deities had been carefully tended to, I could feel the hair on my skin stand on end. "This temple is many centuries old. After all, before the Muslims, everyone here was a Hindu. This was a Hindu land. Nani Rayan is even written about in the *Periplus*. Hindus were here first." Mahesh had simply used Hindu nationalist ideas to reinterpret a text and a port city from the first century. For Mahesh, a member of the RSS, the past was mined for a decidedly Hindutva future. Mahesh had found his evidence and wanted me to be his witness. There was much I tried to tell him about his reframing of history in this way: that Hinduism did not exist in the way he assumed it did in that period; that the existence of a temple did not suggest that Muslims were not part of this land; that Mandvi's history was a complex layering of Hindus, Muslims, and many diverse communities having arrived from elsewhere. But my narrations of the past did not convince him.[1]

I wrung my hands and told Mahesh, "It's getting late. We should head back." As we drove toward Mandvi, I stared at the sun drowning into the horizon before us,

searching for a different horizon than the one Mahesh envisioned. But even as I had expected him to drop me off at my hotel, he insisted on driving us back into the temple in his fields. As we got out of the car, I saw Ratanji finishing his prayers, ringing the temple bell that echoed ominously.

Distracted by the sound of the bell, I almost didn't notice a man standing before us wearing formal pants and a button-down shirt. He had been waiting for us. "Who are you? And why are you here?" he asked me brusquely, and then told me, "I am KB Charan from the CID [Criminal Investigations Department], come sit and talk to me." As we sat on a bench outside the temple, I laughed nervously and explained that I was an academic. Mahesh then whipped out his phone, pulling up my faculty biography online. "It's okay, she's only a scholar, see?" Mahesh continued to search for me on Facebook, Hamid watching him intently. My wits finally about me, I remembered all my posts against the RSS on my profile. Hiding my phone behind my back, I began to stealthily delete my name on Facebook and change security settings.

"So you think I'm a spy or something?" I asked KB, laughing to distract him.

He was not amused. "You think this is a joke?! Do you know where you are? Anything can happen to you."

A threat. I looked around me, at the temple, the empty field, and the four men encircling me. Mahesh then interrupted, "She's fine, she's fine. See?" He held up an old bio and picture of mine that detailed my dissertation research in East Africa. Mahesh was pretending to defend me when he was the one who had obviously planned this interrogation in the first place.

KB then interjected, "Show me your Aadhaar [national ID] card, now!" I quietly acquiesced. "You're Hindu! You're one of us!" KB said looking at my card.

"My family is . . . Punjabi," I responded. "I'm just writing a book about vahans, that's all. I'm interested in history," I said, trying to ease the palpable tension and yet hold my defiance.

"But you know all these sailors?! How?" KB asked. I explained to him that I had arrived in Mandvi after doing research on vahans in Mombasa.

"But you know anything can move on these vahans. Weapons, RDX. It's happened before, in the 1990s," Mahesh informed me. He insisted, based on no evidence, that weapons used during riots in Bombay in 1991 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid had passed through vahans. I remembered these riots well. Although I was just seven years old when they began, memories of smokestacks of burning Muslim neighborhoods enveloping the skyline and stories of Muslim families being hunted out of their own homes by the Hindu right-wing Shiv Sena returned to me in flashes. Many Muslim friends did not return to school and left the country amid the devastating violence that ripped Bombay apart and changed it forever.[2] I blinked into the present.

"How did you do all this research?! You're a Hindu woman!" KB asked again.

"I simply spoke to people." I responded, vaguely.

"But you're one of us [a Hindu]! You need to come work for us. If you have gotten this far on your own, imagine what you could do with our support."

I responded as politely as I could, afraid: "I'm fine, thank you. I already have a job, as a professor in California," realizing that admitting that I was agnostic despite my name marking me as Hindu wouldn't help.

"But you should work for us," KB repeated himself.

Hamid, who had been a silent accomplice until then, interjected, "She writes everything down in these notebooks and has a computer." I turned to him, betrayed.

"You must share your notes with us," KB said.

I deflected, "I don't have them here, and it's getting late. I have to go."

KB then turned to Hamid and instructed him, "Bring her back here tomorrow."

Surprised at the camaraderie between these Hindu nationalist agents and Hamid, a Bhadala Muslim, I dared to ask, "But how is he working with you both?" All three of them began to laugh.

Mahesh smiled and said conspiratorially, "Don't worry about that, *woh purana paapi hai* [he's an old sinner]." Hamid, once a smuggler, had become an intelligence agent.

I sat in silent rage through the ride back to my hotel. I ran into my room and locked the door, propping a chair against it for what felt like extra protection. I then called Yusuf's brother, Ahmed, and said, "I think I might leave tomorrow. Something has come up." Even as I made this call, I noticed an odd, new disturbance on the line. Our conversation was fuzzy. This was not a network issue. My phone had been tapped. Unable to sleep that night, with the first sign of light, I took all my luggage to Yusuf's house. As I entered, I ran into the arms of Yusuf's sister-in-law and told the whole family what had happened the previous day. They stood there, unsurprised, repeating, "We told you everyone in this town is suspicious, all the time." I sobbed, worried that the CID would trace me back to their home and cause difficulties. I decided to return immediately to Bombay, safe with my notes and laptop.

Enroute to the airport in Bhuj, I received a call. My mother. "Someone just called for you from IBM, a KB Charan. I gave him your number." Despite the fearful tears that had been streaming down my face all morning, I laughed. Although KB had used my Aadhaar card to call the number on it (my mother's) to track me down, my mother had disbelievingly misheard KB from the CID. So much the better. But from then on, the messages and calls from KB would not stop. "You're one of us, join us. Join us." He would call and try and persuade me, even as I repeatedly dismissed him, saying that I was not interested and wanted to live far away, in California.

Over the next few days, I noticed a faint white noise, the sound of operator voices interrupting my every phone call. My phone had been tapped. I wiped my phone. Immediately, KB sent me link on WhatsApp to a site that looked like a

digital library. But the site was a fake, and my phone was compromised again. I learned to keep my phone conversations boring. I made plans to drink. To shop. To work out. I would wear them down with my boring life every day. Still, KB kept calling on WhatsApp to check in about my whereabouts. I finally blocked him on WhatsApp and got a new telephone number and phone. I went to the police in Bombay and narrated the incident. "You should have complained in Mandvi! We cannot do anything here," I was told, even as I explained that the police in Mandvi were likely involved. But the police in Bombay remained unmoved. Lawyers explained to me that legally, KB would need documents and permission to take my notes. No such document arrived.

Years later, even as the BJP government under Modi erases the Mughals from government textbooks and seeks to rewrite the history of Gandhi's assassination at the hands of Savarkar, an RSS militant, I am taken back to Nani Rayan and Mahesh's insistence that Hindus were here first; his insistence that Muslims must become Hindus to belong to the nation; his insistence on rewriting history, assuming that anyone with a Hindu name must acquiesce to this state-led project of Hindutva. That Muslims were always a threat, especially those of lower-caste and class status who had already been pushed out of the frame of Indian civic life. This episode is sadly not unique in India today, where violence against Muslims, Dalits, and other minorities unfolds daily, with lynchings; the incarceration of activists and scholars, such as Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam; the Bhima-Koregaon 16; and many other incidents now an everyday occurrence. Despite large-scale protests such as the farmer's protests of 2020–2021, draconian laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act continue to be used to silence dissent. The revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave Kashmir some degree of autonomy, has also paved the way for the corporate settlers in Kashmir, already under militarized Indian occupation since 1947. The planned implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) would exclude and dispossess Muslims in India of citizenship. Even as widespread protests against the CAA and NRC at places like Shaheen Bagh in Delhi were shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hindu right-wing continues to conjure up the past in the present for a devastating future for the nation, one in which Muslims and other minorities are violently erased.[3]

But it is not yet the end of times.

There is much I could say to counter Mahesh and the RSS's narratives of Mandvi's Indian Ocean history. And indeed, this book, which highlights how Indian Ocean trade is made possible by the labor of Muslim Bhadala and Wagher seafarers, should be read as a counterpoint to Hindu nationalist visions of Indian Ocean pasts, presents, and futures. I could also theorize how anthropologists often end up as suspects, spies, intermediaries, or collaborators in the "field."[4] But in these last pages, I center my interlocutors and friends, who continue to confront Hindu nationalists who now control the Indian state.

Yusuf and his family were unfazed by Mahesh, the RSS, and their plans for Muslims in Mandvi and beyond. "We will keep ourselves safe," they insisted. They were also not worried about me being surveilled. Rather, they urged me to return to Mandvi the following year for Yusuf's eldest daughter Fauziya's wedding to a Bhadala sailor who lived next door. When I returned for these celebrations, they insisted that I stay with them in their home and did not let me wander alone in town, continuing the relationship of hospitality. After Fauziya's wedding, Yusuf was arrested by the Iranian coast guard during the COVID-19 pandemic as he was attempting to gather resources for his youngest daughter, Anisa's, wedding. In 2022, Anisa was married to another Bhadala seafarer from Mandvi.

Yusuf and his family, like other seafarers, are intimately familiar with the forces that shape their past, present, and future. The vahans they labor on are crucial intermediaries in global supply chains and have become the lifeline for many who live amid conflict, sanctions, and blockades. Their invisiblized labor brings food, household goods, electronics, and medicines to Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen, even as they themselves face the dangers of climate change, conflict, and Hindu nationalist governmental policies that actively undermine not only their livelihood but also their very lives.

And yet, these sailors contend with their marginality by voyaging out. Vahans move flexibly between fractured sovereignties, extracting small profits, ghos by ghos. Sailors continue to voyage, eking out a life in the shadows despite what lurks beyond the horizon. Their earnings settle into homes in the Gulf of Kachchh, the women whom sailors leave behind laboring to make their mobility across the Indian Ocean possible. As I have argued in this book, racial capitalism has expropriated and conscripted dhows into a shadow economy. The racialization of Muslims has intensified today, even as postcolonial states such as India perform and enact territorial sovereignty through the tight control of borders and movement, whether on land or at sea. Vahan seafarers extract value and profit through geopolitical arbitrage in the interstices of an Indian Ocean fractured by nation-states, building on long histories of arbitrage as a form of capitalist accumulation. Yet their voyages are made possible through moorings, material and social practices such as hospitality that enable them to "do business." As they arrive in a new port, they build upon long histories of connections that destabilize categories such as guest and host, sovereignty always overlapping and braided with capitalism.

The view of capitalism from the dhow is not linear. Waves of history continue to shore up the Indian Ocean like the tides, offering up a temporality for capital that is circular, not linear, countering developmentalist notions of progress. The voyage or ghos becomes a unit through which to trace these circulatory movements of capital through intermediaries such as the vahan, which connects those on the margins of global shipping and capital. Yet this mobility is contingent on moorings: spatial, material, and temporal.

FIGURE 22. "The Window to the Sea" in the dargah of Shah Murad Bukhari. Mundra, 2018. Photo by author.

Moorings as material and social practices are not fixed. While this book enumerates some of these moorings such as hospitality, shadow economies, arbitrage, Sufi notions of divine sovereignty, and patronage, such moorings are contingent. They anchor movement to port cities in Kenya, India, Somalia, and the UAE, linking these different sites. Dhow sailors and traders draw flexibly upon these moorings, longer histories of movement, religious beliefs, and forms of relationality to produce new forms of value even as they become a detritus of global shipping and capitalism. While I conceptualize some of these moorings here, there are others that might be drawn upon in other moments, for different voyages.

Even as the social fabric of these Muslim Bhadala and Wagher sailors could be ripped apart by the forces of Hindutva, sailors, like the dhow itself, remain flexible, altering routes and strategies while still being attached to multiple moorings, which they might draw upon again in the future. Two days after Fauziya's wedding, I visited the shrine of Shah Murad Bukhari in Mundra again, this time with Yusuf's family. We sat silently together in this dargah where seafarers offered up models of vahans to the saint, continuing to seek his patronage as they voyaged out to sea. Indeed, a vahan model made by Yusuf was displayed near the tomb of the saint who ruled this corner of Kachchh, his divine sovereignty still making

ghos possible. Only a few kilometers away are two ports. One is India's largest port, the Adani Port run by the Adani Group, with close ties to the BJP. The other is the dhow bandar, the only port through which vahans can now depart India for elsewhere. A descendent of Shah Murad Bukhari is the only shipping agent for this port, his office not far from the tomb of the saint. As we sat by the "Window to the Sea," a portal for the saint's miracles, Yusuf turned to me and said resolutely, "We are still here."

NOTES

INTRODUCTION. MOORINGS AND VOYAGES: THE VIEW FROM THE DHOW

1. The voyage has been a central theme for academic and literary works on the Middle Passage and slavery in the Atlantic world. Similarly, in Indian Ocean scholarship on coolitude, the voyage has been understood to be a space of trauma and possibility for indentured labor (Carter and Torabully 2002). This book focuses on a particular type of voyage, the ghos, that has long been used by Kachchhi seafarers to account for their life of labor at sea.

2. The methods of construction and materials used to build these vessels changed over time and across space (Agius 2005, 2008; Gilbert 2004; Prins 1965). Varadrajan (1980) has focused specifically on indigenous forms of navigation from Gujarat.

3. "Country Craft: Registration of Dhows, Sept 1940-Jul 1941." British Library, India Office Records and Private Papers. BL IOR/R/20/B/939 File 111/3.

4. The term *lascar* has been used to refer to Indian seafarers employed on European ships, and is also occasionally used by Bhadalas and Waghers to refer to laborers, khalasis on board vahans. There is a vast literature on Indian seafarers laboring on European ships in the colonial period—for example, see Ahuja (2006), Balachandran (2012), Fisher (2006).

5. Banaji's (2020) work is useful in pushing back against orthodox Marxist literature that traces capitalism to the rise of industrial capital. Banaji examines how, from the sixteenth century, a form of commercial capitalism arose in Europe that was competitive, diverse, and flexible and eventually came to be bound up with the state.

6. This is not exclusive to dhow shipping. Recent scholarship on "container economies" has emphasized how maritime logistics are also made possible through dependency expressed through existing systems of value, kinship, race, ethnicity, and other seemingly non-economic factors (Leivestad and Markkula 2021).

7. Tirthankar Roy (1999) has also argued that old modes of manufacturing were radically reorganized in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India.

8. J. C. Van Leur (1955) famously argued that premodern trade in the Indian Ocean consisted of peddlers. Similarly, Alan Villiers, an Australian who voyaged on a dhow from the Persian Gulf to East Africa between 1938 and 1939, characterized dhows as peddlers in an age of steam run by "natives" for their bazaars (1948, 401). Notions of the bazaar have been shaped by the work of Clifford Geertz, who understood it as a peddling trade where "goods flow through the market channels at a dizzying rate, not as broad torrents but as hundreds of little trickles, funneled through an enormous number of transactions" (1963, 31). For Geertz, the bazaar occupied an interstitial place that was highly disorganized in comparison to the seemingly rational space of the firm. Geertz understood the bazaar as an indigenous, precapitalist, and even protocapitalist form of exchange, at first isolated and then absorbed into the capitalist world economy.

9. Fahad Bishara has argued that pearling dhows in the Persian Gulf in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be understood to be part of a "maritime bazaar —a site of finance, of contracting, of wealth accumulation, and of capitalism more broadly" (2021b, 516). Indeed, the dhow economy even today can be viewed as the maritime transportation wing of the "bazaar economy," enabling more "modern" forms of exchange while being subsumed by them. As Rajat Kanta Ray (1995) has argued, the bazaar economy became an intermediate sphere that enabled the expansion of European-dominated capitalist economies in Asia and Africa. However, Markovits (2000) notes that Indian merchants were not just middlemen; they created different spaces for themselves for their own ends, even as the colonial state played a decisive role in the making of bazaars in the nineteenth century (see Yang 1998). Ritu Birla (2009) has shown how Marwari capitalists were regulated by the British colonial state and rendered simultaneously illicit and complicit with state forms through colonial market governance. Much of the literature on bazaar economies examines how the bazaar became a site that colonists sought to reform, reshape, and regulate (Bayly 1996). Recent work has focused on the shape of this vernacular trade, through legal cultures (Bishara and Wint 2021) as well as gift economies (Choudhury 2023). Elements of the bazaar, such as financial instruments like *hundi*/*hawala* and *arhatiyas*, or commission agents, continue to facilitate exchange in markets in South Asia today. The bazaar thus continues to play an intermediary role, being a link between local, transregional, and global markets.

10. Anthropologists since Polanyi have long argued that the economy is embedded in a range of social institutions. Feminist political economists have pushed back against representations of the "economic" as a separate domain, arguing not only that the disembedding of market and nonmarket relations is illusory but also that studies of capitalism must attend to the multiple contradictions and complexities of time and space (Appel 2019; Bear et al. 2015; Yanagisako 2002). Indeed, capitalism needs to be understood as "a difference rather than a sameness" (Gibson-Graham 2006, 14) such that "capitalism . . . incorporates contingencies without forming a single, homogenous structure; indeed, that is the genius of its spread" (Tsing 2009, 152).

11. After all, capital "must have its origin both in circulation and not in circulation" (Marx 1990, 268).

12. Many thanks to Chris Gratien for making this connection.

13. Marx wrote that "within the circuit of capital and the commodity metamorphoses that form a section of it, the metabolism of social labour takes place. This metabolism may require a motion of the products in space, their real movement from one location to another" (Marx 1992, 226).

14. Commercial exchanges across the Indian Ocean date back to 5000 BCE, and the different littorals were linked by trade by the beginning of the Common Era (Pearson 2003; Bose 2006; Chaudhuri 1985); an early voyage was recorded in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, dated 100 BCE–50 CE. Long before dhows assumed their modern (or medieval) form, seafarers mastered the monsoon trade winds. The rise of Islam in the seventh century stimulated commerce and trade, the spread of the faith being entangled with commercial aspirations as Muslims came to control trade routes, sea lanes, and customs revenues (Risso 1995, 14). Between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, the Indian Ocean, together with the Mediterranean, became a world-system of trade and exchange in which no single political power dominated (Abu-Lughod 1989).

15. The Indian Ocean birthed maritime law along the contours of imperial interests. For example, Hugo Grotius penned *Mare Liberum* (On the Freedom of the High Seas) at the behest of the Dutch East India Company to defend a Dutch admiral's capture of the Portuguese carrack the *Santa Catarina* at the entrance of the Singapore Straits in 1603. Grotius wrote to support Dutch rights to trade alongside the Portuguese in the East Indies (Van Ittersum 2006), his ideas of the freedom to navigate at sea parsing out jurisdiction from ownership and recognizing that "multiple spatial relations of sovereignty were integral to empire" (Benton 2010, 132).

16. Pearson argues of the mid-eighteenth century that "a long process began which led over the next hundred years to a very dramatic change in the history of the ocean and its peoples" (2003, 190). Yet this was a gradual process. Eric Tagliacozzo has argued that Great Britain came to dominate the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century, moving from mercantilism to controlling local means of production on land, the process unfolding gradually and "often *not* at the point of a gun" (2002, 77).

17. As Thomas Metcalf (2007) has argued, Indians moved across the Indian Ocean between 1860 and 1920, making India the node from which British colonialism was made possible in the Indian Ocean. Despite British dominance, others also continued to traverse the Indian Ocean. Engseng Ho has argued that both imperial powers and the Hadhrami diaspora "were very mobile affairs and traveled the same routes, often in the same vessels" (2006, 248).

18. Mandvi grew in prominence in the eighteenth century with the decline of Surat (Das Gupta 1979; Nadri 2008).

19. Viswanath (2014) focuses on how agrarian systems depended on unfree labor. Rao (2009) has argued that caste was constitutive of capitalist modernity.

1. STRANGERS ON SHORE: HOSPITALITY AND SOVEREIGNTY IN MOMBASA'S OLD PORT

1. This is a staple on board vahans and in Bhadala and Wagher homes.

2. It is perhaps for this reason that Candea and da Col (2012, S3) suggest that hospitality is the "anthropological innate" and, not unlike the gift, is bound up with central questions that concern anthropologists such as identity, individual and collective belonging, kinship, exchange, and sovereignty.

3. Much has been written about caste and diaspora. Yengde (2015) is a good starting point on caste and Indian diasporas in East and South Africa. In North America and the UK, activist groups such as Equality Labs have mobilized against caste discrimination in the South Asian diaspora (Soundararajan 2022).

4. Precolonial historical connections between India and East Africa have been explored by Alpers (1976), Machado (2014), Pearson (1998), Mahajan (2023a), and Subrahmanyam (2019), among others.

5. As the Portuguese sought to expand control over East Africa, Mombasa and Pate turned to Oman for assistance against Portuguese incursions. By 1652, Omanis and their mercenaries from the Makran coast were seen all over East Africa.

6. In writing about cross-cultural trade, Philip Curtin (1984) has argued that trade diasporas, typically merchants who settle elsewhere for the purpose of trade, became cross-cultural brokers in plural societies. While there is much work on merchants as part of trade diasporas, seafarers who do the labor of transporting goods and are thus typically itinerant, do not always fit into the notion of a "diaspora." However, in Mombasa, Bhadalas who were once seafarers and settled in Mombasa were part of such a trade diaspora, but seafarers such as Yusuf, who continued to be itinerant, were classified differently.

7. This includes a diverse group of seafarers not only on dhows but also steamships. As Janet Ewald (2000, 2010) shows, East African seamen, both enslaved and free, were crucial to enabling the creation of an Indian Ocean world, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

8. The Old Port of Mombasa has seen much dhow traffic. In his time in Mombasa, Villiers (1940) recognized that the dhow trade in Mombasa saw no sign of dwindling: in 1937, 214 dhows entered the port, increasing to 241 in 1938. Dhows from Sur and Bendeni would carry dried fish and mango to Zanzibar; dhows from Kuwait and Persia would bring general cargo and passengers from Hadhramaut, and vessels from Somalia also docked there. Salt, dried fish, earthenware, tiles, carpets, and all kinds of trading goods were brought into the port, as were passengers. However, there was a distinction between the Arab dhows and the Indian vessels from Kutch and Malabar; while the Arabs would make trading voyages, the Indian vessels would be employed on charter by Indian merchants in East Africa. This practice of chartering continues even today, although the long-standing connections between East Africa and Kachchh seem to have dwindled in scale. Martin and Martin (1978) also provide details for the trade in the 1970s.

9. Established in 1978, the KPA is a successor to the East African Harbor Cooperation, which used to oversee the ports of Tanga, Dar es Salaam, and Mombasa for the East African Community (EAC), established jointly by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. With the collapse of the EAC in 1977, the administration of all Kenyan ports fell to the Kenyan government. Thus the KPA was born to maintain, develop, and operate all of Kenya's ports, especially that of Kilindini in Mombasa, the largest port in East Africa, and the Old Port.

10. Anastasia Piliavsky (2020) has called feeding central to the role of patrons. However, in this case, it is not the patron who feeds but the client. Yet the idea of reciprocity remains. While a bribe is usually seen as involuntary and a gift is seen as a more voluntary form, the distinction between the two is blurry.

11. As Hofmeyr (2022) demonstrates, customs officials in the colonial era had an intimate relationship with objects that moved dockside as part of the hydrocolonial project. These intimacies remain even today, as does the project of controlling movement between land and sea.

12. This encounter can be seen as one way to engage what Antoinette Burton has called a "variety of histories of the tense and tender relationships between Indians and Africans" (2016, 17). Scholarship has highlighted the complex relationships and processes

of racialization between and among Indians and Africans in the Indian Ocean world (Gupta et. al 2010; Hawley 2008; Lee 2010; Prashad 2001). Yet many of these works tend to highlight processes of racialization in the context of intellectuals or political actors in the colonial and postcolonial moment, especially in the context of the Bandung Conference of 1955, when leaders of newly independent Asian and African countries met in Indonesia in an attempt to build the nonaligned movement. In contrast, this interaction took place amongst equal partners in a trade network who saw each other as fellow Muslims and operated through cooperation and conflict, with questions of race surfacing only occasionally. Matters of race from the perspective of these seafaring and trading communities require further research, as the categories of *brown* and *black, African* and *Indian* are blurry and variegated based on caste, class, ethnic origin, religious background, and the space of encounter. This is especially salient given that Bhadalas like Yusuf were accustomed to working with Siddi sailors of African origin who were also part of the seafaring community of his hometown Mandvi. Moreover, these categories are further complicated on the Swahili coast, where residents of Swahili and Somali descent were racialized as "non-Native" in colonial legal classifications, their indigeneity and "Africanness" a subject of debate in politics, popular discourse, and academic work in Kenya and beyond even today.

13. Hospitality makes fieldwork possible, with the anthropologist always a guest (Herzfeld 1997); and as Dresch (2000) suggests, although hospitality is a form of control, the generosity involved in hosting a guest cannot be discounted.

2. DHOW ITINERARIES: RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE MAKING OF SHADOW ECONOMIES IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

1. Glück (2017) traces the emergence of the "counterterror state" in Kenya. Counterterrorism has also led to a transformation of the governance of refugees and ethnoracialized Muslims, especially Somalis and Swahilis in Kenya (Brankamp and Glück 2022). As Samar Al-Bulushi (2021) argues, transnational policing in the grounded geography of Kenya has racialized Muslims in Kenya as citizen-suspects.

2. In September 2011, two British tourists were kidnapped by Al-Shabaab in Lamu East County in northern Kenya. Three weeks later, a French woman, Marie Dedieu, living in Lamu was also kidnapped by Somali gunmen. Operation Linda Nchi came on the heels of these kidnappings.

3. A 2011 report by the United Nations Security Council's Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea stated that revenues from Kismayu and secondary ports such as Merka and Baraawe generated between USD 35 million and 50 million for Al-Shabaab, of which at least USD 15 million was based on the trade of charcoal and sugar (United Nations Security Council 2010, 28).

4. While there have been many debates about the relationship of the formal economy to the informal, scholars such as Bhattacharyya (2005), Das and Poole (2004), De Genova (2002), Hansen and Stepputat (2006), Heyman (1999, 2013), and Portes et al. (1989) have emphasized the links between the two, with the informal economy supporting the official, regulated, formal economy. Africanists (Bayart et al. 1999; Chalfin 2010; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Hart 1973; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000; Nordstrom 2004, 2007; Roitman 2005) have especially focused on the relationship between formal and informal economies.

5. Studies of state sovereignty have generally traced the concept as having emerged from the treaties of Westphalia in the 1640s, where it was envisaged that the state would be the sole sovereign authority over a given territory, later giving rise to an international system of mutually recognized sovereign territorial states (Hinsley 1986). Yet sovereignty in practice is not fixed; it is contested and continually negotiated on the ground (Howland and White 2008, 2).

6. Anthropologists such as Jean and John Comaroff have pointed to the tenuous nature of sovereignty in postcolonial states, these states being characterized by "partial sovereignties" because of their historical predicaments (2006, 35). Effective legal sovereignty, although ideal, is not tenable in postcolonial states, where pirates, bandits, criminals, smugglers, and warlords operate as informal sovereigns, as Hansen and Stepputat (2006) argue. These figures are also intimately tied to the state, as Das and Poole (2004), Schneider and Schneider (1999), and others argue.

7. In the context of British and Dutch colonial Southeast Asia, Eric Tagliacozzo (2005) has poignantly argued that border formation and transgression in the form of smuggling went hand in hand. These practices of border making were ultimately about the tying together of sovereignty and territoriality.

8. Indeed, as Janet Roitman argues, illegal yet licit practices were seen by smugglers in the Chad Basin as one way to participate in "prevailing modes of accumulation and prevailing methods of governing the economy" (2005, 249), while illegal practices were seen not as countervailing state policies but as deeply imbricated within them, and as legitimate forms of work. As she argues, although illegal and yet licit practices have a code, it is not a moral code with a clear or definite set of laws but instead is made up of heterogenous practices that gesture to the rationalities of the power relations in operation in specific contexts.

9. As Judith Scheele (2012) argues of the cross-border trade in the Sahara, official distinctions between legal and illegal trade are largely meaningless. When distinctions between halal and haram trades were made by participants on moral grounds, these morality distinctions were less about Islamic principles of haram and halal than about social ties. As she argues, "trade becomes 'immoral' when it ignores 'proper' social ties, hierarchies, and regional control, or allows people to circumvent or even to publicly challenge them" (2012, 123). Yet social standings of the moral and pious are made possible through trades considered haram, such as drug smuggling, and even drug smugglers employed their wealth to achieve social and religious standing.

10. Edward Alpers (2013) has argued that the incorporation of the suppression of the slave trade and slavery into the struggle against piracy was crucial to the making of a "British Lake" in the Indian Ocean from the nineteenth century onward.

11. These treaties included the Moresby Treaty of 1822, which forbade the sale of slaves to Europeans by subjects of the Imam of Muscat—with an additional article being added in 1839 that prohibited the export of slaves to the east and south of a line drawn from Cape Delgado to a point sixty miles east of Socotra and from there to Diu, permitting ships suspected of trafficking outside the designated area to be detained and searched. This sphere of British influence was further extended with the Hamerton Treaty of 1845, in which the exportation of slaves from the Sultan of Muscat's African dominions was completely prohibited, granting the Royal Navy and the East Indian Company permission to seize and confiscate any vessels involved in the export slave trade, except those carrying slaves between ports within the Sultan's dominions in Africa.

12. An account by Captain Colomb (1873), a British patroller in the waters between Bombay and Madagascar in 1868, also outlines the difficulty in discerning legal and illegal dhow trades.

13. As Lakshmi Subramanian (2014, 2016) has argued, in the eighteenth century the regions of Sind, Kutch, and Kathiawad (also known as the Northward) were viewed as hotbeds of piracy by the East India Company, which was seeking to expand its influence in a region with multiple rulers. While Kathiawad came under a Maratha sphere of influence, Kutch came to be ruled by rulers of Rajput origin. These small kingdoms had a maritime orientation and sought to make claims on the sea; meanwhile, other dispossessed coastal communities of Waghers and Bhadalas in Okhamandel became maritime predators who were cast as pirates by the British. While the English sought to issue passes for trade to extend their influence, these groups continued to engage in maritime predation, often defending their actions in terms of custom, resistance, or livelihood. In this region, where sovereignty was unsettled, maritime predation was part of the political economy of the region until at least the early nineteenth century.

14. Priyasha Saksena (2020) has argued that while the British relied on these ideas of divisible sovereignty to expand their influence and sovereignty through alliances with local rulers, the local rulers sought to define sovereignty in more absolutist terms and tied notions of sovereignty to territory, a legacy carried on by postcolonial states in the twentieth century.

15. "Proposed Use of Sailing Vessels by the Italian Authorities between Aden and Massowah," 1918. National Archives of India, Department of Commerce and Industry, Shipping Branch. File 81–81, Repository II.

16. On January 15, 1944, the Collector of Excise and Revenue in Bombay reported that a trader named Khalid Musaad had shifted his operations from Bombay to Jamnagar and together with the merchant Dharamsee Mekrani was attempting to smuggle sovereigns purchased in Bombay to the Persian Gulf on a type of dhow, a *bagla*, through Jamnagar. The British saw the customs offices at Jamnagar and Okha as complicit with these smugglers. "From H. McClenaghan, CIE, ICS, Collector of Central Excises and Salt Revenue, Bombay to the Secretary to the Resident for Baroda and Gujara States, Baroda. Subject: Khalid Musaad—Activities of, at Kathiawar Ports," 1944. National Archives of India, Political Department Branch, Intelligence Bureau (I.B.). File No. 24 (9)-I.B./44.

17. "Country Craft-Jettisoning of Cargo from-on the West Coast—Measures to Prevent," 1947. National Archives of India, Western India States Agency. File D/42–10, 1946–47.

18. "Country Craft Organization," 1943. National Archives of India. File D/1–19.

19. The figure of the pirate and the terrorist have also been viewed and tried in courts of law using the same vague designation of *hostis humani generis*, or "enemy of all mankind." Jody Greene (2008) offers an especially insightful essay on the genealogy of the term and its contaminating effect.

20. Dates have long been traded across the Indian Ocean and were used as ballast on dhows. Baskets of dates were the standard measurement of shipping space and vessel size prior to the eighteenth century (Chaudhuri 1985, 184).

21. A letter from C. K. Desai, Chief Commissioner of Kutch, to N. M. Buch, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of States, refers to the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. XI, p. 81, speaking highly of Kutch's shipbuilding industry (January 19, 1949).

National Archives of India, Ministry of States. Development of Minor Ports in Mundra, Jakhau and Lakhpat. File 1(14)-C Vol. 1. Looking to these colonial gazettes, these officials saw the industry as potentially useful for the nation.

22. "Smuggling of Arms into Junagadh Territory through Diu—Enquiries Made in Regard to the Reports Appeared in the Press," 1950. National Archives of India, Ministry of States. File No. 1 (7)-P (S).

23. "Director of Intelligence Bureau Reports—Saurashtra and Kutch Smuggling of Tea, Cloth, Tobacco, Bidi, Cigarettes, Etc by Pakistanis Across the Border," 1954. National Archives of India, Ministry of States. File 20(35)-PA/53, Director of Intelligence Bureau Reports, 1953–54.

24. "Countrycraft Registered in India Visiting Muscat and Muttrah," 1955. National Archives of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Prog Nos. 13 (23) AWT 1955. D. 3269. MT/55.

25. "Grant of Loans for Mechanization/Construction of Sailing Vessels Loans Granted to Govt of Gujarat during 1970–1." National Archives of India, Ministry of Surface Transport, Marine Department. File 39-MD (10)/70.

26. Much of this trade was initially controlled by the infamous Haji Mastan, a dockworker who rose to fame as a smuggler of gold and electronics through the port of Bombay. Dawood Ibrahim, the notorious crime kingpin, also began his career as a gold smuggler (Zaidi 2012).

27. Little (2003) offers an extensive study of Somalia's cross-border trade and informal economy.

28. By 2010, Al-Shabaab taxed every dhow that docked at Kismayu port $1,000, and every ship $2,000. Imported food was taxed at $0.60 for every fifty kilograms, cars at $200 each, and trucks between $400 and 500 each (S. J. Hansen 2013, 91).

29. By November 7, 2012, the KDF allowed thirteen dhows and two ships to load charcoal at Kismayu. Between November and December 2012, over $24 million worth of charcoal was exported from Kismayu, generating a revenue of $1.8 million. Much of the supply chain that delivers charcoal to this port is also taxed by Al-Shabaab in regions under its control. Al-Shabaab therefore continues to profit from this trade even through to 2014 and beyond (Anderson and McKnight 2015, 10–11; United Nations Security Council 2012).

30. Reliance is one of India's largest companies, and most profitable. It started as a family business trading in textiles and is now the largest private sector multinational corporation trading in energy, petrochemicals, retail, telecommunications, and natural resources.

3. A BURNING SEA: RISK AND GEOPOLITICAL ARBITRAGE ACROSS THE PERSIAN GULF

Epigraphs: Koran translated by Mustapha Khattab. *The Clear Quran*. Accessed Aug 26, 2024. https://quran.com/52?font=v1&reading=false; Shahriyār (1981), 24; Hanif (2018), 40.

1. This includes "jurisdictional arbitrage," or the "search for the legally advantageous spaces of a landscape fractured by land and sea" (Kahn 2019, 20) by patrollers at sea, and forms of legal arbitrage where European powers in the Indian Ocean would take advantage of "variegations in sovereignty" across different ports (Khalili 2020, 49).

2. Dhow captains historically traded goods for themselves while also carrying goods for merchants (Sheriff 2010; Villiers 1940).

3. These sanctions regimes have in fact blurred the boundaries between war and peace, demonstrating that, as Mulder has argued, ever since World War II liberalism has reimagined coercion such that sanctions have been cast as an alternative to war. As he reminds us, in the interwar period sanctions were seen as an "economic weapon" that were "the total essence of war" (Mulder 2022, 4); even Woodrow Wilson argued that sanctions were "something more tremendous than war" (Mulder 2022, 1). Sanctions disproportionately affect the most vulnerable residents. As multiple sanctions regimes against Iran exemplify, insecurity produced by sanctions has led to greater suppression of dissent and strengthened the power of ruling elites (see nosanctionsoniran.org). As Emrah Yıldız has shown, sanctions against Iran are "exercises in collective punishment that generate lived insecurities and bolster, rather than weaken a targeted regime's power" (2020, 221).

4. Sharafedin and Nasralla (2021) offer a timeline of sanctions on Iran's oil and gas sector.

5. For details on diesel smuggling in Iran see *Iran International* (2021). Both dhows and larger tankers are involved in diesel smuggling (El Gamal 2015; McQue 2022).

6. Economist Henry Crosby Emery argued that the practice of profiting from differences in price in different markets, now known as arbitrage, was once central to any trader's business (1896, 137). This exemplified what he called "place-speculation," since it involved the movement of goods with different prices in different places across space. This practice was inseparable from ordinary trade in eras when communication was imperfect and uncertain. Emery distinguishes this from "modern arbitrage" where prices in buying and selling markets are known at the same moment. In addition to place-speculation, he also offers a definition for "time-speculation," a practice whereby expected differences in price of the same commodity offers the potential for profit. The roots of arbitrage thus lie in long-distance trade.

7. The Maria Theresa Thaler was popular in different Indian Ocean contexts (Gervais 1982; Pankhurst 1963, 1970; Semple 2005).

8. I am grateful to Engseng Ho for insights on the parallels between the Maria Theresa Thaler and the diesel trade.

9. Merchants were politically powerful in the Trucial States until the rise of the oil economy and the establishment of the "ruling bargain," a political project whereby "valuables distributed by the state would be exchanged for political demobilization" (Kanna 2011, 25).

10. The gold trade has been subject to much discourse within academic and nonacademic work on Dubai. While many scholarly debates on the UAE hinge on the citizenship laws that exclude merchants from India and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf (Kanna 2011), Dubai and other Emirates continue to attract merchants and businessmen precisely because of these low tariffs on trade. As Neha Vora (2013) argues, Indian businessmen in Dubai referenced a history of mercantile connection between India and the Gulf through the colonial period as well as the postcolonial reexport trade in gold to make claims of belonging to the UAE, seeing these historical connections between India and the Gulf as foundational to Dubai's success. Moore (1976) offers a powerful account of the gold trade and the creation of the UAE and shows in—albeit fictionalized—detail how gold was central to creating capital for Dubai's merchants and rulers.

11. Although I am speaking of both Sharjah and Dubai as hubs for the dhow trade, on the ground the two ports function rather differently. The dhow port in Dubai was taken over by

the Dubai Ports World and is highly securitized—the entry and exit of sailors and others between the port and the city is restricted. In Sharjah, however, dhows dock at a jetty on Sharjah Creek, and after customs procedures, sailors can move freely between the city and the dock. The artist collective CAMP's film *From Gulf to Gulf*, exhibitions, and published works such as *Wharfage* are based on research with dhow crews in Sharjah Creek (CAMP 2009).

12. While production has often been the emphasis in thinking about labor and value creation, exchange and transport are just as important, as volume II of Marx's *Capital* demonstrates. Transport adds value to the commodity and can be seen as part of the production process—after all, a commodity cannot be understood as such unless it is at the marketplace. Yet exchange, especially in transportation and shipping, has not always been viewed as central to the production of value. A focus on seafaring labor of all kinds, whether in container shipping or in dhows, shows that labor on board the vessel enables exchange and in fact creates value.

4. OF SAILORS AND SUFIS: DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND DANGER AT SEA

Epigraph: Translated by Mustapha Khattab. *The Clear Quran*. Accessed August 26, 2024. https://quran.com/10.

1. The Indian Ocean is the fastest-warming ocean in the world, and scientists have predicted that extreme weather events across the region will occur more frequently (Abram et al. 2008; Cai et al. 2021).

2. Sheikh (2009) has written extensively on a Gujarati sailor's map and pilot book of the Indian Ocean from 1750 CE. She shows that nautical cartography in the western Indian Ocean involved an exchange of technical information that also included talismanic diagrams with ritual instructions, sailing directions, lists of navigable Indian Ocean ports, notations of constellations, and Quranic verses to protect the vessel. Fahad Bishara (2023) has examined the notebooks of dhow captains from the islands off the coast of Kuwait, showing how these notebooks did not conform to genre conventions but can be read to think through contractual forms that circulated across the Indian Ocean.

3. Taking on the work of philosopher Levy-Bruhl, Douglas and Wildavsky (1983) argue against the idea that "primitives" were constantly in search of reasons (such as superstitions or witchcraft) to explain disaster and were thus different from moderns insofar as they were unable to understand natural death. Instead, they argue that the "moderns," too, look for reasons, although in secularized ways that are not situated in the supernatural, risk being a cultural production more generally.

4. Frank Knight, a University of Chicago economist who was a major influence in the making of neoliberal economic thought, argued that while risk is measurable and calculable and its effects able to be mitigated through insurance, uncertainty is unmeasurable. According to Knight, profit is contingent upon undertaking not just risk but also unmeasurable uncertainty and acts as a reward for entrepreneurs (1921).

5. As Francois Ewald has argued, "Risk is a neologism of insurance, said to derive from the Italian word risco which meant 'that which cuts,' hence 'reef' and consequently 'risk to cargo on the high seas'" (1991, 198–99).

6. Writing about the history of insurance, Dua notes that its emergence marked "the move from the unknowability of God's will to an 'evental thinking'" (2019, 109).

7. A different, popular version of this naat can be found on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrF4cMvW3gg), recited by Pakistani poet Muhammed Owais Raza Qadri. The version used by Ali is set to music, unlike the version recited by Qadri.

8. Abdul Qadir Gilani (1088–) is said to be from the Caspian Sea; the order was introduced to South Asia in the fourteenth century. According to Anne Marie Schimmel, Gilani is perhaps "the most popular Islamic saint in the world" (1975, 247). He is the *qutb* (pole, axis) "responsible for the smooth operation of the world" and is revered across South Asia (Ewing 1983, 254).

9. This is not unusual in South Asia. As Amitav Ghosh has convincingly shown in his works of fiction and nonfiction, in the Sundarbans deities such as Bon Bibi and Mansa Devi were seen as guardians of the forests, with even traders relying on the goddess for interjection and protection in all business matters. In other contexts in South Asia too, as Laura Bear (2015) argues, divination and "technologies of the imagination" are linked to speculation and capitalist practices.

10. Khizr is the "patron saint of Muslims at sea" (Mukherjee 2008, 131); he also connects South Asia and Arabia. Khan (2023, 171) has argued that the relationship between Khijir (Khizr) and Ganga can be understood as an example of involution between Islam and Hinduism in Bengal and Bangladesh.

11. Jeychandran (2019) discusses how sailors from Mandvi visit the shrines of African saints, seeking their intercession at sea, and argues that these rituals and devotional practices point at the continued salience of African Sufi sacred geographies across the Indian Ocean. These African saints, however, are not the only saints that are called upon by sailors and are part of a broader Sufi sacred geography.

12. The intermediary role of Sufis beyond South Asia has been written about extensively (Cornell 1998; Gilsenan 1973). Gellner (1969) also argued that in Morocco, saints were crucial arbitrators between nomadic and settled groups, Sufis administering and maintaining order in a region with multiple competing groups. These saints also provided protection for travelers, especially in the caravan trade.

13. This mode of sacrality declined only with colonialism, the reformist wave of the Deobandis, and the loss of a body of a Muslim sovereign (Moin 2012).

14. This is not surprising, as elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, during the colonial period sayyids and other authority figures and their descendants often became bureaucrats in colonial administration (Ho 2006, 303).

5. THOSE WHO STAY: PATRONAGE, KINSHIP, AND SEASONS OF SAIL IN THE GULF OF KACHCHH

1. Seafarers in the Indian Ocean unlocked the patterns of the monsoon perhaps as early as 100 BCE, although there is evidence of trade between the Harappan civilization of the Indus Valley and the Gulf, Red Sea, and Egypt as early as 2600–1900 BCE. The peopling of Madagascar from Southeast Asia by the first centuries CE also indicates that movement across the Indian Ocean took place earlier than the documentary evidence we have for those who sailed with the monsoon winds. The earliest records that we do have of the monsoon come from an anonymous Greco-Roman source written in the first century CE. Subsequent travelers in the Indian Ocean, from Ptolemy (150 CE) to Ibn Battuta (1331 CE)

and Ahmad ibn Majid (1432–1500 CE), were intimately familiar with the monsoon winds. The monsoon has thus been a non-human agent that has shaped connection and interaction across the Indian Ocean.

2. Letter from Bohra Tayabji Budhabhai, 1876. Zanzibar National Archives, ZNA AA1/19: 581/1876. I am most grateful to Hollian Wint for sharing this document.

3. In Indian Ocean literature, stories of women left behind by men in different parts of the ocean abound. Gurnah (2005) offers an especially moving literary account of a Swahili woman deserted by her itinerant Indian husband.

4. These amounts are based on figures reported by sailors in 2018.

5. An extensive literature on jajmani relations in India has debated questions of exploitation, religious sanction, and historical transformations (Dumont 1970; Fuller 1989; Mines 2005; Piliavsky 2020).

6. Letter from the Assistant District Commissioner, Lamu. Kenya National Archives. KNA D.C./LAM/3/2/1924.

7. Despite critiquing this system of debt, the district commissioner then went on to state, "There is one debt however which I feel strongly should be collected, namely the amount of Government Tax which is advanced to each man at the beginning of the season" (25).

8. Patronage has long been a topic of study for social scientists, especially in Mediterranean and Latin American contexts (Silverman 1977; Ben-Yehoyada 2017). In some studies, patronage has been viewed through the complex of dependence-exploitation, with coercion being at the center of patron-client relations. Others, however, have emphasized the potential of patronage, recognizing that it might be leveraged by those in need. In South Asia, patronage has been studied with reference primarily to political power and kingship (Dirks 1979, 1987; Stein 1980; Peabody 1991; 2002; Piliavsky 2015). In this literature, what emerges is that kings and political authorities were defined by their ability to provide for and protect their subjects, flamboyant acts of giving and receiving defining the relationship between patrons and clients. This structure of favors reached every level—"from grand maharajas to 'little kings,' vassals and vassals of vassals, all the way down to village landlords" becoming sources of kingly authority (Piliavsky 2015, 10). Yet these were not simply economic transactions; they had moral implications as well (Bayly 1983), with even merchants having to engage in this system. In the context of rural India, this was made visible through the jajmani system, whereby patronage was seen to be at the center of all social relationships, a total exchange (Mauss 2004) in which patronage came to define difference in status, made most visible in the form of the gift—typically given by patrons and received in exchange for a service by clients.

9. Simpson classifies these goods as "gifts" (given to friends and relations entailing obligation), "commodified gifts" (goods received by individuals for payment, which are still seen as gifts since they can also embody the quality of the gift based on the relationship between giver and receiver), and "transactable commodities" (E. Simpson 2006, 149).

10. This is true not only of sailors but of other types of migrant workers, including Indian information technology workers in Australia (Xiang 2005). As Andrea Wright (2020, 2021) argues, the fulfillment of family obligations, especially the purchasing of gold for female kin's dowries, is a central factor in Indian migration to the Gulf. She suggests that gold is a kinship substance that continues men's natal ties just as their female kin, such as

wives at home are responsible for taking care of the elderly. As I argue, this labor of women extends beyond care work.

EPILOGUE

1. Hindu nationalism has long combined an "antihistorical feature of religious discourse with an empiricist search for 'facts' that has been highly influenced by orientalism" (van der Veer 1994, 138). This includes archeological discourse. Indeed, as Pandey (1994) has written in the case of new, right-wing Hindu histories of Ayodhya, this historical writing is deeply ahistorical, not allowing for any change, and with the verities of "facts" including the precision of numbers, geography, and dates reinforced by faith. As Truschke (2020) has argued, followers of Hindutva seek to reinvent a past to justify a modern identity, denying cultural change. This kind of historical writing has long been a feature of Hindutva narratives of Indian "history" that have transferred nationalist rhetoric into precolonial times, the medieval era being viewed as a struggle between "Muslim" invaders and "Hindu" rulers, as Sarkar (2002) has shown.

2. T. B. Hansen (2001) shows how the Shiv Sena transformed Bombay into Mumbai, a process marked by violent nationalism. Hansen (1999) has also examined the RSS, the rise of the BJP and Hindu nationalism.

3. The problem of violence based on religious difference or "communalism" in India is related to caste difference (Menon 2006; Shani 2007). Merchants have been central to the process of remaking a Hindu sphere that excluded "Untouchables" and Muslims as "Untouchables," a process that goes back to at least the eighteenth century (Cherian 2022).

4. Borneman (2009) offers a poignant reflection on collaboration and Verdery (2018) on the experience of being under surveillance.

REFERENCES

ARCHIVES

British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Kenya National Archives
National Archives of India: Department of Commerce and Industry, Shipping Branch; Ministry of External Affairs; Ministry of States; Ministry of Surface Transport, Marine Department; Political Department Branch, Intelligence Bureau (I.B.); Western India States Agency
Zanzibar National Archives

PUBLISHED SOURCES

Abram, Nerilie J., Michael K. Gagan, Julia E. Cole, Wahyoe S. Hantoro, and Manfred Mudelsee. 2008. "Recent Intensification of Tropical Climate Variability in the Indian Ocean." *Nature Geoscience* 1 (12): 849–53. https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo357.

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 1989. *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Agius, Dionisius A. 2005. *Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman: The People of the Dhow*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203040317.

———. 2008. *Classic Ships of Islam: From Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean*. Leiden: Brill.

Ahmad, Imtiaz. 1978. *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Manohar.

Ahuja, Ravi. 2006. "Mobility and Containment: The Voyages of South Asian Seamen, c. 1900–1960." *International Review of Social History* 51 (S14): 111–41. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002085900600263X.

Aiyar, Sana. 2015. *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Al-Bulushi, Samar. 2021. "Citizen-Suspect: Navigating Surveillance and Policing in Urban Kenya." *American Anthropologist* 123 (4): 819–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13644.

Alpers, Edward. 1976. "Gujarat and the Trade of East Africa, c. 1500–1800." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9 (1): 22–44. https://doi.org/10.2307/217389.

———. 2013. "On Becoming a British Lake: Piracy, Slaving, and British Imperialism in the Indian Ocean during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century." In *Indian Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition*, edited by Robert W. Harms, Bernard K. Freamon, and David W. Blight, 45–58. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Alpers, Edward and Chayya Goswami. 2019. *Transregional Trade and Traders: Situating Gujarat in the Indian Ocean from Early Times to 1900*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Al-Sayegh, Fatma. 1998. "Merchants' Role in a Changing Society: The Case of Dubai, 1900–90." *Middle Eastern Studies* 34 (1): 87–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701211.

Amrith, Sunil. 2013. *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

———. 2015. "Risk and the South Asian Monsoon." *Climatic Change* 151 (1): 17–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-016-1629-x.

———. 2018. *Unruly Waters: How Rains, Rivers, Coasts, and Seas Have Shaped Asia's History*. London: Penguin.

Anderson, David, and J. McKnight. 2015. "Kenya at War: Al-Shabaab and Its Enemies in Eastern Africa." *African Affairs* 114 (454): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu082.

Ansari, Sarah F. D. 1992. *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sind, 1843–1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appel, Hannah. 2019. *The Licit Life of Capitalism: US Oil in Equatorial Guinea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Aristotle. 1998. *Politics*. Clarendon Aristotle Series. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Arondekar, Anjali, and Geeta Patel. 2016. "Area Impossible: Notes toward an Introduction." *GLQ* 22 (2): 151–71. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3428687.

Azam, Shireen. 2023. "The Political Life of Muslim Caste: Articulations and Frictions within a Pasmanda Identity." *Contemporary South Asia* 31 (3): 426–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2023.2237417.

Baber, Zaheer. 2004. "'Race', Religion and Riots: The 'Racialization' of Communal Identity and Conflict in India." *Sociology (Oxford)* 38 (4): 701–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038504045860.

Balachandran, Gopalan. 2012. *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c. 1870–1945*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Balachandran, Jyoti Gulati. 2020. *Narrative Pasts: The Making of a Muslim Community in Gujarat, c. 1400–1650*. First edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Banaji, Jairus. 2020. *A Brief History of Commercial Capitalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Bayart, Jean-François, Stephen Ellis, and Béatrice Hibou. 1999. *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Bayart, Jean-François. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longman.

Bayly, C. A. 1983. *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1996. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BBC News. 2021. "Mundra Port: Nearly Three Tonnes of Heroin Seized at Gujarat Port." India. September 21, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-58634575.

Bear, Laura. 2015. "Capitalist Divination: Popularist Speculators and Technologies of Imagination on the Hooghly River." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 35 (3): 408–23. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-3426265.

Bear, Laura, Karen Ho, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, and Sylvia Yanagisako. 2015. "Gens: A Feminist Manifesto for the Study of Capitalism." *Cultural Anthropology* 30 (March). https://culanth.org/fieldsights/gens-a-feminist-manifesto-for-the-study-of-capitalism.

Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. Theory, Culture & Society. Newbury Park: Sage.

Bellamy, Carla. 2021. "Being Muslim the Chhipa Way: Caste Identity as Islamic Identity in a Low-Caste Indian Muslim Community." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 55 (2): 224–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/00699667211006954.

Benton, Lauren A. 2005. "Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47 (4): 700–24. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417505000320.

———. 2010. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ben-Yehoyada, Naor. 2016. "'Follow Me, and I Will Make You Fishers of Men': The Moral and Political Scales of Migration in the Central Mediterranean." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22 (1): 183–202. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467–9655.12340.

———. 2017. *The Mediterranean Incarnate: Region Formation between Sicily and Tunisia since World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226451169.

Bernstein, Peter L. 1996. *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*. New York: John Wiley.

Beunza, Daniel, and David Stark. 2004. "Tools of the Trade: The Socio-Technology of Arbitrage in a Wall Street Trading Room." *Industrial and Corporate Change* 13 (2): 369–400. https://doi.org/10.1093/icc/dth015.

Bhattacharyya, Debjani. 2018. *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108348867.

Bhattacharyya, Gargi. 2005. *Traffick: The Illicit Movement of People and Things*. Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fs7c2.

Bigelow, Anna, ed. 2021. *Islam through Objects*. London: Bloomsbury.

Billingsley, Randall S. 2006. *Understanding Arbitrage: An Intuitive Approach to Financial Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School.

Birla, Ritu. 2009. *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture, and Market Governance in Late Colonial India*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822392477.

———. 2015. "Speculation Illicit and Complicit: Contract, Uncertainty, and Governmentality." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 35 (3): 392–407. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-3426253.

Bishara, Fahad Ahmad. 2014. "Paper Routes: Inscribing Islamic Law across the Nineteenth-Century Western Indian Ocean." *Law and History Review* 32 (4): 797–820. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248014000431.

———. 2017. *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780–1950*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2018. "'No Country but the Ocean': Reading International Law from the Deck of an Indian Ocean Dhow, ca. 1900." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60 (2): 338–66. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417518000075.

———. 2020. "The Many Voyages of Fateh Al-Khayr: Unfurling the Gulf in the Age of Oceanic History." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52 (3): 397–412. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743820000367.

———. 2021a. "History at Sea: Route and World on an Indian Ocean Dhow." *Matatu* 52 (1): 9–34. https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-05201001.

———. 2021b. "The Diver's New Papers: Wealth, People, and Property in a Persian Gulf Bazaar." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 64 (5–6): 513–40. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685209-12341545.

———. 2023. "The Sailing Scribes: Circulating Law in the Twentieth-Century Indian Ocean." *Law and History Review* 41 (3): 587–604. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248022000402.

Bishara, Fahad, and Hollian Wint. 2021. "Into the Bazaar: Indian Ocean Vernaculars in the Age of Global Capitalism." *Journal of Global History* 16 (1): 44–64. https://doi.org/10.1017/S174002282000011X.

Bohannan, Paul. 1959. "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy." *The Journal of Economic History* 19 (4): 491–503. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700085946.

Boivin, Michel, and Bhavna Rajpal. 2017. "From Udero Lal in Sindh to Ulhasnagar in Maharashtra: Partition and Memories Across Borders in the Tradition of Jhulelal." In *Partition and the Practice of Memory*, edited by Churnjeet Mahn and Anne Murphy, 43–62. Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64516-2_3.

Borneman, John. 2009. "Fieldwork Experience, Collaboration, and Interlocution: The 'Metaphysics of Presence' in Encounters with the Syrian Mukhabarat." In *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*, edited by John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, 237–58. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520943438-010.

Bose, Sugata. 2006. *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bradbury, Mark, Ken Menkhaus, and Roland Marchal. 2001. "Human Development Report Somalia 2001." *United Nations Development Report*. New York: United Nations Development Programme. https://policycommons.net/artifacts/2125190/hdr/2880489/.

Brankamp, H., and Z. Glück. 2022. "Camps and Counterterrorism: Security and the Remaking of Refuge in Kenya." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 40 (3): 528–48. https://doi-org.oca.ucsc.edu/10.1177/02637758221093070.

Breman, Jan. 1974. *Patronage and Exploitation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burton, Antoinette M. 2016. *Africa in the Indian Imagination: Race and the Politics of Postcolonial Citation*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822374138.

Buzurg ibn Shahriyār, and G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville. 1981. *The Book of the Wonders of India: Mainland, Sea and Islands*. London: East-West.

Cai, Wenju, Kai Yang, Lixin Wu, Gang Huang, Agus Santoso, Benjamin Ng, Guojian Wang, and Toshio Yamagata. 2021. "Opposite Response of Strong and Moderate Positive Indian Ocean Dipole to Global Warming." *Nature Climate Change* 11 (1): 27–32. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-020-00943-1.

CAMP. 2009. *Wharfage*. Mumbai: Spenta Press.

Campbell, John. 1964. *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Campling, Liam, and Alejandro Colás. 2018. "Capitalism and the Sea: Sovereignty, Territory and Appropriation in the Global Ocean." *Environment and Planning. D, Society and Space* 36 (4): 776–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775817737319.

———. 2021. *Capitalism and the Sea: The Maritime Factor in the Making of the Modern World*. London: Verso.

Candea, Matei. 2012. "Derrida En Corse? Hospitality as Scale-Free Abstraction." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (S1): S34–48. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2012.01759.x.

Candea, Matei, and Giovanni da Col. 2012. "The Return to Hospitality." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (S1): S1–19.

Carse, Ashley. 2014. *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Carse, Ashley, Townsend Middleton, Jason Cons, Jatin Dua, Gabriela Valdivia, and Elizabeth Cullen Dunn. 2023. "Chokepoints: Anthropologies of the Constricted Contemporary." *Ethnos* 88 (2): 193–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2019.1696862.

Carter, Marina, and Khal Torabully. 2002. *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*. London: Anthem.

Castel, Robert. 1991. "From Dangerousness to Risk." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, edited by Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 281–98. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cattelino, Jessica R. 2008. *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ceccarelli, Giovanni. 2001. "Risky Business: Theological and Canonical Thought on Insurance from the Thirteenth to the Seventeenth Century." *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (3): 607–58. https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-31-3-607.

Cháirez-Garza, Jesús F., Mabel Denzin Gergan, Malini Ranganathan, and Pavithra Vasudevan. 2022. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Rethinking Difference in India through Racialization." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45 (2): 193–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1977368.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 1994. "Modernity and Ethnicity in India." Special issue, *South Asia* 17 (sup001): 143–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856409408723221.

———. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chakravarti, Ranabir. 2000. "Nakhudas and Nauvittakas: Ship-Owning Merchants In The West Coast of India (c. AD 1000–1500)." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41 (3): 34–64. https://doi.org/10.1163/156852000001436261.

Chalfin, Brenda. 2010. *Neoliberal Frontiers: An Ethnography of Sovereignty in West Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226100623.

Chambers, Thomas. 2020. *Networks, Labour and Migration among Indian Muslim Artisans*. London: UCL Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xps20.

Chari, Sharad. 2004. *Fraternal Capital: Peasant-Workers, Self-Made Men, and Globalization in Provincial India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Charles, Molly. 2001. "The Growth and Activities of Organised Crime in Bombay." *International Social Science Journal* 53 (3): 359–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2451.00323.

Chatterji, Joya. 2017. "On Being Stuck in Bengal: Immobility in the 'Age of Migration.'" *Modern Asian Studies* 51 (2): 511–41. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000664.

Chaudhuri, K. N. 1985. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1990. *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cherian, Divya. 2022. *Merchants of Virtue: Hindus, Muslims, and Untouchables in Eighteenth-Century South Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520390065.

Chhabria, Sheetal. 2023. "Where Does Caste Fit in A Global History of Racial Capitalism?" *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 31 (2): 136–60. https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206x-bja10011.

Choudhury, Rishad. 2023. *Hajj across Empires: Pilgrimage and Political Culture after the Mughals, 1739–1857*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/hajj-across-empires/8D3901BC94DD6D26BB34B7DFC8E5FDF0.

Chu, Julie Y. 2010. *Cosmologies of Credit*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393160.

———. 2019. "Risky Work, Fateful Play: Chinese Customs Inspectors and the Composibility of Fortune." *Ethnos* 84 (2): 201–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2017.1394348.

Chua, Charmaine. 2022. "Docking." In *The Routledge Handbook of Ocean Space*, edited by P. Steinberg, K. Peters, and A. Davies. London: Routledge.

Chua, Charmaine, Martin Danyluk, Deborah Cowen, and Laleh Khalili. 2018. "Introduction: Turbulent Circulation: Building a Critical Engagement with Logistics." *Environment and Planning. D, Society and Space* 36 (4): 617–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818783101.

Colomb, P. H. 1873. *Slave-Catching in the Indian Ocean. A Record of Naval Experiences. By Captain Colomb, R. N*. England: Longmans, Green.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2006. *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226114101.

Cornell, Vincent J. 1998. *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Cowen, Deborah. 2014. *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping the Violence of Global Trade*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Crouzet, Guillemette. 2014. "'A Slave Trade Jurisdiction': Attempts against the Slave Trade and the Making of a Space of Law (Arabo-Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Red Sea, circa 1820–1900)." In *Legal Histories of the British Empire*, edited by Shaunnagh Dorset and John Mclaren, 234–48. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Curtin, Philip. 1984. *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Das Gupta, Ashin. 1979. *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat: C. 1700–1750*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

———. 2001. "The Maritime Merchant in Indian History." In *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta*, compiled by Uma Das Gupta, 23–33. New Delhi; Oxford University Press.

Das, Pushpita. 2013. "Coastal Security: The Indian Experience." *IDSA Monograph Series* 22. http://www.idsa.in/monograph/IndiaCoastalSecurity.html.

Das, Veena, and Deborah Poole. 2004. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Davidson, Christopher M. 2008. *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*. London: Hurst.

Davis, Muriam Haleh. 2022. *Markets of Civilization: Islam and Racial Capitalism in Algeria*. Duke University Press.

De Blij, Harm J. 1968. *Mombasa; An African City*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

De Genova, Nicholas P. 2002. "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability and in Everyday Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (1): 419–47. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085432.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. 2018. "Revisiting Tidalectics: Irma/José/Maria 2017." In *Tidalectics: Imagining an Oceanic Worldview through Art and Science*, edited by Stefanie Hessler. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 2000. *Of Hospitality*, edited by Anne Dufourmantelle. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Digby, Simon. 1990. "The Sufi Shaykh and the Sultan: A Conflict of Claims to Authority in Medieval India." *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 28 (1): 71–81. https://doi.org/10.2307/4299836.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 1979. "The Structure and Meaning of Political Relations in a South Indian Little Kingdom." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 13 (2): 169–206. https://doi.org/10.1177/006996677901300202.

———. 1987. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Cambridge South Asian Studies 39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Donovan, Kevin P. 2021. "Magendo: Arbitrage and Ambiguity on an East African Frontier." *Cultural Anthropology* 36 (1): 110–37. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca36.1.05.

Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky. 1983. *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dresch, Paul. 2000. "Wilderness of Mirrors: Truth and Vulnerability in Middle Eastern fieldwork." In *Anthropologists in a Wider World: Essays on Field Research*, edited by Paul Dresch, David J. Parkin, and Wendy James, 109–27. New York: Berghahn Books.

Dua, Jatin. 2016. "Dhow Encounters." *Transition* 119: 49–59. https://doi.org/10.2979/transition.119.1.07.

———. 2019. *Captured at Sea: Piracy and Protection in the Indian Ocean*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520973299.

———. 2020. "A Different Kind of Unmooring." *American Anthropologist* (blog). 2020. https://www.americananthropologist.org/commentaries/dua-unmooring.

Duara, Prasenjit. 2021. "Oceans as the Paradigm of History." *Theory, Culture & Society* 38 (7–8): 143–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276420984538.

Dumont, Louis. 1970. *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, translated by R. M. Sainsbury. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dunn, Ross E. 2005. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Eaton, Richard Maxwell. 1993. *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

———. 2003. *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

El Gamal, Rania. 2015. "Iranian Fuel Oil Exports Trade Skirts Sanctions." Commodities News, Reuters, February 3, 2015. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-sanctions-fueloil-idUSKBN0L724T20150203.

Elyachar, Julia. 2005. *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo*. Durham: Duke University Press.

———. 2010. "Phatic Labor, Infrastructure, and the Question of Empowerment in Cairo." *American Ethnologist* 37 (3): 452–64. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01265.x.

Emery, Henry Crosby. 1896. *Speculation on the Stock and Produce Exchanges of the United States*. New York: Columbia University.

Erami, Narges, and Arang Keshavarzian. 2015. "When Ties Don't Bind: Smuggling Effects, Bazaars and Regulatory Regimes in Postrevolutionary Iran." *Economy and Society* 44 (1): 110–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2014.909986.

Ewald, Francois. 1991. "Insurance and Risk." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, 197–210. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/F/bo3684463.html.

Ewald, Janet J. 2000. "Crossers of the Sea: Slaves, Freedmen, and Other Migrants in the Northwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1914." *The American Historical Review* 105 (1): 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/105.1.69.

———. 2010. "Bondsmen, Freedmen, and Maritime Industrial Transportation, c. 1840–1900." *Slavery & Abolition* 31 (3): 451–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2010.504531.

Ewing, Katherine. 1983. "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42 (2): 251–68. https://doi.org/10.2307/2055113.

———. 2020. "Introduction: Sufis and the State; The Politics of Islam in South Asia and Beyond." In *Modern Sufis and the State: The Politics of Islam in South Asia and Beyond*, edited by Katherine Ewing and Rosemary R. Corbett. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ewing, Katherine, and Rosemary R. Corbett, eds. 2020. *Modern Sufis and the State: The Politics of Islam in South Asia and Beyond*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Faier, Lieba, and Lisa Rofel. 2014. "Ethnographies of Encounter." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (1): 363–77. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030210.

Fajardo, Kale Bantigue. 2011. *Filipino Crosscurrents: Oceanographies of Seafaring, Masculinities, and Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822387640.

Ferradás, Carmen A. 2013. "The Nature of Illegality Under Neoliberalism and Post-Neoliberalism." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 36 (2): 266–73. https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12026.

Filkins, Dexter, and Marc Lacey. 2002. "Kenya's Porous Border Lies Open to Arms Smugglers." *The New York Times*, December 4, 2002. https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/04/world/threats-responses-east-africa-kenya-s-porous-border-lies-open-arms-smugglers.html.

Fisher, Michael H. 2006. "Working across the Seas: Indian Maritime Labourers in India, Britain, and in Between, 1600–1857." *International Review of Social History* 51 (S14): 21–45. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859006002604.

———. 2018. "Roepke Lecture in Economic Geography-From Exploitation to Expropriation: Historic Geographies of Racialized Capitalism." *Economic Geography* 94 (1): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00130095.2017.1398045.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.

———. 1998. "Of Other Spaces." In *Other Spaces: The Affair of the Heterotopia*, edited by Roland Ritter and Bernd Knaller-Vlay. Graz, Austria: Haus der Architektur.

———. 2003. *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, edited by Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, and François Ewald and translated by David Macey. New York: Picador.

Fraser, Nancy. 2016. "Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A Reply to Michael Dawson." *Critical Historical Studies* 3 (1): 163–78. https://doi.org/10.1086/685814.

Fuller, C. J. 1989. "Misconceiving the Grain Heap: A Critique of the Concept of the Indian Jajmani System." In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, 33–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511621659.002.

Gayer, Laurent, and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2012. *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. 1880. Vol. 5. Bombay: Government Central Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1963. *Peddlers and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gellner, Ernest. 1969. *Saints of the Atlas*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Gervais, Raymond. 1982. "Pre-Colonial Currencies: A Note on the Maria Theresa Thaler." *African Economic History*, no. 11: 147–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/3601220.

Ghassem-Fachandi, Parvis. 2012. *Pogrom in Gujarat: Hindu Nationalism Anti-Muslim Violence in India*. Princeton University Press. https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691151779/pogrom-in-gujarat.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006. *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1999. "Risk and Responsibility." *Modern Law Review* 62 (1): 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2230.00188.

Gidwani, Vinay K. 2008. *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gidwani, Vinay, and Priti Ramamurthy. 2018. "Agrarian Questions of Labor in Urban India: Middle Migrants, Translocal Householding and the Intersectional Politics of Social Reproduction." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45 (5–6): 994–1017. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1503172.

Gilbert, Erik. 2004. *Dhows & the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar: 1860–1970*. Oxford: James Currey.

———. 2011. "The Dhow as Cultural Icon: Heritage and Regional Identity in the Western Indian Ocean." *International Journal of Heritage Studies: IJHS* 17 (1): 62–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.524007.

Gilsenan, Michael. 1973. *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Glissant, Édouard. 1997. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Glück, Z. 2017. Security Urbanism and the Counterterror State in Kenya. *Anthropological Theory* 17 (3): 297–321. https://doi-org.oca.ucsc.edu/10.1177/1463499617729295.

Goswami, Chhaya. 2011. *The Call of the Sea*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

———. 2015. "Mundra: A Tale of Walled Port Town." In *Port Towns of Gujarat*, edited by Sara Keller and M. N. Pearson. Delhi: Primus Books.

———. 2016. *Globalization before Its Time: The Gujarati Merchants from Kachchh*, edited by Jaithirth Rao. London: Penguin.

———. n.d. "Malamni Pothi: Treatise on Kachchhi Navigation Techniques." Accessed October 31, 2023. https://www.academia.edu/34139282/Malamni_Pothi_Treatise_on_Kachchhi_Navigation_Techniques.

Government of Gujarat. 1971. *Gujarat State Gazetteers Kutch District*. Ahmedabad: Directorate of Govt. http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.108453.

Grant, Bruce. 2011. "Shrines and Sovereigns: Life, Death, and Religion in Rural Azerbaijan." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (3): 654–81. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417511000284.

Green, Nile. 2003. "Migrant Sufis and Sacred Space in South Asian Islam." *Contemporary South Asia* 12 (4): 493–509. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584930420002126 78.

———. 2011. *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511975165.

Greene, Jody. 2008. "Hostis Humani Generis." *Critical Inquiry* 34 (4): 683–705.

Gupta, Pamila, Isabel Hofmeyr, and M. N. Pearson. 2010. *Eyes across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Gupta, Pamila. 2019. *Portuguese Decolonization in the Indian Ocean World: History and Ethnography*. London: Bloomsbury.

Gupta, Akhil. 2012. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394709.

Gupta, Akhil, and K. Sivaramakrishnan. 2011. *The State in India after Liberalization: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846858.

Gurnah, Abdulrazak. 2005. *Desertion*. London: Bloomsbury.

Guyer, Jane I. 2004. *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa*. 1997. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hagmann, Tobias. 2005. "From State Collapse to Duty Free Shop: Somalia's Path to Modernity." *African Affairs* 104 (416): 525–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adi049.

Hanif, Mohammed. 2018. *Red Birds*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hansen, Stig Jarle. 2013. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamic Group, 2005–2012*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hansen, Thomas Blom. 1999. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400823055.

———. 2001. *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 2022. "A History of Distributed Sovereignty: Trade, Migration and Rule in the Global Indian Ocean." In *Beyond Liberal Order: States, Societies and Markets in the Global Indian Ocean*, edited by Harry Verhoeven and Anatol Lieven. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197647950.003.0002.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2006. "Sovereignty Revisited." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (1): 295–315. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123317.

Hardin, Carolyn. 2021. *Capturing Finance: Arbitrage and Social Domination*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478021605.

Hart, Keith. 1973. "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11 (1): 61–89. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00008089.

Harvey, David. 2001. "Globalization and the 'Spatial Fix.'" *Geographische Revue: Zeitschrift für Literatur und Diskussion* 3 (2): 23–30.

Haynes, Douglas E. 2012. *Small Town Capitalism in Western India: Artisans, Merchants and the Making of the Informal Economy, 1870–1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hawley, John C. 2008. *India in Africa, Africa in India: Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanisms*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Heard-Bey, Frauke. 1982. *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates: A Society in Transition*. London: Longman.

Herzfeld, Michael. 1997. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York: Routledge.

Heyman, Josiah, ed. 1999. *States and Illegal Practices*. Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic.

———. 2013. "The Study of Illegality and Legality: Which Way Forward?" *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 36 (2): 304–7. https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12030.

Hinsley, F. H. 1986. *Sovereignty*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ho, Engseng. 2004. "Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2): 210–46. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417504000012X.

———. 2006. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean*. The California World History Library 3. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520938694.

———. 2017. "Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 76 (4): 907–28. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911817000900.

Hofmeyr, Isabel. 2012. "The Complicating Sea: The Indian Ocean as Method." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 32 (3): 584–90. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-1891579.

———. 2022. *Dockside Reading: Hydrocolonialism and the Custom House*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478022367.

Hopper, Matthew S. 2015. *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Houreld, Katherine. 2016. "Report: Arabian Sea Raids on Arms Smugglers Show Iran-Yemen Link." Reuters, November 30, 2016. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-arms-idUSKBN13P001.

Howland, Douglas, and Luise S. White. 2008. *The State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations*. 21st Century Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hunt, Margaret R. 2013. "The Sailor's Wife, War Finance, and Coverture in Late Seventeenth-Century London." In *Married Women and the Law*, edited by Tim Stretton, Krista J. Kesselring, Krista J. Kesselring, and Tim Stretton, 139–62. Montreal: MQUP. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773590137-009.

Ibrahim, Farhana. 2009. *Settlers, Saints, and Sovereigns: An Ethnography of State Formation in Western India*. New Delhi: Routledge.

———. 2021. *From Family to Police Force: Security and Belonging on a South Asian Border*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Iran International. 2021. "Nine Million Liters Of Fuel Smuggled Out Of Iran Every Day." December 27, 2021. https://www.iranintl.com/en/202112278240.

Jacob, Wilson Chacko. 2019. *For God or Empire: Sayyid Fadl and the Indian Ocean World*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2015. "What 'Gujarat Model'?—Growth without Development—and with Socio-Political Polarisation." *South Asia* 38 (4): 820–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2015.1087456.

———. 2021. *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691223094.

Jeychandran, Neelima. 2019. "Navigating African Sacred Geography: Shrines for African Sufi Saints and Spirits in India." *Journal of Africana Religions* 7 (1): 17–36. https://doi.org/10.5325/jafrireli.7.1.0017.

Jitendra. 2016. "Line of Conflict." *Down To Earth*, October 31, 2016. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/environment/line-of-conflict-56021.

———. 2018. "10,000 Sheep, Goat Stranded at Gujarat Port after Govt Cancels Export." *Down To Earth*, August 10, 2018. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/10–000-sheep-goat-stranded-at-gujarat-port-after-govt-cancels-export-61367.

Joseph, May. 2007. "Old Routes, Mnemonic Traces." In *Cultures of Trade: Indian Ocean Exchanges*, edited by Devleena Ghosh and Stephen Muecke, 62–75. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

———. 2019. *Sea Log: Indian Ocean to New York*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Kahn, Jeffrey S. 2019. *Islands of Sovereignty: Haitian Migration and the Borders of Empire*. The Chicago Series in Law and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2023. "Racializing Aesthetics: 'Boat People,' Maritime Worlds, and the Metonymy of the Haitian Sloop." *Current Anthropology* 64 (2): 191–211. https://doi.org/10.1086/724725.

Kanna, Ahmed. 2011. *Dubai, the City as Corporation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kapadia, Aparna. 2018. *In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth-Century Gujarat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316597477.

Kasmani, Omar. 2022. *Queer Companions: Religion, Public Intimacy, and Saintly Affects in Pakistan*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478022657.

Katju, Manjari. 2015. "The Politics of 'Ghar Wapsi.'" *Economic and Political Weekly* 50 (1): 21–4.

Kaur, Ravinder. 2020. *Brand New Nation: Capitalist Dreams and Nationalist Designs in Twenty-First-Century India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. 2010. *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas*. Politics and Ideas. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Khalili, Laleh. 2020. *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula*. London: Verso.

Khan, Naveeda Ahmed. 2023. *River Life and the Upspring of Nature*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478024002.

Knight, Frank H. 1921. *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t2j687w8t.

Kuroda, Akinobu. 2007. "The Maria Theresa Dollar in the Early Twentieth-Century Red Sea Region: A Complementary Interface Between Multiple Markets." *Financial History Review* 14 (1): 89–110. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0968565007000376.

Lanzillo, Amanda. 2024. *Pious Labor: Islam, Artisanship, and Technology in Colonial India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520398580.

Lee, Christopher. 2010. *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Lee, Joel. 2018. "Who Is the True Halalkhor? Genealogy and Ethics in Dalit Muslim Oral Traditions." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 52 (1): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0069966717742223.

Leivestad, Hege Høyer, and Johanna Markkula. 2021. "Inside Container Economies." *Focaal* 89: 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2021.890101.

Leur, J. C. van (Jacob Cornelis). 1955. *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*. The Hague: W. Van Hoeve.

Levesque, Julien, and Soheb Niazi. 2023. "Caste Politics, Minority Representation, and Social Mobility: The Associational Life of Muslim Caste in India." *Contemporary South Asia* 31 (3): 413–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2023.2240258.

Levy, Jack S. 2000. "The Implications of Framing and Loss Aversion for International Conflict." In *Handbook of War Studies II*, edited by Manus I. Midlarsky, illustrated edition, 193–221. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Little, Peter D. 2003. *Somalia: Economy Without State*. African Issues. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lobo-Guerrero, Luis. 2014. "The Capitalisation of 'Excess Life' through Life Insurance." *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 28 (3): 300–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2014.900737.

Lowe, Lisa, and Kris Manjapra. 2019. "Comparative Global Humanities After Man: Alternatives to the Coloniality of Knowledge." *Theory, Culture & Society* 36 (5): 23–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419854795.

MacGaffey, Janet, and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga. 2000. *Congo-Paris: Transnational Traders on the Margins of the Law*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Machado, Pedro. 2014. *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacKenzie, Donald. 2003. "Long-Term Capital Management and the Sociology of Arbitrage." *Economy and Society* 32 (3): 349–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140303130.

Mahajan, Nidhi. 2020. "Seasons of Sail: The Monsoon, Kinship, and Labor in the Dhow Trade." In *Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds*, edited by Smriti Srinivas, Bettina Ng'weno, and Neelima Jeychandran. London: Routledge.

———. 2021. "Notes on an Archipelagic Ethnography: Ships, Seas, and Islands of Relation in the Indian Ocean." *Island Studies Journal* 16 (1): 9–22. https://doi.org/10.24043/isj.147.

————. 2023a. "Afro-Indian Migrations and the Indianization of East Africa." In *The Cambridge History of Global Migrations*. Vol. 1, *Migrations, 1400–1800*, edited by Catia Antunes and Eric Tagliacozzo, 390–412. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2023b. "Locked Up in Lockdown: Patronage in a Time of Pandemic in the Indian Ocean." *History of the Present* 13 (1): 71–86. https://doi.org/10.1215/21599785–10253314.

Malcolm, John. 1833. *The Government of India*. London: John Murray. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t6736pr7f.

Mannil, Bindu Menon. 2023. "Amphibious Media Histories: Dhow Infrastructures and Narratives in Indian Ocean Film and Media." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 43 (2): 176–90. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-10615648.

Mannov, Adrienne. 2021. "Nowhere Near Somalia, Mom: On Containerizing Maritime Piracy and Being Good Men." *Focaal* 89: 40–51. https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2021.890104.

———. 2023. "Maritime Piracy and the Ambiguous Art of Existential Arbitrage." *Current Anthropology* 64 (2): 147–71. https://doi.org/10.1086/724981.

Markkula, Johanna Sofia Kristina. 2022. "The Ship." *History and Anthropology* 33 (2): 188–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2022.2066097.

Markovits, Claude. 2000. *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*. Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 6. Cambridge: University Press.

Markovits, Claude, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds. 2006. *Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750–1950*. London: Anthem Press.

Marriott, McKim. 1976. "Hindu transactions: Diversity without dualism." In *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior*, edited by Bruce Kapferer. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Martin, Esmond Bradley, and Chryssee Martin. 1978. *Cargoes of the East: The Ports, Trade, and Culture of the Arabian Seas and Western Indian Ocean*. London: Elm Tree Books.

Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1, *The Process of Production of Capital*. London: Penguin Books.

———. 1992. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 2, *The Process of Circulation of Capital*. London: Penguin Books.

Mathew, Johan. 2012. "Trafficking Labour: Abolition and the Exchange of Labour across the Arabian Sea, 1861–1947." *Slavery & Abolition* 33 (1): 139–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144039X.2011.622124.

———. 2016. *Margins of the Market: Trafficking and Capitalism across the Arabian Sea*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520963429.

———. 2019. "Gilding the Waves: Gold Smuggling and Monetary Policies Around the Arabian Sea, 1939–1967." In *Currencies of the Indian Ocean World*, 165–84. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20973-5_8.

Mathew, Nisha. 2020. "At the Crossroads of Empire and Nation-State: Partition, Gold Smuggling, and Port Cities in the Western Indian Ocean." *Modern Asian Studies* 54 (3): 898–929. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X18000173.

Mauss, Marcel. 2004. *Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo: A Study in Social Morphology*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315017709.

Mawani, Renisa. 2018. *Across Oceans of Law: The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822372127.

Mbembe, A. 2000. "At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa," translated by Steven Rendall. *Public Culture* 12 (1): 259–84.

McDow, Thomas F. 2018. *Buying Time: Debt and Mobility in the Western Indian Ocean*. New African Histories. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv224ttsk.

McLeod, John Edmond. 2007. *Sovereignty, Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916–1947*. New Delhi: Decent Books.

McQue, Katie. 2022. "Smuggled Iranian Fuel and Secret Nighttime Transfers: Seafarers Recount How It's Done." *Washington Post*, January 3, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iran-oil-smugglng-sanctions/2022/01/02/97a6bf90-5457-11ec-83d2-d9dab0e23b7e_story.html.

Meier, Prita. 2016. *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Meister, Robert. 2016. "Liquidity." In *Derivatives and the Wealth of Societies*, edited by Benjamin Lee and Randy Martin, 143–73. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226392974.

Menkhaus, Ken. 2004. "Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism." *The Adelphi Papers* 364: 7–92.

Menon, Dilip M., ed. 2022. *Changing Theory: Concepts from the Global South*. Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003273530.

———. 2006. *The Blindness of Insight: Essays on Caste in Modern India*. Pondicherry: Navayana.

Menon, Dilip M., and Nishat Zaidi, eds. 2023. *Cosmopolitan Cultures and Oceanic Thought*. Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge.

Metcalf, Thomas R. 2007. *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Mines, Diane P. 2005. *Fierce Gods: Inequality, Ritual, and the Politics of Dignity in a South Indian Village*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Miyazaki, Hirokazu. 2000. "Faith and Its Fulfillment: Agency, Exchange, and the Fijian Aesthetics of Completion." *American Ethnologist* 27 (1): 31–51. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2000.27.1.31.

———. 2013. *Arbitraging Japan: Dreams of Capitalism at the End of Finance*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Moin, A. Azfar. 2012. *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*. South Asia Across the Disciplines. New York: Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/moin16036.

Moore, Robin. 1976. *Dubai*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Muir, Sarah, and Akhil Gupta. 2018. "Rethinking the Anthropology of Corruption." *Current Anthropology* 59 (S18): S4–15. https://doi.org/10.1086/696161.

Mukherjee, Rila. 2008. "Putting the Rafts out to Sea: Talking of Bera Bhashan in Bengal." *Transforming Cultures Ejournal* 3 (2). https://doi.org/10.5130/tfc.v3i2.925.

Mulder, Nicholas. 2022. *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Murty, Madhavi. 2022. *Stories That Bind: Political Economy and Culture in New India*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978828780.

Nadri, Ghulam. 2008. "Exploring the Gulf of Kachh: Regional Economy and Trade in the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51 (3): 460–86. https://doi.org/10.1163/156852008X317789.

Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95 (3): 671–86. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1993.95.3.02a00070.

Natrajan, Balmurli. 2022. "Racialization and Ethnicization: Hindutva Hegemony and Caste." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45 (2): 298–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1951318.

New York Times. 1984. "Dhows in Gulf Slip by Iraqis in Iran Trade," World, June 10, 1984. https://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/10/world/dhows-in-gulf-slip-by-iraqis-in-iran-trade.html.

Nordstrom, Carolyn. 2004. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

———. 2007. *Global Outlaws: Crime, Money, and Power in the Contemporary World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

O'Malley, Pat. 1996. "Risk and Responsibility." In *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, edited by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas S. Rose, 189–207. London: University College London Press.

Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822387879.

Onley, James. 2007. *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf*. Oxford Historical Monographs. New York: Oxford University Press.

O'Sullivan, Michael. 2023. *No Birds of Passage: A History of Gujarati Muslim Business Communities, 1800–1975*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pandey, Gyanendra. 1994. "Modes of History Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29 (25): 1523–1528. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4401363.

Pankhurst, Richard. 1963. "The Maria Theresa Dollar in Pre-War Ethiopia." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1 (1): 8–26.

———. 1970. "The Perpetuation of the Maria Theresa Dollar and Currency Problems in Italian-Occupied Ethiopia." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 8 (2): 89–117.

———. 1996. *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. 2013. *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Patel, Geeta. 2017. *Risky Bodies & Techno-Intimacy: Reflections on Sexuality, Media, Science, Finance*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Peabody, Norbert. 1991. "Kotā Mahājagat, or the Great Universe of Kota: Sovereignty and Territory in 18th Century Rajasthan." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 25 (1): 29–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/006996691025001004.

———. 2002. *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*. Illustrated edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pearson, Michael. 1998. *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

———. 2003. *The Indian Ocean*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203414132.

———. 2012. "'Tremendous Damage' or 'Mere Pinpricks': The Costs of Piracy." *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (6): 463–80. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-12342336.

Peebles, Gustav. 2010. "The Anthropology of Credit and Debt." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (1): 225–40. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-090109-133856.

Piliavsky, Anastasia. 2014. *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2015. "Patronage and Community in a Society of Thieves." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 49 (2): 135–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/0069966715578046.

———. 2020. *Nobody's People: Hierarchy As Hope in a Society of Thieves*. South Asia in Motion. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pillai, T. S. 2018. *Chemmeen*, translated by Anita Nair. New York: Harper Perennial.

Pitt-Rivers, Julian. 2012. "The Law of Hospitality." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2 (1): 501–17.

Poitras, Geoffrey. 2010. "Arbitrage: Historical Perspectives." In *Encyclopedia of Quantitative Finance*, edited by Rama Cont, 1–10. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Portes, Alejandro, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton. 1989. *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Prange, Sebastian. 2010. "'Measuring by the Bushel': Reweighing the Indian Ocean Pepper Trade." *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 84: 212–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2010.00547.x.

———. 2013. "The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-Modern Indian Ocean." *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (1): 9–33. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-12342355.

———. 2018. *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast*. Cambridge Oceanic Histories. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108334860.

Prashad, Vijay. 2001. *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge.

Prestholdt, Jeremy. 2008. *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization*. Vol. 6. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Prins, A. H. J. 1965. *Sailing from Lamu: A Study of Maritime Culture in Islamic East Africa*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Raheja, Gloria Goodwin. 1988. *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rahman, Maseeh. 2008. "Witnesses Describe Mumbai Attackers' Arrival by Sea." World News. *The Guardian*, November 27, 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/27/mumbai-terror-attacks-terrorism-boats.

Rajeshirke, Ashok B. 2014. *Pre-Modern Kutchi Navigation Techniques and Voyages*. New Delhi: National Museum.

Ralph, Michael. 2012. "'Life . . . in the Midst of Death': Notes on the Relationship Between Slave Insurance, Life Insurance and Disability." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 32 (3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v32i3.3267.

Ramnath, Kalyani. 2023. *Boats in a Storm: Law, Migration, and Decolonization in South and Southeast Asia, 1942–1962*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503636101.

Rao, Anupama. 2009. *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520943377.

Rao, S. R. 1979. *Lothal, a Harappan Port Town (1955–62)*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 78. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.

Ray, Himanshu Prabha. 2019. "Early Historic Gujarat and the Trading World of the Western Indian Ocean." In *Transgregional Trade and Traders: Situating Gujarat in the Indian Ocean from Early Times to 1900*, edited by Edward Alpers and Chhaya Goswami, 100–122. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ray, Rajat Kanta. 1995. "Asian Capital in the Age of European Domination: The Rise of the Bazaar, 1800–1914." *Modern Asian Studies* 29 (3): 449–554. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00013986.

Rediker, Marcus. 2001. "The Seaman as Pirate: Plunder and Social Banditry at Sea." In *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*, edited by C. R. Pennell. New York: NYU Press.

Riles, Annelise. 2014. "Managing Regulatory Arbitrage: A Conflict of Laws Approach." *Cornell International Law Journal* 47 (1): 63–119.

Risso, Patricia. 1995. *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*. Boulder: Westview Press.

———. 2001. "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century." *Journal of World History* 12 (2): 293–319. https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2001.0039.

Robinson, Cedric J. 2000. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Rofel, Lisa, and Sylvia J. Yanagisako. 2019. *Fabricating Transnational Capitalism: A Collaborative Ethnography of Italian-Chinese Global Fashion*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478002178.

Roitman, Janet L. 2005. *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Roy, Tirthankar. 1999. *Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2012. *Natural Disasters and Indian History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Rutherford, Danilyn. 2012. *Laughing at Leviathan: Sovereignty and Audience in West Papua*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Saikia, Arunabh. 2022. "How Communalism and Climate Change Destroyed the Lives of Muslim Fishermen in a Gujarati Village." *Scroll.In*, November 26, 2022. https://scroll.in/article/1037601/how-communalism-and-climate-change-destroyed-the-lives-of-muslim-fishermen-in-a-gujarati-village.

Sailing Vessels Committee. 1949. *Report of the Sailing Vessels Committee, May 1949*. Bombay: Government of India, Ministry of Commerce. http://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.21486.

Saksena, Priyasha. 2020. "Jousting over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Late Nineteenth-Century South Asia." *Law and History Review* 38 (2): 409–57. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248019000701.

Salvadori, Cynthia, and Andrew Fedders. 1989. *Through Open Doors: A View of Asian Cultures in Kenya*. Rev. ed. Nairobi, Kenya: Kenway Publications.

Salvadori, Cynthia. 1996. *We Came in Dhows*. Nairobi, Kenya: Paperchase Kenya.

Sarkar, Sumit. 2002. *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Scheele, Judith. 2012. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139135412.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. 1999. "Is Transparency Possible? The Political-Economic and Epistemological Implications of Cold War Conspiracies and Subterfuge in Italy." In *States and Illegal Practices*, edited by Josiah McC Heyman. Oxford: Berg Press.

Schober, Elisabeth, and Hege Høyer Leivestad. 2022. "Past the Canal: An Anthropology of Maritime Passages." *History and Anthropology* 33 (2): 183–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2022.2066093.

Schwecke, Sebastian, and Ajay Gandhi. 2020. "Markets in Modern India: Embedded, Contested, Pliable." In *Rethinking Markets in Modern India*, edited by Ajay Gandhi, Barbara Harriss-White, Douglas E. Haynes, and Sebastian Schwecke, 1–28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108762533.001.

Semple, Clara. 2005. *A Silver Legend: The Story of the Maria Theresa Thaler*. Manchester: Barzan.

Serels, Steven. 2019a. "Introduction: The Indian Ocean World Currency System." In *Currencies of the Indian Ocean World*, 1–15. Cham: Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20973-5_1.

———. 2019b. "The Circulation of Modern Currencies and the Impoverishment of the Red Sea World, 1882–2010." In *Currencies of the Indian Ocean World*, 141–64. Cham: Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20973-5_7.

Sevea, Teren. 2020. *Miracles and Material Life: Rice, Ore, Traps and Guns in Islamic Malaya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108569781.

Shaikh, Juned. 2021. *Outcaste Bombay: City Making and the Politics of the Poor*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021.

Shani, Ornit. 2007. *Communalism, Caste and Hindu Nationalism: The Violence in Gujarat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shankar, Shobana. 2021. *An Uneasy Embrace: Africa, India and the Spectre of Race*. London: Hurst.

Sharafedin, Bozorgmehr, and Shadia Nasralla. 2021. "The Ebb and Flow of Sanctions on Iranian Oil." Energy, Reuters, April 22, 2021. https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/ebb-flow-sanctions-iranian-oil-2021-04-22/.

Shayah, Hazem, and Yang Qifeng. 2015. "Development of Free Zones in United Arab Emirates." *International Review of Research in Emerging Markets and the Global Economy* 1 (January): 286–94.

Sheikh, Samira. 2009. "A Gujarati Map and Pilot Book of the Indian Ocean, c .1750." *Imago Mundi (Lympne)* 61 (1): 67–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085690802456244.

———. 2010. *Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders, and Pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200–1500*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sheriff, Abdul. 1987. *Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770–1873*. London: James Currey.

———. 2010. *Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Islam*. London: Hurst.

Shryock, Andrew. 2004. "The New Jordanian Hospitality: House, Host, and Guest in the Culture of Public Display." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (1): 35–62. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417504000039.

———. 2008. "Thinking about Hospitality, with Derrida, Kant, and the Balga Bedouin." *Anthropos* 103 (2): 405–21.

———. 2012. "Breaking Hospitality Apart: Bad Hosts, Bad Guests, and the Problem of Sovereignty." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (S1): S20–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2012.01758.x.

Silverman, Sydel. 1977. "Patronage and Community-Nation Relationships in Central Italy." In *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism*, edited by Steffen W. Schmidt, James C. Scott, Carl Landé, and Laura Gausti, 293–304. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Simpson, Edward. 2006. *Muslim Society and Western Indian Ocean: The Seafarers of Kachchh*. London: Routledge.

———. 2008. "The Changing Perspectives of Three Muslim Men on the Question of Saint Worship over a 10-Year Period in Gujarat, Western India." *Modern Asian Studies* 42 (2/3): 377–403. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X07003216.

Simpson, Edward, and Kai Kresse. 2008. *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Singh, Bhrigupati. 2012. "The Headless Horseman of Central India: Sovereignty at Varying Thresholds of Life." *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (2): 383–407. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2012.01148.x.

———. 2015. *Poverty and the Quest for Life: Spiritual and Material Striving in Rural India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Soundararajan, Thenmozhi. 2022. *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books.

Srinivas, Smriti, Bettina Ng'weno, and Neelima Jeychandran, eds. 2020. *Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds*. Abingdon, Oxon; Routledge.

Stein, Burton. 1980. *Peasant, State, and Society in Medieval South India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Stone, Nomi. 2022. *Pinelandia: An Anthropology and Field Poetics of War and Empire*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 1995. "Of Imârat and Tijârat: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400 to 1750." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (4): 750–80. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500019940.

———. 2019. "Between Eastern Africa and Western India, 1500–1650: Slavery, Commerce, and Elite Formation." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61 (4): 805–34. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417519000276.

Subramanian, Ajantha. 2009. *Shorelines: Space and Rights in South India*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.

Subramanian, Lakshmi. 2014. "Piracy and Legality in the Northward: Colonial Articulations of Law, Custom and Policy in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Bombay Presidency." *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 15 (1). https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2014.0014.

———. 2016. *The Sovereign and the Pirate: Ordering Maritime Subjects in India's Western Littoral*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tadiar, Neferti Xina M. 2009. *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822392446.

Tagliacozzo, Eric. 2002. "Trade, Production, and Incorporation. The Indian Ocean in Flux, 1600–1900." *Itinerario* 26 (1): 75–106. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0165115300004952.

———. 2005. *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915*. New Haven: Yale University Press. https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300128123.

Taneja, Anand Vivek. 2018. *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi*. South Asia in Motion. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Taussig, Michael T. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thomas, Deborah A., and Joseph Masco, eds. 2023. *Sovereignty Unhinged: An Illustrated Primer for the Study of Present Intensities, Disavowals, and Temporal Derangements*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Trimingham, J. Spencer. 1998. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Truschke, Audrey. 2020. "Hindutva's Dangerous Rewriting of History." *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 24 (24/25). https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.6636.

Tsing, Anna. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 2009. "Supply Chains and the Human Condition." *Rethinking Marxism* 21 (2): 148–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935690902743088.

Um, Nancy. 2009. *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean Port*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

United Nations Security Council. 2010. "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1916 (2010)." S/2011/433. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/433.

———. 2011. "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2002 (2011)." S/2012/544. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/544.

———. 2012. "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2060 (2012)." S/2013/413. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/413.

van der Veer, Peter. 1994. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Van Ittersum, Martine Julia. 2006. *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615*. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 139. Leiden: Brill.

van Schendel, Willem. 2005. "Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows, and Territorial States Interlock." In *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, edited by Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

van Schendel, Willem and Itty Abraham, eds. 2005. *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Varadarajan, Lotika. 1980. "Traditions of Indigenous Navigation in Gujarat." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 3 (1): 28–35.

Verdery, Katherine. 2018. *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822371908.

Vergès, Francoise, and Carpanin Marimoutou. 2012. "Moorings: Indian Ocean Creolisations." *Portal (Sydney, N.S.W.)* 9 (1): 1–39. https://doi.org/10.5130/portal.v9i1.2568.

Vijayan, P. K. and Karen Gabriel. 2015. "Hindutva's Psychological Warfare: The Insidious Agendas of 'Ghar-Wapsi.'" *Economic and Political Weekly* 50 (11): 22–24.

Villiers, Alan. 1940. *Sons of Sinbad; An Account of Sailing with the Arabs in Their Dhows, in the Red Sea, Around the Coasts of Arabia, and to Zanzibar and Tanganyika; Pearling in the Persian Gulf; And the Life of the Shipmasters, the Mariners, and Merchants of Kuwait*. New York: Scribner.

———. 1948. "Some Aspects of the Arab Dhow Trade." *The Middle East Journal* 2 (4): 399–416.

Viswanath, Rupa. 2014. *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India*. New York: Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/visw16306.

Vora, Neha. 2013. *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822397533.

Weiner, Annette B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wright, Andrea. 2020. "Making Kin from Gold: Dowry, Gender, and Indian Labor Migration to the Gulf." *Cultural Anthropology* 35 (3): 435–61. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca35.3.04.

———. 2021. *Between Dreams and Ghosts: Indian Migration and Middle Eastern Oil*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Xiang, Biao. 2011. *Global "Body Shopping": An Indian Labor System in the Information Technology Industry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko. 2002. *Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yang, Anand A. 1998. *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Yengde, Suraj Milind. 2015. "Caste among the Indian Diaspora in Africa." *Economic and Political Weekly* 50 (37): 65–8.

Yıldız, Emrah. 2020. "Nested (In)Securities: Commodity and Currency Circuits in an Iran under Sanctions." *Cultural Anthropology* 35 (2): 218–24. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca35.2.04.

———. 2021. "Of Nuclear Rials and Golden Shoes: Scaling Commodities and Currencies across Sanctions on Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53 (4): 604–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382100043X.

Zaidi, S. Hussain. 2012. *Dongri to Dubai: Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia*. New Delhi: Roli Books.

Zaloom, Caitlin. 2004. "The Productive Life of Risk." *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (3): 365–91. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.2004.19.3.365.

Ziad, Waleed. 2021. *Hidden Caliphate: Sufi Saints Beyond the Oxus and Indus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

INDEX

NOTE: Page numbers in *italics* denote illustrations.

Founded in 1893,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
publishes bold, progressive books and journals on topics in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences—with a focus on social justice issues—that inspire thought and action among readers worldwide.

The UC PRESS FOUNDATION
raises funds to uphold the press's vital role as an independent, nonprofit publisher, and receives philanthropic support from a wide range of individuals and institutions—and from committed readers like you. To learn more, visit ucpress.edu/supportus.

Moorings follows sailors from the Gulf of Kachchh in India as they voyage across the Indian Ocean on mechanized wooden sailing vessels known as *vahans*, or dhows. These voyages produce capital through moorings that are spatial, moral, material, and conceptual. With a view from the dhow, the book examines the social worlds of Muslim seafarers who have been rendered invisible even as they maneuver multiple regulatory regimes and the exigencies of life, navigating colonialism, neoliberalism, the rise of Hindutva, insurgency, climate change, and border regimes across the ocean. Based on historical and ethnographic research aboard ships, at ports, and in religious shrines and homes, *Moorings* shows how capitalism derives value from historically sedimented practices grounded in caste, gender, and transregional community-based forms of regulation.

"This is a brilliant book. The seafarers aboard dhows who navigate multiple sovereignties at sea and complex border regimes on land are rendered lovingly here, in three dimensions and with all the requisite appreciation of complexity and respect for their trajectories."—**LALEH KHALILI**, author of *The Corporeal Life of Seafaring*

"A stunning multisited ethnography of the ships and smugglers that underpin the global economy. Nidhi Mahajan's incisive scholarship shows us how borders, shrines, and meals are the moorings that enable mobilities across the Indian Ocean."—**JOHAN MATHEW**, author of *Margins of the Market*

"Draws from rich, intimate, and challenging fieldwork and emphasizes how seafarers from western India contest their marginality by turning to the sea—in ways that follow in the footsteps of generations before them—seeking out possibilities amid perilous circumstances."—**JATIN DUA**, author of *Captured at Sea*

NIDHI MAHAJAN is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

A Fletcher Jones Foundation Book in Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
www.ucpress.edu

A free ebook version of this title is available through Luminos, University of California Press's Open Access publishing program. Visit www.luminosoa.org to learn more.

Cover design: Kevin Barrett Kane
Cover photo: Moad Musbahi

ISBN: 978-0-520-41351-1