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Anthropologist Special Issue No. 2: 99-108 (2007)

Indian Family Businesses in South Africa: 1870-2004

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KEYWORDS South Africa. Indians. Family Businesses

ABSTRACT This paper attempts to provide an overview of the political, economic and social realities, as they affected Indian family businesses in South Africa, during the period 1870-2004. The locational analyses is Durban, Kwazulu/Natal, which has the largest concentration of Indian owned businesses in South Africa. As an immigrant group, they initially sought economic opportunities, but later became permanent residents of the province. Their trading patterns and success, often elicited perennial outbursts of anti-Indianism. Like other disadvantaged classified groups, they became the victims of oppression and racial prejudice. Nevertheless, the early pioneers established businesses which endured and overcame political and economic struggles to reach the 21st century. In post-apartheid South Africa however, despite the political and economic freedom gained in 1994, Indian family businesses are faced with new challenges. It is against these challenges that many have to transform and adapt if they are to survive in the 21st century.