Citizenship as Movement

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Abstract. This paper interprets movement within the frames of citizenship theory. The ambit of citizenship is opened up to include citizenship acts and practices, understood as movements towards changes in relationships. Such attention to movement also directs consideration towards the concomitant acts of fixing or prevention of the movement of political subjects. The argument of this article is that looking at Goan communities in this manner opens up new vistas for our scholarship. Additionally, it would enable scholars of Goa to move away from the tendency to fix Goans in frameworks inherited from British Indian cultural nationalism, which are very often carried forward in post-colonial theory that has emerged from British colonial experience. Finally, the article draws attention to the fact that as producers of discourse, scholarly works often hold the possibility of being tools for fixing political subjects and preventing their movement.

Keywords: Citizenship, post-colonialism, British India, British Indian nationalism

My first response to the call for papers for this special issue on “Goans on the Move” was to restrict the understanding of movement to the spatial alone. Given the global spread of Goans, such an interpretation might not be surprising. Contemplating the invitation longer, however, I soon saw larger possibilities enclosed within the concept of movement. In this article, therefore, I choose to interpret movement within the frames of citizenship theory. Within this larger understanding, citizenship, or more appropriately, citizenship acts and practices, are better understood as movements towards changes in relationships. The article directs attention towards this aspect of movement, and the concomitant acts of fixing or preventing the movement of political subjects. I argue that to look at Goan communities in this manner opens up new vistas for our scholarship. Additionally, it enables us, as scholars, to move away from the tendency to fix Goans in frameworks inherited from British Indian cultural nationalism and often carried forward in post-colonial theory that has emerged from British colonial experience. I would also like to draw attention to the fact that as producers of discourse our works often hold the possibility of being tools for fixing political subjects and preventing their movement.
Too often citizenship is seen as a formal, legally-recognised status that one possesses vis-à-vis the State. As such, the question is, invariably, does the subject under consideration enjoy a formal status as a citizen, or not? Another popular way of understanding citizenship is to confuse it with national identity. These are not the best ways to approach the issue of citizenship given that they are based on positivist and statist understandings of law, and limit the concept of citizenship to the State’s relationship with individuals and communities. As argued by Anne-Marie Fortier, “[c]ircumscribed by theoretical, juridical or academic presuppositions about the nature of citizenship, such studies [of citizenship] pay little attention to historical and contemporary practices of citizenship, or active participation in relationships of affiliation and definitions of the general welfare” (17). What such perspectives on citizenship do, therefore, is occlude the agency of the individuals in the community and the manner in which citizenship is actively constructed by such individuals. These individuals may very often not even enjoy formal citizenship status, but nonetheless aim for this status. Once this status is formally acquired, they then work to further expand their space for political engagement. With this change in perspective, citizenship is ideally seen not as a status, and definitely not as a national identity (Pell). Rather, citizenship is a dynamic process that “is negotiated, unstable, constructed and reconstructed through the ways that we participate or engage, shaping our communities, the nation, nations within nations, and ourselves as citizens” (Gold 349; see also Stasiulis and Bakan; Isin). I have been particularly persuaded by the arguments of Andrew Gordon and Trevor Stack that citizenship should be considered “at certain times and in certain places, as a kind of room for manoeuvre” (125). Given that they mount an argument against understanding citizenship solely as the relationship of the individual with the State, but in favour of viewing it as a larger negotiation with communities and social institutions in the polity, this understanding of citizenship as room for manoeuvre complements an understanding of citizenship as relational, as constantly evolving, and as constructed between various social spaces. This, I argue, should be our understanding of Goans on the move. The attempts to change their socio-economic status, the nature of relationships, even their obligations within the family, and their dealings with various States (the Estado da Índia Portuguesa, the Union of India, the British Raj, the United Kingdom, etc.) are the movements that they are engaged in, movements that are not merely spatial, but relational. Indeed, one could even see the spatial movement in Epitácio Pais’s short story, “Christmas Tale”, translated by Paul Melo e Castro for this volume, as ways in which these subjects could effect relational changes with the world around them. In this story, Mári’s transition to Maria is made possible primarily by her spatial dislocation.

Seen within this frame, all at once citizenship takes on a broader dimension. This broader dimension is particularly useful for literary theorists and students of literature because it now opens up a variety of texts to explore how exactly the authors of these texts were locating themselves within the broader political
culture of their time, or indeed, how narrations locate narrative voices and narrative actors in the broader political cultures of their time. In other words, it allows us to explore literary texts, and performances, not only as practices of citizenship, but also as acts of citizenship. This distinction between practices and acts is proposed by Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, who see practices of citizenship as neutral acts of repetition, such as “voting, paying taxes or learning languages” (2), i.e., those actions that ensure the stability of the polity—and acts, as dramatic breaks from the quotidian repetition that instantiate new ways of being (Isin and Nielsen 2). To place this within a Goan context, the act of learning Portuguese, at the time of Portuguese sovereignty over the country, could well be seen as a citizenship practice. To learn the same language today, however, might signal a citizenship act—the rejection of Goan identities that are compliant with Indian nationalism—to assert a newer way of being. This way of being should not be understood as necessarily pledging allegiance to Portugal, but rather the desire to claim a new space within post-colonial Goa.

Thus, when interpreting texts and performances, the questions we need ask are, what claims of belonging were these authors were making? Or alternatively, what were the claims being articulated through the narrative voice within the text? How were these claims being articulated? Within what polity did the authors seek to place themselves? Were these texts and performances being articulated as members of empire, or members of a fractured and subject nation deserving of an independent nation-state, or members of a subject nation deserving of reunion with their imagined community? These representational options could perhaps be illustrated by reference to the works of three Goans. In the first case, one has the works of Germano Correia, a Goan doctor of descendente heritage in the early twentieth century whose scholarly works sought to affirm the identity of his community of descendentes as Portuguese, and who saw the Portuguese empire as worthy of praise (Bastos, “Race, Medicine and the Late Portuguese Empire”, which text also offers a substantial bibliography of Correia’s writings which might be useful to those interested). In the second case, one has the arguments of António Bruto da Costa contained in his monograph, Goa: A Terceira Corrente, which move towards an independentist position. Representing the third stream, one has “The Denationalization of Goans”, the famous work of Tristão Bragança e Cunha who clearly saw no space for himself in the Portuguese empire and wrote as a member of a subject race desirous of union with his imagined community; the Indian nation.

Other questions that we are forced to ask are, what are the social locations from where these claims for belonging, and attempts to manoeuvre, are being articulated? This is to say, were these attempts directed merely towards the State, or produced in other spheres too—whether the family, or the market, or within social relationships such as caste? That changes in the family structure are no less political than changes in the State is evidenced in the short story, “Room 54”, by Epitácio Pais (and included in this collection as a translation by Paul Melo e Castro). In this story, the moral evaluation of Joseph and Mary Aranjo by the
narrative voice is explicit. The Aranjos, the story suggests, made their way up in life only by neglecting their filial obligations towards Joseph’s mother while she was alive, then making a show of love and devotion after her death. But aren’t these changes within the family structure, and the public remonstrations of filial obligation, precisely the result of manoeuvres made, willingly or otherwise, by migrants to the big city?

Viewing citizenship as attempts to manoeuvre also directs our attention towards the possibility that citizenship is not necessarily always about solidarity, whether national, or indeed even imperial. This assumption about citizenship being about solidarity with the entire population within a polity is largely the result of the standard liberal definition of citizenship, which rests on a legal-political framework of inclusion, and is premised on equality under the law and universal citizenship within the institutions of the State. However, Susan Pell draws our attention to a fact that has often been observed by those studying citizenship, that citizenship excludes as much as it includes (Mouffe). In her words, citizenship “reflects a particular conception of the political, where the practice of (some) identities and actions are deemed legitimate and others not” (Pell 149). Thus, the movement of some political subjects could, and very often does, result in the fixing of others, often as less-than-equal citizens. This is very obvious, for example, in the manner in which some ways of being are deemed acceptable to a polity and others are not. Take, as an example, the manner in which the speaking of Portuguese was made the target of unofficial practices condoned by the Government of Goa for years after the annexation of the territory.

The impact of these practices is ideally illustrated by the anecdotes from the life of a North American man now resident in Lisbon who I happened to meet at a dinner party in the same city in mid-October 2016. This man had passed the first fifteen years of his life in Brazil, and then returned to North America. He travelled to India in his twenties when he worked with the Peace Corps, spending time in southern India. In the course of this period he found his way to Goa in about 1968. He was delighted, he told me, to find another kind of tropical Lusospace, where he could find steaks with “ovos a cavalo” and drink beer with ease unlike in the southern states. He also wanted to speak in Portuguese, the language of his childhood. The curious thing was, he noted, that whenever he tried to speak it with someone, they would speak only after reassuring themselves that they were not being overheard. There was a culture of fear with regard to speaking the Portuguese language, he remarked. He also recounted another anecdote which revolved around his finding old-fashioned bookstores in Goa, such as one might find in Lisbon. And yet, he found no books written in Portuguese in these stores. When one owner was asked if there were no books in Portuguese, he apparently responded, “You want books in Portuguese? Follow me”. The man was led down a long corridor, to a room where there were piles of books in Portuguese covered in dust and cobwebs. They had clearly been untouched for a long time. The books were not kept on display, he said, because
he feared his store being stoned. There was no official policy against Portuguese, the man told those at the table, but an unofficial policy that kept all Portuguese speakers in fear. This culture of fear that marked the initial years of the territory of Goa soon after invasion has also been described by Maria Aurora Couto on a number of occasions (“Politics of Erasure”; “Goa: Past Continuous”).

What becomes available for contestation as citizenship is constantly redefined, therefore, are the limits of acceptable and legitimate behaviour. Thus, rather than asserting claims of radical equality, citizenship acts could merely be about solidarity with the members of the group one identifies with and creating manoeuvring space for this group, even if it comes at the cost of restricting this space for others. This becomes even more obvious if one abandons a State-centred analysis, as I propose, and moves the focus to the contestations of multiple groups in their relationships to one another.

Recognition of this possibility has multiple implications for those of us studying literature as a way to construct histories of citizenship of denizens of the former Estado da Índia. We can be conscious of the fact that there are different groups, often dominant caste groups, each of which is trying to construct different political communities which privilege different ways of being, while at the same time delegitimising ‘other’ communities by constructing the latter’s peculiarities as not representing the cultural image of the national community. One could take the example of the way in which the Konkani dialect of the Saraswat caste has been given preference as the official language of Goa, casting Marathi, Portuguese and the Konkani of Catholic groups and bahujan Hindus outside of state-imagined Goan-ness (Fernandes, “Citizenship Experiences of the Goan Catholics”). Our attempt should be to recognise these strategies as citizenship acts, while also at the same time evaluating the problems with each of them, especially from an egalitarian perspective. Even more importantly, this appreciation of citizenship urges that we avoid falling prey to the promises of nationalism that the independent nation is the ideal end of decolonization, and the temptation to read the current structuring of the international order as the natural outcome of the fall of colonial empires.

It is important to avoid this danger because, as Raghuraman Trichur has pointed out, this is precisely the urge that has driven much of the sociological and anthropological work on Goa.

Given the circumstances and the manner in which history has unfolded, the meaning of Goan initiative in the making of history remains elusive. Thus violence is done to the facts in order to fit them into some preconceived vision of the past. Responding to a need for a history that erases the Portuguese colonial bias, research has slid away from being an investigation into history towards historicism—an imposition . . . Most of the anthropologists and sociologists who conducted research in Goa in recent years also seem to have uncritically accepted these nationalist renditions of history. They have concentrated on viewing Goan history with the intention of encouraging the process of assimilation within the Indian nation-state, postcolonial nation-building and state formation without subjecting these very processes to critical inquiry. (24)
It is because of the felt need to cater to Indian nationalist predilections in the work on Portuguese India that the denizens of these territories are often merely the ground of narratives and very rarely heard as the subjects in their own right. In other words, we fail to see, or misinterpret, the movement and manoeuvres that have been attempted by Goans over the centuries. Trichur’s argument not only amply articulates my central problem with a good amount of the work on Portuguese India, but it also opens up a host of issues that can drive the crafting of multiple histories of Portuguese Indian citizenship; i.e., the way in which Portuguese Indians crafted their self-image, and the space for their political manoeuvres in different spheres, while in this process marking out the limits for the citizenship acts and practices of ‘others’ both near and distant.

In line with my attempt to shift the debate away from individual agency towards a consideration of the power of structure on individual actions, I would like to emphasize that this tendency of “anthropologists and sociologists” to go along with an Indian nationalist agenda should not be seen as a personal failing. Rather, it fits in with the way in which the political landscape has been structured, especially since the end of the colonial empires, where there has been a nationalization of citizenship. This is to say, citizenship, which should, when legally conceived, be about rights, has now become synonymous with nationality. The aspirations to universality of citizenship of the State have come up against national definitions whether understood as racial, ethnic or even religious. Hannah Arendt (quoted in Isin and Turner 11–12) suggested that this collaboration with the nationalist agenda was the result of “the transformation of the state from an instrument of the law into an instrument of the nation”; in other words, a conquest of the State by the nation. An openness to the citizenship practices and acts of the subjects of Portuguese India would require that we be conscious of the difference between citizenship and nationality and not collapse, as has been done too often thus far, the two into one.

What is additionally required, however, is not merely to recognise the fact that the nation has imposed its values over those of the State, but also to recognise how this happened and what it means. The earlier reference to conquest allows us to consider the fact that Goa is effectively a conquered territory, and its people a conquered people. It is also possible that the scholarly framing of Goa, and Goans, has also been the result of academics responding subliminally to the anxiety of the conquered group they study. This is to say, that scholars working on, and in, Goa recognise that there are many groups in Goa—especially Catholic groups—whose anxiousness arises from the fact that being Catholic, and possibly from Portuguese-speaking groups among Catholics, is seen as not in compliance with the national ideal. As such, these scholars craft for the marginalised groups a discourse that will allow them to be nationally compliant. Such a scenario is not incomprehensible, given that field-based research, especially one that involves interaction with a community, generates affective ties with the community (Ingold). Note also, that for foreign scholars, the ability to continue to return to India on a research visa is dependent on their
producing a narrative that is not contrary to the interests of the Indian State. It would be a brave, or foolhardy, scholar that would willingly confront the might, and jeopardize the good will, of the Indian State. Recognising this imposition of nationalist values will allow us to evaluate the colonial empires somewhat differently from what is now fashionable, and permit, I believe, the study of Portuguese India to come into its own, without having to necessarily follow the contours of dominant post-colonial theory—marked not only by the history of British colonialism, but also largely by the interests of the South Asian elites of British India.

British India was marked by the politics of racism. This is to say that the subjects of British India were racialised, i.e., seen as racially different, and marked by intrinsic cultural attributes that rendered them unable to be British. This was not so for those in Portuguese India, and definitely not for the elites in Goa, who were in very many ways Portuguese. This is not to say, of course, that there was no racism in the Portuguese empire, but only that there were ways in which one could legally overcome racism—an opportunity that was not quite so available in British India. The inability of British Indians to be formally recognised as imperial citizens resulted in a new strategy that has been famously demonstrated by Partha Chatterjee. The response of British Indian nationalists to imperial racism was to affirm their racial difference and valorise what the imperialists had discredited. Indian nationalism, therefore, was based on an overwhelming emphasis on cultural nationalism, constructing the various groups in the subcontinent as a single nation, rather than a political nationalism, which stresses rights. As a result, British Indian post-colonialism resulted in the assertion of the values of the nation over those of the State, thus ensuring the continued politics of racism. Rather than assert the universality of the right of “man” or citizens, what has taken place is the assertion of the rights of nations—i.e., racialised groups, and the rights of the elites that speak for these groups—to autonomy from the colonial empire (Mongia). In various works, Barry Hindess has pointed out that the contemporary citizenship regime that obtains in the world is built on the idea of closed societies that shut off populations, rather than allow them freedom of mobility. This ensures that populations are enclosed not only within the nation, preventing international movement, but also excluded from the nation when the cultural markers of a group do not align with the nation’s imagination of the ideal citizen-subject. What obtains, therefore, is a dual fixing of individuals in community.

It would be useful in this context to take note of the substantial anthropological debate that problematizes the very idea of society itself (Ingold; Kuper). While there are varied positions within this debate, most scholars are in agreement that there is reason to be cautious of “powerful rhetorical overtones in the moral and political discourse of citizens as well as in the academic discourse of social scientists . . .” when invoking the term “society” (Ingold, “Introduction” 1). There is also agreement that one cannot invoke the idea of society as if there were some such discrete object automatically available for
study. Rather, society as a unit of analysis is constituted by the work of scholars, and one cannot ignore the role of Orientalism in constituting societies both of the other and of the self. These anthropologists have suggested other ways in which to study the social, moving away from an imaginary “society” as our unit of analysis, to a unit similar to the concept of citizenship endorsed by scholars to whom I have referred, an examination of the social event (Barth), or social networks (Hannerz), stressing the relational aspect of social interaction, allowing us to conceive of these relationships in fluid, dynamic terms in wider spatial contexts, rather than the rigid, limited units so beloved of nationalists.

To this larger debate, one must necessarily take on board the observations and insights that Dalit scholars and activists bring to our appreciation of the way caste inflects social interactions and systems in South Asia. In light of these interventions one is forced to ask whether a society obtains in the polities of South Asia that are so marked by caste. When discussing the concepts of civility, civil sphere and citizenship, Bryan Turner points out that civil society was specifically the product of bourgeois European society. In this context society has its root in the recognition of shared space, companionship and friendship between the denizens of this space, and it is these relations of trust and friendship that are presumed when discussing civil society (Turner 177–178). The concept of society, therefore, necessarily involves seeing the other as sufficiently related to oneself as to have a commonality. At its very core caste negates this commonality. Caste is based on the principle that the “other”, i.e., those from other castes, are incommensurable with the self. This “other” is either higher or lower than oneself, and hence rarely, if ever, equal. Indeed, as B. R. Ambedkar has pointed out, the Hindu polity is marked by an “ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt” (Das 25). This ensures that the lower down one is placed in the hierarchy, the less human one is seen to be. Society, as the association of similar persons, is thus impossible in a polity marked by the presence of caste. Thus, where scholars talk about a pre-colonial society in the case of Portuguese India, one must look at this suggestion with considerable circumspection.

At this point I would like to return to Hindess’s argument mentioned above, that the contemporary citizenship regime that obtains in the world is built on the idea of closed societies that shut off populations, rather than allow them freedom of mobility. While Hindess, like many scholars of citizenship based in the global North, was thinking about the movement of populations, I would like to reiterate that there are a variety of groups that are imprisoned within the space of the national. One does not have to go very far to see how groups that are perceived as non-national are imprisoned within this nation. There is the example, especially of the bahujan Catholics of Goa who are forced to be educated in a version of Konkani (the Devanagari-scripted Antruzi form) with which they do not identify, which is designed to eradicate their difference, and also destroy a living linguistic culture— that of a Portuguese- and Latin-influenced lexical and syntactic Konkani written in the Roman script (Fernandes,
“Citizenship Experiences of the Goan Catholics”). When these groups protest
the imposition, they are often seen, as Ferrao notes, as “clones of the colonizer”.

This imprisonment of non-dominant and marginalised groups is also
carried out by scholars, who seem to, no doubt unwittingly, or for reasons of
working within certain forms of post-colonial politics, demonstrate a kind of
horror of the hybrid. My reference here is to Homi Bhabha’s argument (85–92)
that mimicry is a problem because while the colonizer wishes to be mimicked,
he does not want the colonized Other to succeed perfectly in the imitation. There
is a horror, therefore, of the colonized who mimics. The desire of many scholars,
thus, often appears to be to demonstrate that original, or underlying, Hindu-ness
of practices of Catholics in Goa (Henn). For the purpose of my larger argument,
I would like to point out that mimicry is, in fact, precisely a citizenship act,
whereby the subjugated seek to find ways to integrate themselves into the
reigning power structure. Thus, as much as citizenship was a status won by and
granted to Portuguese Indians, it was not as if this mere legal extension was
sufficient. As Cristina Nogueira da Silva points out, Portuguese Indians, and
especially the elites, found ways in which to craft themselves as Portuguese, and
realize in greater measures their status as citizens of the Portuguese empire.

This citizenship act, however, and the subsequent acts that flow from this
assertion are dealt with quite severely. One could take up as an initial example,
Augusto do Rosário Rodrigues’s short story, “Deaf to the World”, included in
this collection, and translated by Melo e Castro. This story mocks the manner in
which impoverished gãoocar families sought to integrate themselves into the
European social model. Doing this was a way through which they could boost
their status and social options. While Francisco João da Costa (Gip) has garnered
much praise for the way in which he poked fun at upwardly mobile Goan
Catholic families in his text, Jacob e Dulce, one could also inquire if his narrative is
not an example of nativist self-loathing for belonging to an elite that sought to
imitate rather than realize its native genius. In his review of the text, Paul Melo e
Castro agrees with Rochelle Pinto suggesting that Costa was not engaged in an
“attack on the foreign qua foreign, in the name of some pre-existing essence or
authenticity these outside elements are seen unfairly to displace” (Melo e Castro
42–43). Rather, he engaged in satire because he saw the strategies of the local
elites as “being impractical or fatuous and as hampering individual autonomy”
(Melo e Castro 42). While appreciating the nuance that Melo e Castro attempts
to bring to our reception of this work, it needs to be highlighted that Costa’s
critique is nested in a peculiar circumstance. Not only is his critique directed at
the desire for autonomy, through an assertion of native control of the territory
as well as culture, but also there is a certain shame that the Goan Catholic elites
are mimicking the Portuguese, a waning international power, who are themselves
beholden to the French and the English (39). I would like to suggest, therefore,
that while Costa’s critique may not be an all-out romanticist critique of his
contemporaries, he, like Rodrigues, fails to appreciate that the Goan Catholic
native elite were engaging in innovatively asserting citizenship within the
limitations that they faced. This failure to appreciate, I would argue, was rooted as much in a romanticist nativism as it was in a double bind that many contemporary Portuguese found themselves in, between admiring and resenting British success and power.

This desire to model Portuguese Indian practice along the lines of the British, and more specifically British Indian, model is also obvious in Rodrigues’s “Deaf to the World” where the ideal model for the gãocar is apparently the industrious English. However, the most iconic text to criticize Goan participation in Portuguese-ness is Tristão Bragança Cunha’s “The Denationalization of Goans”, where he upbraids the Goans for imitating the Portuguese. This celebrated text is in fact a manifestation of this horror of the mimic. It is, nevertheless, simultaneously a citizenship act of one who, in the aftermath of the disappointing failure of the First Republic and the emergence of the Estado Novo, wished that other Portuguese Indians would fall in line with the anti-colonial model emerging from the colonial North (i.e., England, France).

A more recent example of the horror of the hybrid and the mimic seems to manifest in a recent article by Cristiana Bastos and Ana Cristina Roque which compares two doctors, the first the Catholic brahmin, Arthur Ignacio da Gama, and his contemporary, the descendente, Ezequiel da Silva. The single thing that bothered me about this text was the way in which the Goan, Arthur Ignacio da Gama, is presented as a willing tool in the service of empire and European modernity. Often, he is contrasted against the Portuguese descendente, Ezequiel da Silva, who is presented as being in touch with, and hence somewhat more respectful of, the locals and local knowledge, as in the following extract:

Arthur Ignacio da Gama was part of a flow of Goan skilled professionals who sought work outside Goa and saw themselves as part of a project of civilizing the world using modern standards, European medicine among them; Ezequiel da Silva belonged to the more mobile group of Indian-Ocean-born Eurodescendants who lived close to local populations and used local knowledge for practical purposes, including healing. (171)

I would like to point out that the article itself makes an attempt to be quite nuanced and the work of one of the authors, Cristiana Bastos, on Goa, is in fact a model to be emulated. Nevertheless, there is, in the way these two doctors are presented, or perhaps in the way the text can be read, the general postcolonial horror of the colonized subject who is not heroically oppositional enough. In this case, the Goan is the hybrid who fails to fulfil his historic duty of identifying with the other subalterns and colonized. One should bear in mind the structural forces discussed above—such as the need to posit the racialised and independent nation-state as the necessary and only possible end to colonialism, and the dominant liberal understandings of citizenship as nationality—that urge such a presentation and reading, and then attempt to step away to enable a more dispassionate reading of the citizenship practices and acts of Portuguese Indians.

What needs to be stressed is that this national enclosure was as much the result of racial tendencies in colonial empires as it was the result of the attempt
of local elites to secure an autonomous sphere of influence for themselves while remaining connected to the continuing model of colonial imperialism. The works by Radhika Singha and Radhika Mongia highlight the racial tendencies of the colonial empire demonstrating how passports were introduced to limit mobility of South Asian working classes who sought to travel to locations such as Australia and Canada which had been set aside as white settler colonies.

While pointing to the racial element present in the governance models of the late colonial empires, what also needs to be pointed out, is that the colonial empire was not characterized solely by racism. There was also a universal tendency, one that carried over from the Roman tradition (Pagden; Armitage) and which offered, and in my opinion continues to offer, space for the assertion of citizenship, especially by the subjugated within these empires. What should be highlighted is that while adopting much of the aesthetic traditions of the Roman empire, notably in their country homes in the eighteenth century, the British, unlike the Portuguese, did not carry forward the citizenship practices of that empire (Ando). To the extent that approximation to the Roman ideal determines fulfilment of the imperial model or not, then the British Empire can be seen as an unreliable model of empire. To trace the manner in which these universalist tendencies, present in the Roman model and followed by the Portuguese, were used by the colonized, one can of course look at the history of citizenship in Goa, which is slowly being plotted in the works of Ângela Barreto Xavier, Sandra Lobo, and others—I look forward, in particular, to the doctoral research of Sharmila Pais. The works of Barreto Xavier (see for example, “Ser Cidadão No Estado Da Índia” [Being a Citizen in the Estado da Índia]) look at the way in which the Goan native elites, in particular, used power and legal frames to create opportunities for themselves. Similarly, Sandra Lobo’s doctoral thesis looks at the interventions of Goan intellectuals in the nineteenth century engaged with the political trends around them. Sharmila Pais is looking at the elections in Goa when it was a part of Portuguese India, and this work promises to fill in one more layer of the unfortunately largely absent legal history of the territory and how people negotiated the law, as well as their rights.

One need not restrict oneself to Portuguese India, however, but also look at the context of the British empire where citizenship was not a status granted, but was nevertheless desired by the colonized, who made active attempts to get it. In this context I want to refer to the work of Sukanya Banerjee (in *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire*), who points to the way in which the South Asian subjects of the British crown worked with other marginalized populations in the empire—the Irish (through support for the Home Rule campaign) and women’s emancipation (via the Women’s Franchise League)—to realize citizenship status. What is important about this work for those of us engaged with literary texts produced in Portuguese India is that instead of limiting herself to more traditional statutory enactments, Banerjee explores the cultural, imaginative and affective locations of imperial citizenship for British Indians. More critically, to carry forward my argument of how the
universalist tendencies within empire were shut down not only by racist practice by the metropolitans, but also local elites, Banerjee points to the way in which the attempts for a status of imperial citizen pioneered by early critics of empire were shut down by local elites once they acceded to the locus of power.

The argument I want to make, therefore, is that the assertion of some Portuguese Indians of themselves as Portuguese, should not necessarily be reviewed with suspicion, as being contrary to good sense, or against post-colonial justice and reason. Rather, these should be seen as offering alternative, non-racialised models of global citizenship. Models of citizenship that leap out of the confines of nation-state politics are, hence, possibly emancipatory. In this context, I would like to direct attention towards Gary Wilder’s presentation of the political projects of Aimé Césaire and Leopold Senghor. In his book, Wilder points out that both Césaire and Senghor presciently understood that decolonization with formal independence was no guarantee for “substantive freedom” (2) and hence refused to reduce colonial emancipation to national sovereignty. Thus, Césaire helped negotiate the political incorporation of Martinique into France as an overseas department, which ensured that at least in principle, the territory would enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as any other French department. Senghor, for his part, proposed a continued political relationship between former French imperial territories in Africa and metropolitan France. This relationship being envisioned as a “federation of federations within a larger confederation” (153). Those familiar with the political history of twentieth-century Goa will recognise that there were similar attempts in this territory, which unfortunately came to nought, thanks to the Indian invasion of the territory.

To contemplate these alternative post-colonial possibilities, however, requires that we put aside the restraints of not only British Indian nationalism, but also of those in Portugal who continue to battle the rhetoric of the Estado Novo. Add to this the need to disengage from the compulsions of a longer Portuguese tradition. Dating from about the nineteenth century and consequent to Britain’s rise to global prominence as a colonial power, this tradition saw the Portuguese convince themselves that they had to fit their colonial experience to British models of coloniality and subsequently post-coloniality. We need to look with equanimity on what Portuguese Indians were—and are—saying, on how they sought, and seek, to fashion their identities. In sum, we need to be attentive to the manoeuvres they were, and are, trying to effect.

None of this is to say that those narratives that actively seek to write themselves into the Indian national narrative are wrong. On the contrary, these narratives should be seen as one more route through which some Portuguese Indians seek to create space to manoeuvre. Take, for example, the book, Moda Goa, by Wendell Rodricks. Even though filled with historical errors, this attempt to craft a history of Goan costume is a testament to the citizenship practices of those Goans who are trying to fit themselves within the Indian nationalist narrative, and create their own space within it (Fernandes, “The Curious Case of Goan Orientalism”).
In an article I wrote in 2012, I had suggested that rather than committing ourselves to a nationalist and racist notion of the authentic national self, we should really adopt a model of anthropophagy—a concept that should have particular resonance in Brazil—which would suggest that in consuming South Asia, Portugal (or the Portuguese) also become South Asian, or Indian, while in consuming Portugal, South Asians also become Portuguese (Fernandes, “Consuming Empire”). Take, for example, the Japanese word for the Portuguese, Namban, which means Southern barbarian. This term suggests that for the Japanese the Portuguese had a South Asian identity, challenging us to see beyond the racist models that have dominated our understanding thus far. That we refuse to give the Portuguese this South Asian identity has as much to do with the fact that historiography has been coloured by racial models, as with the fact that the representational war among the local elites in colonial Goa was won by the Catholic brahmin elites, who excluded Europeans and Eurasians in Goa from being seen as native to the territory (T. Souza 15).

In addition to having adopted the British Indian nationalist model, another blind spot that prevents scholars from appreciating the citizenship narratives that emerged from Portuguese India is their suspicious attitude towards Catholicism. This is perhaps not unusual, given anthropology’s particularly tense relationship with Christianity and its largely uncritical adoption of secular-liberal assumptions (Fountain). Within this framework, which continues a longer Anglo-Saxon and Protestant tradition of equating Catholicism with obscurantism, Catholicism can only ever be associated with colonialism, and seen either as a colonization of consciousness, and hence a false consciousness, or as a violent intrusion into the local landscape (Axelrod and Fuerch). A very good illustration of this would be the contents of Alexander Henn’s recent production, Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa: Religion, Colonialism, and Modernity. The placing of the word “Hindu” before the word “Catholic” in the title is very suggestive of the hierarchies in Henn’s imagination of the Goan polity. The placing of Hinduism prior to Catholicism suggests that the second is a somewhat unwelcome interloper. The core argument in this book is also somewhat disturbing, suggesting that despite conversion to Catholicism, Catholics in Goa continue to hold “memories” of their Hindu past; that their Catholicism is a nominal one; that they continue to venerate the local deities extant prior to the arrival of Catholicism. The problem with this kind of positioning is that it obscures the fact that the move to Catholicism was not only about violence, but also about self-fashioning; that persons actively worked within a certain environment to accede to power—in this case I am speaking especially of elites (Xavier, “Disquiet on the Island”). It also ignores the fact that the language of Christianity gave, and continues to give, to lower-caste groups a language of justice that was otherwise not present in the non-monotheistic faith practices obtaining in the subcontinent (P. Souza 128). This fact has thus far been ignored because of the obsessive focus on formal colonialism, rather than the coloniality of power (Quijano). As elaborated by Quijano, the coloniality of power is a structuring of relations that creates a
hierarchy not only among peoples, but also among epistemologies, resulting in the continuing disenfranchisement of populations long after the end of formal colonialism. While Quijano, and others, restrict the notion of coloniality of power to European intervention in America, we must recognise that in South Asia such a structuring of relations and knowledge predated European arrival and was embodied most clearly in the caste system and the Laws of Manu. The moment we recognise that the coloniality of power has structured relations within South Asia, even prior to the arrival of the Europeans, we recognise that the entry of these groups, with Christianity, and subsequently the language of the Enlightenment, was a liberating moment in the history of the subcontinent. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that an appreciation of the violence of caste and its operation in the Goan polity is, apart from some notable exceptions (Robinson), almost entirely absent in the scholarship on this territory. Works that fail to appreciate this fact are unable to track the growth of Hindu nationalism in Goa, and show how various groups either try to work with it, or respond to it. In looking at Catholicism from this Eurocentric location, these engagements with Goa not only entirely ignore the complex realities in Goa, and the larger subcontinent, but also fail to consider how their work might even exacerbate, even if unwittingly, current problems.

In this context I would like to direct attention to the fact highlighted by Aditya Nigam (182). Nigam points out that at the beginning of the new millennium, the Pioneer, an English language newspaper in India, brought out a 12-page supplement titled, “The Dalit Millennium”, compiled by some leading Dalit intellectuals. One of the constituents of this supplement was a list of milestone events in the history of Dalit liberation. This chronology began with an event normally reviled by dominant-caste scholars and activists, the discovery [sic] of the sea route to India and the advent of Vasco da Gama in 1498. This chronology claimed that Gama’s arrival opened the way for the eventual contact with the West that led not just to the colonization of the country but opened the way for Dalit liberation. This is not, however, a unique example of a positive appraisal of European arrival in the subcontinent. In the course of recounting his interactions with Dalit activists, Ramnarayan Rawat quotes Chandrabhan Prasad, a prominent Dalit intellectual and leader who argues that the only thing wrong with British colonialism was that “the British came too late and left too early” (4). In his work Rawat also points to the fact that colonial systems of indentured labour also offered marginalised caste groups a way to escape caste oppression (76). An example, closer to home, would be that of the bahujan activist, Ramnath Naik, who, as evidenced in a lecture in 2006, sees the presence of Christianity in Goa as a challenge to the caste order in the territory and whose discourse is not marked by the outright rejection of the Portuguese, or their legal system, and welcomes the fact of Portuguese citizenship (see also Fernandes, “Recovering the Republic”). Just as is the case with Naik, it is the language of abstract law, for all its problems, that was identified by so many Dalit scholars and activists as the
basis through which they could overthrow the longer colonial yoke (i.e., of caste) that has been thrown over them

A failure to internalise such insights ensures that the works of scholars on the Indo-Portuguese world, and Goa in particular, are not helping the subaltern to speak, but speaking for the subaltern. In addition, such scholarship very often imposes racialised frameworks—even if unconsciously—onto the actions of the persons being studied. Indeed, I would like to be slightly provocative and inquire if this speaking for the subaltern, crafting local and authentic identities for them, does not, in fact, continue the civilisational burden, and indeed continue to produce white identities in contemporary Europe/America. Such a question would once again point to the manner in which the creation of space for one group results in the enclosure of another.

If we are to not block the movements of Goans we need to ensure that the Portuguese Indians who have thus far largely been the object of narratives are allowed to be the subjects, not merely of narratives, but also of law. We also need to be especially alive to the narratives of marginalized caste groups within Portuguese India. It could be said that all too often in the study of Portuguese India it is the voice of dominant caste groups—whether Catholic or Hindu—that we are listening to. Some change has been made in the recent focus on the Gomantak Maratha Samaj in the works of Perez, Arondekar, and Parobo. However, these works are far from sufficient to counter the bias that marks the field. Further, these works are largely blind to the specificities of Catholic bahujan communities, ensuring that these groups remain at the bottom of the social pile in contemporary Goa.

To conclude, citizenship can be studied as more than just a relationship with the State, but also as the action of political subjects creating room for manoeuvre. This attempt at movement is witness to a counteraction which seeks to restrict mobility or fix in place these political subjects. To recognise these two possibilities within a larger frame of social action would allow us to appreciate the various actions of Goans, as well as their narrations, as citizenship practices, and citizenship acts, and movement as citizenship. Finally, it would also allow us, as scholars, a plethora of models through which to appreciate the post-colonial world, shifting from now-dominant trends that look to the British Indian experience to define the norm.

Notes
1 Critical to my discussion of citizenship in this article is the understanding of individual, and society. I attempt to move away from Enlightenment influenced notions of the pre-formed, natural, autonomous, and self-willed individual to one that stresses that persons come into being through social relationships, and simultaneously are able to forge these relationships anew. For a discussion of this notion, see Ingold (1996).
2 In addition to her many works on doctors in colonial Goa (2005; 2008), as well as the famous Escola Medica or Medical College (2001), one particular text (2009) is especially rich in reflections regarding the dangers that must be avoided when attempting a comparative post-colonial theory.
Bibliography


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