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Richardson, N.N.; Antunes, C.A.P.; Bethencourt, F.

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Hindu Mercantile Culture and Practices in Goa, 1750–1818

Noelle Richardson

The dominance of Hindu merchants over the colonial economy of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* during the eighteenth period has been widely recognised, as has their relationship of mutual dependency with the Portuguese imperial polity in India.¹ It has been firmly established that they were a dominant force at almost every level of the commercial and politico-administrative system of the *Estado*: as tax-farmers, brokers, and as providers of commercial acumen and financial assistance to the colonial state in times of need. Moreover, not only were these merchants successful country traders active in the local and regional economy of the *Estado*, they were also deeply immersed in the commercial networks of the Portuguese overseas empire, becoming significant actors in the emerging global economy of the Indian Ocean. However, despite our knowledge of the scope and substance of the commercial activities of the Hindu mercantile community in Goa, as well as the various financial, commercial and broker services that they provided – not only to the Portuguese colonial state but also the French Company in India and other private merchants active in the region during the period at hand – significant questions still

1 Celsa Pinto, for example, has characterised this factor of mutual dependency as a ‘mutual dependency nexus’ see *Trade and Finance in Portuguese India: A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade, 1770–1840* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994), 100. For discussions of the dominance of Hindu merchants in the colonial economy of the *Estado* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see also Celsa Pinto, *A Commercial Resurgence, 1770–1830: Situating Indo-Portuguese Trade History* (Tellicherry: Institute for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, 2003); Teotónio de Souza, ‘Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of Goan Economy in the 17th Century’, *Indica*, 12 (1975), 27–35; M.N. Pearson, ‘Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy: The Goa Rendas, 1600–1670’, *Mare Luso-Indicum*, 3 (1972), 61–73, *idem*, ‘Goa-based seaborne trade, 17th–18th centuries’ in *Goa Through the Ages: An Economic History*, ed. Teotónio de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984); Geoffrey V. Scammel, ‘The pillars of empire: indigenous assistance and the survival of the *Estado da Índia*, c.1600–1700’, *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988), 472–489; and Philomena Sequeira Antony, ‘Hindu Dominance in the Goa Long-Distance Trade’ in *The Indian Trade at the Asian Frontier*, ed. Stephen S. Jeyaseela (New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 2008), 225–256.

remain. One of the most pressing questions is just *how* were these merchants able to secure their commercial dominance in the first place? How did they manage and organise their trade, and what were the main mechanisms, institutions and strategies that composed of their overall *modus operandi*, and which allowed them to sustain their commercial dominance over such a significant period of time? Despite the fact that such factors were key in structuring the mercantile culture and commercial world of Hindu merchants in Goa, they remain greatly unaccounted for.

This chapter thus seeks to fill a significant lacuna in the historiography by examining a crucial organisational facet of Hindu mercantile culture and practices in Goa during the period at hand: the family. Firstly, it will focus on the importance of the family unit, illuminating the extent to which bonds of kin were the key loci for the organisation of their trade, and a key component of their wider *modus operandi*. However, it will also be emphasised that whilst the bonds of kin and the unit of the family were crucial, they did not stifle entrepreneurialism nor did they limit the ability of merchants to pursue trade on an individual basis. Thus, this chapter whilst stressing the centrality of family and kin seeks to draw a finer and more detailed picture of the commercial landscape of the *Estado*. It does so by emphasising that merchants were not bound exclusively to organising their trade with their direct or extended kin, nor did Hindu mercantile families only conduct trade amongst themselves. Secondly, it will analyse the significance of kinship in influencing and shaping Hindu mercantile involvement in colonial governance and administration.² The nomination to, and occupation of, important administrative posts which were retained in Hindu mercantile families over successive generations reflects the importance of kin in structuring the politico-administrative functions of Hindu merchants in the *Estado* during this period. The role of local families in managing and sustaining imperial governance and administration was not unique to the Portuguese imperial polity. Kinship, as demonstrated by Dana Agmon, was also key to the governance and management of the French colony of Pondichéry which was dominated by local Tamil and French families and familial relations.³ The importance of local Hindu families in the governance of Portuguese India thus requires an equally important examination

2 This emphasis of the 'intersection' of family and how 'local realities of kinship' shaped and influenced colonial governance is drawn from Dana Agmon's discussion on the role and conceptions of family in Pondichéry in shaping the French imperial project in India, see Danna Agmon, 'The Currency of Kinship: Trading Families and Trading on Family in Colonial French India', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014), 137–155.

3 *Ibid.*, 138.

in order to understand the broader involvement of local mercantile families in the consolidation of European colonial governance in South Asia during the long eighteenth century. In emphasising the strong engagement of Hindu mercantile families with the politico-administrative spheres of the *Estado*, this chapter thus also provides one further example to studies that have highlighted the manner in which local merchants played multiple and pivotal roles with respect to states in South Asia, both during the Mughal and European periods of imperial rule.⁴

Assessing the manner in which family and kin structured both the commercial and politico-administrative functions of Hindu merchants in Goa is crucial not only to augment our scant knowledge of their *modus operandi* and mercantile culture, but the extent to which family was the key platform for Hindu merchants in their negotiations with the Portuguese imperial polity in India. In keeping with the broader concerns of this volume that seek to analyse how mercantile actors contributed and engaged themselves in the very exercise of empire, whilst becoming significant agents of empires in their own right, it will illuminate our understanding of just how and why they were able to establish themselves as invaluable imperial subjects. In sum, therefore, the key factors of family and kin and their crucial significance for the commercial and political lives of Hindu merchants yield myriad insights for historical debates that seek to understand the role of local commercial actors in the evolution of the emerging global economy in the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth century. Finally, it sheds light on the wider commercial and political changes that accompanied the expansion – or in the case of the Portuguese *Estado* the survival – of European colonial rule in the region, and the invaluable contribution and collaboration of indigenous capitalists in this processes.

1 ‘Eating from the Same Bowl’: The Centrality of Family in Hindu Mercantile Culture

The ways in which merchants organised amongst and within themselves was crucial to the management of their trade and thus a fundamental element of their *modus operandi*. One significant mode of business organisation was the practice of centring commerce around the family unit, which has been widely regarded as playing a central role in merchant activity and networks both in

4 Karen Leonard, ‘Banking Firms in Nineteenth-Century Hyderabad Politics’, *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981), 177.

Europe and Asia.⁵ Across the spectrum of merchant networks and communities active in the Indian Ocean region during this period, the joint-family and the bonds of kin were central factors in the organisation of country and long-distance trade. The commercial landscape of early modern Surat, for example, was characterised by the presence of several prominent mercantile families such as the Parekhs and the Kishandas families, brokers to the English East India Company and the Dutch East India Company respectively.⁶ Indeed, for both mobile and diasporic mercantile communities, as well as settled commercial actors, family firms were a significant feature of the commercial landscape of the Indian subcontinent and the broader Indian Ocean maritime space.⁷

- 5 For literature that has emphasised the key role of kin and family in structuring commerce in South Asia and for South Asian diasporic mercantile networks, in addition to the work of Karen Leonard cited above, see also Karen Leonard, 'Family Firms in Hyderabad: Gujarati, Goswami and Marwari Patterns of Adoption, Marriage and Inheritance', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 4 (2011), 827–854; Richard Fox, 'Family, Caste and Commerce in a North Indian Market Town', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 15, no. 3 (1967), 297–314; C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Anne Hardgrove, *Community and Public Culture: The Marwaris in Calcutta, c.1897–1997* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2004); Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ritu Birla, *Stages of Capital: Law, Culture and Market Governance in Late Colonial India* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009); Prisa Ratanpruck, 'Kinship and Religious Practices As Institutionalization of Trade Networks: Manangi Trade Communities in South and Southeast Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50, no. 2/3 Special Issue: 'Spatial and Temporal Continuities of Merchant Networks in South Asia and the Indian Ocean' (2007), 325–346 and Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c.1750–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). For the case of Europe, see for example, Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Susanah Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014) and Luuc Kooijmans, *Vriendschap en de kunst van het overleven in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2016).
- 6 For a survey of the commercial activities and the longevity of the fortunes of these prominent mercantile families over multiple generations, see Ghulam Nadri, 'The Maritime Merchants of Surat: A Long-Term Perspective', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50, 2/3, 235–258.
- 7 Gujarati Banian merchants active in the south Western part of the Indian Ocean organised their long-distance trade on the basis of the family firm and these firms were structured hierarchically around senior members with kin members occupying different positions and were further distinguished by age, experience, and reputation; see Machado, *Ocean of Trade*, 31–33. The bonds of kin were also crucial for diasporic mercantile communities active in the Indian Ocean such as Armenian merchants, see for example, Sebouh Aslanian, 'The Circulation of Men and Credit: The Role of the Commenda and the Family Firm in Julfan Society', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 50, 2/3, 124–17, and Jewish

As mentioned previously, for the Hindu merchants of Goa the bonds of kin were not only the central locus of their commercial activity, but their political and administrative functions were also structured around the family. This is evidenced most clearly by the fact that key administrative posts were inherited along the patrilineal line and retained within certain families over successive generations and for significant periods of time. Moreover, the idiom and rhetoric of petitions submitted by Hindu merchants by which they formally sought the nomination to a particular administrative post were characterised by references to the 'loyal' and 'faithful' service of successive generations of their family members to the Portuguese Crown. Importantly, such appeals not only demonstrate the centrality of family in the political life of Hindu merchants, but also reflect their broader consciousness in their informed strategy of appealing to the 'efficacy of kinship' and family as a 'politicised concept' within Portuguese metropolitan ideas of governance and bureaucracy.⁸

The centrality of kin in structuring Hindu mercantile activity in Goa was such that the Portuguese made several observations to try and grapple with the complex forms of their mercantile organisation that was centred on, but not limited to, the family unit. During this period, Portuguese colonial officials recorded and remitted back to Lisbon, several observations regarding the practice and 'custom' of Hindu merchants structuring their commercial activities on the bonds of kin. These observations noted the practice or '*costume*' (custom) of Hindu merchants 'living in society', forming '*sociedades*' (societies) and '*casas do comércio*' (houses of commerce), and it was widely concluded that Hindu merchants 'treating in society all their business' was the 'customary gentile way.' The presence of family firms as a prominent feature of Goa's commercial landscape has also been acknowledged by scholars such as Catherine Manning, who argues that this 'local' form of organisation actually worked to the benefit of outsiders. She concludes, for example, that Portuguese and Luso-Indians were 'natural mediators' for the French entering into the Asian trade in 1719 because the family based nature of their trading networks, which were not dictated by the structures and rules of a company organisation made them easier to penetrate, especially in contrast to the English and the Dutch whose contacts were more circumscribed.⁹ In addition, as Celsa Pinto has noted, one

merchants, see for example, Francesca Trivellato *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

8 Agmon, 'The Currency of Kinship', 138.

9 Catherine Manning, *Fortunes à faire: The French in Asian Trade, 1719–1748* (Aldershot: Varorium, 1996), 120.

example of a family based enterprise in Goa during this period was the 'Agency House', joint-ventures that were usually backed by common family assets in order to 'prevent dissolution and to assure that the concern would remain in the family in perpetuity'.¹⁰ Whilst Agency Houses established by Hindu merchant families were numerous, it is important to note that Portuguese and Luso-Indian Portuguese merchants would also establish what were known as '*Companhias*' (Companies) to manage their business, capital and commercial interests in Goa. In order for a '*Companhia*' to be established, a merchant would first have to require permission from the authorities after which it was formally recognised as an institution in customary law.¹¹ The Agency House was headed by a Director and staffed by attorneys who signed and endorsed accounts, letters, bills of exchange and other documents together with '*conselheiros*' (advisers) who were drawn from amongst the partners, as well as accountants, an overseer, and even spies known as *mexiriqueiros*.¹² These *Companhias* were not just engaged in the export and import of goods, but they also offered their services to, and shared their commercial acumen with, other merchants. In this respect, they were essentially trading houses 'indulging in buying and selling for others on a commission basis' and the merchants of the *Companhias* 'acted as brokers, insurance agents, bankers, freighters, ship-owners, purveyors' thus diversifying the commercial and business portfolio of the company.¹³

Whilst the importance of the Agency House cannot be understated, as the numerous designations offered by contemporary Portuguese officials above indicate, it is evident that it was only *one* of many commercial institutions that characterised the commercial landscape of the *Estado*, during this period. This is evidenced, not least due to the multiple designations cited above, which point efforts on the part of the colonial authorities to understand and subsume the diverse modes of organisation practiced by Hindu merchants, but also a degree of flexibility in how these institutions operated in practice. Whilst the Agency House had a clear structure, hierarchy, as well as what can be described as a more regimented mode of functioning, the boundaries of the institutions classified as '*casas do comércio*' or '*sociedades*' and designated under the umbrella category of Hindu mercantile organisations may have been more flexible. This flexibility is most clearly reflected in the practice of Hindu merchants conducting trade collectively as a family unit but also on

¹⁰ Pinto, *Trade and Finance*, 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³ Pinto, *Trade and Finance*, 64.

an individual basis, exiting and entering back into the family fold if and when needed. Indeed, across the broader spectrum of mercantile culture in South Asia during the early modern period, the ‘firm’ was not seen as necessarily separate from the family, and there was no commonly used word for ‘*sociedade*’ or ‘*casa do comércio*’ as a fixed concept.¹⁴ Moreover, joint family businesses generally operated without a contract meaning that they were not formally a ‘firm’; if, for example, the firm was to be divided amongst the members there was no need for documentation if there was a formal agreement.¹⁵ The British, for example, used the term ‘joint family’ overwhelmingly in reference to household members living together in one house, even though shared residence was not a strict requirement for families in business.¹⁶

In the *Estado*, the very existence of this spectrum of multiple descriptions and designations points to a fluid and diverse set of practices and forms of organisation, which nevertheless pivoted around the family unit. Concomitantly, there is also ample evidence to demonstrate that the organisation of trade, and the exercise of administrative duties were organised on the basis of firstly, paternal bonds with fathers in officially listed partnerships and/or working closely with the eldest son, and secondly, fraternal bonds, with brothers working closely amongst and with each other. Whilst commercial transactions were organised and handled broadly within the family unit, fathers and sons conducting administrative duties closely together and being formally recognised as holding joint contracts appear to have been a significant practice. For example, the prominent merchant Vittogi Sinay Dumo of the Dumo family, who will be discussed in greater detail in the latter part of this chapter, was also *Corretor dos Balagateiros* (broker of the Balagate merchants) responsible for mediating the *Estado*’s important trade with merchants from Balagate, and who held the contract for pepper with the *Fazenda Real* jointly with his son Poquea Sinay Dumo.¹⁷ In a despatch from Goa to Lisbon, it was noted by the viceroy that both father and son were engaged in procuring and buying pepper for the *Fazenda Real* together.¹⁸ For Hindu mercantile families, this practice would have served a symbolic function as it consolidated the role of the family in such prominent administrative positions, but such arrangements also

14 C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 454.

15 Jack Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), 140–141.

16 *Ibid.*, 141.

17 HAG MR 167–132A, fls. 208. Italics are my own. The *Fazenda Real* was the Royal or Crown Treasury.

18 HAG, MR 167–132A, fls. 208.

served a practical purpose. For Poquea Sinay Dumo, his inheritance of the same post of *Corretor dos Balagateiros* would have undoubtedly been aided by the experience and knowledge cultivated by working closely with his father in this capacity.

Although the commercial activities and administrative functions of Hindu mercantile families in the *Estado* were directed by the father as the nominal head of the family, fraternal partnerships and cooperation were also of particular significance. For example, it was also noted that one service performed by Poquea Sinay Dumo and his brothers included receiving and inspecting boats during the monsoon high season and that they 'would go daily to the river, and the Customs House to assist in the selection, exam, distribution of weights, and the counting and organisation of the cargoes.'¹⁹ A further example of fraternal cooperation can be found in a collective petition submitted in 1756 by Vamama Camotin, Pondilico Camotin, Mabulea Camotin, Rama Camotin, Essu Camotin, Venca Camotin, Norsu Camotin and Aoque Camotin 'all brothers and residents of Ribandar in the Island of Goa', which served as a joint application for the permission to open a *botica* in Goa.²⁰ In emphasising the importance of fraternal links for Hindu mercantile culture during the period in question, it would be impossible to overlook the strategies and structure of the Mhamai Kamat family firm, if only by virtue of the fact that they were probably the most prominent Hindu mercantile family active in the *Estado* from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. From Goa, the vast and substantial volumes of trade and financial services of the family were directed in Goa by the two brothers Naraena and Vencatesha Camotin. After the death of their father Suba Camotin, these two brothers established a joint family trust or *vakar* alongside their brother Yeshwant (or Exa) who managed their commercial interests in Bombay, whilst Naraena and Vencatesha managed the family firm in Goa.²¹ Remaining fixed in Goa, Naraena and Venctaesha Camotin were able to build and maintain a global cross-cultural network of commercial partners, expanding the scope of their business across the Indian Ocean to Macau and Canton, and across the Atlantic to Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon.

In addition to the fact that commerce was organised within the bounds of the nuclear family, there was also a practice of establishing and consolidating

¹⁹ HAG MR 176–137A, fls. 29.

²⁰ A *botica* was a small scale commercial institution in the *Estado* akin to a grocery store; it sold basic provisions such as foodstuffs and tobacco, but could also distribute and sell more valuable goods such as textiles and spices; AHU, Índia, Cx 134 Doc. 94.

²¹ Teotónio de Souza, *Mhamai House Records Indigenous Sources for Indo-Portuguese History*, (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1995), 937.

bonds between and across prominent Hindu mercantile families in Goa. Given the fact that most of these families were drawn from the same Brahman sub-caste known as the Saraswats, the endogamous practice of inter-caste marriage was thus also one of a maintaining high caste status and a way of consolidating their community identity. Moreover, establishing bonds in this way would have also served the purpose of forming intrinsic alliances across merchant families, helping to consolidate what can be described as a veritable merchant class in the *Estado* during this period. These alliances amassed the already significant pools of resources, capital and acumen controlled by individual merchants families and thus helped to secure the commercial dominance of the Saraswat community for generations to come. Indeed, the strategy of joining familial and commercial interests was common mercantile practice. As demonstrated by Karen Leonard, decisions regarding marriage and adoption taken by Hindu, Muslim and Jain mercantile communities and banking family firms were shaped by the strategic interests and concerns of business. Similarly, as Francescsa Trivellato has emphasised, within Jewish Sephardic mercantile communities, marriage alliances between larger clans and families shaped their economic investments and allowed merchants to build specialisations in commercial niches.²²

Within the *Estado*, prominent mercantile families pursued similar strategic, selective, and mutually beneficial marriage arrangements to consolidate their commercial interests, but also to maintain their high ritual status within local Goan society. In 1766, for example, the close partnership between the prominent merchant and tobacco *rendeiro* (contractor) Soirea Sinay and the Mhamai Kamat family was consolidated by the marriage of Sinay's daughter to the son of Naraena Camotin.²³ The Mhamai Kamat family had established a close relationship with the highest levels of imperial authority in the *Estado*, and occupied a high level of social rank in Goa by virtue of their political influence and their status as one of the most important elite local mercantile families. Moreover, they also played a visible public role within the local Hindu community of the *Estado* by spearheading the construction of temples in the centre of Goa, and for hosting important religious ceremonies at their mansion in Panjim. For Soirea Sinay, even though he was already a close partner of the Camotins, this marriage alliance would have cemented this relationship, granting him access to the inner circle of one of the most prominent mercantile and political families in Goa. Symbolically, it would have also greatly contributed to his family's degree of upward social mobility, whilst consolidating his own status as a prominent merchant.

²² Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 22.

²³ AHU, Índia, Cx 134 Doc. 94.

As elaborated above, the Portuguese colonial authorities recorded their observations of Hindu mercantile organisation that revolved around the family according to a wide range of designations. Despite the intrinsic limits of colonially inflected observations of such aspects of Hindu mercantile culture, which belie its complexity and flexibility, these limitations are somewhat mitigated by insights offered from Hindu merchants themselves that reveal the significance of family and kinship. The significance of the bonds of kin as the loci of Hindu mercantile activity is evidenced by a series of commercial disputes amongst family members 'who lived in society', which were brought before the colonial courts for mediation and conflict resolution. From a series of communications between Goa and Lisbon that serve as an account documenting the origins, intricacies and outcome of a commercial dispute within a prominent Hindu family firm or '*sociedade*' referred to as the 'Corondos' brought before the colonial authorities for arbitration, we can glean crucial insights as to how and why Hindu merchants organised on the basis of the joint-family. In 1778, the Governor General Dom José Pedro da Câmara reported to Lisbon that there was a dispute within 'one of the big houses of commerce of this city' known as the '*gentios* called Corondos.'²⁴ These 'gentiles', the Governor General describes, were prominent merchants involved in long-distance trade and were involved in 'making and receiving many shipments not just to Europe but the many ports of Asia.'²⁵ However, their commerce- one which was highly lucrative for the colonial state as it generated revenue through customs taxes and import and export duties- was interrupted due to the fact that these '*gentios*' who 'live in society' have 'disagreed and disunited.'²⁶ The dispute was so serious that it had resulted in their commerce being stalled and 'for years the shipment of their goods had been tied up in the warehouses.'²⁷ The issue was thus forced into the purview of the colonial state, not only because the matter was referred to the *Ouvidor Geral* in Goa in an attempt at conflict resolution by the merchants themselves through the act of petitioning, but because there

24 HAG MR 214-158A, fls. 240. The significance of this petition in regards to demonstrating the extent to which Hindu subjects in the *Estado* engaged with the imperial legal sphere has been briefly surveyed in Noelle Richardson, 'Petitions, Privileges and Protection: "Performative Subjection" and the Use of Colonial Legal Mechanisms by Hindu Merchants in the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, 1750-1830' in *Distributive Struggle and the Self in the Early Modern Iberian World*, eds Nino Valen, Nikolaus Bötcher and Stefan Rinke (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 2019), 45.

25 HAG MR 214-158A, fl. 240.

26 HAG MR 214-158A, fl. 240.

27 HAG MR 214-158A, fl. 240.

was a threat to the Royal Coffers as the diminishing capital of this prominent society was also a point of concern.

Whilst the names of the individual members of this joint-family were not explicitly stated in the above petition, from scattered references to merchants with the familial surname Corondo we can piece together a picture of who these '*gentios*' who lived in society may have been. For example, it was noted that the merchant Custam Naik Corondo, alongside his brother Rama Naik Corondo, held contracts for *rapé* (snuff tobacco), following in the footsteps of their father Biquea Naik Corondo who obtained the contract in 1776.²⁸ This observation further underscores the importance of fraternal links in the mercantile practices of Hindu merchants during this period, as well as the practice of sons inheriting key commercial contracts and positions from their fathers. As we shall see, Biquea Naik Corondo was identified as one of the '*gentios*' who forcefully opposed the prevailing institutional arrangements of his business house. Although it is unclear if he was directly linked to this particular society of Corondos, within the collection of documentation pertaining to the *Junta do Tabaco* (Tobacco Board) dated between 1750 and 1754, a letter regarding the decrease in the price of pepper, makes note of a merchant Ramagy Naique Corondo who lived in the Ilha de Combarjua and who held a contract of pepper with the *Fazenda Real*.²⁹ Thus, while it cannot be definitively stated if these merchants were loosely or directly related to the '*society*' of Corondos in question, what can be confirmed is that there were several prominent and successful merchants with the familial surname Corondo who were active in Goa during the mid eighteenth century.

The question thus arises as to what had caused such a fundamental rift in this business house in the first place, and why did the remaining members, seemingly unable to resolve it amongst themselves, turn to the state to act as a third-party arbitrator? Indeed, This inability to resolve the matter internally demonstrates the limits of the family in Hindu mercantile practice in Goa during this period, and its flexibility or porousness in allowing an external authority to arbitrate. As the note of the Governor General elaborated, the dispute amongst the members of this '*society*' was the result of the death of the Administrator, and there was 'doubt amongst the four whom remained partners' as to who 'had equal right to the said house and its capital', and 'about

28 Philomena Sequeira Antony, *Relações Intracoloniais Goa-Bahia, 1675–1825* (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2013), 223.

29 ANTT, *Cartas do Junta do Tabaco*, Maço 103, Cx. 95. The *Junta do Tabaco* was the administrative board responsible for managing the trade in tobacco, especially the allocation of monopoly contracts to private merchants.

who would be the Administrator of the same House.³⁰ The Governor General appointed the *Ouvidor* to handle the matter, specifically the task of nominating a new head. During the process of arbitration, it appears that the feud had led to an irreversible split amongst the surviving members of the house who had formed two opposing factions; it was thus proposed that the 'society' and its assets simply be divided between the two parties. However, this solution appears to have been rejected for two reasons, the first of which offers a revealing insight as to how the practice of organising commerce, and living in commune within the unit of the joint-family, was more than a merely functional and practical arrangement.

As the Governor General reported back to Lisbon, these merchants, when describing the manner in which the society had organised, explained 'in mysticism' that they were 'eating from the same bowl', and they stressed that the proposed resolution to split its capital and assets had caused the 'ruination of many houses of business.'³¹ However, the Corondos may not have wrong in their predication that the fragmentation of their firm and assets would cause the complete 'ruination' of their house as well. It has been argued that in Gujarat, for example, the inheritance system as it was practiced in many parts of South Asia during this period, which divided wealth among male and female heirs had hindered the continuity of mercantile property and had caused the quick disappearance of certain merchant families.³² The authorities in Goa were undoubtedly concerned about the prospect of causing the collapse of a prominent (and lucrative) family firm, but also wary of the fact that their solution did not have wide acceptance between the surviving members and were thus at a loss as to how to resolve the dispute. The Viceroy thus suspended the arbitration process, remitted the issue to Lisbon and awaited instructions to be issued from the king before continuing.

Before elaborating further on the evolution of this dispute, it is worth dwelling firstly on the significance of the explanation offered by these merchants, particularly how they described the practice of living in commune and conducting their commerce jointly as one of 'eating from the same bowl.' The metaphor of the bowl was one that echoed the strong sense of communality and indivisibility underlying their form of collective self-organisation, even if in reality it did not entirely prevent the potential of division and dissent. Broadly speaking, however, the practice of conducting commerce and living

30 HAG MR 214-158A, fl. 240.

31 HAG MR 214-158A, fl. 240.

32 Nadri, 'The Maritime Merchants of Surat', 250–251.

in commune was flexible and did not solely apply to kin members related by blood. In principal, under *Mitakshara* Hindu law, joint families – descendants of a common ancestor in an unbroken male line – were bound together by ties of agnation, affinity or adoption, but also by their common fund of property, common worship and residence, even though the latter three factors were not strictly required.³³ The five brothers of the Risikdas mercantile family in Surat mentioned previously, handled the commercial ventures inherited by their father jointly, lived together in one house ‘in commune’ and this property was held in joint-ownership.³⁴ In addition to the Corondos, the practice of being bound together by a common fund of property, forms of common worship and residence was also evident in the mercantile and familial organisation and practices of the Mhamai Kamat family.

The location of the Mhamai Kamat mansion – also referred to as ‘Kamat Ghanekar House’ – in central Panjim where it still stands today, was a reflection of the family’s close association with the highest levels of Portuguese colonial government. Suba Camotin, one of the official four brokers of the Goa customs house, relocated the family residence and their commercial activities from Panjim to Goa, at the same time as the Viceroy the Conde de Ega shifted the viceregal palace.³⁵ This strategic relocation was a way of maintaining his proximity to the centre of imperial power, and a means of keeping his ear to the ground in order to ensure the continued access of his family firm to the most lucrative commercial opportunities that emerged in the *Estado*. Reflecting the practice of ‘living in commune’, the mansion was built to house several generations of the family and continues in the ownership of the descendants of Suba, Naraena and Venctaesha Camotin. The structure, which is considerable in size, consists of two levels; the living quarters occupy corridors that were built around one central courtyard and the house also includes a *puja* room for common worship and prayer thus reflecting the practice of mercantile families in Goa living in commune, occupying the same property and engaging in common forms of worship. The importance of the three factors of commerce, communal residence, and joint worship in the public and private lives of Hindu merchants accounts for the reticence of the ‘*gentios* Corondos’ in agreeing to the *Ouvidor*’s proposition to divide their society, and was fuelled by a desire to maintain their greater sense of communality.

33 Goody, *East in the West*, 140.

34 Nadri, ‘The Merchants of Surat’, 252.

35 Souza, *Mhamai House Records*, 936–937.

Despite the initial reticence shown by the remaining members of the Corondo 'society' to accept an intentionally divisive solution, it appears that there was a split made to the common bowl. Further correspondence between Goa and Lisbon, and a petition submitted by one of the remaining partners Biquea Naique Corondo to the *Junta Real da Fazenda*, dated in 1782, five years after the initial report of the dispute, reveals crucial insights into a further dimension of the dispute, one which strongly contradicted the initial expressed sentiment of maintaining the integrity and communality of the society above all else. Biquea Naique Corondo's petition litigated for the right to claim his assets from the 'reach' of the new Administrator, whilst arguing that an intractable division had emerged, and that individual interests were beginning to override attempts to maintain the collective commercial activities and assets of the society.³⁶ In his petition, Biquea Naique Coronda claimed to have 'had suffered great prejudice' and had thus 'repeatedly protested' the arrangements made by the new Administrator whose identity remains unclear.³⁷ However, careful to catch the attention of the authorities and force their hand to intervene, he stressed that not only were his personal commercial interests threatened, but so too had the 'the contracts with the *Fazenda Real* that had been entered into that Administration.'³⁸ Hindu merchants held contracts with the *Fazenda* for lucrative commodities such as textiles, spices and tobacco which were a significant source of revenue for the Portuguese imperial polity. Perhaps Conscious of the initial decision that advocated for a division in the first place, and undoubtedly unwilling to place these contracts in 'great prejudice', the Secretary of State in Lisbon, Martinho Melo e Castro informed the Governor-General Francisco da Cunha e Meneses that he regarded what Biquea Naique Corondo had stated in his petitions 'to be true.'³⁹ As a result, it was decided that Biquea Naique Corondo was to 'collect his assets with preference over the debt of the *Fazenda Real*' suggesting that the contracts held with the Royal Treasury were separated from the 'society' and maintained only with Biquea Naique Corondo.⁴⁰

However, It is currently unclear if Biquea Naique Corondo completely left the fray of his society and continued to pursue trade on a solely individual basis; or if he simply only severed this specific connection and continued to conduct some commercial activities within the family unit. Nevertheless, his

36 AHU, Índia, Cx. 222, Doc. 117.

37 AHU, Índia, Cx. 222, Doc. 117.

38 AHU, Índia, Cx. 222, Doc. 117.

39 AHU, Índia, Cx. 222, Doc. 117.

40 AHU, Índia, Cx. 222, Doc. 117.

petition and the responses from both Lisbon and Goa reveal the overarching concerns of the Portuguese imperial polity, which was to protect commerce and key sources of revenue, and gives an insight into the complex and dynamic picture of Hindu mercantile culture and practices in Goa during this period. Importantly, Biquea Naique Corondo's petition was ostensibly aimed at protecting his own commercial interests over that of his collective 'society' and he did not refrain from revealing the divisions that had emerged. This not only challenges the supposed 'mysticism' that accompanied the initial observations of the Governor General when describing the supposed sanctity and inviolability of the practice of 'living' and conducting commerce 'in commune'. As the dispute of the Corondos demonstrates, family and the bonds of kin were highly significant, but they did not completely restrict the ability of Hindu merchants to pursue trade separately, or prevent them from forcefully acting to protect their own individual commercial interests and assets. This dispute, and the actions of Biquea Naique Corondo, not only reveals the complexity of Hindu mercantile culture in the *Estado* during this period, but further underscores the rationality, individualism and entrepreneurialism previously denied to non-European merchants, most notably by scholars such as Max Weber.⁴¹ Hindu merchants were thus not irrevocably bound to the family firm, 'society', '*companhia*' or Agency House, but these organisational units did act as a central anchor, as well as a safety net, which helped to support, and in some cases buffer, the pursuit and even failure of individual commercial activities.

2 Central but not Hegemonic: Individual Trade within the Bounds of the Family

One of the most significant benefits of the collective family unit is that it enabled, and helped to tide, the risks and failures that could accompany the pursuit of individual commercial activity. Concomitantly, however, the pursuit of individual trade outside, but also loosely within, the bounds of the family was necessary to maintain the continued profitability of the familial enterprise as a whole. The division and distribution of collective assets and investments amongst individual members within the family helped to reduce and spread

⁴¹ Although strongly and systematically disproved, Max Weber's accounts of the development of capitalism argued that 'rationality', 'entrepreneurialism' and 'individualism' were particular to Europe as factors such as religion and caste prevented individual entrepreneurialism and capitalist activity in the non-West and was thus also responsible for stifling the rise of capitalism in India, for example; see 3

risk, whilst allowing for the diversification of a firm's business portfolio. As C.A. Bayly, in his analysis of family firms in North India between 1770 and 1870 has argued, these kinship based enterprises functioned in a similar manner to modern business enterprises who divide their trading operations into separate 'portfolios' that can be manipulated in order to avoid risks.⁴² Importantly, for some Hindu merchants in the *Estado*, the family unit also helped to tide or absorb the losses inflicted by the failure and/ or the disruption of individual commercial ventures. Indeed, this was the case for the prominent and successful merchant Upea Camotin, referred to as a 'man of business and captain of the Brahman *gentios* of this state', who was also an important political intermediary for the Portuguese imperial polity, serving as a Portuguese diplomatic envoy during the Maratha invasion of Goa in 1739 and 1740, intervening personally in the peace talks at Salsette. In regards to his commercial activities, whilst he is recorded as an individual merchant engaged in local and long-distance trade on a number of commercial and administrative documents, there is evidence to suggest that he engaged in commerce as part of a wider familial enterprise as well. In 1761, Upea Camotin, alongside his brothers Chandra Camotin, Suba Camotin and Pandu Cha were granted the extension of the 'privilege' in establishing three more *boticas* in Goa for the sale of textiles and basic provisions.⁴³ Furthermore, on the 18th of October 1769, as part of the testimony of two merchants Crisna Sinday Cabadi and Bulla Naique, it was noted that he was related to another prominent merchant, Chondru Camotin, his older brother, and that he 'lives with him in the same houses treating in society all of their business in the form that is the gentilic custom.'⁴⁴

The safety net provided by his 'society' proved crucial to Upea Camotin, allowing him to weather the storm that emerged as a result of a long-standing commercial dispute against the *Fazenda Real* that ran between 1751 and 1777. The reasons undergirding Upea Camotin's dispute with the *Fazenda* were complex but culminated in the seizure and total liquidation of his personal assets.⁴⁵ The dispute became increasingly complex over its lifetime, but its primary cause lay in a disagreement regarding the price of a cargo of *bate* (unmilled rice) that Upea Camotin had remitted to Mozambique in 1746. As the Praça of Mozambique 'had found itself entirely lacking in provisions', the Governor of Mozambique, Caetano Correia de Sá appealed to the Viceroy, the Marquis of Alorna Pedro Miguel de Almeida Portugal e Vasconcelos, and the *Vedor Geral*

42 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 462.

43 AHU, Índia, Caixa 213. Doc. 23.

44 HAG, MR 190- 143A, fl. 86.

45 AHU, Índia, Caixa 91, Doc. 71, 9th March 1756.

da Fazenda (the Chief Financial Officer of the Crown Treasury), Antonio Carneiro de Alaçova in Goa to appeal to Upea Camotin to send a cargo of rice.⁴⁶ As further incentive, the appeal to Camotin was made on the assurance that he would be paid promptly and that the sale price of the cargo of *bate* would be in conformity to the current values in Mozambique.⁴⁷ Upea Camotin responded positively to these appeals and sent a cargo of 68 *maons* and 2 *candins* of *bate* on his own account, bearing the customs duties and freight charges himself.⁴⁸ However, there was a disagreement regarding firstly, a delay in the payment and secondly, the price at which the rice was to be sold and Camotin claimed a higher value than what was ruled by the *Conselho da Fazenda* (The Revenue Council of the Exchequer). Ultimately, it was ruled in 1768 that Upea Camotin had received an excessive payment for his shipment of rice and that he was paid more than its actual sale value, therefore leaving him in debt to the *Fazenda Real* of the substantial amount of 32, 367 *cruzados* and 181 *réis* or 43,048,¹¹ *xerafins*. This debt was to be repaid through the seizure and liquidation of Upea Camotin's assets, which were to be sold at auction.⁴⁹

Upea Camotin fought against the ruling, submitting three petitions between 1756 and 1771 asserting that he had only received fair payment concurrent with the prices in Mozambique, and that payment for any other amount was 'injurious and against the promises of the *Vedor Geral* (Royal Treasurer) who had insured him that they payment would be according to the state of the land.'⁵⁰ In a reflection of Camotin's commercial and political standing, as well as the fact that grievances and complaints of Hindu merchants were taken seriously both in Goa and the metropole, his petition was also remitted to Lisbon and the *Conselho Ultramarino* for further arbitration. Moreover, the matter was deemed serious enough that in 1770, the Governor Dom João José de Melo wrote to Lisbon that he had personally called upon Upea Camotin to 'ask this *gentio* about the remittance' and although he was convinced by Camotin's grievances regarding the delay in payment, the Governor ultimately sided with the ruling of the *Conselho da Fazenda*. As a result, despite Camotin's repeated protestations, the Governor confirmed that he was indeed indebted to the *Fazenda Real* and the seizure of his assets was maintained. However, as the total value of his liquidated assets were insufficient to cover his debt, in a further blow to Camotin, it was further ruled that any outstanding and future payments due to him owed from any existing commercial ventures would also

46 AHU, Índia, Cx 91, Doc. 71.

47 AHU, Índia, Cx132, Doc. 49

48 HAG, MR 190-143A, p. 87.

49 AHU, Índia, Cx 91, Doc. 71.

50 AHU, Índia, Cx132, Doc. 49.

be seized. Undoubtedly, this was a significant financial blow and such a public seizure of his assets may have even affected Camotin's reputation as a prominent merchant.

What is striking about Upea Camotin's case is the extent to which he was cushioned by the financial blow of the seizure by the safety net of his 'society'. The long-standing nature of the dispute between 1751 and 1777, coupled with the liquidation of Camotin's assets declared in 1768, did not dissuade nor impede Camotin from continuing to engage in commerce, as evidenced by his application to open an additional *botica* in 1761, as well as by collective observations made by the Hindu merchants Crisna Sinay Cabaddi and Bulla Naique, noting the fact that he continued to engage in commercial activity one year after the seizure was declared. It cannot be definitively established if Upea Camotin did indeed lived jointly with his brothers whilst 'treating in society all their business'. However, what can be definitively concluded is that Upea Camotin, in accordance with the broader Hindu mercantile practice in Goa during this period, predominantly organised and engaged in commerce around the family unit, and that he drew from the collective bowl of his 'society' to help tide the financial losses of his individual commercial enterprises.

3 'Imitating their Fervour': The Role of Kinship and Lineages of Service in Hindu Mercantile Involvement in Colonial Governance and Administration

Hindu mercantile families in the *Estado* did not limit themselves to commerce but acted as indispensable middlemen or brokers, allowing the *Estado* to establish direct and sustained links with other important local trading communities such as the *Balagateiros*, caravan merchants from the region of Balagate in neighbouring Bijapur. They also occupied important administrative posts, performing crucial functions for the *Fazenda Real* and the *Alfândega* (Customs House) by acting as crucial knowledge intermediaries who supplied the *Estado* with information, for example, the availability, price and quality of valuable commodities such as textiles, spices and even slaves. However, this was a mutually beneficial arrangement as the social and political capital acquired through the occupation of such posts, represented some of the more direct and tangible benefits that could be extracted. Combined with their commercial acumen, establishing a close relationship with, and servicing the commercial needs of the *Estado* allowed them to secure lucrative contracts, afforded them privileged access to other important traders and brokers, and gave them greater leverage in their negotiations other merchants. The active pursuit of

these posts coupled with visible attempts to retain such lucrative positions and functions within the family unit can thus be considered to be a key aspect of Hindu mercantile culture during the period at hand.

Hindu mercantile families actively secured and retain these advantageous and high-ranking administrative posts, primarily by submitting petitions to receive the *mercê* (favour) of the *requerimento*, which would allow the inheritance of specific positions between first-degree male members of the same family, namely the passing of an administrative position from father to son.⁵¹ Ensuring the continuity of a family's administrative position and engagement with colonial commercial governance and administration was key to maintaining the commercial benefits they rendered, but also to sustain their level of political capital. The rhetoric and idiom of these petitions rested heavily on crafting a lineage of service and sought as much as possible to consolidate their claims and substantiate their right to the post in question by emphasising their familial legacy, claiming a record and lineage of virtuous service, and underscoring the substantial contributions of their families to the *Estado*. This largely symbolic but regimented process allowed such functions to be retained within certain families over several generations. Moreover, these petitions simultaneously consolidated their relationship of reciprocity with the imperial polity, underscoring the obligations of the King to his subjects, and vice versa. As demonstrated by António Manuel Hespanha, this practice was in line with Portuguese legal and moral doctrine of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which substantiated the expectation that subjects, especially those belonging to families constituting a long line of succession of service, were also 'owed' *mercês* that acted as a symbolic and formal confirmations of their service(s) to the king reflecting his reciprocal obligation to his subjects.⁵² This 'efficient practice of representation for the recompense of services' continued into the *Antigo Regime* and was, as Hespanha has succinctly described, '*affectus* in exchange for *effectus*.'⁵³ For the metropolitan nobility, the rhetoric requesting such *mercês* emphasised a family's unbroken line of service of a family that was faultless and proof of their loyalty to the king. In Goa as well as in Lisbon, this practice of representation was also a pre-emptive strategy: declarations and substantiated displays of 'loyalty' and 'fidelity' would ameliorate

51 A *requerimento* can be roughly translated as a requisition and it acted as an official order that granted the claims or demands by a supplicant, which granted the nomination to a specific administrative or political post.

52 António Manuel Hespanha, 'Os poderes num império oceânico' in *História de Portugal, vol.4: Antigo Regime*, eds. António Manuel Hespanha and Catarina Madeira Santos (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1993), 390–391.

53 Hespanha and Santos, 'Os poderes num império oceânico', 390.

any potential charges of treason or unfaithfulness, thus guaranteeing the inheritance of future generations to the same charge.⁵⁴ Hindu mercantile families in Goa employed the very same practices of representations as the metropolitan nobility, placing family and their respective lineages of service at the centre of their petitions, whilst fervently claiming their rights as subjects for the remuneration of their services at the king's behest. In successfully securing these *mercês*, Hindu merchants consolidated the importance of the family unit within the political sphere thus maintaining the dominance of kin based networks in the governance and administration of the *Estado* during the period at hand.

One key example of a prominent Hindu mercantile family heavily involved in the politic-administrative governance of the *Estado* was the Dumo family. As demonstrated in the first half of this chapter, the Dumo family organised their trade on the basis of the family unit and their administrative functions as Custom House officials and as brokers were also similarly structured on the bonds of kin. However, it worth dwelling in greater detail at the extensive evidence that reflects the success of Dumo family in retaining these significant administrative posts and functions over at least three generations. Our knowledge of the commercial activities, administrative positions and political engagements of the Dumo family is primarily drawn from information gathered from the petitions submitted, and in response to, Vittogi Sinay Dumo, and those of his eldest son, Poquea Sinay Dumo, and Vittogi's grandson, Chondra Sinay Dumo. Vittogi Sinay Dumo, resident of Goa, a prominent merchant, one of the principal *rendeiros* of pepper, and diplomatic intermediary for the *Estado* also occupied the position of *Corretor da Provincia de Bardes* (Broker for the Province of Bardes), as well as *Corretor da Ribeira de Goa* (Broker of the Riverside of Goa).⁵⁵ In addition to the praise and 'credit' he garnered for securing 'the very large quantity of pepper' for the *Fundo do Giro*, he was also noted for 'advancing gross quantities of money to the *Fazenda Real* in its times of greatest needs.'⁵⁶ The viceroy Manuel de Saldanha e Albuquerque had stressed to Lisbon, the 'notoriety of the service' that Vittogi Sinay Dumo had displayed, as well as that of his son Poquea Sinay Dumo, particularly the former's financial assistance and his role in securing the treaty of peace with the Bonsulos, which had

54 *Ibid.*, 391.

55 HAG MR167-132A, fls. 208. Vittogi Sinay Dumo's substantial efforts in procuring, supplying and importing pepper on his 'own risk and account', especially during times of difficulty, were felt to be substantial and significant enough to warrant his petitioning the viceroy for an honorary title of *Corretor do Cafre do Giro* as a symbolic notice of his services rendered.

56 HAG MR167-132A, fls. 208.

resulted in his being granted the position of *Corretor dos Balagateiros* in 1760. The granting of this position, as well as the personal recommendation of the viceroy, consolidated the Dumos' reputation as indispensable and significant subjects, and as a prominent mercantile and political family.

Importantly, the position of *Corretor dos Balagateiros* did not end with Vittogi Sinay Dumo who himself inherited the position from his father; continuing the line of inheritance, Vittogi Sinay Dumo's grandson and the son of Poquea Sinay Dumo, Chondra Sinay Dumo also submitted petitions to secure the *mercê* for the *requerimento* of the same post.⁵⁷ Poquea Sinay Dumo was also a prominent merchant and *rendeiro* in his own right, acting as a regular supplier of basic goods to the Royal Hospital and other public institutions, who provided for the maintenance and provisions for diplomatic envoys such as those to the King of Canara. However, he was able to draw from the established reputation and lineage of his family to bolster his position vis-à-vis the colonial authorities.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that in the response to a petition submitted by Poquea for the *requerimento* of the position of *Corretor dos Balagateiros*, it was noted that the 'fidelity and service' found in his father and grandfather was also demonstrated 'by the supplicant's brothers who also engage in services of that administration.'⁵⁹ Continuing the practice of his predecessors, in his petition submitted in 1786 for the same *mercê*, he employed the same currency, idiom and 'efficacy of kinship' to strengthen his claims. In this vein, Chondra Sinay Dumo established a clear lineage of service, stressing that he only sought 'to continue and follow in the footstep of his father and grandfather who distinguished himself greatly in the service of Your Majesty.'⁶⁰ However, in underscoring his own personal commitment to the position, and his strong desire to continue his family's lineage of service, he stressed how he 'has always made a personal study to deserve those same credits that were won by his predecessors'⁶¹

The efforts of the Dumo family thus perfectly embody the broader practice and success of prominent mercantile Hindu families in the *Estado*, who mirrored their close engagement with the colonial economy of the *Estado* by directly immersing themselves with the business of imperial governance and

57 AHU, Índia, Cx. 116, Doc. 40.

58 HAG MR 176-137A, fls. 88–90; HAG MR- 176-137A, fls. 83. Poquea Sinay Dumo was the principal *rendeiro* of pepper from Sunda between 1755 and 1762, see Maria de Jesus dos Mártires Lopes, ed., *Nova história da expansão portuguesa: O Império Oriental (1600–1820)* Tomo 1 (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 2006), 326–327.

59 AHU, Cx 93, Doc. 43.

60 AHU, Índia, Cx. 93, Doc. 43.

61 AHU, Índia, Cx. 83, Doc. 43

administration. Importantly, reflective of the beneficial relationship of mutual dependency between the Hindu mercantile community in the *Estado* and the Portuguese imperial polity, this close engagement of commercial families with the political sphere was not only profitable, but contributed to their upward social mobility as well, allowing them to augment their status and position in local Goan society.

4 Conclusion

Historians of the Indian Ocean and of mercantile communities in South Asia have emphasized that due to a paucity of sources, reconstructing the culture, practices and organizational structures of local mercantile family firms in the early modern period is a difficult task. With exception to the brief reflections regarding structure of the organisational structure Mhamai Kamat family firm that drew from the family's own personal archive, the bulk of the evidence used in this chapter has been drawn from the Portuguese colonial archives. Bearing in mind the required cautiousness that must accompany imperial observations of local culture and practice, these records have nevertheless provided crucial insights that have allowed us to reconstruct a significant aspect of Hindu mercantile culture in Goa during the period at hand. In regards to the organisational practices, this chapter has demonstrated the significance of the family unit, familial networks, and bonds of kin in shaping Hindu mercantile culture in the *Estado* in the early modern era. Hindu merchants drew on the combined resources, capital, and labour of their family unit, and drew upon the inherent trust underlying the bonds of kin structure and organise their commercial activities. Moreover, the practical exigencies of trade, the organisation and management of the vast commercial, financial and service activities which coalesced around the family firm, '*sociedade*' or '*casa do comércio*', allowed family members to expand their individual portfolios, cushioning or sometimes absorbing the risk associated with the pursuit of individual trade. Further demonstrating the flexibility of these kin based units, as the case of the Mhamai Kamat family demonstrates, this security also allowed for the establishment of cross-cultural networks that consisted of close partnerships with commercial actors drawn from far beyond the close or extended family circle.

Moreover, the simultaneous and close engagement of Hindu merchants in the political and administrative spheres of the *Estado* extended the engagement of the family into the structures of imperial governance and administration. As stressed at the beginning of this chapter, it has been widely concluded Hindu merchants were central to the survival to the Portuguese *Estado da*

India during the long eighteenth century, but the significance of the family has not been at the fore of such discussions. Hindu mercantile culture and practices remained outside the strict purview and influence of the colonial regime, and Hindu merchants were able to maintain their autonomy and agency in the pursuit of their individual, as well their collective material and symbolic gains. This autonomy and entrepreneurialism owed much to the flexibility of the family unit and was complimented by the continued engagement of Hindu merchants in the political sphere of the *Estado* which itself was predicated on invoking and sustaining their familial lineage of service to the Portuguese imperial polity. It would not be possible, therefore, to account for the success of Hindu merchants in *Estado* and their indispensability as imperial subjects for the Portuguese Crown in India without invoking the importance of the family and bonds of kin in, or in the words of the merchants themselves, their practice of ‘eating from the same bowl’.