

THE PIONEERS

Asians anywhere in East Africa will take his name first – **Allidina Visram** – because he was indeed the first to establish shops all over East Africa, starting with Zanzibar and Tanganyika, and then Kenya and Uganda, and responsible for *sponsoring* many, many people of his own Ismailia community and the wider Indian community to migrate to East Africa from India. In Uganda his empire blossomed. His name was synonymous with Asian business acumen, particularly retail business, but he was into agro-processing too. His companion and partner was **Rashid Khamis**. Contemporaneous with them were **Suleiman Verjee** and **Kassim-Lakha**. Seven of the early pioneers who branched out beyond trading were **Bandalli Jaffer**, **Dayalbhai Madanji Vadera**, **Jamal Walji** and **Jamal Ramji**, **Inder Singh Gill**, **Jal F Dastur**, and **Norman Godinho**. So they came from all communities. Starting from the 1920s **Nanjibhai Kalidas Mehta** and **Muljibhai Madhvani** were “value-adding” to our agricultural products – and going much beyond. Their children and grandchildren are back to add more value. **Sir Amar Maini** has been recognised as the first mayor of Kampala. Mbale’s pioneers have been highlighted. Were people who played roles after 1920 “pioneers”? A demarcation has been made. Nearer independence **Gurdial Singh**, **Shafiq Arain** and **Dr MM Patel** assumed leading roles in the political arena. Some “pioneers” stories are told in the section on Those Who Never Left for Even a Day and Those Who Returned After Amin, people like **Manzur Alam**, **Mansur Hudda**, **Haider Somaní** and **Dr Mukhtar Ahmad** whose families were themselves indeed pioneers. The important thing is “we contributed” – and the stories are all over the book.

Allidina Visram (1851-1916)

He was born in Kera, Kutch, in 1851, and came to Zanzibar on a dhow in 1863, at the age of 12 years. He proceeded to Bagamoyo to work as an assistant to Sewa Haji Paroo (1851-1897). Soon he branched out on his own and started organizing caravans into the interior. He opened branches of his firm at Dar es Salaam, Sadani, Tabora, and Ujiji, and Alima and Tindo in the Belgium Congo. In the early years he purchased cloves, wax, and honey in exchange for cloth, salt, grains, etc. Soon he began to specialise in ivory, which was increasingly a by-product of hunting safaris by early Europeans and Americans.

Allidina was given the contract to provide packed foods to the hunters. After the death of Sewa Haji Paroo he bought up his caravan trade and took his wagons as far as Uganda, and parts of Congo Free State and Southern Sudan. He was the "King of Ivory" in Africa. With the ongoing construction of the Uganda Railway he opened many stores along the railway line and became the supplier of food to the Indian workers. He also obtained the contract of paying the railway workers their salaries as well as loans to the railway authority. He was practically a bank: notes given to him at the coast could

be cashed in the interior for a commission of 3-5 percent.

By 1904 he began to branch into agriculture and within a few years owned seven large plantations, for sugar cane and rubber, with experimental plots of grams, fruits, flowers, tea, and cotton, employing over 3,000 workers. He opened his first ginnery at Entebbe in 1910 for exporting ginned cotton to India, via dhows and steamer to Kisumu and then by rail to Mombasa. He himself owned the sailing crafts on Lake Victoria to facilitate the transportation, with Kisumu as his hub. His telegraphic address said it all: PAGAZI, meaning transporters.

Varas Allidina Visram was reputed for his kindness and generosity. He donated freely to the construction of the first Ismailia jamatkhana in Kisumu in 1905, which was inaugurated by the Imam, Sultan Mohamed Shah, Aga Khan III. On the occasion of the opening, Varas Allidina, Mukhi Varas Hasham Jamal (1880-1972), and others came forward to physically pull the Imam's carriage. The Imam would have none of it: "I accept your zeal, but you need not be so demonstrative of it. You are my spiritual children.

Varas Ismail Gangji had managed to lift the slur on the community *khoja uthao boja* [Khoja! lift the load]. Now I cannot allow you to lift this load. Hitch back the horses and come and ride with me."

In 1905 the Imam instructed Allidina to encourage further immigration of the community from Kathiawar. Enlisting the help of Mukhi Valji Hirji of Mombasa, Mukhi Varas Hasham Jamal of Kisumu and his deputy manager at Kampala Rashid Khamis he sponsored many new immigrant Ismailis to East Africa, first as his employees and then as his agents. They spread out to Homa Bay, Mumias, Sio Port, and then into Uganda. It is said that 90 percent of the Ismailis who attained prosperity in Kenya and Uganda owe their settlement to him.

He was bestowed the title of Varas by the Aga Khan (III) for his communal services, the first person to be



given that title in Kenya and Uganda. He was ecumenical however: he contributed substantial funds to the construction of Namirembe Cathedral, and to the Red Cross and the Church Mission Hospital in Kampala. And he sponsored and employed as many non-Ismailis as came his way.

He lived to see 65 years of hard life bring prosperity to Africa, and made regular annual visits to every branch of his vast business empire. On one such trip to Congo (then Belgian Congo) to recover outstanding debts from his agents he met with refusals. Highly shocked, he contracted a fever when he returned to his base at Mombasa and died soon after on June 30, 1916.

His son, Varas Abdul Rasul (d.1923), built a High School in Mombasa to commemorate the name of his father. A memorial bronze was presented by Rajabali Hasham Paroo, his life-long family associate and his General Manager, and was unveiled in Mombasa in 1937 by the governor of Kenya.

Allidina Visram certainly pioneered the emergence of East African countries on the world stage. The British Commissioner of Uganda, Fredrick Jackson, noting the difficulties in getting farmers to grow new crops and hence get the economy going, wrote, "I am doing all I can to induce the people to cultivate sugar cane and *simsim* (sesame). An Indian trader named Allidina Visram is already prepared to buy as much as the natives like to cultivate and that should assist in the circulation of the rupee if the people can only be induced to cultivate." Later as Governor of Uganda he described Allidina as "a charming old gentleman, respected by everyone in the country, high and low, white or black." Dr. Cyril Ehrlich wrote in *The Uganda Economy, 1903-1945* (p 18), "Perhaps the most important individual in the early history in East Africa, Seth Allidina Visram was responsible for laying the firm foundation not only of trade in Uganda but of such industries as cotton, sugar, rubber, tea and various other agricultural products as well as of shipping across Lake Victoria." And according to *Oriental Nairobi*, "An interesting point is that the Khoja community was in East Africa even before the foundation of Nairobi. The merchant Prince Allidina Visram, also known as the Uncrowned King of Uganda, extended his activities on the mainland from Mombasa to the lower reaches of the Nile."

UGANDA ASIANS

The biographical article is based on *Tajddin, Mumtaz Ali Sadik Ali, 101 Ismaili Heroes*, Vol.1, Islamic Book Publisher, Karachi, January 2003, p 052ff.

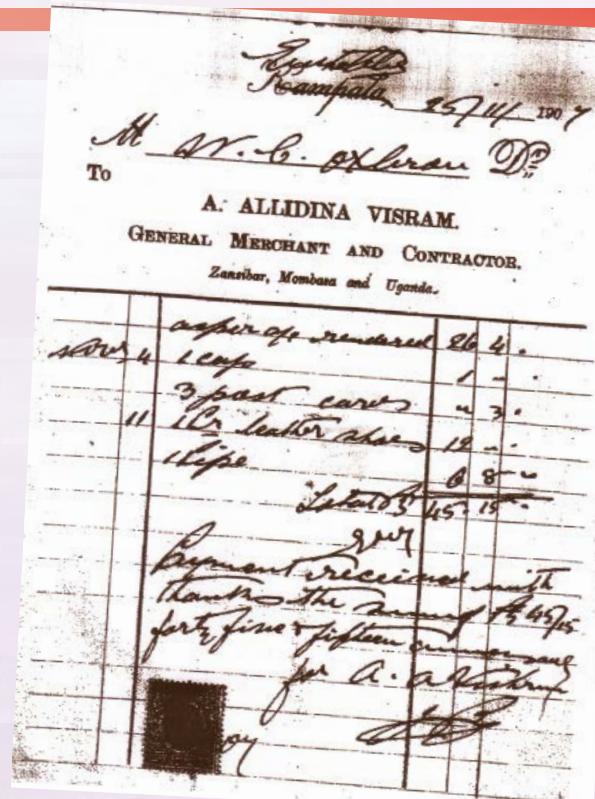
Editor's note: The rupee (and the ana and the pice) was the currency in East Africa until well into the 1920s. The denominations were even indicated in Gujarati. Varas Hasham Jamal in the above account was my father's *wada bapa* (eldest paternal uncle), my father being the son of Valli Jamal. My grandfather started his employment with Allidina Visram. Hasham Jamal (*Bwana Mzuri*) established a sugar-cane farm at Muhoroni near Mumias.

In 1972 after Jean-Badel Bokassa declared himself Emperor of the Central African

Republic the first country he visited was Uganda. In a moment of imperial euphoria, Idi Amin honoured him by changing the name of the street where Allidina had established his first shop in Kampala from Allidina Visram Street to Bokassa Street. Obote II changed it to Luwum Street in honour of Archbishop Luwum who was killed by Idi Amin, some say personally. Of course Archbishop Luwum should be honoured. But the irony wasn't lost on Asians that in redressing the wrong done against them – the alleged duka-owners – by inviting them back, the wrong done against them in erasing the name of the *King of Duka-wallas* from the street where he first established his duka, wasn't also redressed at this time. There is still a Rashid Khamis Road in Old Kampala.



THIS IS WHERE IT ALL STARTED: Allidina Visram's shop-house on, well, Luwum Street. That's how it is now (Sep 2011) - the only building of that type still left in the whole street.



Sent by Bhailal Tejura. Notice the date, notice the handwriting. The third item on the bill is a pair of leather shoes at 12 rupees and the fourth item a pipe at 6 rupees 8 annas, presumably a smoking pipe.

Amin Dada on Allidina

from Gordon BK Wavamuno, *The Story of an African Entrepreneur*, p 125. Wava was chasing Amin everywhere with Daimler Benz officials to win the Mercedes Benz dealership. They tracked him down at the "presidential hut" (you had to crawl to enter) at Arua. Wavamuno's story is included in a later section.

"After ranting against Nyerere, Amin turned his attention to the Trans-Africa Highway from Mombasa to Lagos through Kampala and Kinshasa. Amin said, 'Although I like Mobutu very much, I would like it to go through Bangui, Central Africa, because Bokassa is my friend. That is why I have named Allidina Visram Street after him. Why have a British Asian in the middle of Kampala.'"

Allidina Visram School

If you became six years old before 1935 in Uganda it was quite likely you went to the Allidina Visram School at Mombasa – and if you were from upcountry stayed in “Ada’s Hostel,” where the discipline was medieval. The school was actually built by Allidina’s son Abdulrasool in honour of his father. It cost 50 thousand pound sterling, which mark down as 1.5 million pounds in today’s money. It could accommodate 500 pupils right from its opening. All the materials - the teak for the stairway, the steel for the windows, the blocks of stones, even the desks – were brought over from India, but despite this the walls collapsed several times at the start of construction. The area where the school was/is located – Ras Kibramne, overlooking the old Nyali Bridge – “had a considerable reputation (still has) as an area of spirits,” as the school’s 50th anniversary souvenir said. In fact the school was being built over Arab graves. The souvenir goes on: “The Mzimu, the Swahili custodian of spirits, advised that a pot of gold be offered as a placatory measure to the spirits, and that done, the irate spirit obligingly returned to his repose, for no further hindrances arose from this quarter.” Now that’s good English, and let it be said as an aside that the best scholars before 1950 all came out of Allidina’s school.

If you went looking for spirits, you sure found them. And of course boys did just that. There was a cave at the bottom of the school grounds going all the way to the cliff. If you entered the cave you came back with a slap on your face.

Was the inauspicious start to the school anything to do with having hurt the feelings of the Ismaili spiritual leader? It’s a well-known story in the community that Abdulrasool declined to match the donation of one lakh (100,000/-)



rupees made by the rival Suleiman Verjee family to build an Ismaili school, because he wanted a school for all Asian children. The Imam Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah Aga Khan III expressed his displeasure at this. Old members of the community date the decline of the Allidina Visram empire from that episode. Family members themselves attribute it to Abdul-Rasul’s care-free ways. He sounds like what we’d now call “a spoilt brat” – the rich man’s son given over to profligacy, in his case card-playing, with a hint of drinking and gambling at the side.

Based on “history generally known” – in Mombasa and all over, refreshed by several accounts in Cynthia Salvadori, We came in dhows. Great-grandson Nizoo writes there of Abdul-Rasul’s worldly ways (pp 108-109 in Salvadori) alluded in the forgoing and even hints that the school might have been built because “he lost a bet.”

There were three “uncrowned kings of commerce” in East Africa before 1900 – Sewa Haji (Paroo), Sir Tharia Topan, and Allidina Visram. In the next decade there were several super-rich, although none of them were called “kings.” Suleiman Virjee and Kassim Lakha would rank amongst them. Mehta and Madhvani came later and surpassed all of them, but as an aside it should be noted that the early pioneers were Ismailis, quite likely because of their Imams’ links with the British Raj, starting from the 46th Imam Aga Khan I (Mehlati, from his district in Iran) who befriended and was befriended by the British when he came riding out of Iran to escape persecution. Bohras – the Jivanjee’s - also played important pioneering roles on the Tanganyika coast.

Politics *as* usual

from Salvadori

Rivalries were rife – not unlike now. Suleiman Virjee was Mombasa’s first Mukhi. He wanted to “do” for the Imam. The extant mosque was just a hut. Suleiman Virjee felt it was time to erect a more permanent stone structure. He went to Zanzibar to enlist the support of Sir Tharia Topan (knighthood by Queen Victoria). Topan “insulted him, telling him to go away.” Tharia

Topan comes to Mombasa the next year. He receives a jubilant welcome from the Ismailis. Suleiman Virjee keeps to his shop. Topan orders Suleiman to come out. Suleiman: “You insulted me when I came to you for the donation for the jamatkhana. Being a millionaire doesn’t give you that right. Please go away.” (Salvadori, p 98).

Verjee was certainly on an institution-building zeal. He built a school for Ismaili children. He donated one lakh rupees for that (say half a million dollars of today). He asked Abdul Rasul Allidina Visram to match. Abdul Rasul looked at the Verjee family as rivals and announced he’d build a school for all Asians.

Ebrahim Jamal remembers Allidina

in Salvadori, p 150. She says she felt very fortunate that she got to talk to Ebrahim Jamal, the only person she met who had met Allidina Visram. Date of interview not given, except for “just before his death,” so should be around 1992.

“By the time I came to Kisumu, Allidina Visram was established in Uganda. There were no roads to Uganda, so he used to travel back and forth by boat from Kisumu. He sometimes used the Railway steamer but he also had a small steamer of his own. I remember seeing Allidina a few times, here in Kisumu. He was a hefty man with a beard, and he used to wear the old-fashioned embroidered coats. He was a very important man, a big businessman and a leader of the community, and he kept his distance.”

I had once spoken to my great-uncle Ebrahim Jamal about Allidina Visram. He was one of the last surviving Asians to know him personally. He said he was a very straight, come-to-the-point person. Ebrahim Jamal had just come to Kisumu to join his brothers. Allidina said to him, “I know you are the youngest of the family but here it’s all work, otherwise you might as well go back.”

Manubhai Madhvani on Allidina Visram

Along with my great-uncle Vithaldas Haridas, I claim the honour of counting Allidina Visram as my spiritual ancestor. When my great-uncle Vithaldas reached Mombasa (1893; age 18) he knew there was only one man he had to find. Allidina took him on straightaway. My uncle worked for him for five years and then set off on his own. By 1914 Allidina had established a base at Jinja. My father was honoured to become his friend. Every evening, after my father closed his shop, he would go and visit Allidina Visram. My father was around 20 at this time. A caring person and a good host, Allidina was a very important influence on the younger man, many of his good qualities reappearing later in Muljibhai's life. Thousands of people attended his funeral after his death at Mengo Hospital on 30 June 1916, including the Kabaka and the Governor.

We can imagine how the one-sided conversation between Allidina and the young Vithaldas Madhvani went when Vithaldas came ashore at Mombasa:

Vithaldas tamaru naam? Bapuji ni chitthi mali ti chela wahan ooper. Garam pani tyar hashe, to nahi lyo, ketla wakhat thi wahan ooper mokko nahi malyo lagto. Pacchi thodok araam kari khawa maate garej awi jajo. Te baad tamne dukan ma lai jayish.

Vithaldas your name? I got your father's note in the last dhow. Hot water should be ready, seems like you didn't have the possibility to bathe all that time on the dhow. Rest for a while and come for lunch at our place only. After that I shall take you to the shop.

Tak tak. None of how did you leave your father, how was the voyage - just go and bathe, eat, and come to the shop. Notice that although there's a major age difference, Allidina still addresses the young Vithaldas with the honorific tamei.

from *East Africa and Uganda Mail*:

In one day 10 of his dhows, with a crew of 100 men, anchored in Ugowe Bay. Besides liberal salaries allotted to all members of his big establishment everywhere, boarding and lodging are free. After each successful voyage, presents are given to the crew. The whole of the employees are happy and contented.

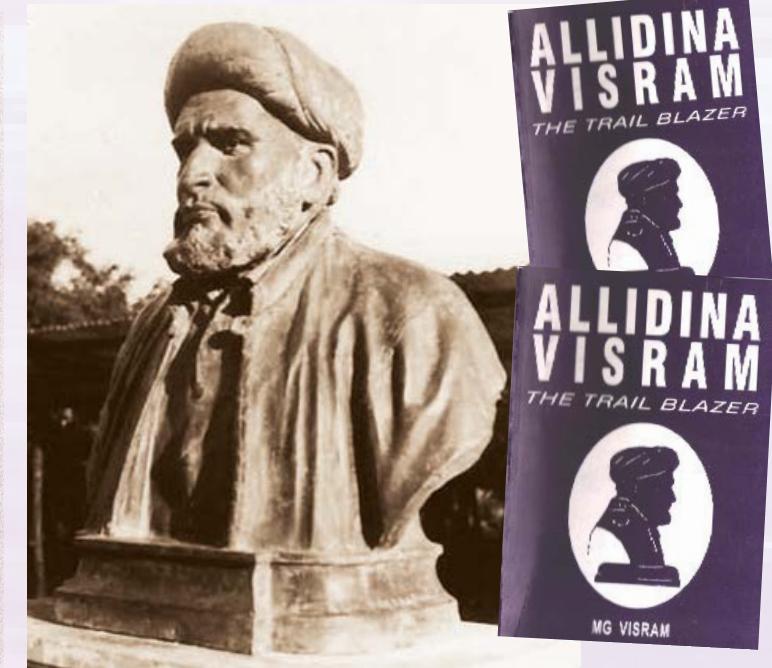
from *The Early History of Nairobi Township*

by Dr E Boedeker:

One of the most important shops in the Indian Bazaar belonged to Allidina Visram. He had a charming personality and was extremely popular with everybody. His shops were an absolute boon in the old days where one could buy all sorts of groceries, including wines etc, at very reasonable prices, virtually on one's door.

Nanji Kalidas Mehta on Alidina in his autobiography

When I set foot on the soil of Jinja I heard numerous stories and anecdotes about his fame. He became my ideal as Uganda's captain of commerce and man of charity. My youthful spirit sought inspiration from the legacy of fame and generosity he left behind. To me he was like a brilliant star that once shone with the full brilliance of the heavens but suddenly disappeared in the dark, leaving behind a dazzling trail (p 77). He had five hundred employees which included Hindus and Muslims. He stood far above the distinctions of caste and creed and treated all persons equally.



Excerpts from the above autobiographical novel (right) by MG Visram (no relation). It's a novel yet many episodes ring true. Abridgment and editing. The picture above is of Allidina Visram's statue in Mombasa.

Allidina was often on the quay at Porbander port. He would see a ship leaving and returning five-six months later with the same crew. The returning craft would be loaded with elephant tusks – some taller than an adult person. Occasionally there were also rhino horns. The land was said to be full of precious stones, gold, myrrh, ivory and all those things meant for maharajas only. Allidina's heart longed to be there. One day, with a couple of torn blankets and a fistful of coins the boy walked on to a dhow sailing to Africa (p 11).

There was a protruding round platform on the starboard stern, wooden skirting enclosing it. That was the toilet. He had once heard it said that Popatbhai was lost during a voyage while being in the toilet. He had tried to figure out how one could get lost in a toilet. Now he knew. He imagined an entire crew could be lost

during a long voyage and the dhow sail into a port fully laden minus a single soul. Would the town-folk mourn the lost sailors or split their sides laughing when they realized how they got lost! (p 14).

Still more from MGV's book

Nasser Virjee could not believe his eyes at the sight of Allidina's 200-strong caravan coming down the last hill to Mwanza laden with wooden planks and beams. "I knew it! I knew it! I knew it that someday this man would lose sanity, wandering up and down malaria-infested Africa as he does. And now it has happened. Who's going to buy timber in an African forest?"

Allidina explained it was *bambacofī* timber to build a dhow. The town elders came to the lake-front to witness the glorious and historical launch of the dhow. Shooting down at an angle of 35 degrees, the dhow crashed into the water like a heavy boulder. The Mwanza crowd walked back in silence. They thought what an unnecessary waste of their time from business (p 80-82).

Death

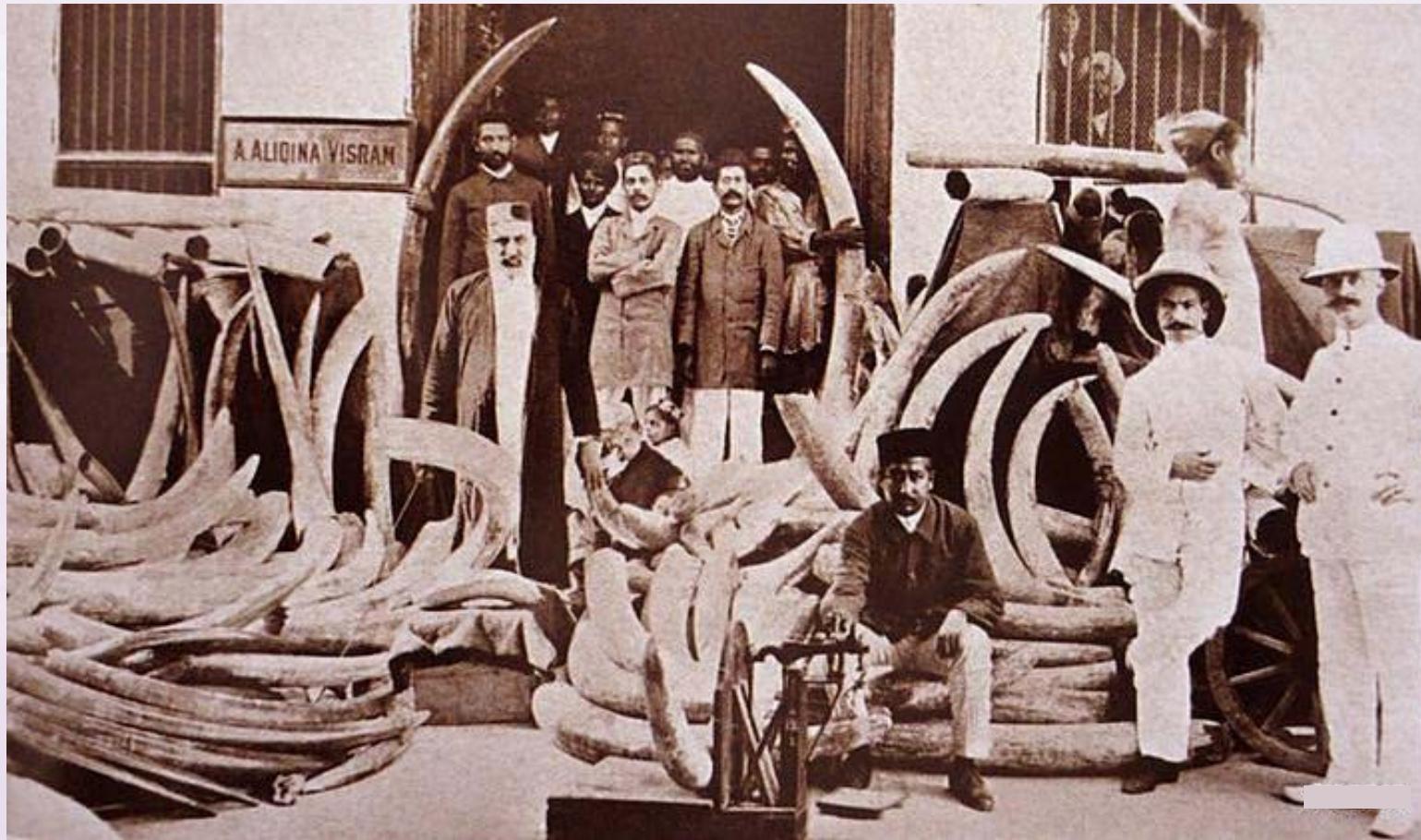
Almost all shopkeepers in entire eastern Africa shut down their businesses the day Allidina was buried. The Kabaka of Buganda and the Governor of Uganda stood in silence as the body was lowered into the grave. It is said that an unusually violent thunderstorm hit Buganda the night of the burial. If there was anything like that I personally would like to put it down to coincidence. Buganda Province is notorious for out of season freak storms (p 133).



(left top) Mausoleum, June 2009, somewhat neglected as relatives have gone. (left bottom) Nov 2011 picture (above) grave of Khoja Jafferbhai Alidina, b 1890, d 1917. Inscription after Bismillah: Ya Allah; Ya Mohamed, Ya Ali, Ya Fatima, Ya Hassan, Ya Hussein - the Five Holy Ones. Born 1890, Sinungra, Kutch; died Kampala 1917.

Says MG Visram about the cemetery in his book

His large tomb lies at a cemetery on Kololo Hill in Kampala, overlooking the roller coaster landscape of numerous other surrounding hills. The cemetery is densely grown with mango and jackfruit trees. They swing gently with mild but incessant winds, adding serenity to already tranquil surroundings. Everything around is as quiet as the people lying in those graves there. Far in the distance in a depression between two hills and with a backdrop of blue sky one can almost see Port Bell. A century and more ago that is where Uganda opened its door for commerce to the outside world (p 133).



The photo at the entrance to A (for Abdulrasool) Allidina Visram's depot. The pair of tusks that towers above the rest is around 10' and weigh in at around 150 lbs each piece. Prices varied according to quality, the grades being *Cutchi*, *Vilayati*, *Dandia*, *Maksub* – clearly Gujarati words. *Then* one pound of ivory fetched one rupee; one rupee bought 10 chickens (*VJ's chicken purchase parity index*). Today 10 chickens would cost \$ 30. Therefore the two tusks were worth \$ 9,000 in today's terms. There are >100 tusks lying around in the picture, so the total stock of ivory was \$ 450,000! But that was *then*. Now with a ban on ivory trading each of those big tusks would fetch upward of \$50k as trophy.

Picture and information provided by **Mohamed Ismail** (photo

at the right from his Facebook page), of the Baluch community, ecologist and wildlife biologist, author of **"The Essential Safari Companion"** and **"The Lost Wilderness"** published by www.safaripress.com of Los Angeles.
Website: <http://www.explorersafrica.com>

Writes he further: "During my career as a Kenya Game warden, I saw many elephants with tusks that easily weighed 150/160 lbs. Those days are long gone now. In 1972, the price of ivory from Kenya shot up from Shs 4/- to Shs 500/- per pound. Kenya imposed a ban on hunting and ivory trade in 1977. The legendary Robin Pereira who was a warden at the then Ivory Room near Treasury Square used to auction hundreds of elephant

tusks for more than a decade and could tell from a quick inspection the weight, grain quality and origin of the tusks, whether from an elephant along the Tana River, the N.F.D. or anywhere else.

Mohamed Ismail still: The photograph probably dates back to the early 1920s. I do recall the location when ivory was stocked there by an Ismaili family referred to as the *Congowallas*. My relatives dealt with them, also the Paroos, Batchibai, the Jethas, and the White Heart Service Station. You notice in the photo that some wore the *Fez*. This was traditional among Ismailis. My father wore one but he was not an Ismaili. He was fluent in Kutchi and eight other languages. We are Afghans and Baluchis.



Rashid Khamis

by Shamsh Khamis, Vancouver, Dec 2010

Backstory while music plays

Khamis Illay (four generations removed from Rashid Khamis) first appears on the scene at the end of the 18th century as governor (“Gornor” in family folklore) of northern Persia on behalf of Sultan Hamud of Syria who has just conquered Persia. The Sultan grants him land in western Persia. Illay’s two sons – Mamad and Mamud - get into a fight over a girl, an Ithnasheri girl at that. The girl’s brother is killed in the fight. The mother puts a curse on the male issue of the Khamis family. The murder is an unfortunate thing to happen as after all Iran is 100 percent Ithnasheri. Illay asks the two sons, Mamad and Ali Mamad, to escape with their sister Mumtaz. They end up in Baluchistan (now in Pakistan). A son Ali Momad is born to Mamad and then Mamad Hussein to Ali Mamad. Mamad Hussein decides to travel all the way to India, arriving in Kutch around 1820. Three children are born to Mamad Hussein– Faizal, Fakir and Gulshan. Faizal dies early (“the curse”). Fakir has three

children – Rashid, the hero of this story, Remtulla and Yasmin.

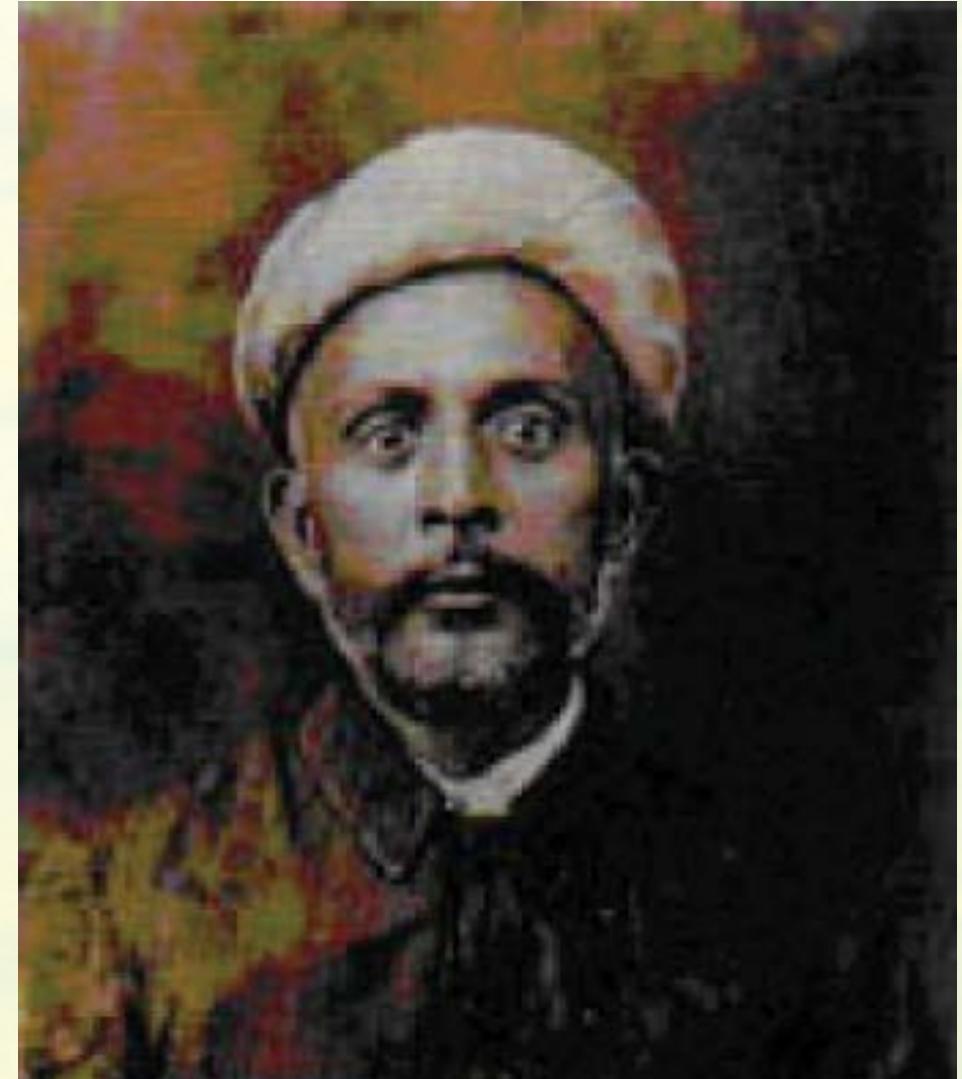
[Music]

Rashid was born in Bhuj in 1844. He was brilliant at school but also showed an early inclination towards business. Allidina Visram took him in as an apprentice, as a favour to his sister, Rashid's mother. Allidina brought him to Pemba (Tanganyika) in 1857 when Rashid was barely 13. Soon Allidina moved his headquarters to Mombasa to trade from a British colony rather than German.

Rashid married Fatima from a well-known Zanzibar Arab family. A son was born Huseni but died in infancy after a short illness (“the curse”). Fatima grieved and lost touch with reality. No cure being effective Rashid married a second wife Sakina with whom he had four boys and five girls.

Rashid concentrated on building his joint empire with Allidina. Rashid reached Entebbe from Kisumu and opened Allidina's first shop there on May 10, 1900. From Entebbe he sailed on to Jinja and bought up land to plant with sugar, called the Kigudu Farm, after the local ruler. He found more land nearby for growing tea.

At the start of World War I Rashid found himself still in Uganda, whereas Allidina was at Mombasa. The British warned Allidina not to send out any of his goods



abroad for fear of attacks by German ships. Allidina was in a quandary: His godowns were chockablock. Moreover prices were plummeting fast. He decided to buy up more of the cheapening produce and started shipping them off to Britain and other destinations. The convoy was attacked not far from the shores of East Africa. Rashid rushed to Mombasa. The two partners agreed they'd compensate the families who had lost their bread-winners on the ships. The creditors now came demanding payment for the goods Allidina had so hastily purchased. The total was 200,000 shillings, equal to US\$5 million in current terms. Rashid rushed back to Uganda to raise money from the stock left in the shops. Nothing! He found all the shops had been looted! There was no alternative but to start selling off the properties. The tea estate went to Mr Buchanan; the Kigudu sugar estate was mortgaged to Nanji Kalidas Mehta to add to his fledgling sugar farm. Rashid was still 10 thousand shillings short. He managed to get a loan from the colonial government authorities who were renting his home at Entebbe. So all creditors were paid off.

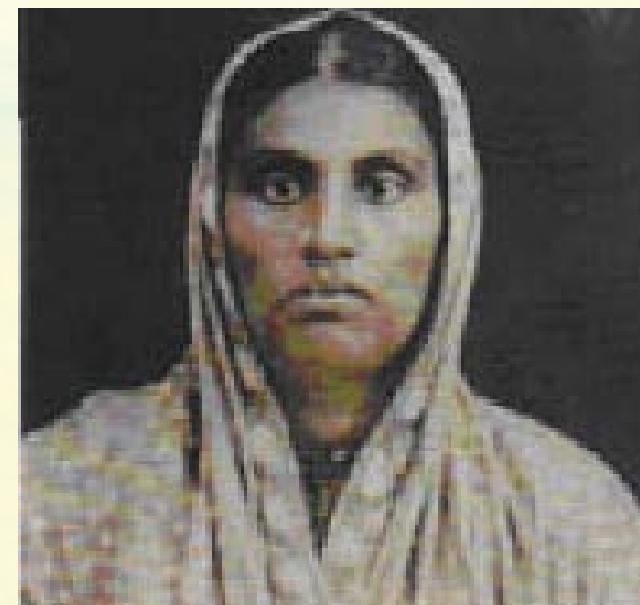
Betrayal

Rashid tried to put the Allidina empire back but just then a plague broke out and took the lives of Rashid, his wife, and four daughters. Rashid's two children were spared as they were studying at Mombasa. They returned to Uganda. Uncle Remtulla (Rashid's brother) was now the head of the family. "It is said [I am now quoting verbatim from an account sent by the family for this book] that six steel trunks full of silverware and one trunk full of precious goods was taken away by Remtulla. He even sold off the Kigudu estate to Nanji Kalidas Mehta. The British Government took Alidina's wife and children to Britain as Allidina was dead and so was Rashid. Remtulla was told by the



Fatma and the ill-fated Huseni

Sakina



British that Rashid's two sons would get positions in the district administration. Remtulla inserted his own son Haroon in place of Rashid's son Hussein."

Account submitted by Shamsh Khamis from Vancouver via Farouk Verjee, May 2009. Shams acknowledges receiving information for the article from his aunt Kulsum, the eldest daughter of Rashid Khamis. Other people he credits are: Khatija, wife of Haji Rashid Khamis; eldest son Dr Hassan; Major Deen; Sheikh Noordin Illahi; and Rashid Moleddina, a relative of Rashid Khamis.

Shamsh adds: "I was given the honour of the eldest of the Khamis family after the death of Amir."

The Curse

When the Ithnasherî girl's brother was killed in that love-fight, the mother put a curse on the Khamis family that every first born in every generation would die an early death. On pleading, she confined the curse to seven generations.