

# Religious Citizenship: The Case of the Globalised Khoja

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## Abstract

*The African Khōjā are an Indic Muslim caste, which began migrating from Sindh and Gujarat to East Africa in the late 18th century. During the 19th and 20th centuries, their economic success in an institutionally underdeveloped region coupled with a strong religious impetus allowed them to build communal municipal institutions throughout the region that both mimicked and replaced the absent state. The insecurity of postcolonial East Africa, such as the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar and the 1972 Ugandan Asian exodus, forced the Khōjā to further expand their bureaucratic apparatus towards foreign policy- migration to Western Europe and North America and requisite institutionalization. In the 21st century, the Khōjā coordinate these communal networks from North America and Western Europe to Asia and Africa towards a religious-based economic development in emerging economies. Their primary identity is religious, defined from within and outwith, using the mechanisms of globalization to further communal aims internationally within a framework of religious nationalism insensible to state nationalism.*

**Key Words:** *The Khōjā, Religious citizenship, Islam, Madagascar, Diaspora, Identity, Imagined Community*

## Résumé

*Le Khoja africaine sont une caste musulmane Indic, qui a commencé la migration de Sindh et du Gujarat Afrique de l'Est à la fin du 18ème siècle. Au cours des 19e et 20e siècles, leur succès économique dans une région sous-développée sur le plan institutionnel couplé avec une forte impulsion religieuse leur a permis de construire des institutions municipales communales toute la région imité C'est Bothan et substitué à l'Etat absent. L'insécurité de l'Afrique post-coloniale de l'Est, tels que la révolution de 1964 à Zanzibar et 1972 ougandais asiatique exode, a forcé le Khoja à élargir leur appareil bureaucratique de la politique de la migration étrangère à l'Europe occidentale et l'Amérique du Nord et l'institutionnalisation nécessaire. Au 21e siècle, la Khoja coordonner Ces réseaux communautaires d'Amérique du Nord et en Europe occidentale à l'Asie et de l'Afrique vers un développement économique basé sur la religion dans les économies émergentes. Leur identité première est religieuse, définie à partir de l'intérieur et sont sortis, en utilisant les mécanismes de la mondialisation à d'autres objectifs communautaires l'échelle internationale dans le cadre de nationalisme religieux Insensible aux nationalisme d'Etat.*

**Mots clés:** *Le Khoja, citoyenneté Religieuse, l'islam, Madagascar, la diaspora, identité, communauté Imaginé*

## Introduction

The Khōjā are an Indic Muslim merchant caste whose early modern origins lie in geographic expanse stretching from Sindh to Gujarat. Permanent migration from India to parts of East Africa has been estimated as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, such as in the case of Madagascar. (Campbell, 2008, p. 48) This study is focused on the contemporary community which has its origins beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Khōjā religion was caste specific (*khōjāpanth*) which employed regional Indic practices and rituals that integrated eclectic Muslim theologies.

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was witness to a fundamental transformation in Khōjā religion and caste identity with the arrival of Mahomed Hoosein Hoosanee to the province of Kacch in 1900 V.S. [1844 C.E.] (Nānjiānī, 1892, p. 251). In Bombay, he pursued a series of legal cases to acquire the communal property of the Khōjā caste through the claim of being their 'Imam'. In 1866 Aga Khan case (*Daya Mahomed, et. al. v. Mahomed Hoosein Hoosanee, et. al.*), also known as the 'The Khojah Case', was argued in the High Court of Bombay between the elders of the Khōjā caste and supporters of this Persian exile known also as the 'Aga Khan'; at stake was access to the caste's extensive trading networks and control over its considerable financial resources. In essence, the plaintiffs argued that Hoosanee's claim to be the exiled Imam of the Khōjā caste was spurious. Eventually, the case was decided for the defendant, the results of which ultimately fractured the modern caste into three Islamic creeds—Isma'īlī, Ithnā 'Asharī, and Sunni. (Purohit, 2012) His forceful insertion into the internal affairs of the Khōjā is a nexus point in modern Khōjā history, which set into motion a series of events eventually leading to the fracture of the Khōjā caste and resulting in three distinct modern Khōjā reactions to Western modernity.

It can be argued that the Khōjā are at the vanguard of modern Indic Islamic identities in our age of globalization.<sup>1</sup> The most famous Khōjā in the colonial period was Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. The diasporic communal networks of the Khōjā, utterly disconnected from their ancestral homeland, can be seen as an example *par excellence* of 'deterritorialized Islam'. (Roy, 2006, p. 158) The Khōjā believe that they can be purely 'Muslim' in religion and culture, 'Isma'īlī' for the Āgākāhānī Khōjā

<sup>1</sup> *The term 'globalization' as employed in this study references what Held refers to as the 'transformationalist perspective', which "conceives globalisation as being a process whereby various forms of human activity are increasingly traversing the world and connecting people in differing parts of the world more densely and more quickly than in previous times." (Hudson & Slaughter, 2007, p. 2) From this perspective, there is no single cause or outcome of globalization. For this study, the economic and intellectual effects of liberal economic policies in Tanzania beginning in the 1990s, affordable intercontinental human transportation, and the flow of identity discourses from South Asia and the Near East to East Africa are some of the specific impacts of globalization that have helped to radically transform Khōjā identity in the twentieth century and continue to do so.*

and 'Shia' for Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā. This reified and idealized vision of Islam is inherently in conflict with Khōjā identity, for 'Muslim' is functionally defined here as Arab and Persian in form leaving little room for their ancestral Indic heritage. All aspects of Indic culture are measured against this idea of a 'pure Islam' and those aspects of culture which do not further this ideological goal are contested and usually discarded. There is no irreconcilable duality of the Prophet as a man of 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia and a universalist prophet. The impact of the lack of this duality can be seen in the discourses of Muslim societies in existential turmoil, such as Pakistan. The *jamāt* of the Āgākhānī and Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā function as networks of *poleis* overlaid modern nation-states facilitating transnational movement and a supranational identity in which loyalty to the *sāhēba jhamāna* ('Imam of the Age') precedes and outweighs that of the state. The Khōjā, as a bellwether of globalized Islam, provide an important case study of this emergent 'religious citizenship'.

## Religious Identities

Discourses on the theme of 'religious citizenship' are starting to emerge and can be classified in somewhat overlapping categories. For Antiquity, this phrase refers to religious life in the Greek *polis* and the extent to which this constituted politics. From this perspective, female inclusion in the religious life of the city-state could be seen as form of political inclusion and thus citizenship. (Borgers, 2008) For the contemporary period, there are two overlapping discourses with regard to religious identity and ethnic minorities in the West. The first focuses on how citizenship is inculcated within religious education and the challenges presented in teaching a secular civic identity within a religious framework. (Miedema, 2006) (Hemming, 2011) Relatedly, the second more extensive body of research focuses on how religious minorities, particularly Muslims, are challenging established notions of citizenship in a pluralistic West. (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000) (Ryder, 2006) (Modood, et al., 2006) (Hudson, 2003) (March, 2009)

This article defines 'religious citizenship' in a different and narrower context from the existing literature, focusing on the political evolution the African Khōjā. Just as modern Western notions of citizenship are the result of the political evolution of state through distinct junctures from the Greek *polis* to the modern nation-state, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century represents a similar nexus for the African Khōjā, from a circumscribed caste to a self-defined transnational nation. It was in this period through the colonial experience, (Mamdani, 2006) that the Khōjā transformed from a caste organization to a liberal welfare state parallel to the nation-state structure to deliver goods, services, or security which the postcolonial state could or would not provide in a political environment in which Asians were politically marginalized. (Olinga, 2010)

The transformation of the *jamāt* into a modern political body continues, particularly in the Western diaspora. The organization of the early modern Khōjā *jñāti* ('caste structure') was plutocratic, relying almost exclusively on *sēṭhā'ī* ('the authority of the merchant elite'). For the Āgākhānī Khōjā in the early nineteenth century, this changed with the arrival of Mahomed Hoosain Hoosanee (Aga Khan I) who introduced an autocratic hierarchy which functioned as a constitutional divine monarchy over the Khōjā by the twentieth century, as evidenced by the theological discourses which surrounded his grandson in the *dhu'ā* ('central prayer') and the creation of a law-book in 1905 for the Zanzibar community that evolved into the 1961 constitution. (Anon., Sapṭēambar 1905/ Rajab 1323) (Māstar, 1909) (Janmohamed, 2011) Significantly, for the Āgākhānī Khōjā the 'Aga Khan' of the day remains the ultimate spiritual and temporal head of the community within a highly hierarchical transnational power structure.

With their official recasting in 1899, the Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā took a radically different approach to democratize their community by creating a constitutional democracy in which all male men could vote in elections each term. These autonomous communities in Africa are loosely affiliated through the creation of the The Africa Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaats of Africa created in 1946 allowed for a bureaucratization of the *jamāt* structure. (Anon., 1992) For much of Eastern and Central Africa until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, to be Khōjā and Ithnā 'Asharī was synonymous. The tension of Khōjā identity as both *jñāti* ('caste') and *jamāt* ('community') began to be challenged in the second half of the twentieth century with the growth of the community as seen in the 1956 case of *vakaph* ('religious endowment') trusteeship of an Ithnā 'Asharī of Memon ancestry in Zanzibar. (M.D. Kermali, et. al. v. Mussa G. Dhalla, et. al., 1956) Saeed Akhtar Rizvi's development of the Bilal Muslim Mission in 1964 (Dārēsālām khōjā sī'ā ithanā'asārī jamāt, 1969) further blurred the established racial association between the Ithnā 'Asharī faith and Asiatic peoples. The full realization of this *ummatī* ideal of religious nationhood manifests itself among the Anglophone African Khōjā diaspora in Western Europe and North America wherein some new religious centers established by these Khōjā eliminate the term 'Khōjā' entirely in their naming and membership requirements.

Aside from a shared sense of purpose, religious identities are inherently about inclusion and exclusion (Kabeer, 2006). For both the Āgākhānī and Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā, religion allowed for an expansion of ethnic membership on religious terms, being 'Ismailī' or 'Shia' respectively. Modern Khōjā communities have had their caste identities subsumed within larger globalized Islamic identity constructs based on Near Eastern authorities, such as pan-Shiism or pan-Ismailism. (Kassam-Remtulla, 1999) Islam has become the exclusive *dīn* ('religion') of the Khōjā. This transformative development has allowed non-Khōjā attendees full membership within a Khōjā-majority *jamāt*. For this globalized community, each *jamāt* functions as the sovereign territory of the Khōjā nation in which its own definition of religious citizenship functions as a primary civic identity and

demands a loyalty above and beyond the nation-state. To illustrate these points, take the following encounter in Miami with Āgākḥānī Khōjā students and visitors in the spring of 2013.

Q: How do you primarily identify yourself? Do you consider yourself Khōjā?

A: *No, not really. I am Khōjā but I think of myself as Ismā'īlī. I'm having this issue with my children, trying to explain to them who we are. I have [Sunni] Muslim friends who don't consider us Muslim because we don't go to the mosque or pray and fast like other [Muslims]. What should I tell them? Are we Ismā'īlī or Muslim? It's hard to explain...*

Q: In terms of loyalty, is your first loyalty to America or Hazur Imam [Aga Khan IV]? If you had to choose between one and the other, which would you choose?

A: *Of course, maulā bāpā. We are loyal Americans but if we had to choose it's him.*

This nationalistic loyalty as distinct from that of the nation-state is further illustrated in the Preamble (§D) of the 1987 Ismaili constitution which states:

The authority of the Imam in the Ismaili Tariqah [‘faith’] is testified by Bay’ah [‘oath of alliance’] by the murid [‘devotee’] to the Imam which is the act of acceptance by the murid of the permanent spiritual bond between the Imam and the murid. This allegiance unites all Ismaili Muslims worldwide in their loyalty, devotion and obedience to the Imam within the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood. It is distinct from the allegiance of the individual murid to his land of abode, (Hasnani, 1987)

## Citizenship

The idea of citizenship is defined by the relationship of the citizen to the *polis* (Heater 1999) or the state to the globalized citizen. (Sassen 2009) Citizenship invokes languages of social and political rights demanded of the state as well the responsibilities of citizens to it. These constructs are being increasingly challenged by the mobility of citizens, (Beiner 1994) particularly Muslim migrants into Western Europe and North America. (Soysal 1997) Both Heater and Beiner call for call for a ‘world’ or ‘universal’ citizenship respectively based on notions of universal human rights and civics education that broadens the hitherto narrow focus of nationalist agendas towards a global political

identity that embraces diversity and allows for points of global political convergence, such as the International Court of Justice.

The modern notion of citizenship is the evolution of more than 2,000 years of Western political thought whereby the evolution from *poleis* to the nation-state created modern ideologies which finally bound the identities of peoples through civil religion to the structures of political power in which they resided. The Khōjā had begun to leave the Subcontinent before the nationalist project began in earnest in their ancestral home and by virtue of their position as economic intermediaries were isolated from the nationalist discourses of Africanism in East Africa. The African Khōjā evolved a primary loyalty and identification to their local *jamāt*, which functioned as a *polis* and the *imāmvaādō* as *agora*.

While the Khōjā in Africa were becoming alienated by the majority, the Khōjā who migrated northwards into Western Europe and North America became fully deterritorialized and were forced into a process of an 'Islamic' identity formation based on differentiation, relativization, and socialization amongst their minority ethnic neighbors. (Robertson 1992) This new trans-local culture bore an imagined world (Appadurai 1996) that connected the worldwide Khōjā *jamāt* based on an idealized Near Eastern Shiism through the cultural experience of Africa. As a diasporic community, the African Khōjā leaped from the *polis* to global citizenship without a firm sense of state nationalism. The use of dual and triple citizenship by many members of the Khōjā community can be understood through Ong's 'flexible citizenship' in an era defined by Soysal as 'postnationalism'. And yet, the state is not politically irrelevant as people from the Global South do not flow northward quite as freely as do their manufactured goods. (Jacobson 2009) The African Khōjā have been able to maintain the economic advantage of caste kin networks through the *jamāt* while reimagining their identity to engage the discourses of global Shiism. The national is understood either in relation to the local or the global. It is possible that the Khōjā represent a new facet of Muslim global citizenship through the continuing evolution of the *jamāt* as an aggregator of the community's socio-economic resources directed towards local and global religious aspirations.

Employed heuristically, the phrase 'religious citizenship' endeavors to capture the changing political identity of the Khōjā in the age of globalization as inexorably linked to the transnationalism of global capitalism (Barber & Lem, 2012) yet quite apart from being a 'rootless cosmopolitan' or Kantian 'world citizen'. (Beiner, 1994, p. 17) One could argue that this is not citizenship at all, simply membership in an organization. In the literal sense that is true, the Khōjā cannot construct citizenship as they have no sovereign territory from which to project power within the nation-state system. And yet, they have created a latticed network which overlays the nation-state system by which expertise, money, power, and authority are transferred along these vertical axes, while grounded in North America and Western Europe.

In East Africa, the Khōjā community has ability to issue birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, and legal arbitration in matters of personal law. Additionally, in Dar es Salaam, the official Khōjā membership card provides discounts at community institutions such as pharmacies and for the destitute social welfare in the form of monthly payments of rent, utilities, and food. In its most state-like function, the Khōjā conduct foreign affairs directly with heads of state bypassing the nation-state apparatus. The most vivid example of this is seen through the leader of the Āgākḥānī Khōjā, Karim al-Husayni,

All this has only accentuated the Imamate's state-like form, given its efforts to standardise Ismaili practices globally as if in a nation-state, claim ambassadorial status for the Imam's representatives in parts of Asia, Africa and even Europe or North America, and lend the Aga Khan the perquisites of a head of state by having him sign protocols of cooperation with kings, presidents and prime ministers. Indeed the community has its own constitution, flag and even, in the case of the Khojas, an anthem. (Devji, 2009, p. xii)

In the same way that the multi-national corporation, such as Coke or Nestlé, have used globalization of the national-state system to set up transnational networks facilitating the flow of goods and services through affiliated companies throughout the world, so too the Khōjā have exported their corporate organization worldwide with independent local franchises (*jamāt*) linked by confederation. Khōjā 'religious citizenship' can thus be envisaged as a possible next iteration of communal citizenship and religious organization in the age of globalization.

What is argued here is the ideological impact of a civic identity, how one participates in national and transnational power structures which gives identity and allows participatory inclusion within a group that has real political ramifications across subsystems within the world system. (Balibar & Wallerstein, 2011) When Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) or World Federation (WF) offices in countries function as *de facto* embassies negotiating directly with a host country for passports and visas for its members or political and economic dispensations, something qualitatively different is occurring beyond the non-governmental organization model. That level of coordination between Africa, Asia, and Europe allows tightly organized Khōjā communities to acquire Western citizenships and traverse global political foundries to fulfill religio-political agendas that are expressed by their respective leaderships. (Steinberg, 2011)

Modern ideas of citizenship and nationalism are intimately tied to the evolution of the nation-state, so too is Khōjā nationhood tied to its diasporic reality in the age of globalization. For example, the creation of an 'Ismā'īlī nation' creates a social contract to those who accede to its requirements of membership, thus providing its 'citizens' a narrative of place in history and purpose of being as well as the full resources of a

developed welfare state apparatus, such as in Tanzania. Herein the boundaries between a secular civil religion and faith are blurred. This transnational political construct goes far beyond other similar communal Muslim development programmes such as the Gülen or Ahmadiyya movements, both in sheer scope and ideology. Whereas those programmes are embedded within particular cultural and national milieus, Turkish and Pakistani respectively, both the Āgākhānī and Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā communities aspire to and are inclusive of Muslim communities from around the world who embrace their religious creed, albeit with some reluctance. It is the synthesis of modern nationalism and political realization of the Islamic ideal of the *umma* (Kruse, 1971) through particular discourses of pan-Islamism that has its origins in 19<sup>th</sup> century South Asian literature. (Naeem, 1980) For both the Āgākhānī and Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā, the African experience was critical and determinant in the development of their contemporary transnational ‘religious citizenship’ construct. It is in historicizing these stages of Khōjā institutional development in East Africa that have led to the contemporary transnational political networks with which this article is primarily focused.

## Constitution

In the nineteenth century, the Khōjā caste became more than an ethnic community and voluntary organization. Interaction with the British in India and Zanzibar allowed a gradual transformation of the Khōjā *jamāt* into a constitutional body. For the Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā, the constitution is essential to local *polis* organization as well for each international organizational body, such as the Africa Federation. Each constitution lays out rules of membership, bylaws, membership dues, election rules and terms, administrative positions, etc... So internalized has this form of organization been among the Khōjā that mid to late nineteenth century communal religious endowments (*vakaph*) were bequeathed through trust deeds and corporate wills/probate rather than with the traditional Islamic writ of endowment (*vakaphnāmū*).



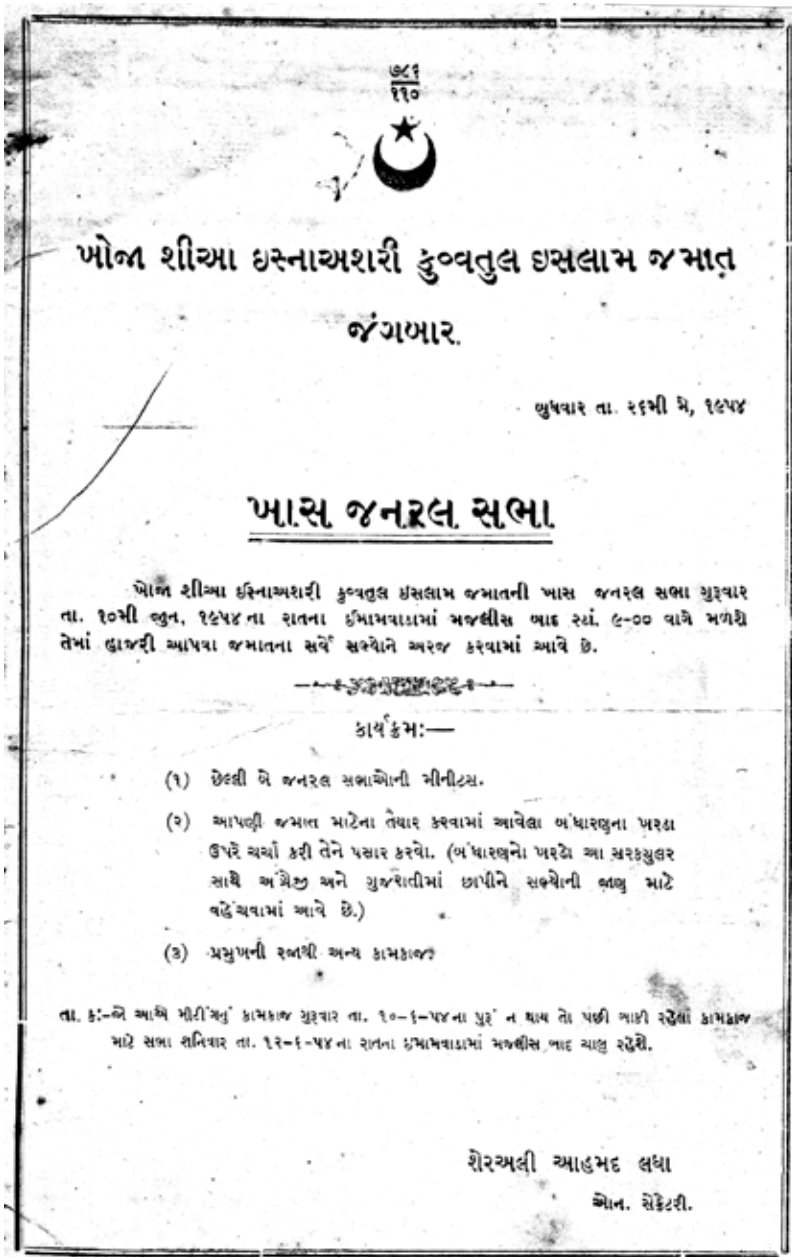


Figure 5: General body minutes/constitutional changes by the Khōjā Kuwwatul Islam jamāt in Zanzibar, 1954

## Translation

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110

Khōjā Shia Ithnā ‘Asharī Kuvvatul Isalām *jamāt* of Zanzibar  
 Wednesday 26 May 1954  
 Special General Body Meeting

The Khōjā Shia Ithnā ‘Asharī Kuvvatul Isalām *jamāt* will have a special general body meeting in the evening at 9.00h on Thursday 10 June 1954 in the *imāmṡvādō* after the *majalīs*. All community members are invited to attend.

### Programme:

[A reading] of the minutes from the previous two general body meetings

Our *jamāt* is ready to submit the constitutional bill to be passed by the church. (The [proposed] constitutional bill is attached to this circular printed in English and Gujarati for all to read.)

President’s other business

Postscript: If all of the proposed business is not completed on Thursday 10 June 1954, then the remaining items will be reviewed at the next meeting on the evening of Saturday 12 June 1954 in the *imāmṡvādō* after the *majalīs*.

Śēra’alī Āhamad Ladhā  
 Hon. Secretary

Contemporary Khōjā identity is based upon these institutions and constitutional forms of organization as both immutable and essential to corporate organization. Wherever the Khōjā settle, a *jamāt* is immediately formed to organize the community and build institutions to support it. The normal offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer are present in all Khōjā constitutions each with a limited term and carefully bounded powers.

The republican nature of the Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā *jamāt* is critical to their identity and, within the caste, a means of identifying themselves against their Āgākhānī brethren. As the African Khōjā began to experiment with higher levels of organization, they exported

their local and regional republican models of organization back to India, helping to establish such regional organizations as the Kutch Federation and the Council of Gujarat. The consolidation of the original Africa Federation has itself been contentious. Each 'triennial conference' and 'extra-ordinary conference' of the Federation is beset with conflicts by various communities couched in the language of parliamentary procedure; the main issue being a balance of power.<sup>2</sup>

At the onset of the twenty-first century, the Dar es Salaam Khōjā community is the largest and wealthiest in Africa. Its interests tend to dominate to the consternation of smaller communities. Because it is organized through a system of proportional representation<sup>3</sup> (The Africa Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaats, 1993–2003), smaller and relatively poorer communities must form alliances and use parliamentary procedures to ensure their interests are accounted for in final deliberations. Aside from power and wealth, other cleavages within the Federation can be found such as language and culture. For instance, there is a distinct separation between the mainland communities and the Francophone islands of the Western Indian Ocean. The mainland communities send individuals representing their particular community whereas the Francophone communities of Madagascar, Mayotte, and Réunion have formed a 'Conseil Régional Des Khojas Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamates De L'océan Indien' have a separate council apart from the Anglophone Africa Federation. (Anon., 2011) The Francophone insistence on the use of Gujarati is a pronounced difference from the Anglophone mainland transition to English in Khōjā affairs. The political complexity and intrigues found within the Federation rival that of any international governmental organization.

While *jamāt* constitutional parliamentary procedure is modeled after British practice, Khōjā constitutions are a composite of Khōjā organizational history. The medieval organizational remnants present in all Khōjā constitutions in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa are the appointed posts of chief (*mukhī*) and accountant (*kamāḍīyā*).<sup>4</sup> The remit of these two posts are largely ceremonial and limited to the institutions of the caste hall, shrines, and mosque. To conceptualize their role in *jamāt* organization, the chief and accountant have had authority to maintain the religious traditions and cultural rituals for the Khōjā since time immemorial. The larger modern Khōjā welfare state apparatus which has emerged in the twentieth century is organized and executed through the elected leadership to which the chief and accountant ultimately report. The retention of these two positions allows for a continuity of medieval identity in the modern Khōjā *polis*.

2 A full fifth of the total Gujarati and English archival correspondence housed in the Africa Federation Archives in Dar es Salaam deal with issues related to parliamentary procedure and constitutional matters of the Federation.

3 The proportional representation is one representative for each one-hundred members of the particular community (*jamāt*).

4 While the Ithnā Asharī Khōjā have adopted a republican form of communal organization which has limited the remit of the chief and accountant, the Āgākhānī Khōjā have allowed the chief and accountant to retain their medieval power and authority within the caste hall.

## Taxation

There are three funding streams for the Dar es Salaam Khōjā *polis*- the subscription, tithing, and personal donations. The first funding stream is the yearly subscription (*lavājam*), the smallest share of overall funding. It is levied on each adult male within the community as an acceding of the individual's membership within the community. In 2008, the subscription rate in Dar es Salaam was TZS 100,000 (65 USD) per year and payment entitles the Khōjā male to voting, custody, finance, management, and leadership rights within the Khōjā community of particular locale. (Census Committee- Dar es Salaam, 2008) Any major movement of an individual within the communal hierarchy necessitates payment of the subscription. Poorer members of the community, as with taxation, are exempt and become recipients of this funding after a detailed financial assessment by the Welfare/Social Services Subcommittee of the *jamāt*.

The second funding stream is the one-fifth tithing incumbent upon the Shia (*khums*). The Khōjā observe the nineteenth century practice of remitting their tithing to an ayatollah deemed to be the source of emulation (*marja'ē taklīd*). This fifth can be further divided into two parts, the portion for the Imam (*sahmē imām*) and the portion for the Prophet's descendants (*sahmē sadāt*). The current source of emulation for the Dar es Salaam Khōjā is Ayatollah Sistani in Iraq. Each Khōjā community collects the tithing from their respective communities; these funds are pooled by region and presented to the ayatollah yearly. The Khōjā have received a dispensation for the portion of the Imam such that half of the total tithing remains with each community. These funds are then reinvested in community projects such as infrastructure development, education, healthcare initiatives, etc... This funding and allegiance to the ayatollah serves to enhance and reinforce the Near Eastern element of contemporary Khōjā Islamic identity.

The third and final funding stream is personal donations to the community. The communal nature of the Khōjā society encourages the private funding of communal projects from which status is derived. Wealthy members of the community are expected to be patrons of the community and donate for communal welfare. The ancient Khōjā ritual of the communal feast (*jama'ana*) is seen as central to communal identity and its funding, particularly during the first ten days of Muharram, is seen as particularly meritorious. Funding community building projects are a means for attaining immortality within the communal consciousness as inscriptions bear the names of their benefactors and their deeds are recorded for posterity and periodically disseminated throughout the community in its periodicals, and now on listserv. Historically, Khōjā donations to the community were made in two areas- communal feasts and building construction projects. As the Khōjā community has evolved into an efficient *polis* and sectors of the Tanzanian economy are developing into a service oriented fields, a shift is needed in personal donations towards investing in human capital.<sup>5</sup> This is challenging for a

5 Interview with Ithnā 33 Asharī Khōjā male professional and members of the Dar es Salaam Khōjā Higher Education Board in his early-sixties, Dar es Salaam 7 February 2008.

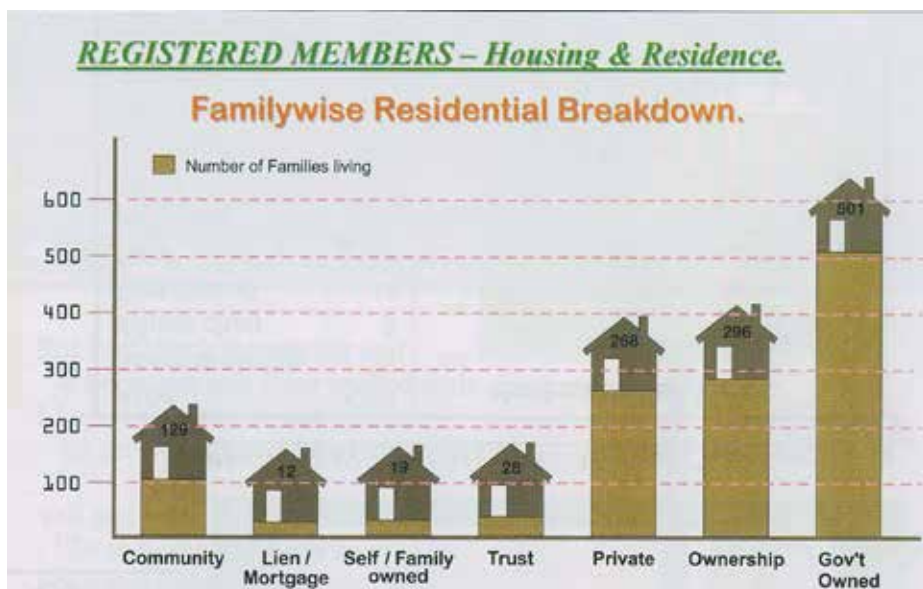
mercantile caste whose historical conception of communal identity and endowments was expressed in tangible terms, now a transition to the intangibility of investing in the intellectual development of the caste and its members.

## Social Welfare

In the absence of a functioning modern welfare state in Tanzania, (Prince & Marsland, 2013) combined with multinational corporate organizational and bureaucratic skills learnt from European colonization, the Khōjā over time developed all of the institutions needed to replicate the modern welfare state for its members. Some of the institutions developed are open to the public, such as the Ebrahim Haji Charitable Dispensary, while allowing its own members reduced or free access to services. Other services, such as subsidized housing, are exclusive for the community's economically disadvantaged membership. Within Khōjā caste identity, there is the concept of communal rights (*jamāti'ā'i*). Because it was the reinvestment of communal funds which built these institutions, community members believe they have a right to its use. An illustrative example of this belief in communal right and challenges to the social welfare function of the *polis* is the current 'housing crisis'.

To understand the contemporary 'housing crisis' in Dar es Salaam, its necessary to reflect upon the economic changes which have affected the Khōjā of Tanzania. The Arusha Declaration of 1967 ushered in a period of Nyerere's socialist policy (*ujamaa*) which hit the Asian trading class particularly hard in its nationalization of property and key sectors of the economy. For about three decades, the Khōjā of Dar es Salaam stagnated economically. Unable to conduct licit trade, some Khōjā participated in the burgeoning black market bringing goods, such as basics like bath soap and toothbrushes, from the port of Zanzibar to Dar es Salaam. It shook the confidence of the Khōjā to have lost their wealth and unable to require it.

During this socialist period, the majority of Khōjā living in central Dar es Salaam lived in Asian built tenements which had been nationalized and administered by the *Shirika La Nyumba La Taifa* (National Housing Corporation or 'NHC'). The NHC imposed rent control on these properties artificially allowing the tenants, mainly Asian, to be insulated from rising rents in the city over three decades. With the economic collapse of Tanzania in the 1990s and opening of the nation to global capitalism through policies of economic liberalization during the presidency of Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995), the class divide among the Khōjā began to become more pronounced.



**Figure 6: Survey data of housing breakdown by ownership status of the Dar es Salaam Khōjā, 2008. (Census Committee- Dar es Salaam, 2008)**

The opening of markets was initially beneficial to the Khōjā as they had maintained their transnational links with other Khōjā communities in the region, such as Dubai. They imported manufactured goods by the container. According to a respondent, “in those times were able to buy a thing for \$10 from Dubai and sell in Dar for \$100.”<sup>6</sup> The profit margin was so high and the need of Tanzania so great for manufactured goods that an entire generation of Khōjā boys did not complete higher secondary education and/or university and instead worked at the family business importing and exporting goods. With the demand satiated, the economy stabilized in the late 1990s and competition from African merchants meant that an entire generation of Khōjā men without higher education qualifications or technical skill was unable to compete in the emerging service economy of Dar es Salaam. This ‘container culture’<sup>7</sup> generation of men and their families has slipped from the middle-class to upper lower class in the matter of a decade and are routinely in need of the community’s welfare assistance.

This economic challenge of a whole generation of Khōjā men was compounded by a policy of the NHC to sell nationalized houses for demolition. The new rent in a newly constructed building without rent control (1,500 USD) is approximately ten times the original rent controlled cost (150 USD) making it almost impossible for poor and lower

6 Interview with Ithnā’ Ashari Khōjā male merchant in his mid-forties, central Dar es Salaam 1 August 2008.

7 Ibid.

middle income families to live in the city. Only three months' notice is given to each family living in the building before the demolition of these houses and, of course, no viable legal recourse is available. The rapid rate of demolitions in central Dar es Salaam in the late twentieth and early twenty first century has exacerbated this 'housing crisis', for which impoverished members of the community have turned to the *jamāt* leadership to solve. (Anon., n.d.) (Abizer, 2009)

The combined 'housing crisis' and 'container culture' generation have put a strain on communal resources. It is estimated that of the remaining 3,100 Khōjā households living in continental East Africa, 600 are completely dependent on communal welfare funds. (Daya, 1433 A.H./ 2012 C.E.) Initiatives to build cheap community housing for those losing their property and updating skills, such as vocational training in technology, are slow processes beset by bureaucratic hurdles and also due to a shortage of competencies within the community. Other salient social issues have recently affected the community for which the leadership has taken bold and swift action. The rise of HIV-AIDS epidemic in Tanzania in 1990s was quickly responded to by imposing a mandatory HIV-AIDS and thalassemia test on all Khōjā couples before marriage. (Daya, 1996/1416) The social and economic policies of the *jamāt* are responses to the Khōjā expectation that the community leadership respond to all manner of social, economic, and political change in Dar es Salaam. For many Khōjā, personal identity is intimately tied to the community and the *polis*; it allows a ceding of personal autonomy and agency to the *polis* to enact policies for the preservation and advancement of the community.

## Foreign Policy

The strongest argument for the Khōjā *jamāt* to be understood as a *polis* is its ability to conduct direct negotiation with nation states and extract concessions for the community. Two examples of this in the late twentieth century exemplify this acquisition of foreign policy power, generally for the nation state- Uganda in 1972 and Somalia in 1991.

The expulsion order of Idi Amin of Asians from Uganda on 7 August 1972 meant all Asian communities had to find a way to exit the country within ninety days. It was unclear until towards end of the deadline that indeed the UK government would allow Asians with British Protectorate passports and stateless Asians to relocate to the United Kingdom. (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1972) In the interim, the Āgākhānī Khōjā took the step to migrate westward to Canada (Valpy, 2002), the Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā looked eastward towards Pakistan.

It begs the question, why choose Pakistan if the ancestral home of the African Khōjā was located in contemporary India? For the African Ithnā 'Asharī Khōjā in the aftermath of Partition, Pakistan came to be viewed as a Muslim homeland for

Asians. The escalating violence against Muslims and rise in Hindu nationalism in Gujarat was perceived to be inhospitable for Muslim émigrés. Additionally, Pakistan was established by a converted Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and Karachi was home to wealthy Khōjā industrialists such as the Habib Kansara (Habib Bank Ltd.) and Jetha Gokal clans. They would be instrumental in helping émigrés to integrate through establishing initiatives such as the Panjetani Welfare Society in Karachi. (Ramji, 1971) (Anon., 1971)

Because it was the Ugandan state itself which functioned as the instrument of oppression, the Khōjā used the Africa Federation and transnational caste connections in Pakistan to bypass the postcolonial nation-state to directly secure immigration waivers and visas for their 3,500 brethren trapped in Uganda (Secretariat, 1970) (High Commission for Pakistan, 1971). The majority of African Khōjā who migrated to Pakistan did so before the 1972 expulsion order, at most this represented only 300 people. The majority of African Khōjā eventually opted to migrate to Western Europe and North America as those avenues rapidly opened to the Ugandan Asian population towards the end of Idi Amin’s deadline. While Pakistan ended up not being the main destination for the Ugandan Khōjā, its preparation was instrumental for the Khōjā Federation in developing experience and negotiating at the nation-state level to achieve its objectives and be able to bring to bear its weight through other Khōjā communities, in this case- Karachi.

### **‘Operation Ghadeer’**

The development of the Khōjā community’s foreign policy interventions has emerged out of necessity in the instability of postcolonial Africa. An example of coordinating international humanitarian assistance by the Africa Federation, organized by the Khōjā communities of Mombasa, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, is ‘Operation Ghadeer’ which evacuated the entire Mogadishu Khōjā community to Kenya and Tanzania between 10 and 15 January 1991. (Rashid & Rashid, 1411 A.H./1991 C.E.)

With the deterioration of the Somali political situation leading to the final ouster of Mohamed Siad Barre in January of 1991, the Khōjā Africa Federation embarked upon a final evacuation of the entire Khōjā community. The Federation had been monitoring the political situation since 1989 when Hashim Okera of Mogadishu visited the Dar es Salam community to discuss evacuation of unmarried girls and prepare current passports of all community members for possible exodus. By December 1990, the situation had deteriorated quickly and those Mogadishu Khōjā members wanting to voluntarily relocate, particularly women and children, were offered free travel to Nairobi by the Supreme Council of the Africa Federation. (Daya & Chagani, 1411 A.H./1991 C.E.) With the fall of the capital in January 1991 and the evacuation of all major embassies,



a four-man committee comprising of Sajjad M. Rashid, Chairman of Mombasa Jamaat; Ashiqhussein M. Rashid, Chairman of Nairobi Jamaat; Raza A. Mooraj, a former resident of Mogadicio domiciled in Nairobi and Hassan A. M. Jaffer, a Councilor of Africa and the World Federation was formed. (Jaffer, 1991, p. 33)

The committee decided to act by hiring a ship captained by Khōjā Sajjad Rashid and, with a small contingent, embarked from Mombasa to Mogadishu to evacuate the Khōjā of Somalia. Coordination was needed in order to achieve safe passage and cross international boundaries. Initially it was with the Italian government that the committee was working, but with the evacuation of the Italian ambassador from the capital, Pakistani naval support was needed. Captain Rashid records in his log that they arrived in Mogadishu on 12 January 1991 at 1145. At which point they realized the situation has deteriorated further since their last communication and sent a seven man advance party, from the 13 onboard, to assess the situation of the community on the ground. Matters took a precarious turn when the two lifeboats broke down on shore upon arrival of the party and the committee was forced to negotiate with militants for safe passage of the evacuees onboard the *M/S Ambassador I*. A total of 1,053 evacuees were finally brought safely to Mombasa, of which 780 were Ithnā ‘Asharī Khōjā. (Datoo, 1426 A.H./ 2005 C.E.) Coordination with the Kenyan government provided for legal status to reside in the country as refugees coordinated by the UNHCR, there was a dispersal of the community as many sought refuge in Dar es Salaam. The leadership of the Khōjā *jamāt* in Dar es Salaam, Alhaj Anverbhai Rajabali Dharamsi and Alhaj Azim Dewji, and chairman of the Africa Federation, Alhaj Ramadhan Bhai Nanji, eventually arranged Tanzanian citizenship for the Mogadishu Khōjā who wished to reside in Tanzania. (Datoo, 1426 A.H./ 2005 C.E.)

The case also illustrates interconnected nature of Khōjā religious identity and foreign policy. This navigation of international borders, appropriating the foreign policy power of the state, and navigating national bureaucracy was motivated and executed through devout belief in the mission and its divine sanction. This is most clearly recorded in the log of the captain’s wife, Tahera Rashid, who recounts that in ‘the darkest hour of the mission when the seven men were on shore, no boats available, and gunfire heard throughout the night of the first day in Mogadishu’, she and six other female volunteers from the community on board held an all-night vigil,

I remember that Monday night when after all effort- leaving no stone unturned- there were no signs of slightest success, we did not sleep that whole night. We did Amale Ashura in the dark under the open sky. We recited 'Amaan Yujibu' several thousand times. We called 'Ya Ali' 125,000 times. We besought Allah to have mercy on His suffering humanity; our community, and our seven volunteers. We prayed to forgive our sins if those stood in the way of our success of the rescue mission. We beseeched him to deliver our people for the sake of Masumeen A.S. I feel Allah replied our Duas, for which we shall always be grateful to Him. (Rashid & Rashid, 1411 A.H./1991 C.E., p. 7)

## Conclusion

The African experience was transformative for the Khōjā of Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa. Without realizing it, they had become diasporic without the ability to return 'home' as was made clear to the Ugandan Asians by Indira Gandhi (Gupte, 2012, pp. 5-6) after Idi Amin's expulsion order on 9 August 1972. Particularly for the Zanzibari community, their working closely with the colonial administration and the social milieu of the Sultanate meant that the Khōjā both adopted modern bureaucracy and ideas of representational government as well as imbibed the 'Islamic' ethos of the island at a point when the caste schism forced a reevaluation of caste identity and the boundaries of inclusion. The indigenization of the Zanzibari community and their later exodus to the mainland and to Western Europe and North America transformed the Dar es Salaam community and set the stage for international coordination, based in London, of Khōjā communities worldwide. Their small numbers, shared experiences, and intimate knowledge of the intricacies of citizenship and nation-state system have allowed them to achieve what Olson termed 'the logic of collective action' (Olson, 1971) in negotiating the international system to the aid of their communities worldwide within a strengthening *ummatī* identity of an illusory pan-Shiism.

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