

# Mapping an Interoceanic Landscape: Dube and Gandhi in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Durban, South Africa

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## Abstract

Building on existing scholarship in the field of Indian Ocean studies, this paper argues that through two major historic figures, namely John Langalibalele Dube (1871-1946) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), the Indian Ocean and the Black Atlantic converged in Inanda (Durban), where notions of nation, nationalism, modernity and civilization were articulated and defined. In doing so, this paper offers a South African vantage point from which to understand the Indian and Atlantic Oceans' role in the intellectualization of the imperial context in South Africa, as part of a set of South-South exchanges and connections. Following a brief historical overview of 20<sup>th</sup> century Natal, the differences, parallels and interactions between Dube and Gandhi's personas and ideologies, and the influence of religion on their work, are discussed and supported through an examination of the Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix Settlement, as well as a comparative analysis of *Ilanga* and *Indian Opinion* archival material, as physical and written expressions of their respective outlook on life. Finally, this case study suggests an understanding of the emergence of African and Indian nationalism and modernity in 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa as a transnational phenomenon.

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The African and Indian continents share a long history of connection via the Indian Ocean. Traders, missionaries, settlers, migrants, slaves, explorers, to name but a few travelers, navigated across the region and each in their own ways left their trace in history. This intercontinental and regional population movement intensified with the advent of industrialization, technological means easing interoceanic traveling. The activities taking place in the Indian Ocean public sphere inevitably created intellectual circuits in their midst, by the same token highlighting the presence and importance of non-western sources of globalization (Hofmeyr 2007: 3). From a South African perspective, the idea of non-western globalization emanating from the southernmost tip of Africa involves not only the entire continent and the broader Indian Ocean region, but also the Atlantic Ocean, and more precisely the Black Atlantic, as will be discussed in this article. Due to its geographical position, located between two oceans but also simultaneously situated in two oceanic regions, South Africa can be seen as a site where alternative discourses emerged, leading to the creation of ‘alternative modernities’ (13).

An example of this redefined space can be found some few kilometers north of Durban, in Inanda, where the paths of John Langalibalele Dube (1871-1946) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) intersected. Their achievements were punctuated with – if not informed by – national and international travels and exchanges, and the convergence of multidirectional flows of religious and spiritual ideologies. Dube and Gandhi actively took part, as Mark Ravinder Frost puts it, in the ‘imperial web of communications’ (2010: 76), redefining – and reasserting – the margins of the British Empire to offer alternative solutions to imperial hegemony. Through transnational lenses, this article will focus on South-South circuits, positioning the places traditionally labeled as the margins at the heart of the empire.

Building on existing scholarship in the field of Indian Ocean studies, this article seeks to posit the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as places rather than voids (Gupta 2010b: 12), where notions of nation, nationalism and civilization took shape around Dube and Gandhi, often labeled the fathers of South African and Indian nationalism, respectively. This case study will

furthermore provide a South African vantage point from which to understand the Indian and Atlantic Oceans' roles in the intellectualization of the imperial context, and the impact of religion on a redefinition of notions of identity, civilization, and modernity. Whilst a modest contribution to this end, this article will examine Durban as a third space or zone of 'constant hybridity' (Gupta 2010c: 277) where ideas and ideologies travelling back and forth across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans took on a uniquely South African character, thus expanding on Homi Bhabha's idea of the 'metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity' (1994: 143).

## **A Short History of the Expanding British Empire in South Africa**

Whilst acknowledging the historical importance of pre-colonial South Africa, this article deals with so-called 'modern' South Africa. This historic period finds its roots in oceanic trading routes passing via the Cape Peninsula, where the colonial conquest of South Africa began. The Dutch Cape Colony (1652-1795) was established as a result of the activities of the Dutch East India Company, at the time 'the world's greatest trading corporation' (Thompson 2000: 32). Jan Van Riebeeck was sent by the company to establish a settlement in Table Bay (near modern-day Cape Town), which would serve as a link between the Netherlands and their eastern empire. The Dutch East Asia Company sent settlers and imported slaves, who populated the Cape and cohabited – not without clashes – with the KhoiKhoi/San and African people. In 1795, the British took control of the Cape over the Dutch, on their way to become one of the most industrialized nations on the globe. The British Cape Colony (1795-1870) served, as it did for the Dutch, as a gateway to the east, mainly India, for the commercial and maritime activities of the English East India Company.

Questions of land were from the onset intimately linked to political power, a theme recurrent throughout the changing landscape of South African politics. As argued by Jeff Guy, the creation of the new Republic of Natal sparked a revolution, that of 'the commodification of land' (2013: 43). In 1842, the region of Natal was annexed to the British Empire, valuable because of its vast arable lands and Port Natal (modern day Durban), a node of commerce for British traders opening the colony to the world, via the

Indian Ocean. Thus began the British Colony of Natal (1843-1870), the region focused on in this article. With the arrival of the British, most Afrikaners emigrated further north, continuing their trek in search of autonomy from British rule.

Between 1849 and 1851, it is reported that some 5,000 settlers arrived to Natal from Britain (Thompson 2000: 95). Even if the African population was 15 times as numerous as the white population, the Natal Colonial government created 42 reserves – or locations – covering 2 million acres, and 21 mission reserves covering 175,000 acres, out of the total 12.5 million acres of land under British rule assigned mainly to white occupancy (95). Colonial authorities generated part of their revenues from direct taxation, a central grievance informing African resistance to colonial domination. Revenues collected from these various taxes were however welcomed in London, and enhanced the status of the Natal colony and its administrators in the eyes of the colonial authorities in Britain (Guy 2013: 145). Through the indirect rule system of control, also referred to as the ‘Shepstone system’, thus named after colonial administrator Theophilus Shepstone, Natal’s colonial administrators ‘used the tribal system and its chiefs to keep peace, raise revenue and control the process of change’ (504).

As argued by Bernard Magubane (1996), missionaries’ activities were a part and parcel of the colonial project. Missions abounded in Southern Africa, and their impact on the transformation of society went way beyond religion, directly influencing the political, social and economic spheres of life. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, also called the American Zulu Mission (AZM), implemented its activities in South Africa in 1835 (Hughes 2011: 11). The colony of Natal was host to the highest concentration of missionary efforts in Africa, as observed by Shula Marks (1986: 14). Through their brand of education, missionaries gave birth to, as Thompson notes, a ‘new class of Africans who eagerly adopted Western practices’ and absorbed ‘Christian ideas of social and political justice’ (2000: 97).

The advent of Christianity thus contributed to the construction of an ideal of what an African citizen ought to be in relation to the broader British Empire. As will be illustrated through the example of John L. Dube below, Christianity proved to be both unifying and divisive, or as Peter Walshe has it, an ‘integrating and disintegrating force’ in society (1970: 11). Indeed, the influence of Christianity and missionaries contributed to the creation of social

classes, including the African kholwa elite, as noted among others by Marks (1986: 46). Interestingly, and as will be discussed later in this article, Gandhi's take on religion had the opposite effect of bridging differences among Indians in South Africa, and uniting them under one common identity.

Closely linked to the issue of social classes, the land question also had a decisive influence on South African history. Jeff Guy emphasizes the fact that 'Africans were not only demographically superior, but they were economically autonomous' (2013: 340). Indeed, Africans in Natal had a relative access to land, enough 'not to be tempted by the wages or type of work in sugar farming' (Hughes 2011: 23). The *Natal Mercury* editorial of 1859 hints towards the importance of the labor issue in relation to land: 'The fate of the colony hangs on a thread, and that thread is labour' (quoted in Meer 1980: 36). Colonial authorities turned to British India, which was already exporting labor to Mauritius and the West Indies, following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834. Indian indentured laborers began arriving in Natal in 1860. For the next six years, some 6,000 Indians arrived from Madras and Calcutta (Thompson 2000: 98), and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indians outnumbered whites in Natal (111). The Indian indentured labor system, as well as the voluntary migration of 'passenger Indians' – as free Indian travelers were called – brought Indian communities in close proximity to Inanda mission station, some few kilometers north of Port Natal, thus formally positioning South Africa in the larger Indian Ocean world, as observed by Frost (2010: 82). With the arrival of Indians in Natal came various religious and spiritual influences, which would subsequently contribute to the formation of a transnational Indian identity, largely shaped through Gandhi's work in South Africa.

In 1879, the British army conquered the Zulu Kingdom, regarded as the most powerful state in Southern Africa at the time. In 1910, after several more devastating wars and conquests amongst the various factions fighting for land, economic and political power, the Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal and Orange Free State were joined to form the Union of South Africa. Africa – and South Africa in particular – had become an increasingly important player on the global scene with the discovery of gold and diamonds in the region. Gandhi would later denounce the fact that the British Empire and modern Western civilization were built on force and violence, refusing to equate modern industrialization with progress (Parel 2009: xxxv). For Gandhi, modern civilization was the root of the colonial problem, a

conclusion he drew during his South African years (xxxiii). However, he believed that Indian civilization could find a place within a broader 'British-Oriental-African Commonwealth' (Frost 2010: 78), re-imagining the imperial system from an Indian perspective, and through his unique position of being located in Africa.

It is in this context of colonialism, imperialism, industrialization and interoceanic exchanges that Dube and Gandhi cohabited in Inanda. As will be discussed in this article, their work was informed and influenced by various factors such as the presence of the urban settlement of Port Natal, traditional Zulu chieftaincies and villages, mission stations, and sugar cane farms. The close proximity to a harbor, as a gateway to the rest of the world, positions Dube's and Gandhi's work and ideology in relation to the wider world, through the connections and possibilities afforded by oceanic routes. This site provides an opportunity to examine the exchanges that occurred parallel to imperial politico-economic imperatives from another angle, namely the intellectual, ideological and geographical influences brought about by the Atlantic and Indian Oceans in cosmopolitan Durban, where Africans, indentured laborers, British, Afrikaners, free migrants, traders, colonial administrators, sailors, missionaries and soldiers, to name but a few groupings, interacted. As Hofmeyr notes, the intellectual circuits based in port cities of the Indian Ocean were 'sustained by the intelligentsias of intersecting diasporas' (2007: 7), producing 'a view of colonialism less as an encounter for the local and the global than as a contestation of different universalisms' (8). Each party involved seemingly had its own configuration of what constituted an ideal empire and imperial citizen, and as this article argues these definitions were underpinned by multifold religious and spiritual discourses, observable in both Gandhi and Dube. This paper will discuss Dube and Gandhi as examples of these notions of transnationalism and nationalism at play in the broader Indian Ocean region, through the specific site where they intellectually and personally interacted, namely Inanda, Durban.

## **John L. Dube**

John L. Dube was born in 1871 in Inanda Mission Reserve. His grandfather was a respected Qadi chief under King Shaka's rule. As Hughes points out,

Dube always had a profound admiration for ‘the old kingdom’ and its ‘level of sophistication – centralized authority, geographic reach, economic organization and military might’ (2011: 4). Ukakonina James Dube, Dube’s father, grew up in the care of his widowed mother in a small mission station led by Daniel and Lucy Lindley, from the American Board of Missions. The mission expanded and moved to Inanda Mission in 1857, where James Dube became the first African pastor in 1870, a successful farmer and prolific entrepreneur. He was highly respected in Christian and Zulu traditional circles, and conducted several dealings with Natal colonial authorities and chiefdoms alike.

John Dube’s life coincided, as was noted by Hughes, with ‘South Africa’s mineral revolution’ (2011: 22). His birth coincided with the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa, feeding ‘British dreams of a subcontinent reorganized to support an endogenous capitalist development’ (28). Growing up in Inanda, Dube received a Christian education at the mission primary school, an influence that would pervade throughout his life. In 1881 he went to Adams College, ‘the leading AZM center for the education of young men’ (30). This is where Dube met American missionary William C. Wilcox, with whom he went to the United States to further his education in 1887. It has been noted that this constituted an unusual yet remarkable feat, preceding the advent of ‘the transatlantic educational flow’ of the 1890s (41). It also marked the beginning of Dube’s intellectual journey towards the Black Atlantic, understood as ‘the site for the emergence of capitalist modernity as a transnational system’ (Hofmeyr 2007: 4), or as Paul Gilroy describes it, ‘a site of transnational black modernity’ (quoted in Hofmeyr 2007: 5). For Dube, this transnational black modernity was infused with Christian principles, that led to the non-racial ideals that later characterized the South African strand of African nationalism, as pointed out by Walshe (1970: 125).

Upon arrival in the United States, Dube established connections with missionary and philanthropic circles directly or indirectly linked to the South African missions. Dube authored the pamphlet *A talk upon my native land*, ‘an assemblage of personal reminiscence, Zulu history, accounts of missionary endeavour in Africa, descriptions of Natal and appeals for support in spreading Christianity among the heathen’ (Hughes 2011: 52). This pamphlet would be noticed by no less than one of the leading pan-Africanists of the times, W.E.B Du Bois, who would earmark it for exhibition at the 1900

World Fair in Paris (53). It could also be said to set the tone for Dube's views later expressed in his paper, *Ilanga*. Dube's life-long endeavors to influence African people to adopt a Christian outlook on life must be seen parallel to his belief that the way to a productive life passed through industrial education, with an 'improving Christianity' being the key for Africans to find their place in the imperial social configuration.

On his return to Natal in 1891, Dube was increasingly involved in social and political affairs, focusing on issues of land, education and race relations, and on the rights of the African people in South Africa in general, and in Natal in particular. He went back to the United States in 1896, where he encountered a figure that would be inspirational throughout his life: Booker T. Washington, an ex-slave and founder of the Tuskegee Institute, an independent industrial education institution for African Americans. As Hughes points out, Dube found resonance in Washington's philosophy, both men embracing a Christian rhetoric and ideology while promoting entrepreneurship, skills development and industrial education amongst their people (72). Gandhi also had profound admiration for Washington's work, referring to Tuskegee as a 'noble edifice' (quoted in Nauriya 2003). Back in Durban, Dube was about to establish his two great works with a lasting legacy: Ohlange Institute and *Ilanga lase Natal* newspaper.

### **Ohlange Institute & *Ilanga lase Natal* – *Ipepa la Bantu***

In 1899, after months abroad, Dube returned to South Africa to build his own Tuskegee Institute, so to speak. It was to be an institution opened to African male students only, independent from government or missionary involvement, infused with Dube's interpretation of Christianity. Ohlange Institute, or the Zulu Christian Industrial School as it was initially called, opened its doors in 1901 in Inanda, which was, as Hughes notes, 'central to his ideas of independent social progress' (171). A facility for girls would eventually open its door in Ohlange in 1917, through American donations.

It could be submitted that the Ohlange Institute was in fact a practical translation of Dube's vision, where Zulu traditional values intersected with Christian ideals, where South Africa's destiny was closely linked to the fate of African Americans, thus firmly positioning South Africa within the Black Atlantic transnational system. The road to self-determination as a people was



possible through ‘manual, industrial and character training’, which is not only reminiscent of Washington’s vision, but also recalling the educational philosophy upheld by the American Board missionaries in Natal (Davis 1975: 504). In this sense, and through his work at the Ohlange Institute and on the local political scene, Dube transformed the margins of the empire into the center of African resistance to white domination, using the education and communication circuits it brought to defend the cause of African ‘national integrity’, to borrow Davis’ expression (510). It is interesting to note that national integrity was achieved via international and transnational routes, and through a transnationally shared vision of universalism and civilization underpinned by religion. Moreover, as one of the initiators of this national project, and as the ‘epitome of the new African’ (Marks 1986: 6), Dube was a product of this new world configuration, where modernity and tradition were negotiated to forge new identities. Christianity impacted on many levels on Dube’s work and discourse, as he sought to offer an environment conducive to the nurturing of a new elite espousing Christian principles.

This new African élite, also referred to as *kholwa* in isiZulu (‘believers’, in reference to a newly found Christianity), experienced 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian liberalism and imperialism as embodied by missionaries, colonial authorities and imperial powers. In doing so, they articulated their social, ideological and political visions, creating a space for a ‘language of resistance’ to emerge, albeit at times ambiguous, as pointed out by Marks (48). This concept of ambiguity is multifaceted. It refers to the tensions between the new African élite’s participation in colonial capitalism, which is exclusive in nature, and the need for broad based support from the African majority (59). It also points to the contradictions between a newfound modernity and Christianity, and pre-existing Zulu traditions and beliefs. This space of ambiguity, where previously accepted social orders are mediated and negotiated in light of new encounters, is perhaps where Dube’s vision of nationalism finds its roots, and as argued below where the Black Atlantic met not only colonial South Africa, but also the Indian Ocean.

This ambivalent reality, where ambiguity is ‘the price of survival in a contradictory world’ (14), can also be seen at play in another of Dube’s important achievement: *Ilanga lase Natal, Ipepa la Bantu*, whose first issue was published in 1903. Literally translatable as ‘The Sun of Natal, the Paper of the People’, it targeted an English, isiZulu, and Sesotho speaking readership, as the trilingual nature of the weekly paper indicates.

*Ilanga* was initially printed at the International Printing Press on Grey Street in central Durban, where Gandhi also printed the early editions of *Indian Opinion*, as will be discussed below. A press was eventually imported from America and housed at the Ohlange Institute, where *Ilanga* was printed thereafter. A dissemination vehicle for Dube's political, religious and educational philosophy, *Ilanga* was also a promotion tool to further the objectives of the Ohlange Institute. In short, it could be said that it encapsulated Dube's vision in written form. R. Hunt Davis observes that *Ilanga*'s foundation was greatly influenced by Tuskegee's *Southern Letter*, whereby Dube took on the dual role of editor and educator (1975: 509). The use of a newspaper could be seen as a means for Dube of reaching beyond the relatively closed and exclusive intellectual circles revolving around the South African National Native Congress (SANNC) and Ohlange Institute, to widely promote the ideals of a nation whose citizens were Africans, educated, empowered and Christians. *Ilanga*'s readership indeed comprised educated and Christian readers, but as Hughes points out, it went beyond these confines and 'spoke for the literate and illiterate alike' (2011: 105), as its subtitle suggests ('the paper of the people' – *Ipepa la Bantu*).

A general survey of *Ilanga*'s first issues reveals a newspaper combining adverts for miscellaneous goods and clothing imported from Britain; classified ads; Sunday school lessons; editorials on labor conditions; reports on American race relations; adverts for the Ohlange Institute; publicity for Indian-owned businesses; readers' letters; obituaries; news on Missionary work in South Africa; and letters to the king of England on the occasion of King Edward VII 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday (*Ilanga*, April-December 1903). With its eclectic amalgamation of news, commercial adverts and opinions, *Ilanga* reads, on different levels, as a tangible testimony to Dube's ideology and outlook on life. Through access to print, and through literacy and the usage of the English language alongside isiZulu and Sesotho, *Ilanga* rallied an imagined community around the complexities of modernity vs. traditionalism; urbanization vs. rural; Christianity vs. pre-colonial religions; British vs. Zulu royal power; in short creating a new space for the articulation of the so-called 'civilizing mission of empire' (Marks 1986: 56).

Progress was presented as being possible through the influence of Christianity, which was in line with the new élite's vision and presented as the right way of life (*Ilanga*, 29 May 1903). Through Christian missionary schools, education was accessible, and through education a man could claim

his place in the broader empire. Dube emphasized, in a column entitled ‘Advice to the Native’ published in *Ilanga*, his firm belief in education to elevate some men above others, on a level where they could connect with the empire:

In spite of the strong feelings that prejudiced the mind of the white man against those of less fortunate colour, we must admit that wherever a Native by education and Christian civilization raises himself to a standard above his fellows, the white man respects him and treats him with courtesy and common politeness, characteristic of his race. [...] The talents of such men are recognized and appreciated by white leaders of society (*Ilanga* 29 May 1903).

Magubane stresses the fact that this process of acculturation was the culmination of ideological colonization, whereby the Anglo-Saxon myth of the ‘Other’ was mainstreamed in the colonial discourse, and that discourse was inherent to missionary education (1996: xiv). Adding to the apparent contradictory nature of his discourse on race, Dube’s stance on the separation of races was ambivalent and polemic, and based on his interpretation of the scriptures: ‘The foundation of American greatness was laid in the gospel that ‘all men are created equal’. We do not advocate a social mixing up of the white and coloured races’ (*Ilanga* 29 May 1903). While Dube was initially apprehensive of Indian migration to Natal, he also expressed admiration for Indian people’s autonomy, praising their hard working attitude while simultaneously acknowledging prejudice, once again directly addressing *Ilanga*’s reader as the ideal imperial citizen:

The growing demand of continuous labour for sugar-planting, and manufacture and other farming industries and the unwillingness of the natives to offer his services for more than a few months at a time, brought about in 1860, the introduction of Indian labourers to Natal. These Asiatics, despised as they are, have so far by their own efforts of thrift and skill succeeded in becoming owners of considerable property in many parts of Natal (*Ilanga* 11 December 1903).

Admittedly, this rhetoric can be met with disbelief from a 21<sup>st</sup> century point of view. However, it must be noted that this racially toned discourse was

typical of Dube's early stance and that he later learned to respect and even admire the work and moral ethics of his Indian neighbors. Gandhi, one of Dube's neighbors, upheld similar views about Africans in his early South African years, before nuancing his discourse later in life. Such a discourse is engrained in the imperial and colonial context, and informed by mutual influence and exchanges between the various actors negotiating their position in the transnational empire.

The question has often been raised as to why Gandhi did not include Africans in his struggle, and the same could be pondered upon regarding Dube's relation to the Indian struggle. Hughes offers an approach to Gandhi's alleged exclusive struggle for Indian rights that can shed light on the importance of placing the context in relation to history:

Gandhi predicated his struggle on a belief that his constituents, despite huge internal distinctions of class, language, regional background and religion, were defined by national origin and the way in which they had been slotted into Southern African society. They were not 'children of the soil', as he [Gandhi] put it, and therefore it followed that the struggles of this minority had to be separate (2011: 110-11).

Gandhi himself spelled out his view in *Indian Opinion*, clearly drawing a line between the African and Indian struggles:

They [Africans] can use the powerful argument that they are the children of the soil... We can petition the Secretary of State for India, whereas they cannot. They belong largely to the Christian community and can therefore avail themselves of the help of their priests. Such help is not available to us (24 March 1906).

Dube and Gandhi's mutual perceptions changed over time, and the links between the leaders of the African and Indian struggles need to be nuanced. As such, the new African élite's call for a non-racial society could be understood as the absence of social hierarchy based on race, whereby 'brotherhood meant a shared if racially diverse society' (Walshe 1970: 9). This is reminiscent of Gandhi's ideal of an 'imperial brotherhood' (quoted in

Bhana 1997: 9) that transcends ideas of religion, race and class. Hofmeyr argues that these racial constructs need to be understood in context:

We need to place them in a broader context of imperial race-making in which ideas about race do not emerge solely from Europe but are constructed by a range of intellectual players and groups across empire. Such race-making projects were common in an age where ideas of ethnic regeneration and Booker T. Washington-style segregationist self-sufficiency were habitual (2013: 11).

In this light, both Dube and Gandhi exhorted ‘their people’ to take their share of the imperial pie. Using *Ilanga* as a vehicle, Dube often appealed to his people to use intellectual and physical abilities to fully participate in this new modern society:

Now, Zulus, how long will this state of things continue? Is not your experience sufficient to cause you to wake from a seemingly endless indolence, to renounce once, and forever, your old time customs, your sluggish attitude towards progress, and your happy-go-easy inclinations? (*Ilanga* 11 December 1903).

This passage from *Ilanga* clearly summarizes Dube’s firm belief in the virtues of industrial education, modernity and self-help, but also points towards an ambiguous aspect of his discourse. His call for an abandonment of ‘old time customs’ could be perceived as contradictory in light of his close relations with the Zulu monarchy, and participates to the ‘ambiguous’ nature of Dube discussed by Marks (1986). This constant negotiation between the old and the new, the modern and the traditional, etc. is characteristic of Dube’s vision. As Marks points out, Dube’s early vision encompassed a supra-tribal nationalism uniting all Africans in South Africa, while his stance after 1917, the year he was ousted as president of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), seemingly shifted towards a more tribal and ethnic nationalism (1986: 67), although this alleged shift in Dube’s ideological position could be – and is – debatable and could be seen in light of the changing socio-historical context. His firm belief in Christian principles was however a constant, and underpinned all of Dube’s achievements, including his political activities, Ohlange and *Ilanga*.

While authorities kept a close watch on *Ilanga*, it was no more a radical publication than its founder was a radical public persona. *Ilanga* regularly covered political issues pertaining to African rights and leadership, promoting the ideals of an African nationalism inspired by pan-African ideals such as those upheld by W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, advocating for a strong leadership amongst African people, racial equality, self-determination and representation. On one occasion, the Minister of Native Affairs of Natal, Henry Winter, was prompted to tell Dube that '*Ilanga* would have to adopt a far more respectful tone towards the government and 'white race' in general' (Hughes 2011: 126). However, *Ilanga*'s early editorial stance was 'politically involved but carefully nurturing a reputation of 'responsibility' and 'moderation'' (Tomaselli 1991: 18).

## **Dube and the South African Native National Congress (SANNNC)**

Hughes argues that Dube was more a pragmatist than an ideologue, translating his vision of nationalism into practicalities such as his newspaper, the Ohlange Institute, and his role as a political leader (2011: 261). He was increasingly active and known in political circles, prompting Gandhi to write that he was 'an African whom one should know' (*Indian Opinion* 2 September 1905).

With the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, African populations were increasingly marginalized from political powers, striped of lands and social recognition, which prompted African leaders, such as Dube, to unite in order to better defend the rights of Africans in South Africa. Gandhi wrote in *Indian Opinion* on 13 February 1909 that the Act of Union constituted a declaration of war against the Black population. When asked later in his life why he did not advocate a joint African-Indian struggle, Gandhi responded: 'I purposely did not invite them. It would have endangered their cause' (quoted in Nauriya 2003).

At the inaugural conference of the SANNNC in 1912, one of the earliest nationalist movements on the continent, Dube was elected president. Elected in absentia, Dube responded to his nomination with a speech detailing his vision for the new organization. An extract from Dube's speech

was published in *Indian Opinion* on 10 February 1912, under the title ‘The awakening of the natives. Mr. Dube’s address’, and introduced as follows:

Our friend and neighbour, the Rev. John L. Dube, Principal of the Ohlange Native Industrial School, has received the high honour of being elected the first President of the newly inaugurated Inter-State Native Congress. Mr. Dube has issued a manifesto to his countrymen which is so good that we regret we cannot find sufficient space for it. But we give below a couple of paragraphs which will show the excellent tone of the letter.

Dube’s election and speech were reported on in *Ilanga* on 2 February 1912. In his speech, he specifically referred to the transatlantic influence impacting on his intellectual, social and political life:

Booker T. Washington is to be my guiding star [...] because like him, I, too, have my heart centered mainly in the education of my race. Therein, methinks, lies the shortest and best way to their mental, moral, material, social and political betterment (Quoted in Davis 1975: 498).

Washington and Dube shared a philosophy whereby education was the basis for social development and emancipation, as discussed earlier. As early as 1897 Dube stated, at an address in Hampton, his belief in industrial education to secure active participation in the larger empire:

The greatest need of my people is industrial education. People of all nationalities are coming into my country... are claiming Africa, and without industrial education our people will sink into the vices of civilization instead of profiting by its virtues (Quoted in Davis 1975: 515).

One can see from this passage that Dube was not blindly accepting the idea of civilization as proposed by the colonial project, but that he was ready to use and transform what befitted his reality, adapting some elements to create a new notion of civilization from an African perspective.

### **M.K. Gandhi and the Natal Indian Congress (NIC)**

Whilst Dube mainly drew from the Black Atlantic, Gandhi drew from the Indian Ocean. As a London trained lawyer, Gandhi arrived in South Africa from India in 1893, aged 24, to offer his professional services to Dada Abdulla Sheth, a Transvaal based Muslim businessman seeking legal representation. Upon arrival in Natal, Gandhi, who wore ‘a fashionable frock coat, pressed trousers, shining shoes and a turban’ (Palmer 1957: 51), was rapidly confronted by the race discrimination characteristic of the colony of Natal. On the train taking him to Johannesburg to conduct his business, he was asked to leave the first class compartment of the train to join the third class. Gandhi refused, having in his possession a first class ticket, and preferred staying the night in the Pietermaritzburg train station. Many historians perceive this experience as the seed that led to Gandhi’s lifelong reflection and social protest that would come to characterize his life (see Palmer 1957; Bhana 1997).

Gandhi completed the work that brought him to South Africa a few months after his arrival, but continued his struggle for social justice in South Africa for the next twenty years or so, punctuated with short travels to India and London. While defending the place of Indians in the colony of Natal and in the broader British Empire, Gandhi also strove to preserve the Indian heritage of the newly formed diaspora, opening up a space where identities were to be deconstructed and redefined. He created a new concept of ‘Indianness’, where core elements of Indian culture, such as caste, religion and gender boundaries, were transformed and redefined, creating a ‘diasporic community’ (Hofmeyr 2007: 18). The formation of this new identity could be seen as an Indian response to the SANNC, whereby supra-national – and even transnational – identities took precedence over national and regional differentiations. Gandhi redefined concepts of identity as understood in India, and as Surendra Bhana observes, ‘Gandhi’s enduring legacy was that he created “Indianness”’ (1997: 31). Through this new identity, linkages between the various religions, castes and classes were forged, which was typical of the religious pluralism inherent to Gandhian thought. Gandhi’s universalism recognized religious differences, and religion was for Gandhi twofold: the religion as organization, and the religion as ethics and spirituality (Parel 2009: lxvii). As discussed below, this understanding of religion had profound incidence on Gandhi’s work in South Africa and



beyond, as his spirituality took a central role throughout his life.

In 1894, Gandhi attended a meeting convening Indian merchants seeking to defend their rights in South Africa's increasingly repressive political climate. With Abdulla Haji Adam as its first president and Gandhi as honorary secretary, the NIC was founded 'to serve as a forum for the protection of rights the Indians believed they enjoyed as subjects of the British crown' (Bhana 1997: 1). Even if led by wealthy merchants, the congress aimed to defend the rights of all Indians in South Africa, although in practice the high subscription fees were out of reach for most. As Hofmeyr notes, the climate of disillusionment in the face of several anti-Indian legislations imposed by British colonial authorities led Gandhi and his peers to intensify their activism, and the launch of *Indian Opinion* in 1903 can be seen in this light (2013: 27).

### **Gandhi, *Indian Opinion*, and the Phoenix Settlement**

In 1898, the International Printing Press (IPP) was established in Grey Street, Durban. As a multilingual press, it offered services in several languages including English, Gujarati, Tamil, Hindi, Zulu and Dutch, with a personnel from Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean world and England (12). As pointed out by Hofmeyr, the IPP on Grey Street was one component of the merchant-led political movement formed in the midst of the NIC (26). The link that can be drawn between printing, political awareness, religion and nationalism can also be observed in Dube's work although, as we shall see, the journey from the printing press to national consciousness took a different path for Dube and Gandhi.

The first issue of the periodical *Indian Opinion* was printed in 1903 at the IPP on Grey Street, under the editorship of M.H. Nazar. Although it is a newspaper in the technical sense of the term, it was more of an 'ethical anthology' attesting to Gandhi's vision of India and Indian identity in a cosmopolitan and global world (5). It included comments and editorials on current affairs in South Africa, the Indian Ocean region, and Britain, and clippings, summaries, and extracts from newspapers from all corners of the British Empire. As Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie explains, '*Indian Opinion* was no ordinary 'news' paper but one that defended human rights and stirred the consciousness of readers and promoted a universal set of social and moral

values in a society that was marked by racism and inequality' (2003: 3). The IPP moved to the newly established Phoenix settlement in 1904, where it came to be a material representation of Gandhi's criticism of technology and a eulogy of manual work. *Indian Opinion* thereon became a 'textual mini-empire' (Hofmeyr 2013: 13), a testimony of Gandhi's vision forged at the crossroad where empire, colonial power, anti-colonial resistance and identity intersected to create an Indian-centric notion of civilization.

This set of values was highly inspired by Gandhi's outlook on religion, which was for him, as he explains in his autobiography, 'self-realization or knowledge of self'(2007: 45). Indeed, Gandhi's 'religious quest', as he calls it (137), was a search for the knowledge of truth. Speaking to Abdulla Seth about Indians born and educated in South Africa: 'Was this the meaning of Christianity? Did they cease to be Indians because they had become Christians?'(138). This passage embodies Gandhi's outlook on the place of Indians in the broader empire, whereby inclusive identities were possible, where the East could meet the West, South Africa providing the space to articulate this new plural identity.

For Gandhi, modern technology and ensuing speed brought about by the West were not synonymous with efficiency and progress (Hofmeyr 2013: 4). While not categorically rejecting modernity, Gandhi's critical approach informed his 'lifelong quest to find a solution to the excesses of late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism and its materialism' (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2003: 2). He practically applied his belief when insisting that all work carried out at the press be manual, even if modern technological means were available. Gandhi believed that modern civilization was in fact a mode of conduct that emerged from industrialization in the West, which was equated to a superior civilization by its proponents (Parel 2009: xxxi). In a nutshell, for Gandhi, the colonial problem found its roots in modernity, as colonial rulers believed they were representatives of Western civilization, which was assumed superior because industrialized (xxxv). Gandhi, on the other hand, esteemed the grandeur of ancient Eastern civilizations, which he believed could cohabit and even benefit from exchanges with the West and Christianity, on equal terms. It has been noted that South Africa provided the space where Gandhi could process and articulate his thoughts, firstly because it offered social freedom from regionalism, caste and other social divisions and sectarianism inherent to India (xxxv). Secondly, as Parel observes, amongst others, Gandhi in fact made his mark on the 'world historical stage' in South Africa, where

he was confronted by the colonial community and its discriminatory laws against Indians (xxxii). Gandhi, just like Dube, was leading ‘his’ people through the complexities of the ‘civilizing mission of empire’ (Marks 1986: 56), further asserting the position of Durban in the broader oceanic world.

Gandhi was fully aware of the oppression to which Africans were subjected, as this excerpt from *Indian Opinion* dated 1 August 1908 reveals:

Our sympathies go out to our oppressed fellow subjects who are made to suffer the same cause that we suffer, viz., our slight pigment of skin.

In light of these ideological considerations, Gandhi’s work can be seen as proposing alternative definitions of modernity, not built on Western led industrialization but rather on Eastern civilization, created in a space where India meets South Africa. As Hofmeyr explains, these ‘versions of modernity are negotiated in an ever-shifting set of idioms around ‘tradition’’ (Hofmeyr 2007: 15). This constant quest for balance between tradition and modernity is also found in Dube’s discourse, and in fact participates to the ambiguous nature of Dube’s brand of nationalism emphasized by Marks (1986). Within this precarious world order, colonial powers were interlinked with African and Indian leaders, intellectuals and workers alike, each caught in a ‘structurally dependent position’ (Hofmeyr: 2013:1).

The IPP not only printed periodicals such as *Ilanga* and *Indian Opinion*, but also printed pamphlets, including *Hind Swaraj*, the famous Gujarati text Gandhi wrote in 1909 on board the ship taking him from England to South Africa, later published in America under the title *Sermon on the Sea* (Parel 2009: lxxvi). *Hind Swaraj* is widely regarded as Gandhi’s seminal work, where his views on nation, civilization, religion, and his political philosophy of *satyagraha* are articulated through a fictional dialogue between an editor (Gandhi) and a reader, who symbolizes the readers of *Indian Opinion*, as specified in the preface and foreword signed by Gandhi, and as discussed in detail by Hofmeyr (2013).

Gandhi’s Phoenix settlement, adjacent to Inanda mission was, despite its apparent semi-rural location, far from isolated as ‘it formed part of a crowded ideological hinterland where African American-inspired Zulu nationalists, Protestant evangelists, Arya Samajists, and Bombay Muslims intersected’ (55). Several Indian families from different classes, castes and

religions lived together in Phoenix, creating a diverse community distinct from traditional Indian society in this regards. A spirit of cosmopolitanism – at least on the surface – presided over differences, in a space Mark Ravinder Frost designate as a ‘utopian settlement’ (2010: 88). More than a residential area, Phoenix was an *ashram* offering an alternative lifestyle to modernity and colonialism, and promoting a self-help discourse not so dissimilar to the one advocated by Dube. Gandhi proclaimed that ‘Phoenix is intended to be a nursery for producing the right men and right Indians’ (quoted in Hughes 2011: 109). Each in their own ways, Dube and Gandhi created spaces where the ideal imperial citizen could be articulated, within the boundaries of new ‘African’ and ‘Indian’ identities, that not only developed side by side but to a certain extent intersected with each other.

New African and Indian identities were not only created in relation to colonial authorities, as pointed out by Hofmeyr, but also in relation to what Jon Soske calls the ‘also-colonized other’ (quoted in Hofmeyr 2013: 8). Dube and Gandhi influenced each other even if unwittingly, for their respective work and vision were developed in a multipartite relation that inevitably included each other, rather than an isolated binary set of relations between colonized and colonizer. However, the ‘also-colonized other’, while present in each other’s thinking, represented for both Dube and Gandhi a ‘frontier of definition’ (10), as their respective African and Indian identities were mutually exclusive, as discussed earlier:

Each involved in creating his own miniature ‘continent’, the two men defined themselves in opposition to each other, admiring each other’s projects from afar but deprecating each other’s ‘people’ – Gandhi being as well known for his anti-African sentiments as Dube for his anti-Indianism (10).

However, Dube openly expressed his changed attitude towards Indians and displayed knowledge of their struggle during an interview with Rev. W.W. Pearson, who visited Ohlange from India in 1914:

I have studied in depth the struggle fought by the Indians under the leadership of Gandhi. And after being an eye witness to the struggle, instead of taking the Indian workers as uncivilized and treating them

disdainfully, I have acquired a sense of respect for all Indians (quoted in *Hindustan Times* 26 January 1992).

As early as in 1903, Dube's position reveals a hint of admiration:

Land which once belonged to black men and deemed beneath their dignity to cultivate has blossomed under the preserving diligence of Indians into veritable Elysium (*Ilanga* 11 December 1903).

Dube and Gandhi seemingly shared a vision, and their respective intellectual journey bears resemblance to one another. Through his work at Ohlange Institute and *Ilanga*, and through the influence of the Black Atlantic, Dube imagined an ideal African imperial citizen that could embrace both his Africanness and newfound Christianity. This multifaceted identity would enable him to enjoy the benefits modernity had brought upon his land, thus securing him a space within the modern world configuration. Turning to the Indian Ocean, Gandhi, for his part, not only conceptualized the ideal Indian imperial citizen outside of India, but also defined a deterritorialized notion of India through his work at the IPP and *Indian Opinion*. As Hofmeyr notes:

*Indian Opinion* [...] explored ideas of 'India' that were not territorially based but, rather, existed among the individual sovereignties of its readers and the pathways of circulation that linked them (2013:4).

*Indian Opinion* contributed in linking India, South Africa and Britain, whereas *Ilanga*, in its own way, connected the United States and the broader empire to South Africa. As a newspaper essentially underpinned by Gandhian ideals of pan-Indian nationalism, *Indian Opinion* addressed a multilingual and transnational readership, 'an enduring commonwealth of readers' (82). Published in English, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi, the paper had an international reach and in the words of Hofmeyr constitutes 'one of the great intellectual archives of the world' (72). With its combination of news, events, announcements, book reviews, editorials and opinions, *Indian Opinion* reads as a compilation of 'transnational portfolios' (73). A heteroclitic community emerged around *Indian Opinion*, formed by readers and contributors, as well as the staff at the printing press. In a similar way that Phoenix broke

conventions surrounding religion, gender, class and caste, *Indian Opinion* aimed at uniting Indians throughout the empire around their common identity.

Through his work at the paper and activism, Gandhi developed new means of protest against the oppression of Indians in South Africa, amongst which his famous *satyagraha* philosophy. The term *satyagraha* was officially adopted in 1908, and refers to the political philosophy of passive resistance or civil disobedience developed and practiced by Gandhi, and can also mean truth. The first *satyagraha* campaign occurred in South Africa in 1906, in protest against racial legislation threatening Indian rights. Gandhi would lead several *satyagraha* campaigns together with other *satyagrahis* until his final departure from South Africa in 1914. Dube was well aware of Gandhi-led passive resistance campaigns, and Anil Nauriya (2012) points out that in 1908, it was the subject of an article in Dube's *Ilanga* as well as in *The Basutoland Star*. Gandhi advocated the practice of *satyagraha* amongst Africans, saying in an interview to *The Natal Mercury* in 1909:

If the natives were to adopt our methods, and replace physical violence by passive resistance, it would be a positive gain for South Africa. Passive resisters, when they are in the wrong, do mischief only to themselves. When they are right, they succeed in spite of any odds (quoted in Hunt 1990).

Seemingly, African leaders gave thoughts to adopting *satyagraha* as a resistance method. Gandhi and Pixley Seme, a prominent African leader, met at Tolstoy farm in 1911 to discuss passive resistance and the imminent formation of the SANNC, as reported in *Indian Opinion* of 29 July 1911. In his interview with Rev. Pearson, Dube explained at length his admiration for Indian *satyagrahis*:

Mr. Pearson, we cannot emulate the Indians. We do not possess that divine power. I have been wonder-struck to see their work with my own eyes. [...] But Mr. Pearson, we will be totally ruined if I ask my people to follow this path. Howsoever illiterate, ignorant, uncultured and wild the Indian workers may be, in their veins there runs the blood which is invigorated with the glory of the ancient culture of the Indians. After getting such a leader as Gandhi that culture has

found a renewal. The original divine power manifested itself again and they could display extraordinary endurance. If our Natives come in their place, nobody can control their violent nature. For their safety they would certainly retaliate. The white men of this place require only this much. If any brother of mine kills a white man after being excited, it would precipitate a great disaster upon us. Thousands of brothers of mine would be put to death in no time and would be totally ruined. We do not possess so much prowess also to wage a *satyagraha* struggle. Only the strength of the Indians can endure it (quoted in *Hindustan Times* 26 January 1992).

Hofmeyr, in *Gandhi's Printing Press*, discusses how the IPP and *Indian Opinion* embodied some aspects of Gandhi's *satyagraha* philosophy, as 'protagonists in the larger story of *satyagraha*' (2013: 2). In a similar way that 'Indianness' is not territorially defined but rather exists throughout the empire via individuals, *satyagraha* can be understood as the ruling of the self in search of a greater truth (3). This was in fact Gandhi's life-long spiritual conquest that informed his definitions of civilization and modernity. Gandhi was a fervent disciple of self-discipline, himself leading a life devoid of superficial material possessions and adopting an ascetic lifestyle. The nurturing of the mind and soul for a greater attainment of the truth is also visible in Gandhi's profound love of reading, himself having been greatly influenced by John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, and Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta, to name but a few authors<sup>2</sup>. It has been stated that reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last* prompted Gandhi to establish the Phoenix settlement (Parel 2009: liii). However, it was also pointed out by Gandhi's secretary that Gandhi's admiration for the lifestyle and work carried out by Jesuits at Marianhill Seminary (xlvii) – and perhaps Dube's work at Ohlange Institute, as proposed by Dhupelia-Meshrie (2003: 2) – might also have provided inspiration for the various ashrams Gandhi set up in South Africa and India. These various hypotheses point towards the multiple South African influences that had an impact on Gandhi's work, and establish a parallel between Gandhi's and Dube's roles as educators, religious leaders and politicians. As Mabel Palmer notes, Gandhi 'mingled political agitation with the spiritual enlightenment of

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive overview of intellectuals and authors who had a profound influence on Gandhi and Gandhian thought, see Parel, 2009.

his followers' (1958: 52). As revealed by the quote above, Dube seemingly thought highly of the *satyagraha* political resistance strategy and discipline it required from the *satyagrahis*.

In this light, through the understanding of 'the self' as being self-disciplined and ethical, the textual allegory of IPP and *Indian Opinion* being forms of *satyagraha* refers to the act of writing and reading:

Reading and writing can be made to conform to such practices of the self and can hence be a mode of *satyagraha* as well as an activity through which to theorize the idea itself (Hofmeyr 2013: 3).

Through the manual labor imposed at IPP and in the daily life at Phoenix in general; the appeal to *Indian Opinion*'s readers to apply their mind to read carefully and slowly; the phasing out of commercial adverts from the paper; the absence of regards for copyrights; and the constant discourse promoting an image of the ideal reader – who is also the ideal Indian imperial citizen – *Indian Opinion* is indeed an 'ethical anthology', as pointed out earlier and observed by Hofmeyr (5). *Indian Opinion* and the IPP existed in a context of print capitalism yet did not adhere to a commercial creed. Through its transnational distribution network, *Indian Opinion* created a community of readers, whose dispersion across the empire became an embodiment of deterritorialized India (12). As noted by Hofmeyr, Gandhi himself tackled this issue when addressing *Hind Swaraj* to the readers of *Indian Opinion* in the original manuscript:

India exists as a deterritorialized space created through textual circulation in which virtually anyone, anywhere, could make themselves Indian (20).

## **Indian Ocean Studies**

It is essentially through the realization of a non-spatial identity made possible through transnational exchanges that Dube's Africa opened its borders for Gandhi's India to emerge, and for Dube's Africa to be drawn into the larger Indian Ocean region. As Frost explains:



Especially after Gandhi launched his first *satyagraha* campaign in 1906, the Indian struggle in South Africa became part of a wider Indian Ocean debate about imperial citizenship and the future of the British Empire (2010: 81).

Frost further proposes that the participation of South Africa in an increasingly assertive non-European Indian Ocean world can be seen as one of many factors leading to apartheid, whereby white settlers feared a loss of control over the destiny of the British Empire (81). On another note, Gandhi's work in South Africa provides the genesis for his subsequent work in the Indian National Congress (INC) in India and leading to the independence of India from Britain in 1947. From a Dube point of view, the intensification of White oppression led to the radicalization of the SANNC, which eventually became the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923. The ANC, for which Dube is considered the father figure, turned out to be one of the major opponents to the apartheid regime, and has led South Africa since the demise of apartheid and first democratic elections in 1994.

The ties bonding South Africa, India, and the broader empire are greater than appear on the surface, and truly participate in imagining the Indian Ocean region as a 'regional cultural corridor', to borrow Sarah Nuttall's expression (quoted in Gupta 2010b: 276). Through an understanding of Gandhi's work in relation to Dube's, and vice-versa, South African and Indian nationalist, religious and intellectual movements can be understood within the broader Indian Ocean region. By interacting, admiring, engaging, influencing and opposing each other in the port city of Durban, Dube and Gandhi became, each in their own ways, progressive actors in a space of 'enforced cosmopolitanism' (Hofmeyr 2013: 8). The links between Dube and Gandhi do not end there, as it had been noted that Gandhi's mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a leader of the Indian nationalist movement and secretary of the INC, visited Ohlange in 1912 (Hughes 2011: 171). Dube reported the visit in *Ilanga* on 15 November 1912, under the title 'Our distinguished visitor'. Dube wrote:

We have seen and heard a great man whose knowledge is equal to that of the foremost statesmen of our day, and he is a black man (*Ilanga* 15 November 1912).

This meeting suggests mutual consultation between leaders of the South African and Indian nationalist movements, and following this lead the parallels between the ANC and the INC could be probed further in terms of their common ‘progressive nationalist appeal’ (Hughes 211: 172) as developed in the Indian Ocean world.

Despite their differences, the parallels between Dube and Gandhi are striking. Both men lived in the same period; traveled extensively across the British Empire, founded centers of advancement through education, founded a newspaper; and were leaders of two major nationalist movements. They were also both avid readers and authors, beyond their contributions to their respective periodicals. Dube authored the first novel in isiZulu entitled *Insila kaShaka* in 1930, as well as a biography of another illustrious inhabitant of Inanda, Isaiah Shembe, numerous speeches, songs, and translations. Gandhi, for his part, wrote *Hind Swaraj*, as discussed above, as well as his autobiography entitled *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, extensive correspondence, essays, and translations, to name but a few of his literary outputs. Moreover, they were both spiritual leaders who left their mark on history, whose respective political philosophies were deeply marked by their religious belief.

The degree with which Dube and Gandhi personally interacted within the ‘Inanda corridor’<sup>3</sup> is difficult to ascertain, as few traces of such encounter survive to date. Asked at the launch of her book on Dube to comment on the relation between them, Hughes replied: ‘I don’t think that Gandhi and Dube were friends - they were pushing the boundaries of apartheid’ (UKZN eNewsletter 2011). However their cohabitation, symbolized through their work at Ohlange and Phoenix, respectively, survived well beyond their physical presence. *Ilanga* moved to central Durban in 1924, where it is still published and is one of the most important isiZulu newspapers in South Africa to this day. Dube’s home is a national monument, and the Ohlange Institute – where Nelson Mandela chose to cast his vote in South Africa’s first democratic elections – is today a heritage site. *Indian Opinion* came under editorship of Gandhi’s son, Manilal Gandhi, in the 1950s. His wife took over the paper upon Manilal’s death, under the title *Opinion*, until the publication of the last issue in August 1961. The Phoenix Settlement was

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<sup>3</sup> The expression ‘Inanda corridor’ was coined by Professor Lindy Stiebel, during a consultation with the author in preparation for this paper.

burnt down during riots at the heights of apartheid unrest in 1985, but buildings have since been restored. The site is still administered by the Gandhi family in South Africa. Together with Inanda Seminary and the Shembe Village, Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix Settlement form part of the Inanda heritage route, said in tourist brochures to be the place ‘where there is more history per square centimeter than anywhere in South Africa’ (Inanda Community Tourism Bureau). Inanda, in all likelihood, still has many stories needing to be told.

The significance of these kinds of unusual encounter throughout the Indian Ocean region, and between Africa and India, has recently garnered renewed interest within academia. As Pamila Gupta puts it, there is a ‘growing trend to look at the Indian Ocean as a space of transformation, immersion and mobility’ (2010a: 3). An interesting feature of the encounter between Dube and Gandhi in South Africa is the analytical space it provides for the Black Atlantic to meet the Indian Ocean. In this theoretical approach, 20<sup>th</sup> century Inanda can be seen as providing an in-between zone where new identities are being negotiated and created, or in the words of Hofmeyr, a zone of ‘cross-over between Indian and African’ (2007: 22). The imperial nation building project no longer flows uniquely from North to South, but flows quite literally throughout the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to reach all parts of the globe via Africa.

As utopian as were Dube’s and Gandhi’s visions, so was the British Empire a utopian project. Seen as a religious, political, social, economic and cultural system, the British Empire’s reach went across the oceans, and as Richard Price sums up, ‘this frontier of empire was a place where hegemony was constantly being negotiated and defended’ (2008: 7). However, as seen through the case study of Dube and Gandhi, this frontier was multifaceted, and went beyond the traditional imperial authorities/subjects or colonizer/colonized dichotomies. South Africa did not only grapple with Western ideologies and religions in shaping its language of resistance and identity, but also had to negotiate its space in relations to the Indian Ocean region. In reflecting on the impact of imperial internationalism on the formation of various strands of nationalism in South Africa, this article partially addresses Frost’s challenging question: ‘How far were South African literati as a whole drawn into this wider oceanic arena and with what results?’ (2010: 83). Within this Indian Ocean framework, and through the massive population movements it brings into play, the line between the

notions of global and local are blurred and redefined, as ‘key voices that emerged across this public arena did not belong solely to colonial officials and Europeans orientalist’ (76).

These observations remind us that a nation can spread over continents and spaces, where identities are linked through ‘social and textual affiliations’, therefore understanding ‘nation as narration’, to quote a famous phrase from Homi Bhabha (1994: 142). Through the dissemination of culture, new cultures and nations are born, and as exemplified in this case study can take the allure of a ‘nation of others’ (139). Frost reiterates this when conceptualizing the Indian Ocean region as a public space where ‘modernity was negotiated’, ‘nationalism reinterpreted’, ‘aspects of Westernization were rejected’ and ‘ideas of religion, science and civilization reconstructed’ (2010: 77). As demonstrated through the study on Dube and Gandhi, and as emphasized by Frost, the various parties interacting within the Indian Ocean were not passive recipients of foreign discourses from the North, South, East or West, but were at the forefront of shaping the imperial discourse itself through their shared yet different ideals, which gave rise to a new sense of cosmopolitan discourse. One can see from this case study that religion, as played out through Dube and Gandhi, had a profound impact on the course of history.

Far from offering definite conclusions, this discussion on Dube and Gandhi raises several questions. Could it be proposed that through the Indian Ocean Studies lens, histories are re-narrated from a different perspective? Could this lens be used as a tool to question and redefine identities created through the colonial discourse, reinstating the voice of the ‘others’ so often left out of the equation? These theoretical questions can begin to find answers through the uncovering of hidden histories that took place in the Indian Ocean region over the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. In doing so, one would need to rethink notions of diasporic identities, migration and globalization when asserting the location of culture. Dube and Gandhi, seen side by side in South Africa, looking towards the Black Atlantic and the Indian Ocean respectively, illustrate this possibility. Further comparative analysis of Dube, Gandhi and Shembe, another important Inanda-based religious leader and contemporary to Dube and Gandhi, could produce fascinating information on how the imperial project and its definitions of modernity were negotiated and received in South Africa, and of the linkages between religion, literacy, and the written word.

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