



Indian Diaspora Council

**Indian Diaspora Council**

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**The first 15 Indian workers of "La Turquoise" came to Reunion island on June 3, 1828**

On March 16, 1828 the schooner "La Turquoise" left the small port of Yanaon, (Andra Pradesh - SE coast of India). The crew commanded by Mr. Prevost de Langristin assisted a convoy of 15 Indian workers to Bourbon Island. A first experience. The continuation of this journey, however decisive in the history of Indian immigration, had never been traced. Since the 1980s, various historians and researchers from Reunion, the Indian Ocean region and elsewhere have tried in vain to find the date of arrival of this first convoy.

IT IS NOW ESTABLISHED THAT "LA TURQUOISE" came to Reunion island on June 3, 1828 (a)

The information is reported in the gazetter (*"La Feuille hebdomadaire de Bourbon"*). The periodical also reveals that after the departure of Yanaon the schooner made a stopover in Pondicherry before resuming the open sea on April 15, 1828, to anchor in the peaceful waters of Bourbon on June 3, 1828.

On their arrival, these fifteen "telinga" farmers (now Andra Pradesh) were placed with planters in Ste Marie, a municipalit   nearby St Denis.

A few months earlier, on Dec. 1827 in a meeting of the Private council of Bourbon the decision was taken to introduce in the island a first group of Indian workers under contract. At the end of 1828, that is to say twenty years before the abolition of slavery, there were already some 1,100 Indians in Reunion. The first historians to mention "La Turquoise" followed Roger S. Paquiry "Memory on Indian immigration to Reunion", Firmin Lacpatia (in 1981, "The Indians of Reunion), then Sully Govindin "The Indian Engaged: Reunion Island, 19th century" and Jean-R  gis Ramsamy "La Turquoise".

A major discovery in the historical relations between India and Reunion

After two centuries of oblivion, Reunion is reviving a decisive stage in its history by rediscovering the date of arrival of the first boat transporting Indian workers. This news is as fundamental as the installation of the Indian consulate in Reunion in 1986 or the opening of an airline between Reunion and Chennai (Tamilnadu). This break in the past of the island opens up new epistemological perspectives. Our island consolidates its place among the Indian diasporas dispersed in about twenty countries. It would not be excluded that it was on Reunion Island, at the beginning of the 19th century, that the first experience of Indian engagement began.

References

- a) Supplement to the Weekly Bulletin for Wednesday, June 11, 1828 - ADR 4MI12 (1828-1829)

*Issued by Jean Regis Ramsamy, President of Indian Diaspora Council, Reunion Island*