'The Most Cosmopolitan Island under the Sun'?
# Negotiating Ethnicity and Nationhood in Everyday Mauritius

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.
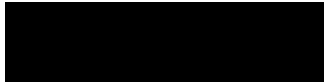
Reena Dobson

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, my *Nani*, whose life could not have been more different from my own. I will always be grateful that I was able to grow up knowing her. I also dedicate this thesis to my parents, whose interest, support and encouragement never wavered, and who were always there to share stories and memories and to help make the roots clearer.

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Abstract

The Indian Ocean island of Mauritius is an intensely multicultural island space. A history of settlement arising out of colonisation, slavery, indentured labour and trade has resulted in a contemporary nation-state that is ethnically and cultural diverse. Mauritius has been characterised by a significant measure of success in the management of this diversity, in that there has been a marked lack of any kind of overt, persistent ethnic violence. By focussing on the particularly quotidian experiences and situations of Mauritius' cultural diversity where the experiences of ethnic lives lived within the contained multi-ethnic island space are arguably at their most frequent, their most banal and, simultaneously, at their most meaningful, this thesis argues that Mauritius' seeming multi-ethnic success is by no means guaranteed.

I argue for two conceptualisations of Mauritius' cultural diversity. Firstly, I argue for a concept of an ethnic imaginary. Drawing on Charles Taylor's concept of the 'social imaginary' (2002, 2004) which focuses on how people understand their everyday worlds, my adaptation of the ethnic imaginary contains a particular emphasis on culture, multiculture and diversity. This includes a recognition of the shifting, nuanced expressions of ethnic identities which can be played out, suppressed or sidestepped in multiple, self-conscious and arbitrary ways throughout the course of a day. As such, there is an associated focus on the ceaseless articulations of, and negotiations between, Self and Others. This is added to by a further focus on the constant movements 'in-between' categories that can be simultaneously reified *and* fluid. I argue that the ethnic imaginary provides an insight into the complex dynamics of living in Mauritius' everyday cultural diversity. It not only offers a way of exploring how individuals situate themselves and others in their daily multi-ethnic worlds, but also the *extent* to which ethnicity is considered important.

The place and importance of the nation in the face of such intense multi-ethnicity is equally part of the focus of this thesis. Rather than being subsumed in the face of the pervasive influences of the ethnic imaginary, I argue that the importance of the nation and a sense of national awareness are emphasised in a variety of ways that I have termed 'Mauritianité'. Mauritianité conceptualises the multiple instances where the

national is crosswoven into the multi-ethnic (and vice versa). Mauritianité offers a balance between the demands of the national and the competing tensions and accommodations of the ethnic imaginary, with the balance remaining open to constant re-negotiation and without any kind of permanent resolution. The dynamics that Mauritianité encapsulates also incorporate a daily, informal component, as well as the more formal, top-down governance-level focus. These two notions – of the ethnic imaginary and of Mauritianité – form the two interrelated conceptualisations which serve as the basis for analysis of Mauritius as a multi-ethnic society.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Bann: Somewhere between 'the' and 'all', this flexible Kreol term offers a sense of a collective; *bann* does not directly mean 'group' but offers a sense of a group.

Bhajia: An Indo-Mauritian-derived savoury snack made from besan flour that no longer has any ethnic specificity.

Bindi: A decorative dot worn on the forehead usually worn by Hindu, Tamil, Telegu and Marathi women, usually worn as part of the accoutrements of wearing a churidaar or a saree (they are rarely, for example, worn whilst wearing western clothing).

Biriyani   (Briyyé in Kreol): a heavily-spiced complex dish which features rice, potatoes and sometimes meat (usually chicken) cooked in layers. Originally a Muslim dish, it can be seen as no longer having any ethnic specificity.

Cavedee: See Thaipoosam Cavedee.

CAM: Comité d'Action Musulman – a political party that was active during the middle of the twentieth century.

Churidaar: An Indian-style garment popularly worn as everyday dress in Mauritius, usually by Indo-Mauritian women. It consists of three parts: a tunic of thigh-length or longer, teamed with matching pants and a light decorative throw.

Creole: This capitalised version refers mainly to Mauritians who are the descendants of African slaves. This is the most heterogeneous of all the ethnic categories and can include those of mixed parentage and/or other ethnicities who are practising Christians.

Curepipe: Main town in the centre of the island.

EPZ: Export Processing Zone.

Flacq: Main town on the east coast of Mauritius.

Flic-en-Flac: Popular beach and seaside village on the west coast of Mauritius

Gateaux La Seer: Literally 'wax cake'; a Sino-Mauritian speciality available after Sino-Mauritian festivals such as the Chinese New Year.

Gateaux Piments: Literally 'chilli cakes'; although an Indo-Mauritian-derived savoury snack made from ground yellow split peas, they no longer have any ethnic specificity.

Goodlands: Large town in the north-east of Mauritius

Grand Bassin: Volcanic lake in the centre of southern Mauritius, that is considered a Hindu sacred site. Water from the Ganges River in India has been poured into lake to reinforce its sacredness. There are several temples and religious icons built around the lake.

Gulab Jammun: Indo-Mauritian sweet which is not restricted to special occasions, but which become part of sweets giveaways especially in the aftermath of religious or special occasions.

IFB: Independence Forward Bloc – a political party that was active during the middle of the twentieth century.

Kanwar: Large decorative structures made of bamboo and paper, constructed as mini-shrines or mini-temples that pilgrims carry on their shoulders during the Maha Shivaratri procession and pilgrimage to and from Grand Bassin; it usually takes four pilgrims to carry one kanwar at any given time.

Karem: A religious fast.

Kavadee: Structures during the procession of Thaipoosam Cavedee, they are usually framed with wood and bamboo and decorated with such auspicious objects as the image of a deity, palm leaves, peacock feathers, flowers, limes and the carved inner flesh of bamboos; kavadees always house a brass container of milk as an offering. Kavadees are carried by the individual worshipper or pilgrim.

Kovil: Tamil temple.

Kreol: The local Mauritian lingua franca,

l'express: Daily newspaper in Mauritius

Lascar: Pejorative Kreol term referring to Muslim-Mauritians.

Luddou: Indo-Mauritian sweets which are not restricted to special occasions, but which become part of sweets giveaways especially in the aftermath of religious or special occasions.

Madras Calain: Pejorative Kreol term referring to Tamils.

Maha Shivaratri: Hindu religious festival in worship and remembrance of the Hindu God Shiva. It incorporates a procession to and from Grand Bassin, during which many pilgrims carry home-made kanwars

Malbar: Pejorative Kreol term referring to Hindu-Mauritians.

Mandir: Hindu temple.

Mataji: Hindi word for mother; can also be used as a term of respect for an elder.

MBC: Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation

Météo: Météorologie – media weather reports.

MLP: Mauritius Labour Party

Morcellement (Grand Morcellement): Sub-division of large sugar estates, allowing the purchase of small parcels of land by (usually) non-Francos.

MR: Mouvement Républicain. Political party in Mauritius with youth-oriented ideologies.

MTPA: Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

Phouli: A nose piercing, usually a small (gold) stud.

PMSD: Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate – a political party.

Pooja: Hindi word for prayer

Port Louis: Capital of Mauritius

Rasgulla: Indo-Mauritian sweet which is not restricted to special occasions, but which become part of sweets giveaways especially in the aftermath of religious or special occasions.

Rasson: A spiced dish (resembling a curry) that is considered a Tamil specialty; it is served in a glass and is a dish that one drinks.

Ravanne: Hand-held drums which are made from goat skin, cured and stretched to fit over variously-sized frames of wood, usually with a wide diameter.

Rougaille: A tomato-based dish that can be vegetarian or can incorporate meat or fish. It does not have any ethnic specificity.

Sagout: The Kreol term for 'Sago'; there is a Tamil version that is often served at weddings.

Samadhi: Hindu memorial.

Saree: A garment of Indian origin, worn mostly by Hindu, Tamil, Telegu and Marathi women, either as everyday dress and/or special occasion dress. It is principally made up of a long (5-6metre) fabric which is wound and folded around the torso in specific patterns and styles.

Sega:	A Mauritian style of music and dance that is considered to be the cultural property of the Creoles, even as it is positioned internationally as a Mauritian style.

Seggae:	A fusion of Sega and reggae; Seggae combines the staggered-but-always-finishing-on-the-beat rhythms of Sega with the clearer off-beat rhythms characteristic of reggae.

Shivling:	A stone icon, usually with three horizontal stripes across its surface, to depict the Hindu god, Shiva.

Sinnwa:	Kreol term for Sino-Mauritian

SMF:	Special Mobile Force

Sindur:	Red powder worn, usually along the length of a hair parting or in a dab at the start of the hairline, which symbolises a Hindu woman's married status.

Thaipoosam Cavedee: A Tamil festival to celebrate the Deity Murugan. It usually involves religious fasting (karem) and purification, the carrying of a decorated kavadee containing an offering of milk, and a day-long procession from a selected river to a nominated kovil. Worshippers will sometimes pierce their skin in multiple places for the duration of Cavedee, a process which leaves no scars.

Tonton:	Kreol word meaning uncle.

Tou korek:	Casual Kreol phrase meaning 'all ok'.

Zot:	Kreol term which can either mean 'them' or 'you' (plural).

Introduction: 'The Most Cosmopolitan Island under the Sun'?
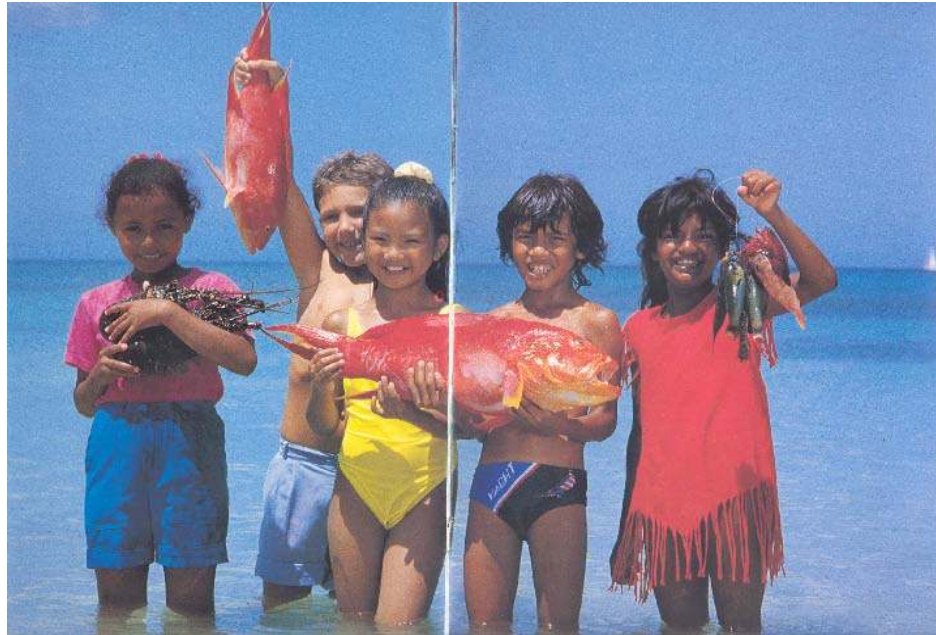
Figure 1: Mauritius Tourism Image (Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, n.d:n.p)

Mise-en-Scène: Introduction

'The most cosmopolitan island under the sun' was a slogan that I first encountered on Western Australian television in the early 1990s, advertising the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius. Since that time, it has remained a recurring theme in tourism literature about Mauritius, used as much by the locally-based Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority (MTPA) as it is by such international commercial tourism operators as Beachcomber Tours and SpaDestinations.com.au. Similarly, the opening image is one which has appeared in several MTPA documents, and is a variation of the one which appeared on the back of Mauritius' official airmail aerograms during the late 1980s-1990s. While it is expected that tourism literature will offer a glib representation of its subject matter, the slogan and the image both emphasise Mauritius as island society whose population is marked by significant cultural diversity. This is one of the most frequently-cited aspects of Mauritius' reputation which extends beyond the tourism sphere; Mauritius is recognised on the international stage as a successful multicultural nation-state (Carroll & Carroll, 2000; Miles, 1999).

Looking beyond the glossy depictions, the seeming success of Mauritius' cultural diversity is the focus of this thesis. Encapsulated in the query that makes up part of my thesis title, *'The most cosmopolitan island under the sun'?*, I undertake an ethnographic exploration of the everyday, ordinary, taken-for-granted experiences of living in, and living with, diversity in Mauritius. The lens of the everyday is where the experiences of ethnic lives lived within this contained multi-ethnic island space are at their most frequent, their most banal and, simultaneously, at their most meaningful. Mauritius' daily cultural diversity is characterised by multiple, ongoing moments of ethnic intersections, connections, disjunctures, juxtapositions and avoidance. It is characterised by what Gow calls "rubbing shoulders" – which he explains as "the messiness and uncoordinated dimension of living… side by side and mak(ing) contact, albeit with discomfort … (and with a sense of) a sideways and informal dynamic…" (2005:387). Ang's rhetorical question articulates the challenge for this thesis very simply:

> Can togetherness be more than a coincidental and involuntary aggregation of individuals and groups being thrust into the same time and space, an uneasy and reluctant juxtapositioning of different bodies and identities forced to share a single world even if their respective imaginative worlds are worlds apart? (1997: 57)

Two components of Ang's togetherness, "different bodies and identities" within "a single world", are central to this investigation of Mauritius' multiculture, with a focus on the issues of ethnicity and nationhood.

In this thesis, I present two conceptualisations for exploring Mauritius' cultural diversity. Firstly, I argue for a concept of an ethnic imaginary. Drawing on Charles Taylor's concept of the 'social imaginary' (2002, 2004) which focuses on how people understand their everyday worlds, my adaptation of the ethnic imaginary contains a particular emphasis on culture, multiculture and diversity. This includes a recognition of the shifting, nuanced expressions of ethnic identities which can be played out, suppressed or sidestepped in multiple, self-conscious and arbitrary ways throughout the course of a day. As such, there is an associated focus on the ceaseless articulations of, and negotiations between, Self and Others. This is added to by a further focus on the constant movements 'in-between' categories that can be simultaneously reified *and* fluid. I argue that the ethnic imaginary provides an insight into the complex dynamics of living in Mauritius' everyday cultural diversity. It not only offers a way

of exploring how individuals situate themselves and others in their daily multi-ethnic worlds, but also the *extent* to which ethnicity is considered important.

The place and importance of the nation in the face of such intense multi-ethnicity is equally part of the focus of this thesis. Rather than being subsumed in the face of the pervasive influences of the ethnic imaginary, I argue that the importance of the nation and a sense of national awareness are emphasised in a variety of ways that I have termed 'Mauritianité'. Mauritianité conceptualises the multiple instances where the national is crosswoven into the multi-ethnic (and vice versa). Mauritianité offers a balance between the demands of the national and the competing tensions and accommodations of the ethnic imaginary, where the balance remains open to constant re-negotiation and, crucially, is without any kind of permanent resolution. The dynamics that Mauritianité encapsulates also incorporate a daily, informal component, as well as the more formal, top-down governance-level focus. These two notions – of the ethnic imaginary and of Mauritianité – form the two interrelated conceptualisations which serve as the basis for analysis of Mauritius as a multi-ethnic society.

Situating Mauritius

Mauritius is a small island some 2000 kilometres off the lower east coast of Africa, and some 850 kilometres east of Madagascar (see Figures 2 and 3). Geographically, it forms part of the Mascarene islands, which share the undersea Mascarene Plateau. The island is approximately 1860 square kilometres in size and its population in 2004 was just over 1.23million (Mauritius Government website). The Republic of Mauritius officially incorporates a number of other island dependencies, including Rodrigues (approximately 560 kilometres to the north-east), the Cargados Carajos Shoals and the Agalega Islands (430 kilometres north-east and 1000 kilometres north, respectively) (Mauritius Government website). This thesis, however, will focus only on the island of Mauritius, not on its dependencies.

Figure 2: Map of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius Government, 2005)

Figure 3: Map of Mauritius (Waters, 2009)

The multi-ethnic population of Mauritius was established as part of the early flows of goods and people that made up the "global interests of colonial powers" (Edensor and Kothari, 2006:325). All of these cultural groups have been represented in Mauritius since the turn of the twentieth century; there are no recent or new groups of arrivals who have formed an additional categorisable ethnic group. These long-established groupings contribute to a contemporary mix of peoples which is easily, if glibly, described as 'cosmopolitan'. This complexity of cultures is heightened by the historical fact that all Mauritians come from elsewhere; that is, there are no indigenous peoples in Mauritius. The contested politics facing many other nations whose colonisation was based on overriding or ignoring existing indigenous social structures are, as a result, in complete abeyance in Mauritius.

Ancestry from geographically distinct parts of the world is one of the most enduring points of demarcation in Mauritius' multi-ethnic make-up. As such, there are four broad categories – Afro-Mauritian, Franco-Mauritian, Indo-Mauritian and Sino-Mauritian. These broad categories are usually intersected and combined with such factors as religious worship, ancestral languages, phenotype (that is, physical appearance) and class.

In more detail, Afro-Mauritians (known locally as Creoles) make up approximately twenty-seven per cent of the population (Carroll and Carroll, 2000b:27; Eriksen, 1989). They are the most heterogeneous group, a legacy of the system of slavery which oversaw their arrival onto the island. Carroll and Carroll point out that, "among Creoles, there is an immense cleavage between a lighter-skinned, well-educated group who have adopted French culture and language, and a darker-skinned, poor and ill-educated group who speak only *Kreol*" (2000:122). This 'spectrum' and language of skin colour is emphasised with the Franco-Mauritians (descendants of the French colonisers) remaining a wealthy and powerful minority at two per cent of the population (Srebrnik, 2000:9). There is nevertheless a religious commonality between these two groups, with the majority of Creoles and Franco-Mauritians being Catholics.

Sino-Mauritians, at three per cent of the population (Joypaul, 2001:1), are cross-cut by language and religion, with Hakka and Cantonese being the two main ancestral

languages and with Catholicism dominating, but with the influences of Buddhism and Confucianism still present (Srebrnik, 2000:9; Pineo, 1998). Indo-Mauritians collectively make up over half of the population at sixty-five per cent, and can and usually do prefer to be demarcated initially via a combination of religion and religiously-affiliated language – into Hindus, Muslims and Tamils, Telegus and Marathis – with further subdivisions in the forms of religious denomination and caste also possible (although caste divisions are not mobilised to the same extent as those that exist in the Indian subcontinent). Hindus, Tamils, Telegus and Marathis collectively make up fifty-one per cent of the population, while Muslims make up seventeen per cent (Carroll and Carroll, 2000b:27).

In citing these categories, I wish to emphasise the common ethnic categories which get mobilised in everyday Mauritius, although it is important to stress that the number of ethnicities, ethnic groups and ethnic divisions shift according to context. The Mauritius Census 2000 aids this lack of definite categorisation by not recording ethnicity; it instead offers the prisms of 'Religion', 'Forefather's Language' and 'Language Usually Spoken at Home', via which an approximation of ethnicity can be generated. However, the field of 'Religion' incorporates multiple denominations of the more popular religions of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam alongside smaller single categories, which results in a final listing of forty-eight separate options.

Similarly, 'Language Usually Spoken at Home' offers eighteen categories, while the 'Forefather's Language' category offers only eleven languages: Arabic, Bhojpuri, Chinese languages, Creole, English, French, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, and Other and not stated. These statistical 'snapshots' offer an idea of the differing categories that are possible. However, it is also important to note that many of the languages listed are less prominent in daily usage than censuses might suggest (Carroll and Carroll, 2000b:28). Different elements that make up ethnicity are themselves in flux.

Kreol is the most widely-spoken, everyday, informal lingua franca[1]. Kreol is a French-based *patois*, but has also incorporated terms and phrases from English, Hindi and Bhojpuri over time, with the result that it is quite Mauritius-specific; the Creole languages spoken in the neighbouring Indian Ocean islands of Reunion and Seychelles are distinct enough that, although communication can take place, it is with effort and then, with the help of the common French. Kreol's standing is such that, even though it is not considered a 'proper' language, and as such, is not taught in schools and is mostly a spoken rather than written language, it is nevertheless spoken by all Mauritians and has superseded the place of both, ancestral/religious and official languages in the everyday sphere, both public and private.

The official language of Mauritius is English, with French being equally frequently employed in official contexts; the official status of these languages is a direct result of the island's colonised past, where first French and then English were the languages of administration by colonial powers. English remains the official language by virtue of England being the final colonial power prior to Independence. However, there is much less fluency in English than there is in French, which is much more widely spoken in official situations. The close correlations between French and Kreol also add to the prevalence of French in official situations, as it is much easier to slide between French and Kreol than it is between English and Kreol.

The English colonial legacy is evident in more than just language use. English is the formal medium in parliament (although French interjections are permitted), in courts of law, and in other such areas of government and civil service as official communications in the Special Mobile Force (SMF - the closest approximation to an army in Mauritius). As well as English as the main form of instruction, education is

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[1] I am using Baker's (1972) spelling of 'Kreol' to distinguish it, firstly, from the Creole identifier locally applied to Afro-Mauritians, and also, to further distinguish it from other spellings of Creole languages in other parts of the world.

Although there are various orthographies of Kreol in circulation, there is no one definitive, formal Kreol orthography (Eriksen, 1998:21). Eriksen points out that many scholars are in agreement that a move away from "the idiosyncrasies of French spelling" is needed for Kreol "to achieve status as something more than a poor man's French" (1998:21). However, I have deliberately chosen to retain French-based influences in the spelling of any Kreol words that I will use in this thesis. My reason for doing so is to recognise the slipperiness that can exist between usage of French and Kreol in everyday Mauritius speech. Mauritians can frequently slide between Kreol and French in the same conversation and sometimes in the same breath. By maintaining some resemblance of French spelling in my Kreol words, I emphasise this fluidity and flexibility and the close spoken relationship between these two languages.

modelled on the English system; indeed, secondary examinations are developed and are marked in Cambridge (Miles, 1999:94-95).

Mauritius also follows the Westminster model of political governance. As a multi-party democracy, Mauritius has remained politically stable since its independence from the British in March 1968. There have been and continue to be multiple political parties, which are formed, are joined in coalitions, part ways and re-form in alternate coalitions, all with dizzying regularity. There have not been any parties however, which have had success on a mono-ethnic platform (Mukonoweshuro, 1991).

Marked by an economic reliance on the mono-crop agriculture of sugar cane, coupled with high population density and high unemployment, Mauritius faced an inauspicious beginning to its independence. Yet by the early 1990s, when it shifted into a Republic within the Commonwealth, it was regarded as an economic 'tiger' (Aumeerally, 2005; Bhujun, 2006). During its immediate post-independent years, generous tax breaks were introduced to encourage international investment, particularly in the areas of tourism and manufacture; an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) was established solidifying the shift from an agrarian to a manufacturing and service-based economy (Lincoln, 2006:59); the civil service was significantly expanded; and more recently, financial and cyber initiatives have been developed to add a technological and communication dimension to the economy (Edensor and Kothari, 2006; Eriksen, 1991; 1998; Carroll and Carroll, 2000).

On the world stage, Mauritius is frequently cited as an example of a successful multicultural society – in its international geo-political profile (compiled by such international bodies as the United Nations, UNESCO as well as non-governmental organisations), and of course, in internationally and Mauritius-produced tourism literature. Mauritius' seemingly successful multi-ethnic management is evident in the very few instances of overt and sustained ethnically-based hostilities or violence since Independence. For such an intensely multi-ethnic, third world society, Mauritius is actually a stable and successful nation in all realms – socially, politically and economically.

Multicultural, Multiculturalism, Cosmopolitanism: Points of Engagement

Mauritians themselves are not unaware of their multicultural success, especially on the international stage. But there have been only a handful of phrases used within the national context to describe this diversity, ranging from the poetic *pays arc-en-ciel* (rainbow nation), and *peuple arc-en-ciel* (rainbow people) to the prosaic 'unity in diversity'. Other than in tourism literature which in any event is aimed at a non-Mauritian audience, the descriptor 'cosmopolitan' has hardly had any currency within Mauritius. Similarly, other terms in commonplace use outside Mauritius for describing cultural diversity, such as 'multicultural', multiculturalism' or 'multi-ethnic', are rarely in play in Mauritius.

Its absence in local Mauritian discourse notwithstanding, 'multicultural' is one of the most popular descriptors in discussions on cultural diversity. Alongside 'multicultural' is the associated notion of 'multiculturalism' as the policy level response. Multiculturalism is the state-level filter through which such everyday experiences get managed within the rubric of the nation. Hall explains multiculturalism as comprising "the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multicultural societies throw up" (2000:209-210). Similarly, Modood emphasises the place of the nation-state in multiculturalism, when he posits: "the recognition of group difference within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity" (2007:2). Both these descriptions underline the top-down, state-level governance of diversity within the boundaries of the nation, and they also hint at the complexities involved in managing diversity and difference within the structure of the nation-state.

Although many countries can be characterised as multicultural (Hall, 2000:210), many English-language discussions are concentrated on Britain and other English-speaking nation-states, such as Australia, Canada, the United States, as well as much of Western Europe. Many discussions on multiculturalism – the policy level response, the everyday complexities (as well as the connections and disjunctures in between) – are focussed on the particular contexts of westernised, developed nations which have experienced significant rates of migration especially over the past fifty years (Spivak

& Gunew, 1993; Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1998; Hall, 1990, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 1999; May, 1999).

Within these Anglo and Eurocentric foci, there have been a number of influential ideas which have arisen out of these discussions. One such point is the propensity, at the policy and governance-level, to rest on static, essentialised understandings of cultural identity and difference, with ethnic groups being seen as bounded and discrete, and constituted in terms of limited, reified cultural content (Ang and Stratton, 1994; Baumann, 1999; Kobayashi, 1997; Ifekwunigwe, 2002; Noble, 2009). As Bhabha puts it, within such contexts, the cultural diversity characteristic of multiculturalism is often situated within a "rhetoric of the separation of totalised cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations" (1994:34). These identity politics are part and parcel of many discussions of multiculturalism (West, 1993).

Further, the very specific contexts of migration in first world countries have led to discussions about the notions of mainstreams and minorities, and centres and margins. In addition to essentialised perceptions of ethnic groups, there have been critiques about both multiculturalism's emphasis on the reified (often migrant) Other, and its simultaneous assumption of an invisible, non-ethnic majority that is comfortably homogeneous and unified (Vertovec, 1996; Chun, 2003; Chatterjee, 1993). This emphasis also generates notions of minority cultural groups as somehow being clustered at the margins of the centre. In May's words, "the notion of a singular, common culture has been brought into serious question by a wide range of minority groups who have argued that it no longer adequately represents, if it ever did, the multiethnic composition of modern nation-states" (2002:124). There have thus been multiple discussions about de-Centring, re-writing the Centre, and placing the margins in the Centre (Hall, 1990:285; Hall, 2002; Bhabha, 1994). An added focus on whiteness, as a way of uncovering invisibility and countering the constant gaze on the ethnic Other, has also developed a critical currency (Frankenberg, 1993; Bonnett, 1999; Hage, 1998).

While these ideas have been very influential in discussions about cultural diversity, I would also argue that the first world contexts of these discussions mean that the ideas

remain quite specific; their transferability to other contexts and case studies is limited. In the case of Mauritius, these ideas are useful mainly insofar as they mark out moments of difference between Mauritian and first-world contexts. This is not to deny the potential usefulness of these ideas in other postcolonial, third-world contexts (Bhatt, 1999:574), but rather to underline their limits with regards to the Mauritian context. Thus, notions about the Centre and margins, and assumptions of homogeneous and uncritical unity at the edges of which are essentialised minority groups, are not productive in the Mauritian case study. Mauritius' multicultural status is not one wrought by recent migration, nor by a belated recognition of the indigenous peoples of the area; rather, it is a long-standing co-existence. While Indo-Mauritians are the numerical majority and are well-represented in the administrative public spheres of civil service and politics, this does not translate to an uncritical hegemonic centre; it must be noted that the minority Franco-Mauritians are economically powerful, with Sino-Mauritians also being active players in business (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

I would also argue that, while Mauritius can be readily described as a multicultural island, it does not have an official policy of multiculturalism. Aumeerally is the only (Mauritian) author to have directly conceptualised government/policy-level initiatives as being 'multiculturalism' (2005:319). However, this is arguably Aumeerally's application of the concept of multiculturalism, rather than an actual policy directive from the Mauritian government. As I will go on to discuss in this thesis, Mauritius' approach to the management of its cultural diversity is more subtle and nuanced.

To describe Mauritius as multicultural is to imply a management strategy of multicultural*ism*. This is a correlation I am keen to avoid. In commenting on Mauritius' cultural diversity, 'multicultural' is an apt adjective, as is 'multi-ethnic'. Therefore, my use of these descriptors needs to be prefaced with the caution that 'multicultural' does not mean an automatic transposition into 'multiculturalism'. Both as a policy and as a conceptual tool of analysis, multiculturalism has been critiqued for falling short. Noble puts it thus:

> Theoretically, the identity focus of multiculturalism is seen to be incapable of capturing the cultural complexity of contemporary societies. Politically, as a set of policies and programmes, it is seen to be inadequate for servicing that

complexity, or addressing concerns around cultural division and the desire for social cohesion (2009:46).

Noble instead argues for a notion of cosmopolitanism which shifts the focus away from a politics of identity and towards "an ethics of cohabitation" (ibid.).

In this interesting approach, cosmopolitanism is itself a loaded concept, whose 'baggage' is as a result of several different contexts of use. Nevertheless, cosmopolitanism has a flexibility that is not as readily available to multiculturalism; it is a social descriptor, not a policy stance.

One of the enduring understandings of cosmopolitanism has been in its association with a privileged positioning, which arises largely out of such factors as financial flexibility and ease of mobility. Nomadic, rootless figures who partake in "globe trotting travel, (have) sophisticated cultural knowledge and (hold a) moral world view" (Werbner, 2006:496), and who can selectively choose to engage and consume difference, have long been viewed as the archetypal cosmopolitans. With the contemporary globalised world being marked by the rapid and incessant circulation of people, ideas, goods, finances and technologies (Appadurai, 1992; 1996; Werbner, 1999), this archetype has remained strong. Indeed, Hannerz made use of this archetype in articulating the figure of the cosmopolitan which he set up in (binary) opposition to the figure of the local (1990; 1992). Similarly, Skrbis, Kendall and Woodward have pointed out that cosmopolitans are often seen as possessing "forms of intellectual, social and cultural capital highly valued within the global economy" (2004:119-120).

However, this elitist depiction has come under increasing scrutiny and expansion. Arguments have been increasingly made for the cosmopolitanism characterising non-elite travellers who equally make up "global ethnoscapes" (Appadurai, 1992), including diasporic, migrant, and refugee populations, which Clifford has termed 'discrepant cosmopolitanism' (1992; 1997). Following a similar line, Werbner uses the term 'working class cosmopolitan' to encapsulate the experiences of those non-elite migrants who work in liminal, transnational, multi-ethnic settings and who equally participate in intercultural exchange.

Other critiques have focussed on the tendency to discuss the cosmopolitan as being a particular 'type'. Urry and Szerszynski in particular have argued for cosmopolitanism as a series of dispositions and/or practices. These include: the *mobility* and means for voluntary travel; the capability to engage and *consume* places during travel; the *curiosity* about places and people, along with an awareness of historical and geographical contextualisation of different places; the consciousness of taking *risks* and encountering the 'other'; the capacity to *map* one's own society in a broader context of geography and history and to be able to reflect upon differences; the *semiotic* skill to interpret representations as representations (including the place of irony); and, the *openness* to Others (people and cultures) along with a willingness for engagement (2002:470 – authors' emphasis). Although these dispositions can be seen as being in danger of constituting a particular cosmopolitan 'type', they are nevertheless useful for thinking about possibilities of cosmopolitan dispositions in elite and non-elite contexts alike.

These dispositions are also useful for thinking about the possibilities of cosmopolitanism in non-travelling contexts – where encounters take place between Selves and Others and can happen 'at home', within nation-states, within familiar territory and in backyards (Wise, 2005). Cosmopolitanism then, can be explored as part of the (extra)ordinary, culturally-complex everyday. 'Vernacular cosmopolitanism' is described by Nava as "the phenomenon of the global, modern everyday, the routine barely documented cultural encounters of diasporic life" (2002:89). Urry's and Szerszynski's final point about openness, appears to have resonated strongly, with Skrbis et al. pointing out that many theorists "concur that cosmopolitanism – as a subjective outlook, attitude or practice – is associated with a conscious openness to the world and to differences" (2004:117). However, Noble points out that, "[w]e need to bear in mind that 'open-ness to otherness' doesn't tell us much; such open-ness can only begin an encounter, it is not the encounter itself" (2009:49).

Noble instead argues for the concept of 'everyday cosmopolitanism' (2009), which is elsewhere succinctly explained as not being "an unproblematic moral virtue, but a form of 'practical tolerance' whereby difference gets negotiated and managed in

everyday life" (Ang, Brand, Noble & Sternberg, 2006:n.p). Both, the concept of 'everyday cosmopolitanism' and Noble's argument for an "ethics of cohabitation" (2009:46), are suggestive of, and allow a focus on the combinations of intricacies, difficulties, pragmatism and easiness which can characterise the day-to-day living, negotiations and give-and-take within a multicultural space. Ang et. al. also add that, "[t]his form of getting along is (made up of) the practices of negotiation which make it possible for differences to exist interactively, not in conflict" (2006:n.p). Cosmopolitanism in this view is about the encounter that follows the openness to engagement with others. However, it includes reference to and awareness of both, the ordinary banality of particularly everyday encounters as well as the indifference or carelessness with which they take place. There is no expectation of, for example, enrichment, curiosity or reflexivity (as dispositions suggested by Urry and Szersynski, 2002) in such everyday ordinary intercultural moments within a multicultural society.

A notion such as 'everyday cosmopolitanism' allows a focus on the agency of citizens within a nation-state (even as they may hold many transnational influences at different moments in their everyday lives); the top-down management element of the state is much less emphasised than it is in discussions of multiculturalism. Given the daily focus on my research on Mauritius' multiculture, this concept offers a useful springboard. This form of nuanced everyday cosmopolitanism allows an exploration of the awareness of Self and Others, and the multiple processes of engagement that come with living in diversity.

However, I also want to allow for and incorporate an allowance of moments of matter-of-fact *in*tolerance – which do not necessarily lead to aggression or conflict, but that are nevertheless part of patterns of engagement in everyday situations. Tensions and 'fuzzy feel good' moments, as well as everything in between and beyond, characterise daily lives. As such, I want to emphasise that the daily focus of everyday cosmopolitanism incorporates not only pragmatic tolerance and moments of 'getting along', but also tensions which can (but of course, which do not always) temper moments of intercultural interactions. There is a recognition of the 'patchiness' – where openness gets undertaken reluctantly, or with grumbles, for example – that can equally be a dynamic in encounters with Others.

As the main researcher on Mauritius for the past two decades, Eriksen's work on Mauritius has been enormously productive and helpful for my thesis. However, although he goes into significant anthropological detail throughout his discussions and analyses of social, ethnic, political and economic structures of Mauritian society, the sheer complexity of everyday life in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-language island can nevertheless be further explored in additional, nuanced detail via the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of ethnography. It is with this approach to my exploration of everyday life in Mauritius that I propose to add to the extensive body of work produced by Eriksen. Through the use of auto/ethnography, I explore the rich textures – the contradictions, complexities, unorthodoxies and synergies – which can all equally characterise everyday cosmopolitanism in quotidian multi-ethnic situations in Mauritius.

Doing Auto/Ethnography: Fieldwork and Methodology

Even before I had set foot in Mauritius for my first fieldwork trip (and my solo trip to Mauritius), I got myself into trouble. Filling out my "Disembarkation Card", I filled in my purpose of visit as being that of being a PhD anthropology student going to Mauritius on fieldwork. I did not want to be categorized as a 'commonplace tourist'. As it turned out, this was entirely the wrong thing to do, as any purpose other than tourism or business has strict paperwork/ visa requirements! This ego-driven urge to distinguish myself from tourists led to my spending a couple of stressful hours in an office trying to explain both my fieldwork task and to justify my "authentic" Mauritian roots.

There has never really been an easy, single-sentence response about my identity and this was no exception. I had to explain, as I usually do, that I have an Indo-Mauritian mother and an English father. In Mauritius, this takes on an extra dimension than it does in Australia; in Mauritius, my hybridity is overtly and unavoidably inscribed on my skin and in my phenotype; I do not look 'Mauritian' and nor am I readily classifiable into any ethnic category. Although I was born in England, I had grown up in Mauritius. From the age of two-and-a-half until 3 weeks shy of my eleventh birthday, Mauritius was my home and the only one I had known. Although I speak

Kreol fluently, I have always had an accent (nowadays made more pronounced as a result of the many years of not living in Mauritius). For visa requirements then, my claims of belonging in Mauritius were, seemingly, contestable. Being a young woman in my early twenties further rendered my speaking position tenuous as I tried to make my case before two male customs officers who reacted with varying degrees of annoyance, sympathy, dismissal and indifference. My detailed knowledge of Mauritius and my familiarity with Kreol gave me no advantage in pleading my case and, at one point, one of the customs officers told me that he couldn't understand my Kreol and that I should just speak English.

In the end it was a senior member of the hierarchy who, irritated at having had his morning routine disrupted by his juniors in order to deal with the 'anomaly' that was my case, exerted his seniority and overruled the bureaucratic requirements which I had broken, in order to deem that I could stay. Without waiting for official evidence from the database of Mauritian citizens where my mother's name would prove my claim of Mauritianness, he based his decision as much on the fact that my mother was Mauritian – "her mother is Mauritian, she is Mauritian" – as well as the fact that his family lived along the same street as mine had used to, and even that he recalled that some children of his relatives had attended the little playgroup school run by one of my aunties nearby.

And in this one opening moment, many of the issues which accompany 'returning' or 'native' ethnographers or that 'auto-ethnographers' face were in play: home, the field, authenticity, belonging... My lack of ethnic cultural capital was again brought home a scant few days later: « *Ki li pensé li été, li, enn Morrissienne?* » ("Who does she think she is, a Mauritian?") I encountered this comment as I walked through the bus station in the inland town of Curepipe, and it took place within a few days of my initial arrival in Mauritius to start my fieldwork. It was made by one of two males as they walked past me and my Mauritian cousin, and was made in Kreol. The comment questions my presence in the bus station and challenges my right to be there; it posits the bus station as a local space used by Mauritians and I am dismissively regarded as someone trying to 'Mauritian'. The irony is that Curepipe is, or rather was, my hometown!

Nevertheless, in spite of my hybrid roots and accents, Mauritius still became a collapse of the spatial distance between 'being home' and 'being in the field' that ethnographic fieldwork has often relied on, and also critiqued (Behar, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Alsop, 2002). Abu-Lughod describes this ethnographic in-between-ness as a "halfie", where there is:

> a blocked ability to comfortably assume the self of anthropology. For both, although in different ways, the self is split, caught at the intersection of systems of difference. I am less concerned with the existential consequences of this split… than with the awareness such splits generate about three crucial issues: positionality, audience, and the power inherent in distinctions of self and other. What happens when the "other" that the anthropologist is studying simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self? (1992: 140).

Auto-ethnography works within this dilemma, allowing space for critical self-reflections as part of the fieldwork and data-gathering process. It is very easy to get caught up in the navel-gazing, angst-ridden aspect of this self-reflexivity. However, the halfie status is nevertheless useful in providing access to views and ideas that are otherwise difficult to come by.

My close networks of extended family and friends were aware I was there doing fieldwork. During my first extended fieldtrip in November 1998-March 1999, multiple and extended visits and overnight stays removed any feelings of being a 'visitor' with a very short (holiday) schedule – for both my extended family members and myself. The second three-month fieldtrip was soon enough after (August 1999 – November 1999) that my non-visitor status was easier to recover. And a final, short fieldwork visit, several years later (February 2006), I did not even attempt to be anything more than a visiting mostly-Australianised relative.

During all my trips, my network of extended family and friends also formed the basis of my network of informants. Given that my familial connections are completely located within the Indo-Mauritian community, and more specifically within the Hindu community, the large majority of my initial network (my 'inner circle') was also heavily Hindu. There was a wide age range, with a slight majority of women over men, within this initial network. They would advise me of potential contacts who might be open to being interviewed and would sometimes kindly act as intermediaries to explain my request. Approximately three-quarters of my twenty-five-odd

interviewees were accessed through word-of-mouth. Because of the Hindu basis of my initial network, over half of these interviewees were Hindus or Tamils. The remainder were a combination of Creoles, Muslims and Sino-Mauritians. My interviewees' ages had a wide range, from young adults in their early twenties to middle-aged parents, to grandparents. By accident, rather than design, close to two-thirds of my formal interviewees were female. The main towns in which my interviews took place were urban ones: Curepipe and Quatre Bornes in the central plateau; Flacq in the east and the capital, Port Louis, in the north-west.

Further, my focus on ethnography also meant that I was not only using formal interviews. Informal chats, queries, conversations and observations were also instrumental in providing rich, layered material; by nature of its very intimacy and informality, the large bulk of this information was generated within an Indo-Mauritian milieu. This has provided a significant portion of my raw material with a heavy Indo-Mauritian slant. However, because I was able to include in-depth discussions with other ethnicities, I am not situating my research as being exclusively Indo-Mauritian-based, although nevertheless, this heavy bias needs to be acknowledged.

If there was any bemusement in my interest in everyday Mauritius, people were too polite to say so. It was interesting, however, to find that, in spite of my capacity with Kreol and knowledge of local events (which I thought would help position me as more of an insider – particularly with those interviewees whom I did not know), this background was not always helpful; some interviewees preferred to stress the 'glossy', 'cosmopolitan' virtues of Mauritius in their positioning of myself as an outsider interviewer.

However, in addition to interviews, much of my fieldwork consisted of multiple moments of participation and observation, casual conversations, heated discussions, and occasional hikes or pilgrimages. I dealt with the ethical concerns in this form of informal data-gathering by outright stating at the time or shortly after pertinent conversations took place, that I found the information useful and was jotting it down anonymously with the speaker's permission. This was reacted to with varying degrees of amusement, mystification or shrugs; this resulted in additional guardedness in what

was said around/to me, but it equally resulted in opinions being asserted to me as 'explanations' of particular events. There was an awareness of my researcher status that was mixed in with the other roles I shared while in Mauritius. Family and friends were thus aware of my ethnographic research, and through the course of everyday matters, this was dealt with in different ways. Sometimes, I was called upon as a confidante; other times, my presence had political implications within the private sphere which could be exploited; I would be (patronisingly, I sometimes felt) lectured about basic aspects of Mauritian society, or I would be accusingly explained the differences between particular ethnic groups as the basis for poor government decisions; and, I was also chatted to and with as though I was only a family member. There were multiple, mixed positions and reactions, which reflected the rich, shifting, textured, intimate lives that I found myself (however partially) immersed in at different times and in different contexts.

Thesis Directions

Utilising the framing device of cosmopolitanism, this thesis provides an exploration into Mauritius' intensely multicultural society. The first chapter, "Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood", provides a historic account of how it is that Mauritius became the multi-ethnic island nation it is today. This chapter charts the key moments of Mauritius' past: the competition for 'undiscovered' land between various European colonial powers as well as the social and historical circumstances that led to different waves of arrivals. Mauritius's accompanying shift from colonial territory to independent nation has also been discussed, along with an accompanying focus on how multi-ethnicity remained a factor throughout the island's development and into its contemporary state.

Quotidian life in Mauritius is made up of multiple and incessant moments which are characterised by moments of everyday cosmopolitanism. Ethnographic explorations of the experiences of living in and with ethnic diversity at the quotidian, informal level form the bases of both, the second and third chapters. The second chapter, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius", presents the concept of the ethnic imaginary as a conceptualisation of how it is that identities and ethnicities of Self and

Other are understood, and how multi-ethnicity gets performed, presented, classified and interpreted – both, on a personal level, as well as in the public sphere. This chapter covers the informal and taken-for-granted breadth of ways in which the ethnic imaginary is present in many aspects of people's quotidian lives.

The third chapter, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", continues the extrapolation of the ethnic imaginary as the basis for understanding the dominance of ethnicity in people's everyday lives, with a particular focus on the different narratives of ethnicity as part of the negotiations around multi-ethnicity. I also discuss the place of Kreol as an informal lingua franca which is free of ethnic specificity, and so allows for greater moments of everyday cosmopolitanism by facilitating moments of interethnic exchange. Strategies of sidestepping and transgressing ethnicity and ethnic boundaries also form part of the focus of this chapter.

Chapter four, "Towards Mauritianité: Ethnicity and Nationhood", broadens its focus from the intense multi-ethnic everyday to consider the place of the state, the nation and senses of nationalism in the top-down management of the island's multiculture. I argue for the idea of 'Mauritianité', which encapsulates the process of intersection and incorporation of experiences of multi-ethnicity into imaginings of the nation. Strategies applied in everyday negotiations around multi-ethnicity are, to a certain extent, replicated at the level of governance in this process of Mauritianité. Significantly, this process is without resolution; it is ongoing and requires the continuing commitment and sanction of (ethnic) Mauritian citizens as well as investment and maintenance from the top-down level.

Chapter five, "*L'Affaire Kaya*", is an exploration of a particular moment in Mauritius' recent history, when, in 1999, riots which started out as anger against the state, and quickly fissured along ethnic lines. The intolerances, fears and aggravations usually contained within the everyday ethnic imaginary were amplified in this uncertain situation, with the delicate, often unspoken 'balances' – within both the ethnic imaginary and processes of Mauritianité – evaporating. However, in spite of this upheaval, the ethnic imaginary and processes of Mauritianité were quick re-emerge.

In the Conclusion, I draw the different threads explored in the preceding chapters together, underlining the ambiguities and paradoxes that allow for the persistence of both, the ethnic imaginary and processes of Mauritianité. The ethnic and the national are productively and repeatedly interwoven. The everyday strategies of the ethnic imaginary via which multi-ethnicity is negotiated and managed – such as classification, articulation and avoidance – are mirrored at the national Mauritianité level. These ongoing processes illustrate the fragility *and* resilience of Mauritius' brand of everyday cosmopolitanism.

This thesis then, offers an exploration of everyday life in one multicultural island in the Indian Ocean. The intricate textures of people's multi-ethnic, multicultural lives – how they interact with each other; how they situate themselves; how they understand themselves – as well as nuanced place of the national and nationalism within this society that I am characterising as everyday cosmopolitan, all form part of this discussion.

1.   Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood

Figure 4: Pieter Both Mountain (Madhoo, 2009)

Introduction

There are quite a few mountains in Mauritius, basalt rock in uniquely idiosyncratic shapes that rise purple-grey into the sky. One particularly memorable mountain is Pieter Both, which is named after the first Governor of Batavia who drowned off the coast of Mauritius when a bad cyclone destroyed his ship. Pieter Both has a typically jagged, multi-pointed profile against the skyline, but is distinguished by an especially unique feature; one of its points rises in a neat triangle shape which is topped by a rounded boulder (see Figure 4). There is a distinct resemblance to a head and neck set on a human torso. There is a local folk tale explaining the circumstances of this part of Pieter Both's unique formation. The version I have encountered is along the lines of: a milk merchant, long before the days when transport and shops ensured an easy

supply of milk, used to walk from village to village, selling his wares. One day, tired of the long march between villages, he stopped for a rest in an unfamiliar spot and fell asleep. Upon awakening, he was amazed to see fairies dancing. As he watched them dancing, completely entranced, the fairies spotted him. They spoke to him sternly, "You must never reveal what you saw here; if you say anything, you will be punished forever." The milkman promised, but he was unable to keep his promise, desperately wanting to share what he had seen with others. But as soon as he tried to speak of it, his arms and feet turned to stone, fell off and shattered. His torso and head were equally turned to stone. He remains there still, on what is now known as Pieter Both, frozen for eternity, forever keeping his secret of where he saw the fairies dancing.

Pieter Both is one of the few mountains or landmarks in Mauritius which does have a folk tale attached to it, and it is one of the most widely circulated stories; indeed, it has been in primary school textbooks for several decades. It is not really surprising that there is only a handful such tales in Mauritius. Many folk stories, whether narratives of true, mythical or magical events, often utilise timeframes set in some distant, 'long ago' past; in doing so, they establish ongoing links back to the origins of time. However, the elasticity of past time settings is sharply constrained in Mauritius by the reality of its recent settlement.

More starkly and unambiguously than many other countries, Mauritius was born out of processes of colonialism. Prior to European settlement, the island land mass that is now Mauritius was a genuine *terra nullius*, with no indigenous population or other permanent settlements of any kind. As such, unlike many other territories marked by European contact and/or colonisation, the Mauritian context is not informed by pre-colonial societies, cultures, politics or histories; it is an indisputably settled – as opposed to conquered or invaded – land. As a colonial settlement and now a nation, "which has unfolded in the full daylight of recorded history" (Eriksen, 1998:150), contemporary Mauritius is a nation made up of decidedly recent arrivals.

This chapter presents a brief history of the settlement of Mauritius, highlighting the different waves of arrivals onto the island and the development from colonial territory into an independent nation-state. The chapter charts how the island was initially imagined, not as a nation, but as a territory – as belonging to a European colonial

power on the other side of the world. Within this colonial imagining, multiculture is argued as an ongoing feature in the island's socio-political fabric (albeit couched within a racialised, colonial discourse). Creolisation, hybridity and inter-ethnic marriages were significant elements of the colonial settlement, however, these were paralleled alongside attempts to maintain, control and manipulate categories. Mauritius was thus a culturally complex island society long before it was a nation. (Indeed, this is arguably the case for most contemporary nations, although it is more starkly evident in Mauritius' shorter timeline of settlement, unfettered by claims into primordial pasts). As this chapter will show, negotiations around ethnicity have thus historically been a constant – both, in everyday life and in top-down measures of governance throughout different stages of colonial and national development in Mauritius.

Imagining Territories, Imagining Nations

Today, all the "dry spaces of the globe" (Billig, 1996:184) are demarcated into nations, marked out by clear, unambiguous boundaries on world maps, even though the 'on the ground' reality in many places is far more complex, porous and contestable than world maps allow – with world maps being frequently re-calibrated to reflect these shifting boundary politics. The recalibration process is not a new one. During the height of colonial exploration from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth centuries, maps of the (known) world were in a continual and active process of re-inscription (Ryan, 1994:115) – with all the "dry spaces of the globe" (Billig, 1996) being searched out, 'discovered', mapped out and also carved out, not as nations but as territories open to conquest and annexation by competing European nation-states.

From the 1500s onwards, interest in the wider world hitherto unknown to the self-proclaimed 'old world' was facilitated by improved sailing and navigational technologies and was fuelled by a combination of commercial, religious and scientific curiosity (Walvin, 1992:12; Anderson, 2007). Awareness of territorial and trade competition from other European countries meant that there was a focus on "assuring themselves, on the map, the most extensive territories possible in order to forestall

any rival's attempt to seize territory at some unspecified time in the future" (Ferro, 1997:9).

In speaking about these historical events, these colonial powers are often discussed as though they were clearly-formed and clearly-understood entities; we speak of the British Empire, the Dutch spice trade, Portuguese territories, French colonies, Spanish conquests and so on. These commercial and colonial European powers are nationally-framed. But while European nations were claiming territories, many of these claims were also commercially led. Benedict Anderson points out, for example, that, "'India' only became 'British' twenty years after Victoria's accession to the throne. In other words… 'India' was ruled by a commercial enterprise – not by a state, and certainly not by a nation-state" (Anderson, 1991:90). Nevertheless, these commercial enterprises were still differentiated on a national basis. Nations are historically recent constructs and constitute political organisations arising out of contexts of modernity, complemented and facilitated by the development of particular technologies (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983). This relative newness is often obfuscated by narratives, practices and rituals which collectively provide the illusion of longer-standing, and even ancient entities (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). In using the national identifiers of French, British, and Dutch in discussing these colonial and commercial powers, then, is not to suggest that they were the same clearly-imagined and understood states and identities that they are today, but rather to recognise that they were in a process of becoming – from nascent states into nation states.

Benedict Anderson, a theorist who has explored the development and origins of nations and nationalism, has focussed particularly on the technological development of print-capitalism which, he argues, helped generate "wholly new ideas of simultaneity" (1991:37). This simultaneity, Anderson argues, is what allows the idea of a nation as an imagined community (1991). Anderson's oft-quoted argument is that the nation "is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991:6). This imagined, artificial quality of the nation is an intriguing idea, particularly in the way it can be used to analyse the development of nationalism in both the colonial powers and the colonized territories.

Anderson touches on this dialectic in his *Imagined Communities* (1991), in looking at the "riddle (of) why was it precisely *creole* communities that developed so early conceptualisations of their nation-ness – *well before most of Europe*?" (1991:50 – author's emphasis). By 'creole', Anderson refers to a "person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas (and, by later extension, anywhere outside Europe)" (1991:47). This understanding is removed from the Mauritian-specific use of Creole, referring to Mauritians of African descent, that I shall be using throughout this thesis, and which is differentiated by its capitalisation. The imagining that makes a community was firmed, he argues, in many American colonies by "the influence of geographic, political and economic factors" (1991:52). The geographical distance was bridged physically by sea routes, politically by the economic benefits of the 'new world', but also in the imagining of the territory as belonging to the 'home country'. This imagined connection was made simultaneously tangible and uneven through the differential treatment proffered to creoles; Anderson points out that few creoles were able to gain position of significant seniority in the 'home country' (ibid.).

This interesting reflection on the maintenance of connections between colonised territories and their colonising homelands brings to light the active reification and imagining required to ensure territorial ownership and territorial belonging were continued. Flags, naming and renaming territories, and economic and political communications with the coloniser can all be seen as active means of imagining connections across geographical and political spaces and borders.

Mauritius was no exception to this multi-faceted approach to colonisation. Although the island was initially something of 'blank slate' thanks to its uninhabited status, it quickly became one point within a growing network of destinations punctuating the Indian Ocean sea routes of European colonial powers as they competed in the spice trade from the sixteenth century onwards. At different times during the colonial era, the island was claimed by different European powers, with different European attitudes, policies and politics influencing events in and around Mauritius.

Initial Discoveries and Settlements

Some historians have conjectured that pre-European knowledge of Mauritius may have been held by groups of people as varied as the Phoenicians, Malays and Indians, suppositions based on these groups' wide traversings of the Indian Ocean during different centuries (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:1; Baker, 1972:5, 36; Eriksen, 1998:7; Vaughan, 2005:4). However, the first recorded, mapped knowledge of the island is attributed to Arab explorers. The timeframe of this knowledge remains fluid, with some scholars citing seventh century Arab awareness (Mannick, 1979, 1989; Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949), while others conservatively cite twelfth or thirteenth century Arab recordings (Baker, 1972; Bowman, 1991).

The next definite point of knowledge of Mauritius' existence is "on the world maps of Cantino and Claudius Ptolemy, published in 1502 and 1508 respectively, (where) there are Arabic names that can only be the Mascarene Islands" (Bowman, 1991:8). Mauritius' Arabic name is variously cited as being *Dina Arobi* (Babajee, 1958:1) or as variations thereof, such as *Dina-e-Arabi* (Mannick, 1979:19) and *Dinarobin* (De Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:2). The commonly-accepted translation is 'Island in the East', against nearby Reunion Island's *Dina Margabim* – the 'Island in the West' (Toussaint, 1974:23).

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the Indian Ocean region and were thus the first Europeans credited with the 'discovery' of Mauritius, which they named *Ilha do Cirne* – 'Island of the Swan' in the early 1500s (Bowman, 1991:8). There was no attempt made at settlement on the island as the Portuguese focus was on the maintenance of their trade routes; instead they left "pigs, goats and cattle" (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:3) as a ready source of food. The Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean lasted most of sixteenth century, until it was superseded by the Dutch (De Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:2-3). Mauritius initially proved a useful point of shelter in the Indian Ocean sea routes for the Dutch, with a natural harbour, water and an easy food supply which included the dodo, a flightless bird quickly hunted to extinction.

It was whilst in Dutch possession that the island was named 'Mauritius' for the first time, in honour of the Dutch *stadtholder* (ruler), Prince Maurice of Naussau (Baker,

1972:5; Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:3, 1974:25). Dutch interests were led by the Dutch East India Company and initial interest was more focussed on the East Indies. Mauritius was settled in 1638 mainly as a precautionary measure against the English and French gaining a foothold in the area (Toussaint, 1974:25).

As well as establishing a worthwhile base on the island through the exploitation of natural resources and the planting of crops, the governor was expected to guard the island against British and French ships (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:9-10). However, this settlement was regarded by the Dutch as being little more than a "large logging camp" (Vaughan, 2005:8). Within one year, there were eighty men in Mauritius, including Company employees, free settlers and convicts (Bowman, 1991:9). By the second year of settlement, slaves, already being trafficked elsewhere in the known world, were brought to Mauritius. However, the settlement was ultimately a demoralised one, with local cultivation attempts remaining unsuccessful. Slaves soon escaped into the unexplored interior of the island, where recapture was unlikely, and set to plaguing and destabilising the settlement (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:14). The settlement was abandoned less than twenty-five years later in 1652, in favour of a more viable Dutch East India Company settlement at the Cape of Good Hope.

A renewed attempt at settlement was commenced somewhere between 1662 and 1664 after the Cape settlement had proved more successful than the first Mauritius settlement attempt (Addison & Hazareesingh, 1993; Mannick, 1979). But after approximately forty years, the settlement remained small, numbering no more than 400. Due to both rats and cyclones, Mauritius produce remained a poor second to the more flourishing Cape settlement, which ultimately led the second and final folding of overall Dutch settlement on the island. Over the three years between 1707 and 1710, all members of the settlement (excluding runaway slaves) were eventually removed to either Batavia or the Cape (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:36-7). A few place names still contain reminders of the Dutch presence on the island, including, among others, Flacq (a town and a district), Plaine Wilhems (a district) and, of course, Pieter Both.

Ile de France: French Settlement (1715-1810)

France, having already claimed possession of the neighbouring islands of Bourbon and Rodrigues, were the next nation to take possession of the territory of Mauritius. A French captain, Dufresne d'Arsel, took possession of the island on the orders King Louis XV of France, renaming the island 'Isle de France'(De Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:9). This particular name removes any ambiguity about its new European ownership. The island was then ceded by the French King to the recently-formed French East India Company to settle and administer. Early initial settlement attempts were unsuccessful, but the "firmly planted French flag (which was left to show) that, despite its lack of inhabitants, the island was now French" (Mannick, 1979:22).

Earnest attempts at settlement by the French were begun in the early 1720s (Barnwell & Toussaint, 1949: 45, Duyker, 1988:2). The first French settlers arrived in 1722 Barnwell and Toussaint point out that "after one year of French rule Mauritius had as many people living in it as the Dutch after forty years" (1949:45). However, for the next twelve years or so, there were still question marks over the permanence of the Mauritius settlement. There were delays in establishing the ruling administrative body – the *Conseil Superieur*, which consisted of six Company officials and was headed by the Governor (Addison & Hazareesingh, 1993:13; Mannick, 1979:23). The pessimism of the island's various Governors about its future meant that little progress was made initially in developing the island as a worthwhile colony (ibid.).

Bowman describes this early period of French settlement as being similar to the Dutch colony: "the population was a hodgepodge of whites, slaves, convicts, and prostitutes, many of whom had been brought by force to Mauritius from Reunion" (1991:10). The settlement was characterised by a lack of morale and of law and order, and evident corruption from leading Company officials; the propagated unrest was compounded by natural disasters in the form of cyclones (Vaughan, 2005:29, 25).

It was only from the 1730s onwards that concerted efforts were made to improve the island's infrastructure. This included such initiatives as the shifting of the main harbour from Grand Port in the south-east to the more advantageously-positioned Port Louis in the north-west, and also, the importation of a large number of slaves from

Madagascar, Africa and India (Nagapen, 1984:73) as the labour via which to establish the colony's infrastructure. Progress in developing the island as a more worthwhile geographic, economic and strategic asset for the French was really made when the French East India Company appointed Bertrand François Mahé de Labourdonnais as Governor. Labourdonnais is recognised as the Governor who spearheaded the island's development of infrastructure. Under his Governorship, the new Port Louis harbour became a viable and thriving seaport, road-building was undertaken across the island, and sugar cane production expanded to exportable levels (Duyker, 1988:2). A new town in the south-east started by his successor, Govenor Decaen, in 1804, was named Mahébourg in Labourdonnais' honour, a name the town still bears today.

This push towards progress led to the importation of more slaves from Madagascar and Africa. As Mannick puts it, Labourdonnais "began to put into effect plans for structuring the island, the physical work being done by slave labour" (1979:23). Indeed, Labourdonnais was said to have "organised intensive slave importation to the Isle de France… a trend that went on to increase after him" (Nagapen, 1984:76). Runaway slaves also became targets. In particular, "Labourdonnais in 1736 and 1737 trained the best slaves to be policemen; they were sent after the runaways and caught many of them" (Barnwell & Toussaint, 1949:53).

From very early on, slaves' ethnic identities were either edited, obfuscated or erased through inaccurate registrations. 'Mozambican' or 'Malagasy' were two of the main categories or labels applied to slaves. Many slaves registered on the east coast of Africa, for example, were uniformly recorded as being 'Mozambican' regardless of cultural, linguistic or social heterogeneity (Boswell, 2006:42). Stereotypes were applied to these two categories, with Malagasy slaves being regarded as having a "propensity for violence and flight" (Vaughan, 2000:63) while Mozambican slaves were considered to be hard workers and obedient (Boswell, 2006:43). Alpers points out that "individuals often were assigned a place or ethnic name of origin as part of their identification by colonial registrars, whether that be 'Malgache,' 'Mozam-bique,' or more specifically 'Macoua' to distinguish them from Creole slaves born on Mauritius" (2000:89).

There was undoubtedly much heterogeneity amongst those taken to Mauritius. Boswell goes on to offer a possible breakdown of slaves' ethnicities, including: "Moujouane (probably from Anjouan in the Comoros), Kamanga (from the Western side of Lake Malawi), Maravi, Yambane, Sagara (from Central Tanzania), and Makua from Mozambique" (2006:43). Alpers more broadly highlights "South Central Africa, reaching into the deep coastal hinterlands of southern Mozambique and onto the Zimbabwean plateau" as the main regions from where slaves were taken to Mauritius, as well as other colonial outposts throughout the Indian Ocean (Alpers, 2000:85). However, Alpers points to other ways in which traces of histories and origins remain, including place names and lexical influences; 'Camp des Yolofs' (in Port Louis), indicative of a Senegalese presence, is an example of the former, while there is "considerable linguistic input …from West Africa in the case of Mauritius" (2000:93, 94).

The settlement had a heavy reliance on slavery and slave labour; Ile de France can be seen as a "slave society" in the vein proposed by Elsa Goveia (1965), where the system of slavery impacted all people – whites, free coloureds as well as slaves – and equally impacted all aspects of the social fabric of the settlement, whether directly or indirectly. In addition to increasing the number of slaves, Labourdonnais was also instrumental in importing artisans from the southern part of the Indian subcontinent, with occupations ranging from tailors and jewellers to brickmakers, carpenters and blacksmiths; many of these artisans settled to ply their trades in Port Louis (Nagapen, 1984:84).

The colony did not develop in a vacuum however. Politics taking place halfway around the world had significant ramifications for small colonial outposts like Ile de France. Declarations of war in Europe had follow-on effects in the various European colonies. And whilst European commercial and national political interests were usually aligned, during the 1740s, both the French East India Company and the British East India Company took the unusual step of agreeing that any war between England and France should not impact upon their trade (Barnwell and Toussaint, 1949:58). However, this was not an agreement that lasted throughout subsequent wars.

Only a few years after the War of Austrian Succession, the onset of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) meant that Mauritius' strategic role was again of primary importance. Mauritius' natural harbour (as compared to Reunion Island's lack of one) meant it was of strategic import in the various French war efforts. Agriculture on the island took a back seat to war preparations. However, towards the end of the Seven Years' War, lack of food and supplies resulted in vulnerable French trading posts falling easy prey to the British (Duyker, 1988:3). This was particularly the case for the French in India (Barnwell & Toussaint, 1949:69), whose the 46-year reign was terminated as the French East India Company went bankrupt and sold the island back to the French king "for the sum of twelve million pounds" (Mannick, 1979:26). Whilst Mauritius remained in French hands, control shifted from the French East India Company to French crown control.

The bankruptcy of the French East India Company meant the removal of their trading monopoly and in 1770, Port Louis became a free port (Mannick, 1979:28). As a result, the Mauritian economy grew rapidly, drawing traders from not only France, but from across Europe as well as the United States (Bowman, 1991:13). However, Duyker cites Toussaint as suggesting that this economic growth was not as successful as it appeared, due to "the financial integrity… (being) undermined by a currency debased through the excessive issue of paper money between 1769 and 1788" (Duyker, 1988:5; See also Mannick, 1979:30). The American War of Independence which was begun in 1775, was entered into by France in 1778, "anxious to avenge the humiliation of the Seven Years' War" (Mannick, 1979:29) when it recognised the United States' independence. During this time, Mauritius was once again called on as a base for the French navy (Barnwell & Toussaint, 1949:86).

Vaughan (2005:34) argues that Mauritius' position as one port of call within an inter-ocean network of colonial towns and settlements, made for a fluid, cosmopolitan population; there were constant traversings between Europe, India, the East African coast, Madagascar, Batavia, and South Africa among others. The number of ships calling into Port Louis increased during times of war. After fifty years of French settlement, the Ile de France was a complex, stratified and multi-ethnic colonial society. The concerted focus by the French East India Company from 1735 to 1767 on improving their Ile de France investment, saw the encouragement of white

immigration, the arrival of Free Coloureds as well as the landing of thousands of slaves. In the Company's final year of operation in Mauritius in 1767, according to Barnwell and Toussaint (1949:78), there was an overall populace of 18,777. Of this, the complexity of the identities was flattened and reduced to three categories: eighty percent (15,027) were slaves, European (mostly French) settlers made up just under seventeen percent (3,163), while Free Coloureds made up the remaining three percent (587).

Slaves were brought into the settlement from a number of places, including Africa, Madagascar and India (Barnwell & Toussaint, 1949; Bowman, 1991; Duyker, 1988). As with the heterogeneous non-slave Ile de France population, slaves would have found themselves in particularly mixed, polycultural contexts where people of differing ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds were thrown together – albeit in particularly cramped, regimented and often brutal circumstances. The complex mixes can be seen as significantly contributing to the creolised, hybridised surrounds that made up the island colony.

Language was another element of the creolisation process, with many slave societies evolving Creole dialects as the quotidian means of communication across enforced differences. Craton comments that, for many slave societies' creole languages, "the lexicon was predominantly European, while much of the grammar, sentence structure and intonation was generically, and some of the vocabulary specifically, African in derivation" (2003:104). Cohen also points out that certain creoles have absorbed such a variety of words from multiple sources that they are often rendered incomprehensible to native speakers of the Creole's original European lexicon (2007:372). Mauritius' Kreol has a "French-lexicon" (Eriksen, 1998:17), but is equally characterised by its easy incorporation of words from other languages. Spoken rather than written, Kreol is still the informal, daily *lingua franca* spoken throughout the island. Interestingly, Eriksen points out that, "[a]s Bernardin de St Pierre's travelogue (1983[1773]) indicates, the Creole spoken in Mauritius during the late eighteenth century was essentially the same language as that which is the main vernacular in contemporary Mauritius" (1998:9).

The creolisation process was arguably contributed to by active attempts to strip away or suppress differences; what Nagapen calls an "irresistible process of depersonalisation" (1984:75). Nagapen's 'depersonalisation' encapsulates such practices as re-naming of people, the allocation uniform clothing, the prevention of particular religious practices, intercultural marriages, conversion to Christianity and the automatic baptism of slave-born children (ibid.). An additional significant component of the can be seen as the role of Christianity amongst slaves. Christianity in particular was a process which, like the labels 'slaves' and 'slavery', sought (not always successfully) to deny and subdue the strengths and the persistence of non-slave identities. According to Barnwell & Toussaint, two priests who were part of the first settlers were included in the original *Conseil Superieur* for many years (1949:47). The importance attached to their status is indicative of the theoretical (if not practical) religious and moral leadership role held by Christianity in the colony. The *Code Noir* initially the edict of King Louis XIV of France, set forth the harsh conditions by which slaves were governed. Christianity was one significant element in the system of slavery and was noted in the *Code Noire*. Article II of the *Code Noir* stated:

> All slaves on our islands shall be baptized and taught in the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic religion. Those inhabitants who buy newly landed slaves (Negroes) are required to give due notice to the Governor and the Intendant of the said islands, within a week at the latest, or be subject to a fine of an arbitrary amount. The latter will issue the necessary orders to have the slaves instructed and baptized within the appropriate length of time (*Reproduction: Le Code Noir*, 1980 – my translation).

Yet, this creolised situation is equally inflected with particular use of labels. The 1760 Governor, Desforges-Boucher, is recorded as listing "*Lascars* and *Malabars*" in one report, and "*Lascars, Malabars, Pions, Chinese Sepoys* and *Topazes*" (Nagapen, 1984:84) in another report. '*Lascar*' and '*Malabar*' are two labels that are still in use in contemporary Mauritius, albeit with pejorative connotations. While '*Lascar*' is an "Indian Seaman", its use in contemporary Mauritius is as a negative denotation for a person of Muslim faith. Similarly, '*Malabar*' is equally in contemporary use as a negative descriptor of a person of Indian ethnicity. It has been explained to me that the term '*Malabar*' was developed as a result of the fact that many people of Indian background left India for Mauritius from the port of Malabar (personal communication). The ongoing use of these labels and their frequency, potency and adaptability will be discussed in the following chapter.

By contrast, *Pions*, *Sepoys* and *Topazes* are not labels which have retained any significant or widespread meaning in the Mauritian Kreol vernacular. The definition of '*Pion*' remains ambiguous (in French, it can be defined as a 'guardian', whilst in Kreol, it commonly means 'caretaker'; whether these two occupations are any reflection on particular class and colour-based roles is a matter of conjecture). '*Sepoys*' has been used to refer to soldiers working for the East India Companies, although it was commonly applied to Indian and Muslim soldiers (Duffy, 1997:89). '*Topaz*' in turn was a term which referred to the offspring between a French father and Indian mother (Carton, 2008). These labels, given their use in writing by no less a figure than the Governor, illustrate something of an official recognition of differences within the all-encompassing 'slave' category. Their use in official documents also hints at their prevalence, which, in the case of '*Lascars'* and '*Malabars'* in particular, has resulted in a persistence of use.

The 'Free Coloureds' (also known as 'free workers', 'freedmen' and '*gens de couleur*') can be seen as being a particularly heterogeneous category, made up (in principle at least) of people who were neither in bondage, nor white. The *gens de couleurs* were made up of "the offspring of sexual encounters between French plantation owners and African slaves" (Carroll and Carroll, 2000:135; Christopher, 1992:58), freed slaves, non-white settlers – traders and artisans from the Indian subcontinent as well as the small number of Chinese merchants who had started to arrive in the island (Addison & Hazareesingh, 1993:67). The free coloured population increased significantly towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the bulk of the increase in numbers in this category came as a result slaves being manumitted. Boswell argues that the liberation of the *gens de couleur* resulted in a longer period of social and physical intermingling with the Franco population, alongside a simultaneous distancing from the darker-skinned slaves (2006:56). This resulted in differences between some free coloureds and white settlers becoming increasingly ambiguous (Sio, 2003:675). In contrast, Nagapen argues that a high proportion of those emancipated were Indians – in spite of their minimal percentage of the overall slave population, with a high proportion of those emancipated being women and their children – most likely the mistresses of the settlers (1984:79). Bowman explains that those emancipated were "often given small parcels of land, and by the early

nineteenth century, they collectively owned 7 percent of the land and 13 percent of the island's slaves" (1991:16). Those freed would often attempt to buy back parents, siblings and spouses still in slavery (Nagapen, 1984:81; Boswell, 2006:56). This category was thus the most hybridised and heterogeneous, straddling as it did the uncomfortable line between the powerful white group and the powerless slave category.

It is worth noting also that the additional category of 'marroons' does not appear on the official statistics. Bowman points out that, "there was never any independent marroon community in Mauritius, for the island was too small and had too few isolated places for the marroons to hide for long" (1991:16). The lack of bureaucratic acknowledgement of runaway slaves is telling, for it sidesteps any official recognition of the limits or failures of European control, as well as the agency and resistance of individual slaves.

Bowman describes the second part of France's 'ownership' of Mauritius, characterised by Crown control, as a time of substantial economic development, population growth and increasingly complex social relations, all of which was underpinned by "extremes of wealth and poverty" and a heavy dependence on slavery (1991:13). The French Revolution is a case in point. When news of the 1789 French Revolution reached Mauritius a year later, those settlers who were unhappy with the Crown's administration seized upon the opportunity to replicate their own colonial assembly and municipal councils (Mannick, 1979:31). The politics in France were adapted and applied locally, albeit selectively. While streets named after royal governors were changed in an echo of the revolutionary ideals in France (ibid.), the appeal of revolutionary ideals evaporated abruptly when a squadron arrived from France in 1793 (Bowman, 1991:16) to enforce the freshly-passed law that decreed that "all slaves should be freed, since, under the new French constitution, all men were free" (Mannick, 1979:32). The Ile de France settlers and merchants expelled two representatives sent to enforce the law after a period of only two days (Duyker, 1988:5; Mannick, 1979:32-33).

With France in the middle of another war with Britain, there were no resources that could be spared to re-establish control in the colony, and Mauritius was effectively,

from 1796 to 1803, an independent state. Privateering was the local answer to generating income, with particular targets being British Indian shipping (Duyker, 1988:7-8). However, in spite of such privateering success, the postrevolutionary years were marked by great inflation – as a result of the colonial assembly printing out "more and more paper money rather than levy unpopular taxes" (Duyker, 1988:8).

Mauritius thus started the nineteenth century in an economic muddle. However, an 1803 law passed by Napoleon decreeing that "only persons of purely French blood were equal and free" (Mannick, 1979:35), cleared the way for the continuation of slavery and slave trading. This meant that, by the time Napoleon had sent a French authority to the island to re-establish its strategic worth to France, the settlers were content to be re-admitted to the French fold and to dissolve the council and assemblies, as long as the system of slavery remained unchanged.

The Governor placed in charge was Decaen; more and more slaves were brought in to the island under his governorship, adding to the 60,000 slaves already there prior to his arrival (Mannick, 1979:35). Decaen is credited with improving the infrastructure, and also, of making name changes to Port Louis – which became Port Napoleon, and Grand Port – which became Port Imperial. All these changes took place against a backdrop of yet another war between England and France. This war led to an active return to privateering by Mauritian settlers, albeit less successfully as the British merchant ships were now travelling in pairs, and were guarded by the Royal Navy (Mannick, 1979:36).

By the early 1800s, the Indian Ocean had become an active focus of British strategists. In particular, they initiated a naval blockage which impeded neutral ships from easily reaching any of the Mascarene islands. A first unsuccessful attempt to take Mauritius during August 1810 was followed by a second successful attempt in November 1810. Without adequate resources or manpower with which to repel the British, Governor Decaen made the decision to capitulate. The capitulation is described by De Burgh-Edwardes as follows:

> By the terms of the capitulation the troops were not to be considered as prisoners of war, and were to be sent back to France at the cost of the British Government. The colonists were to preserve their religion, properties, laws, and customs, while those who desired to leave the colony were given two years to do so, and were

able to leave the island with all their belongings. On the third of December the Union Jack was hoisted on all Government buildings (1921:53).

Mauritius thus shifted from being a French colony to a British one. The first formal changes made were of a symbolic nature intended to signify the island's shift in official allegiance from France to England; the island's French name of Ile de France was reverted back to Mauritius. Port Napoleon was changed back to Port Louis, and Port Imperial was returned to Grand Port (De Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:54). Flags and figureheads were all replaced with English symbols.

British-Occupied Mauritius 1810-1968

Mauritius now officially belonged to the British. Yet, the operation of daily and bureaucratic aspects of daily life (De Burgh-Edwardes, 1921:53), remained largely unchanged. British control was, in some respects, nothing more than a veneer. Seeking to maintain continuity and stability, the British chose to work "closely with the white Franco-Mauritian elite who controlled the island's economy and set its social and cultural style" (Bowman, 1991:17). Similarly, Carter comments that "early British governors tended to shy away from the implementation of policies which might upset this 'refractory little community'" (1995:13). The first appointed British Governor can be seen as a particularly strategic choice. Sir Robert Farquhar was an Englishman married to a Frenchwoman. Thus, "although determined that Mauritius should remain a permanent British possession, his sympathies were entirely with the French white settlers, as were those of many subsequent governors" (Mannick, 1979:39). Thus, the very commencement of British rule incorporated a recognition of and deference to existing French political, social and cultural structures, through a combination of strategic symbolic and political appointments.

Farquhar's first act in 1811 was to require an Oath of Allegiance to King George III of England to be sworn by all settlers; this was followed up in 1817 with a further requirement that "all foreigners wishing to settle in the island should get permission from the British authorities before they left their own lands" (Mannick, 1979:39). The latter ruling can be seen as one of the reasons today why the increase in "the pure (sic) French population results in only a few thousand more today than it was in 1817"

(Mannick, 1979:39). Toussaint points out that, "…the conquest had not been followed up by an influx of English immigrants" (1974:80 – my translation). Baker further points out that, "most of (the British people in Mauritius) were government employees who returned to Britain on completing their service" (1972:9). There were thus never any significant British subjects who chose to settle permanently in Mauritius. While the administration system took on a British orientation, it was nevertheless based on the pre-existing French infrastructure.

Similarly, while English became the official language of Mauritius, unofficially, "[t]he French language would remain the principal language" (Toussaint, 1974:80 – my translation); French is still the most widely-used language in many official circumstances and environments in contemporary Mauritius. Furthermore, "[c]ulturally, Mauritius continued to look towards France" (ibid. – my translation). Carter points out also that loyalties frequently remained distinctly French, with "[a]nti-British sentiments …frequently expressed in the local press – *Le Mauricien* and *Le Cernéen*…" (1995:13). *Le Cernéen* in particular was a newspaper considered to be the voice of the French plantocracy[2], and it frequently referred to the British as "*l'occupant*" ('the occupier') (Callikan-Proag, 1984:223-254; 267-276).

The delicate politics of British rule in the French-dominated island, can be seen in Farquhar's support of the Franco-Mauritian plantocracy's continuing use of slaves, which he defended in terms of "the continuation of local customs" (Bowman, 1991:18) – irrespective of Britain's 1807 abolition of slavery. The need for high levels of diplomacy and conciliation in maintaining good relations between the British and the Franco-Mauritians can be seen in the way compromises and "[c]oncessions rather than sweeping changes remained the remit of the Colonial Office" (Carter, 1995:14). Catherine Hall argues that lines were constantly being re-drawn "as to who was inside and who was outside the nation or colony (and) who were subjects and who were citizens" (2002:20). The need to remain on good terms with the French elite took priority over assertion of British law about the continuing use of slavery.

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[2] The plantocracy is the label applied to the (largely) Franco plantation owners (usually growing sugar), and whose wealth, and economic and political power was built on slave labour (Jayasuriya and Pankhurst, 2003:167).

The British takeover can be seen as a catalyst for the initial imagining of Mauritius as a nation. Franco hostility, references to the British as 'occupiers' and aggressive demands to maintain their existing economic reliance on slavery, illustrate the shaping of nationalist ideals, based on the exclusion of the British Other, regardless of British concessions. This is a very partial imagining of a nation, based primarily on a Franco belonging, and excluding not only the British but also the population of slaves. The place of the *Gens de Couleurs* in this partial imagining reflects the ambiguous make-up of the Franco society.

The appointment of a "Protector of Slaves" in 1829 (Mannick, 1979:42) was another step in attempting to reassert British law. Overseas, the London-based Anti-Slavery Society and the West Indian planters ("who were not allowed to import slaves" (Mannick, 1979:41) and who feared Mauritius gaining a stronghold in the sugar market as a result of their cheaper labour) commenced a campaign against Mauritius. The Anti-Slavery Society was further opposed to Mauritian slave owners receiving any compensation for the abolishment of slavery, because Mauritius had continued trading in slavery well after the official abolishment in 1807. Mannick puts the figure of slaves traded between 1807 and 1835 at 20,000 or 25,000 (1979:42).

In 1830 Mauritian slave-owners sent Adrien D'Épinay, the leader of their *Comité Colonial*, as their representative to England to discuss their concerns over the abolition of slavery. During this same 1830 meeting in England, D'Épinay also requested that a representative assembly be set up in Mauritius. The original request was refused, but the compromised outcome of this request was "the bestowal of a legislative council and a free press. Colonists were given seven seats in a nominated council of fourteen members" (Carter, 1995:13). Carter also goes on to point out "[p]roposed reforms of the judiciary, which was closely connected to the plantocracy by ties of business and marriage, were shelved" (1995:13) as a further concession in order to placate the anti-British sentiments held by the Mauritians. These series of compromises illustrate the British need to maintain a careful balance between the veneer of governance and to avoid alienating the economically-dominant French group. Indeed, the 1832 arrival of a well-known abolitionist, John Jeremie, to take up the post of *Procureur General*, and therefore replacing the brother of Adrien

D'Épinay in that role (Mannick, 1979:43), provoked political unrest (Carter, 1995:14). The plantocracy actively opposed his appointment by interrupting and stalling everyday administrative and commercial activities – law courts and shops stayed shut and government officials refused to work (Mannick, 1979:43). Jeremie was unable to take up the post and was forced to leave Mauritius soon after (Toussaint, 1974:85).

In 1833, Jeremie returned to Mauritius with "a strong contingent of troops" (Toussaint, 1974:85). However, he was unable to maintain charges against those who had opposed him, although he did suspend and dismiss Adrien D'Épinay from the Council of Government (Mannick, 1979:44). D'Épinay returned to England in 1834 to again attempt to persuade the British Government that a Colonial Assembly should be set up; he was unsuccessful in this regard, but was successful in arguing to the British Government that the slave owners should be compensated. The eventual passing of the Act for the Abolition of Slavery in all British Dominions meant that slave owners in Mauritius were allowed to claim what would eventually be £2.1 million compensation for the abolition of slavery and their loss of labour – paid out, as Carter puts it, "in the teeth of humanitarian opposition" (1995:14).

Abolition of Slavery – 1835

Abolition of slavery finally took place on the 1st February 1835. Approximately 66,000 slaves were freed. In addition to the indemnity they were paid, a further compromise was made to 'sweeten' the transition for the plantocracy. Bowman states that:

> [t]o make the process more acceptable to the plantocracy, all former slaves were obligated to a six-year 'apprenticeship' to their former owners. Coupled with strict new vagrancy laws modeled on the old marroonage laws, the apprenticeship laws were designed to force slaves to stay on their estates in a situation little changed from slavery (1991:18).

Bowman does go on to point out, however, that marroonage became so increasingly frequent in the 1800's, that it became the cause for the termination of the 'apprenticeship' system two years early on March 31 1839 (1991:18). However, Carter notes that the transition from the system of slavery to that of indenture "occurred with minimal disruption to (sugar) production because before apprenticeship had been terminated, 20,000 Indians had arrived as plantation labour" (1995:16). Mannick suggests that, by 1838, "there were 24,000" (1979:45) Indians in

Mauritius. These numbers at this time arguably mark the beginnings of the officially endorsed system of indentured labour. According to Carter, this system was established as a "carefully planned and costed exercise in Mauritius" (1995:19). It was justified by the plantocrats on the grounds that "immigration would not affect ex-apprentices, since Indians were to be employed in extending the land area under cane" (ibid.).

However, it is important to comment on the fates of the former slaves. It is arguable whether ex-slaves were reluctant to remain in a working state which differed from slavery in name only (Swaisland, 2000), or whether they preferred to abandon plantations in favour of towns or coastal fishing villages (Bowman, 1991:18). Carter however, argues that the idea of ex-apprentices abandoning field-labour was merely a convenient excuse used to justify the increased importation of indentured labour; her view is that it is far more likely that "indenture ousted the apprentices rather than the apprentices' refusal to work (which) necessitated labour importation" (1995:19). She cites a newspaper report saying "the day apprenticeship was terminated, ex-slaves 'were chased off almost all the estates', having refused the derisory wages offered" (ibid.). She further points that, "planters…only made 'half-hearted' and 'short-lived' attempts to retain apprentices on estates in comparison with their Caribbean counterparts" (ibid.). Many of the texts and papers dealing with this point in Mauritius' history tend to focus on the issues and experiences of the new waves of indentured labour, while the "'lamentable' state of Creole labourers" (Carter, 1995:19) is rarely focussed on. Mannick also states that, "little mention is made as to the fates of the ex-slaves after the Indians took their place, except that they were considered a menace to law and order" (1995:46). However, Miles suggests that many took up work in coastal areas and in towns, with fishing becoming a dominant trade in for the former areas and artisan and manual labour work being the mainstays in the latter (1999:214-5).

Both Baker and Bowman touch on the shift in status in the Creole population brought about by the end of slavery. Baker states that:

> [a]t the time of emancipation, slaves and free coloureds formed distinct social classes. This distinction became increasingly blurred but not forgotten since the term *gens de couleur* (coloured person) continued to be applied to those of partial European descent to distinguish them from those of non-European descent.

Nevertheless the two groups were slowly merging into a 'Creole' community subdivided in a very complex manner according to ancestry, wealth, education etc. Almost all Creoles were Christians, for the most part, Roman Catholics. Economically they occupied a very wide variety of jobs ranging from senior civil servants to impoverished fisherman (1972:9).

Bowman also describes the impact of abolition on the different social categories that slavery had helped to reify. He states:

The *gens de couleur* population, an important offshoot of slavery, also found its situation greatly changed by abolition. Its distinctive position between the whites and the slaves was eroded; after the 1830 census, no separate population classification was maintained for this group, and it became identified simply as part of the island's Creole population. While they shared language and religion with the whites, the *gens de couleur* found their position and status ambiguously defined among whites, Indians, and the newly freed slaves (1991:18).

Christopher points out that the label of 'General Population', which is still in play in official government categories today and covers Creole and Franco-Mauritians, was introduced in 1846 because "the distinction between European and Free Coloured was thought to be so blurred on the island" (1992:58). However, while creolisation and hybridity was clearly evident in this 'General Population' category, fresh waves of arrivals in the form of Indian indentured labourers and migrating Chinese in mid-1800s also resulted in the articulation of further differences.

Arriving in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, Chinese migrants were confronted with laws that restricted land ownership to British subjects, and with the main alternative means of income being trade and artisan work (Pineo, 1998:351). Trade was undeveloped across the island as a result of the former system of slavery, and Chinese merchants filled this void. The initial wave of Chinese migrants were Fujianese and Cantonese, with Hakka Chinese starting to arrive from 1860 onwards (ibid). Community leaders were a prominent factor in Chinese migrants' social organisation. Leadership roles were taken in such facets as lobbying for the construction of temples; in re-directing new arrivals on to other Indian Ocean islands during depressed economic circumstances in Mauritius; and in the screening of new arrivals (Pineo, 1998:353). The latter two initiatives in particular ensured that the Sino-Mauritian population ultimately remained small.

Further, early waves of Chinese migrants who migrated to Mauritius were nearly always male (Nave, 2000:331). Migration of young Chinese women was not overtly

encouraged and increased until the 1900s. Addison and Hazareesingh explain that co-habitation with "local women" (1993:68) was common. Nevertheless, the resulting children, sons in particular, of such unions were taught to maintain their inherited imagined links to China (through ritual and language) while the mother's Roman Catholic religion was also frequently adopted (ibid.).

Indian Indentured Labour

In contrast to the small numbers of Chinese migrants, the arrival of large numbers of Indian indentured labourers ensured that the make-up of the island's population changed rapidly. Mannick points out that, by 1846, there were approximately 53,000 Indians in the island, making up a third of the total population; by 1870, sixty-eight per cent of the total of 316,042 were Indian (1979:45). The label commonly applied to these indentured labourers was 'coolie'. While there was strong opposition to some aspects of indentured labour – such as the abuses being suffered during transportation which led to a temporary suspension in immigration – (although "more concern was voiced about the minutiae of proposed regulations rather than the principle itself"; Carter,1995:22), these objections were strongly countered by the planters, who made use of such arguments as: indenture was in fact a means of escaping destitution in India; India was being relieved of the "superabundant population" for whom work could not be provided; and Indians were exercising their rights as subjects of the Empire to sell their labour wherever they chose (Carter, 1995:20-21).

In Mauritius, labourers found themselves under the yoke of a system differentiated from the island's previous system of slavery by name only. The terms under which indentured labourers arrived, required them to sign "an initial contract promising five years' indenture plus an additional five years of work (normally re-indenture); at the end of this ten-year period, immigrants were supposed to be entitled to (a) subsidized passage home" (Bowman, 1991:21-22). Part of the monthly salary of 5 rupees was retained to pay for the return fare to India when the five years expired; the contract also held terms for punishment in the form of fining, where two days' pay was withheld for every day of absence from work. This financial control was compounded by additional physical controls and restrictions over all aspects of labourers' lives and bodies:

> Strict vagrancy laws helped to combat the Indians' 'love of wandering'. The extension of controls over the personal life of the working population was explained in terms of supposed prevalent vices such as indifference to sanitation, fear of medical care, proneness to violent disputes, jealousy, drunkenness and even the absence of marital fidelity or maternal feelings! (1995:21-22).

These restrictions were ongoing in their development and applications; however, in addition to the implementation of such restrictions, the planters were constantly arguing their case for increasing numbers of labourers that were needed – both in England and in Mauritius to the then Governor.

Attempts by the Governor Gomm to maintain government control over the processes of importing indentured labour during the 1840s were swept away by subsequent Governors who all passed various Ordinances which increased the rights of the planters over their labourers in further regulatory forms (Carter, 1995). These included the withdrawal of the labourers' rights to a paid return passage to India at the end of their tenure (1995:25); the gradual increase of the time of contract from one year to three and then to five years (1995:25, 27); being signed up to a specific estate at the time of embarkation (1995:27); and also, being restricted to field labour as their only allowable form of employment (1995:27). Bowman adds that, "labourers on both their first and subsequent contracts were expected to carry passes; beginning in 1867 passes had to include a photograph of the bearer" (1991:22). Carter goes on to point out that, by the end of the 1860s, "the convergence of interest between planters and the colonial state was at its most apparent and the latter had been effectively harnessed to the task of labour mobilisation in Mauritius, as elsewhere" (1995:27).

Carter also points out that by the 1860s conditions were so harsh for the labourers that some individuals, in particular a German named Adolphe de Plevitz, risked "social ostracism and ridicule" (1995:30) by speaking out against the treatment being meted out to the labourers. As a result, he became derisively known to the plantocracy as the "White Coolie" (Mannick, 1979:48). In 1871, he sent a petition filled with Indian signatures to the newly-appointed Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, who, under administrative pressure as a result of the economic and environmental situations Mauritius was facing, decided to verify the facts through an internal investigation (Mannick, 1979:48; Carter, 1995:27,30). Plantocracy reaction to Von Plevitz was one

of anger along with a demand for his expulsion, "first because he was a foreigner and secondly because the Franco-German war had begun in 1870" (Mannick, 1979:48). This constructed 'foreignness' was also manifested physically in attacks made on Von Plevitz when demands for his expulsion were denied (Mannick, 1979:48).

The internal action initiated by Governor Gordon was, he felt, sufficient in dealing with the issue. However, along with concern expressed by the Indian Government – who had received an understanding of the nature of harsh regulations being endured by the labourers (through the acquisition of a pamphlet describing some of the harsher ordinances to which the indentured labourers were subjected) – some of the older Mauritian planters, "affronted at the accusations" (made by Von Plevitz) (Mannick, 1979:48) placed pressure on "British officials to authorise the visit of a Royal Commission to Mauritius to investigate the charges made by Gordon…" (Carter, 1995:28). The findings of the 1872-1873 Royal Commission acknowledged the government's passivity in their accessions to planter demands, however, Bowman argues that the condemnation in the Royal Commission findings had minimal impact because "little was ever done to change local conditions" (1991:22). Carter, however, marks 1874 as the point of change; in her words, "a watershed in the history of indenture in Mauritius because it marked a formal recognition of the discrimination suffered by Indians and the beginning of a slow process of retreat and reform" (Carter, 1995:30; Mannick, 1979:48).

Alongside these official bureaucratic moves towards change, other small measures of change were happening independently. While the laws based upon the recommendations of the Royal Commission were slow in being acted upon, the recommendation about compulsory education had already been pre-empted by the existence of "thirteen voluntary schools for Indians, according to the Mauritius *Gazette* of 1865" (Mannick, 1979:48). Furthermore, the world events impacting on Mauritius economically were equally the catalyst for initiating a small measure of social change independently of the bureaucratic processes of government.

Allen points out that as early as 1863, "planters had started to divest themselves of some of their properties" (Allen, 1984:342). This sub-division of some of the big sugar estates was known as the "*Grand Morcellement*" and it provided "significant

numbers of immigrants with the opportunity to acquire land… (which) set the stage for the development of a small planter class which earlier practices and policies had actively discouraged" (Allen, 1984:342). Initial purchasers, according to Bowman were "overwhelmingly Indians, largely males who had come as indentured labourers and who, over the period of their contract or contracts, had been able to amass at least a bit of capital; later more families participated" (1991:25; See also Allen, 1984:344-345). By 1884, Allen states, the "*grand morcellement* was an established feature of colonial life" (1984:346). In 1861, there were only 177 independent proprietors who were Indian, and by 1881, more than a quarter of the total independent proprietors were Indian (ibid.).

With indentured labourers arriving from Chota Nagpur, Bihar, the United Provinces and to a lesser degree from Madras and Bombay too, the number of Indian languages spoken in Mauritius increased dramatically, with Tamil, Telegu, Marathi and Bhojpuri joining Kreol, French and English in everyday parlance. Bhojpuri is widely acknowledged as being the primary language of the indentured labourers from the northern part of India, while the southern Indian speakers made use of Tamil, Telegu, and Marathi. Bhojpuri in particular became the main language spoken in rural Mauritius. But it soon incorporated many Kreol words (Eisenlohr, 2004:64) and has become creolised to the point that it became unintelligible to Bihari-based Bhojpuri speakers (Eriksen, 1999:4).

This ongoing contestation between everyday language use was also reflected in official attitudes to the Indian languages.

Ballhatchet states:

> There was official pressure for the teaching of Indian languages in government-aided schools. Georges Guibert, as president of the council of education, countered that children and uneducated adults spoke Creole, and could therefore understand French. Why teach 'an Indian dialect?' And there were many Indian 'dialects'. After two or three generations, Indians 'generally merge into the general population: in other words they become Creoles'. Another speaker welcomed this 'process of absorption and assimilation'. Such ideas worried the colonial office. 'It is of course the policy of the French Mauritians to Gallicize the Indians if they can', noted one official (1995:991).

These attitudes illustrate the ongoing struggles between the English officials and the French to maintain 'control' over the island's administration. As Bowman puts it, "[a]lthough the Indian population was actually divided by caste, place of origin, religion (about 15 percent of in the Indian population was Muslim), and even class… to the French and the British, the Indians remained an undifferentiated mass of illiterate, rural labourers" (1991:29).

Between Ethnicity and Nationhood – The lead-up to Independence

Approximately 150 years after initial French settlement, in the 1880s, the island was now a British colony, while the French plantocracy remained in economically and politically powerful positions. The remainder of the island's population could be broadly divided into the *gens de couleurs* (the Creoles), some of whom had close alliances with the French plantocracy, the former slaves, traders and artisans (from the subcontinent and also, in additional numbers, from China), and the Indian indentured labourers. These divisions were recognised and, when needed, were exploited by the British administrators.

In Ballhatchet's words:

> [w]hen the British suspected disloyalty in the French elite, they turned to the Creoles. …Among the Creole middle class of doctors, dentists, lawyers and officials there was some resentment against the dominance of the French elite, and a tendency to look to the British for advancement. …In general however, the Creoles retained their sympathy for French culture and the ideas of the revolution. When the British suspected disloyalty among the Creoles as well as the French they turned to the Indians for support …(while) the political implications of the Indian majority (was arousing) anxiety in some of the French elite (as well as the Creoles) (1995:990).

Different places of origin, different circumstances of arrival, different expectations and opportunities for work, had resulted in communities were being drawn along a combination of racial and ethnic lines. Political divisions, lobbying and interests were thus also following similarly ethnically stratified lines.

Alongside this politicising of ethnic group formations, there also appears to be the first instances of expressly imagined community, with nascent ideas of

Mauritianhood being articulated. The earlier Von Plevitz situation for example, was one where, as a German who spoke up against the plantocracy's treatment of indentured labourers, he found himself lambasted by the French landowners as 'a foreigner' who needed to be expelled from the island. This critique also simultaneously posits the French plantocracy as 'locals' or 'Mauritians'. However selective or restrictive, there is nevertheless an implicit articulation of Mauritian-ness.

There were other developments which may well have contributed to any nascent imaginings of community (Anderson, 1991). Some changes were instigated as part of the ongoing British administration of the island, while others were lobbied for by the plantocracy. One such change generated as a result of British infrastructure was when Mauritius' legal currency became the Indian rupee. Mannick explains the "logical change" (1979:50) as being a result of Mauritius selling most of its sugar cane to India, and rice being sold by India to Mauritius to "feed the increasing Indian population" (ibid.). The relative geographical closeness between the two British-held territories, the continuing movement of labourers and administrators from India to Mauritius, and the ease of engaging in mutual trade can be seen as reasons behind the shift. Interestingly, there is not much evidence of the plantocracy's feelings about this shift, suggesting no overtly negative reaction.

The governor from 1883-1889, Pope-Hennessy, is notable because of his seemingly active role in undermining his own official status in this highly contested situation. According to Ballhatchet, "Pope-Hennessy proclaimed as his watchword 'Mauritius for the Mauritians'" ('Maurice aux Mauriciens') (1995:991). This is possibly the first overt assertion of nationhood and nation-ness by the official head of the island. However, Pope-Hennessy's motivations appear to be politically strategic, rather than simplified assertions of any kind of an inchoate sense of Mauritianess. Ballhatchet mentions Pope-Hennessy's Eurasian wife and her French-speaking abilities (1995:991), while he and Bowman (1991:27) both also specifically mention Pope-Hennessy's Irish Catholic status, with Ballhatchet further explaining how Pope-Hennessy "openly criticised British policies in Ireland" (1995:991).

Although seemingly acting as much to his own politics as his nation's, Pope-Hennessy also maintained his predecessors' tacit recognition of the Franco-Mauritian

dominance on the island, which meant that local (Franco-Mauritian) representation on the Council of Government was written into the 1886 constitution. The constitution allowed for "ten elected members, nine appointed members and eight official members of the Council of Government" (Bowman, 1991:27-28. See Mannick, 1979:49 for more details). However, there were multiple limitations imposed on the electorate; requirements of income and property, coupled with the capability to read and write in English and/or French, meant that eligibility to vote remained in the hands of a tiny percentage of the overall population – less than two percent – which was made up of the French plantocracy and also a small group of "well-off, conservative Creole allies" (Bowman, 1991:28).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, additional movements and political challenges were being made to the dominance of the French landowners. In 1907, a Creole community of urban intellectuals, led by Dr. Eugene Laurent, formed the *Action Libérale* – whose primary goal was to increase economic opportunities for the Creole middle class. In doing so, they set themselves up in opposition to the French. Although culturally and physically similar to the French, the French had always constructed and maintained a higher place in the racial and colonial hierarchy. While this political opposition had had some success against the French plantocracy in the 1911 election, the party itself was short-lived (Bowman, 1991:29). Conversely, during the post World War I period, another Creole-led movement lobbied for Mauritius' re-admission as a French, rather than English colony (ibid.). While often short-lived and unsuccessful, these different movements illustrate the differing and competing anxieties about the possible political advantages held by ethnic and racial groups about each other.

The catalyst that sparked Indo-Mauritian change is usually linked to Gandhi, who, on his way from South Africa to India in 1901, had a three-week stay in Mauritius where "[h]e spoke frequently at meetings to Indians" (Mannick, 1979:51) emphasising the roles the Indians had to play in the future of the island. It is worth noting that Gandhi's speeches were in both Gujerati and English (ibid.) – using the languages of India and the British empire. As a result of his visit, Gandhi urged an attorney by the name of Manilal Maganlall Doctor to defend Indian workers' rights on the island; Doctor arrived on the island in 1907. In 1909 he had started a newspaper called *The*

Hindustani, printed in Gujerati and English (Mannick, 1979:51). Thus, it appears that, by this point in the island's history, with the same covert struggle going on at the higher levels of the hierarchy between the British administrators and the French plantocracy, there was now a growing struggle between the Creoles and the Indians – aligning themselves strategically alongside the dominant European powers. Thus, while the Creoles were very based in the social and cultural French milieu, the Indians, in the printing of their newspaper in English and in Gujerati can be seen as feeling their way towards an English alliance.

Although there were two symbolic appointments of Indians to the Council of Government in 1926, there were no significant developments or changes in social conditions, with the result that the 1930s and 1940s were characterised by a combination of riots (in 1937 and 1943), and strikes (in 1938) over the poor working conditions and pay rates and high taxes. Paralleling these events was the emergence of unions and cultural associations for Creoles and Indians from which political and social mobilisation was organised. However, Bowman notes that the Mauritius Labour Party, in particular, comprised both Creoles and Indians in its organisation hierarchy (1991:30).

By 1947, Mauritius was one of many territories whose position within the British Empire was being reassessed; constitutional changes were introduced which were "designed to recalibrate the relationship between the Colonial Office and government in Mauritius" (Sutton, 2007:240). For one thing, the census had been adjusted to fit the island's population into four categories: General Population (including Franco-Mauritians and Creoles), Hindus, Muslims and Sino-Mauritians. For another, the 1947 constitution, which was organised by the governor of the time, Donald Mackenzie-Kennedy, was based – for the first time ever – on consultations with members from all ethnic communities. According to Mannick, "[a]dult suffrage was given to all who could read, write and sign their names in English, French, Gujerati, Hindustani, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, Chinese and the Creole patois" (1979:56); this was determined by a basic literacy test. This acknowledgement of the wide ranges of different languages being spoken on the island reflects, for the first time, an official, political and administrative recognition and inclusion of the daily multi-ethnicity of the island's populace, which had persisted in spite of creolising practices. English

proficiency however, was still a requirement for elected members. Bowman explains this new Legislative Council as consisting of "thirty-four members – nineteen elected in five, multimember constituencies, twelve nominated and three British officials" (1991:33). The recognition of, and representation for, a multi-ethnic electorate meant that, for the first time, the Franco-Mauritian community would no longer have dominant authority.

From this moment on, ethnicity was strongly foregrounded in post-World War II Mauritian politics. While ethnicity had arguably never been absent from daily consciousness, this multi-ethnic recognition in the new constitution meant that there were alignments of political causes along ethnic lines. In the 1948 elections, Sutton explains that the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP), a Hindu-strong organisation headed by Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, encouraged tutoring for the literacy test as well as voter registration (2007:242). This resulted in a large number of Hindus being registered as voters, and translated into the success of his Mauritius Labour Party at the 1947 elections – a success that the party maintained into independence (in 1968) and until 1976, in spite of ongoing internal divisions. Further, Ramgoolam drew on a particularly India-oriented narrative, with the Indian flag and Indian terms featuring prominently during his public outings and speeches (Sutton, 2007:245), though this Hindu specificity was toned down in later years. On an organised party level, Ramgoolam's Mauritius Labour Party was countered by the *Parti Mauricien* (later the *Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate* [PMSD]) whose supporters were largely Franco-Mauritian and Creole. Other political parties included the *Comité d'Action Musulman* (CAM) and the Independence Forward Bloc (IFB), which was largely Hindu (Mukonoweshuro, 1991:200-201).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the political climate remained volatile, with parties, meetings and tensions usually following ethnic lines. Political meetings and rallies were heavily but not exclusively mono-ethnic; ideological political concerns were also at play, however, clashes between political rivals and political factions were a frequent occurrence and often followed ethnic lines (Mukonoweshuro, 1991:201; Sutton, 2007). Creole and Franco-Mauritian concerns were aligned over fears of a numerically-dominant Indo-Mauritian politics and, as a result, they were largely anti-Independence. One of the most important Creole politicians of the twentieth century,

Gaëtan Duval, is associated with having coined the slogan '*Malbars, nou pas oulé*' (We don't want *Malbars* [Hindus]) during this turbulent time (Eriksen, 2004:84). However, Sutton points out that the slogan "endured and resonated more effectively as a slogan of Hindu unity than as an anti-Indian war-cry" (2007:254).

The constitution was subsequently adapted twice more. The first change in the mid-1950s formalised universal suffrage, an expansion of the number of single member constituencies to forty, and also introduced the 'best loser' system. The latter change gave the governor the power of nominating and including candidates who performed well but who did not win seats to the Legislative Council. This logic can be seen as being aimed at guaranteeing some form of ethnic representation across the entire electorate while stopping short of organising representation wholly by ethnicity.

The second constitutional change took place in 1961 and was a more bureaucratic one that comprised changes in leadership titles and structure. The winning party leader would become the island's 'Premier', while the Executive Committee would become the 'Council of Ministers' and the Legislative Council became the 'Legislative Assembly' (Bowman, 1991:37). Mauritius was increasingly becoming an independent territory within the British Empire in the lead-up to its Independence in 1968.

During this period of uncertainty, Duyker comments that many of the Franco-Mauritian and upper-middle/middle class Creoles (the *gens de couleurs*) chose to emigrate. While some moved to France or Europe, others moved to Australia. The Mauritius Commercial Bank advanced ninety percent of the cost of passage, at six percent interest over two years, while the Australian airline Qantas reduced its airfares in March 1968 (2008:60). The Mauritian migrants numbered over 10,000 in Australia in the early 1980s. One effect of this wholesale exodus of the middle-class Creole community was an abrupt break between the remaining Franco-Mauritians whose economic situation was comfortable enough to allow them to 'ride out' the uncertainties of post-Independence Mauritius, and the working class Creoles (the *ti-Créoles*), whose situations did not allow any such move. Rather than a wider Creole community which incorporated the Franco-Mauritians, this led to an impression of two distinct groups, separated in most facets of everyday life – economically,

culturally and spatially – and coming together mainly in churches as the common form of worship (Carroll and Carroll, 2000b:26).

The lead-up to Independence was not a smooth one. Existing fears about how the numerical Indo-Mauritian dominance would translate to post-Independence political and economic power, coupled with fears and rumours about the possible annexation of the island to India, meant that tensions ran high. There was an inescapable ethnic element to the tension. There were clashes between Creoles and Indians in 1965 and between Creole and Muslim groups in 1968 in what was probably the greatest political and social unrest that had been experienced in the island up to that point, with twenty-five people dying during one of these instances (Sriskandarajah, 2005:69). Carroll and Carroll posit that, the electoral system in particular was one the main sources of discord (2000:136), in how the nation's multi-ethnicity was to be managed at the democratic political level.

As parties in favour of Independence, Ramgoolam's Mauritius Labour Party formed an alliance with the *Comité d'Action Musulman* (CAM) and the Independence Forward Bloc (IFB) and campaigned as the Independence Party. The *Parti Mauricien Social-Démocrate* (PMSD) were anti-Independence and in favour of greater colonial ties with Britain and the resulting greater economic security (Mukonoweshuro, 1991:202). The MLP-CAM-IFB alliance won the 1967 election (thirty-nine seats to the PMSD's twenty-three), winning a close battle and the right to steer Mauritius through Independence (Meisenhelder, 1997:280). The Coalition splintered shortly after Independence, setting the tone for a continuing sequence of alliances, fragmentations, sutures and partings between various political factions and parties (Eriksen, 1998:69).

Mauritius moved into Independence in an unpromising situation. The population was rapidly expanding, there were significant economic deficits compounded by an over-reliance on an agrarian, sugar-based economy, and heavy unemployment (Bunwaree, 2002:3; Sriskandarajah, 2005:73). The depressed economic circumstances led to strikes in the early 1970s which resulted in a declaration of a state of emergency (Carroll and Carroll, 2000:133). This combination of factors contributed to V. S. Naipaul's (1972) description of the island as an "overcrowded barracoon" from which

escape was the preferable option. Additionally, the ethnic and political tensions which had been at play in the lead-up to Independence remained, and were not helped by the bleak economic situation.

In response, during the 1970s and 1980s, food, health and education were all heavily subsidised, while the civil service was expanded (Carroll and Carroll, 2000; Mukonoweshuro, 1991). Ambitious plans of economic diversification were also undertaken during this period, which yielded successful results. A strong tourism industry was developed and was complemented by an export processing zone (EPZ) as well as the more recent establishment of a financial and offshore centre (Bunwaree, 2002:3), all of which were aimed at encouraging overseas investment and in the development of a manufacturing and service-based (rather than agrarian) economy (Lincoln, 2006:59). This economic success has been notable enough that, by the early 1990s, the labels 'African Tiger' (Rubenstein and Eaker, 1999) or 'Tiger in Paradise' (*Financial Times*, 1994, cited in Aumeerally, 2005b) were being applied to Mauritius.

On the political level, mono-ethnic parties, especially those representing the numerically smaller ethnic groups which had been around at the Independence, soon faded away as it was clear that numerical ethnic support alone was not sufficient (Carroll and Carroll, 2000:136). Instead, Mauritius continued to host multiple political parties, none of which were overtly mono-ethnic; many of these parties were combined into (often uneasy) coalitions in order to contest elections or to act as efficient opposition, but many of which were also short-lived (Mukonoweshuro, 1991).

Conclusion

In some ways, not unlike the folktales applied to the mountain of Pieter Both, Mauritius is now a space onto which thriving complexities and histories have been inscribed. Modern Mauritius then, is an island society, characterised by the complexities of an intensely multi-ethnic population. It throws up intriguing questions of management of multi-ethnicity, of living with diversity and difference, and of doing so successfully – large questions which are the focus of the next three chapters.

This chapter explored how this contemporary multi-ethnicity, rather than being planned in any way, was instead, to a large extent, the result of prevailing politics of different times. Thus, slavery, miscegenation, the abolition of slavery, the importation of indentured labour as well as the movements of artisans, traders and merchants within particular colonial trade routes – all happening against a backdrop of competing European politics and powers – all made for a coincidental combination of peoples, ethnicities in particularly unique social, cultural and political contexts. However, the vagaries of arrivals need to be contextualised by the social and political circumstances of settlement and development. This chapter has provided a brief overview of some of the more significant moments in the various trajectories of Mauritius' history; necessarily brief, this discussion hints at the multiplicities of experiences that have made up people's lives and deaths on the island.

2.   The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius

Introduction

« *Oui, Maurice est multiculturelle, mais…* »
"Yes, Mauritius is multicultural, but…" This comment, made during the aftermath of an interview, when the discussion had drifted into a more relaxed and informal dialogue, is noteworthy because of its distinct ambivalence. My informant, Priya, spoke slowly, thoughtfully; the *mais* ('but') was followed by a lengthy pause and then a shrug, as she struggled to articulate the reasons for the 'but'. Her phrasing in the more formal French, rather than the casual *lingua franca* of Kreol of our preceding conversation, underlines the importance Priya attributed to this point; it was not offered as a flippant, off-the-cuff remark. The use of 'but' coupled with the double inarticulateness of the pause and the shrug, signalled Priya's ambivalence with the notion of Mauritius as being multicultural.

"*Multiculturelle*" was not Priya's choice of term; it was mine, used earlier in the conversation and chosen mainly because of its relatively easy translatability into French (as compared to the awkward translation required of my alternate descriptor, 'multi-ethnic'). Although her choice of term was borrowed directly from me, Priya's focus was not on its etymological or political appropriateness; to her, "*multiculturelle*" was as good a term as any to describe Mauritius' culturally diverse, multi-ethnic population. After a long pause and another shrug, Priya added that *multiculturelle* also implied to her an idea of ongoing harmony, or getting along ("*ki tou korek*" – "that all is ok") among and between Mauritius' various ethnic groups. While she was then quick to then state that it wasn't a lie ("*li pas ene menti*"), she paused again before finishing with a doubtful, "*mais… on ne s'entend pas aussi*" ("but… we don't get along also"). Priya was aware of the contradictions in her views, and struggled to find the appropriate words with which to articulate her feelings, leaving long pauses and eventually slipping between the Kreol of "*tou korek*" and "*li pas ene menti*" and the more formal French of "*mais… on ne s'entend pas aussi*" to do so.

Priya is an example of a young Mauritian woman who is profoundly ambivalent about Mauritius' apparent multi-ethnic success, with her initial use of 'but' capturing this ambivalence. Her statement of 'Yes, Mauritius is multicultural, but…' provides a sense of the complexities that are part of the daily, lived experiences of multi-ethnicity in Mauritius. It provides an insight into the everyday cosmopolitanism that characterises everyday life in Mauritius. It is exactly the types of complexities implied in what Priya does not (or cannot) articulate that make up the focus of this chapter – the in-between of her words, where the idea of successful multi-ethnicity being "*tou korek*" is "not a lie", but has to be qualified by the acknowledgement that, "we don't get along also".

In the previous chapter, "Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood", I charted the play and persistence of ethnicities throughout Mauritius' settlement and its development into an independent nation. This chapter shifts the focus to contemporary Mauritius – where the intensely multi-ethnic population, together with the physical, geographical limitations of its small island status, means that ethnic interactions are a constant and unavoidable facet of everyday life. This chapter argues that everyday life in Mauritius is usefully conceptualized by the notion of the ethnic imaginary. The ethnic imaginary captures the intricacies and complexities of informal interaction and engagement with everyday diversity, and incorporates a focus on the ongoing dominance of ethnicity, ethnic identities and ethnic differences; the ethnic imaginary highlights how ethnic identities are kept foregrounded as well as how they are made and re-made as important. This chapter highlights two particular layers of the ethnic imaginary: firstly, the notion of ethnicised mental maps that underpin how people understand their multi-ethnic worlds; and secondly, the pervasiveness of ethnicity as an element which features in the self-presentations, intersections, and 'rubbing shoulders' (Gow, 2005) that make up the minutiae and nitty-gritty of people's everyday lived realities in their multi-ethnic island. This chapter then, focuses on Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism, with a focus on how ethnicity is understood, experienced and negotiated by Mauritians at the daily, informal level.

The Everyday

The notion of the everyday is implicit in much of my thesis focus, and it is useful to preface my discussions of Everyday Mauritius with a brief reflection on the interconnected concepts of 'the everyday' and 'everyday life'. The everyday encompasses those multiple, shifting dimensions and layers of the quotidian, from the intangible "indeterminacy of the everyday" (Sheringham, 2006) to the routines of "the very close, the familiar and the habitual" (Harrison, 2000:497). It is characterised by the repeated, taken-for-granted and overlooked rhythms of the prosaic and the commonplace.

In some respects, it is much easier to pinpoint the everyday through what it is not, rather than what it is (Highmore, 2002:4). Bennett and Watson provide a useful explanation in stressing the sheer ordinariness that constitutes what is commonly understood as 'everyday life', when they state, "[e]veryday life is … depicted as ordinary in the sense that it is not imbued with any special religious, ritual or magical significance" (2002:x). They also go on to add that:

> To speak of the 'emergence of everyday life' is thus a way of recognizing that its perception as everyday depended on the development of a set of distinctions between some kinds of days and others, and on the perception that everyday life was something that all members of a society shared (2002:x)

The everyday, then, gets positioned as mundane through its implicit juxtaposition against the out-of-the-ordinary and the unfamiliar. Arising out of this view, however, are questions about the privileging of particular forms of 'ordinariness'; as Highmore puts it, "whose everyday life?" (2002:1) is being foregrounded? Everyday *lives* – that is, an emphasis on the plural and the plurality of the everyday experiences and possibilities – is one strategy for sidestepping this dilemma.

However, Edensor takes a different approach, pointing out that:

> Everyday life is captured in Raymond Williams's notion of the 'structure of feeling', a sense that emerges out of 'the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity' (1961: 63) to generate a communal way of seeing the world in consistent terms, sharing a host of reference points that

provide the basis for shared discursive and practical habits... assumptions and routines... (2006:529).

Edensor not only emphasises the sharing and common understandings of the quotidian, but he underlines the broader social awareness of these common understandings that also exists. Edensor's approach emphasises that, although people's experiences of the everyday in any given society can vary, there is nevertheless an awareness that, at the very least, there are shared threads in the everyday.

This is the broad understanding of the everyday that I will be working with in this thesis – the everyday underpins the notion of the quotidian life-world that people at least recognise, even if they do not completely share it, or choose to not share it. The everyday acts as a crucial backdrop to my explorations of everyday cosmopolitanism – of identity, ethnicity, multi-ethnicity, community and the nation. The everyday should also be recognised as a heuristic device; it is aimed at strategically unsettling assumed ideas about where and how the multicultural is important, by removing the more remote contexts of policy and bureaucracy and emphasising the informal and ordinary aspects of the quotidian world where intercultural relations are given currency and are actually lived out.

Identity, Ethnicity, Otherness

In contrast to how identity is often conceived in popular terms – as being fixed, unitary and uncomplicatedly given – in contemporary scholarly orthodoxy, it is acknowledged as being shifting, multilayered, fractured and contradictory (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Minh-ha, 1989; Mirón, 1999). Rather than arising out of some 'core essence', identities are always incomplete and always in process (Hall, 2000). Identities are thus being constantly re-created, re-established, re-produced and re-affirmed, emerging "interactively in a real 'here and now'" (Dyke and Dyke, 2002: 68). Ethnicity is one element of many used in articulations of identities. As Hobsbawm points out, "identity politics assumes that one among the many identities we all have is the one that determines, or at least dominates our politics" (1996:41).

Ethnicity provides one such recurring "point of suture (and) attachment" (Hall, 1989, cited in Watts, 1991:11).

As with popular views of identity, there remain persistently simplified views of ethnicity in popular understandings – where ethnicity is understood as a property of a cultural group and gets discussed and represented accordingly, frequently in terms of static symbols and 'cultural' behaviours. Rather than this 'primordial' understanding (Anthias, 2002; Rex, 1997), conceptualising ethnicity as a social process or a relationship requires a particular focus on the boundaries between groups and the social contexts in which those boundaries highlight differences between groups (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 1998; Verdery, 1994). Barth argues for the mutability of ethnicity and specifically highlights the ethnic boundary defining the group as being the point of critical focus, rather than "the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969:15). This has been extended by Eriksen into an approach that sees ethnicity as being "a property of a relationship between two or several groups, not a property of a group; it exists be *between* and not *within* groups" (2001:46 – author's emphasis). Eriksen further specifies that, "[t]he ethnic character of a social encounter is contingent on the situation. It is not, in other words, inherent" (1997:39). Ethnicity is thus contextually situated, fluid, negotiable and positional, and is a dynamic social process. It is the dynamics between groups during any given interactions that give rise to any sense of ethnicity. As Fenton puts it, "for ethnicity to spring to life it is necessary that *real or perceived differences of ancestry, culture and language are mobilised in social transactions*" (1999:6 – emphasis in original). Fenton highlights use of 'primordial' symbols and identity markers of 'ancestry, culture and language' as examples of what Barth calls the 'cultural stuff' that gets used in continuously shifting social transactions to highlight perceived differences and boundaries.

With ethnicity arising between groups, ethnic identities are generated out of processes of ascription and self-identification, based in "framework(s) of similarity and difference" (Hunt, 2002:148). As with identities generally, ethnic identities are narrated into being, and are dependent on dialogues with the 'Other', against whom to clarify and articulate the position of the Self. Identities are thus constructed out of a dialectical process in which there is a "necessity of the Other to the self…" (Hall,

2000:147). Identities are "constructed through splitting. Splitting between that which one is, and that which is the other" (ibid.). The dialectic of Self and Other gets re-produced as part of the ever-shifting, never-ending processes of ethnic identification and is characterised by multiple, complex and nuanced negotiations and articulations that shape and which are shaped by shifting social circumstances. As Nagel puts it: "[e]thnic identity… is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations – i.e., what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is" (1994:154 – emphasis in original).

Hall delves further into the intricacies of Self-Other identity constructions when he argues that there "is the Other that belongs inside one. This is the Other that one can only know from the place from which one stands. This is the self as it is inscribed in the gaze of the Other" (2000:147). Balibar similarly states that:

> The construction of the Other is the construction of an *alienated Self*, where all the properties attributed to the Other are inversions and distortions of those vindicated for oneself, where indeed the Self is nothing but *the Other's Other*, whose identity and stability is permanently asserted and secured (in the imaginary) through the representation of an essential Other… (2005:30 – author's emphasis).

In these arguments, an ethnic Self not only arises through a juxtaposition against an ethnic Other, but arises out of an entangled and mirrored interdependency. Ethnic identities are thus arguably at their most brittle and fragile, and yet are also simultaneously at their most heightened, on the boundary – where there is 'rubbing shoulders', where the Other is encountered face-to-face, and where similarities and differences are drawn into sharpest relief.

In multi-ethnic situations where there are constant, repeated moments of living-in-diversity, encounters with the Other are inevitable. In particularly western, first world societies, significant levels of immigration have resulted in plural populations, and policies and discourses of 'multiculturalism' have been developed in response to these shifting demographics. However, while the reality of ethnicity and ethnic identities might be much more nuanced and complex, in the face of such policy-level, essentialising approaches, an understanding has also been developed of ethnic groups as political groups (Rex, 1997:271; Anthias, 2002:497; Modood, 1998; 2007).

Modood points out that, "the political uses of ethnicity or culture do not depend upon erasing this sense of change and internal complexity – upon believing that a culture has a primordial existence or a singular, deterministic essential quality" (2007:93). This approach then, makes tactical use of the primordial understandings of ethnicity; the partialities and limitations of its static elements are negotiated around – are subsumed and strategically essentialised (Spivak, 1990) – in order to produce a working sense of an ethnic group as a particularly political group.

Ethnicity then, can be understood on several levels – as being made up of simplified, static cultural content; as a tactically essentialised group identity mobilised particularly in order to engage in policy-based dialogue at the political level; and on a quotidian basis, as a process or a relationship generated as a result of interactions with the Other. While these approaches offer useful understandings of how processes of ethnicity operate and how (and why) ethnicity is generated, they are not necessarily useful in capturing a sense of the pervasiveness and saturation of ethnicity – in providing a sense of *the extent* to which ethnicity operates in everyday situations. This chapter is particularly focussed on how ethnicity is experienced, understood and approached – especially in a third-world multi-ethnic island like Mauritius. My focus is thus on how ethnicity is made and re-made as important on a quotidian basis, the different circumstances and situations under which it gets mobilised, as well as the breadth and depth of daily ethnic influence and awareness.

The Social Imaginary

The 'social imaginary' is a useful concept for approaching this issue. González-Vélez explains the social imaginary as "a kind of symbolic template or cultural conditioning that generates a sense of identity and inclusiveness between members of a community" (2002:349); it is a theoretical idea drawn from Durkheim's notion of the 'conscience collective' (1995, cited in González-Vélez, 2002:349) and has been variously explored by Appadurai (1996), Castoriadis (1987), Maffesoli (1993a, 1993b) and Taylor (2002, 2004).

For the purposes of this chapter, I focus particularly on the ideas of Charles Taylor, who bases his discussions of the concept of the social imaginary in a philosophical discussion of the understandings, practices and expectations which have underpinned the development of western modernity (2002, 2004). He explains his notion of a social imaginary as "[t]he ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (2004:23). He goes on to further describe the social imaginary as "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (ibid.), which also "incorporates a sense of the normal expectations we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life (and) incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice" (2004:24). The social imaginary then, encapsulates those widespread but rarely articulated understandings and expectations of such collective ideals and practices that are intended for the mutual benefit of all those who partake in such practices and, as such, provides people with "a sense of a shared group life" (Crocker, 2005:website).

Taylor cites the influence of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in his conceptualisation of the social imaginary and this is clear in Taylor's additional description of the social imaginary as being "shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society" (2004:23). Where Anderson argues for the nation as resting on a shared imagining (1991:6), the social imaginary focuses on how people similarly imagine their social surrounds, as well as understandings and expectations that make up their daily existence. As Norman puts it, "both an 'imagined community' and a 'social imaginary' evoke an understanding of the world that is out of sight but not out of mind" (2004:website). It is an imagining, Taylor emphasises, that is carried out by "ordinary people" (2004:23) about their social surrounds, and contains an "implicit map of social space" (Taylor, 2004:25).

An additional elaboration of the social imaginary is developed by Taylor when he situates it as part of a, what he terms, "background" understanding. Taylor specifies

that he does not refer to merely the type of background which contextualises and lends immediate meaning to practices – but rather to a broader and more intangible background that is "wide and deep" (Taylor, 2004:28) and encompasses a "largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation" (Taylor, 2004:25). He expands on this notion: "[w]e can see how the understanding of what we're doing right now (without which we couldn't be doing *this* action) makes the sense it does because of our grasp on the wider predicament" (2004:27 – author's emphasis). Morello additionally explains it as "the background that makes sense of any given ideas that draw our whole world" (2007:620). This notion of background calls attention to the constituent elements such as "space, time, our life among others, our history, our relationship with divinity" (ibid.) that might well feed into the type of moral order and social imaginary in action and under scrutiny.

Taylor's exploration focuses on three facets of modernity – the economy, the public sphere and the practices and outlooks of democratic self-rule (2002, 2004). These are three facets of the social imaginary, or as Taylor puts it, three facets "in the great connected chain of mutations in the social imaginary that have helped constitute modern society" (2004: 109). These three aspects of modernity are complex and intricate in terms of the interplay between individual self-understandings, common expectations and the moral order. However, all of Taylor's focus on these three facets is concentrated on a western, European context of modernity. Taylor is aware of his particularistic focus; in his introduction, he briefly alludes to the need to speak of 'multiple modernities', acknowledging the differing approaches and arrivals to modernity by "other non-Western cultures" (2004:1). However, he does not expand this point, other than to suggest that issues around modernity/ modernities can be explored via "a clearer definition of the self-understandings that have been constitutive of it/them" (ibid.). This echoes his stance from earlier works where he acknowledges that analyses of western modernity should recognise the historically specific context in order to sidestep "the distorting grid of a bogus universality" (Taylor, 1992:108 cited in Morello, 2007:619).

Taylor's model of the social imaginary thus rests heavily on the western European context of modernity. There is some work being done in applying Taylor's ideas to

non-Western modernities. Morello, for example, has explored a Latin American context (2007), while the American Association for Asian Studies, in their 2008 annual meeting, included a session on 'South Asian Social Imaginaries' with the aim of expanding Taylor's ideas to another site of non-Western, globalised modernity. Mauritius fits obviously enough into this broad (binary) category of non-Western modernity. Rather than specifically explore the Mauritian context of modernity as such, this chapter aims to use the concept of the social imaginary to understand Mauritius' multiculture. This may contribute to understandings of Mauritian modernity, even though this is not the main focus of the chapter.

In encompassing "[t]he ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2004:23), the social imaginary offers a way of accessing and understanding the ways in which people understand, imagine and construct their social realities. Within Mauritius' multi-ethnic context, this offers a useful way of exploring the ambivalence expressed in interviewee, Priya's use of "*mais*" as well as the disjunctures between "*tou korek*" and "*on ne s'entend pas aussi*", and where and how identities, ethnicities and differences are generated and reified.

However, Taylor's discussions of the social imaginary sidestep any issues around the cultural complexities of 'how people fit together' – the realities of what comes with 'rubbing shoulders', the actual nitty-gritty, uncomfortable or crunching views of ways in which people do and also sometimes *do not* want to fit together. Instead, he confines himself to generalisations about "normal" expectations, "common" understandings, "collective" practices, "common" practice, "mutual" benefit, as well as uncomplicated usage of terms such as "us", "we" and "our", which have a sweeping effect erasing any focus on differences, disjunctures and complexities. Redhead (2004:585) similarly comments that, "Taylor… frequently invokes the 'we' when discussing the hold the modern social imaginary has on members of Western democratic societies. Yet… who exactly is this 'we' and how exactly… (are) the assorted members of the 'we'… constituted by the modern social imaginary?" Not

only does Taylor rest his discussions within a western European context of modernity, but there is also an assumption of a monocultural western context unmarked by differences of any kind. There is a blanket approach of all individuals participating equally in uncomplicatedly, equally-imagined, equally-understood, equally-accepted and equally-participated in common and collective practices. Yet, as Ang points out, "[i]n this postmodern world of multiplying claims to difference and proliferating pluralisms, any overarching sense of 'we' has become fundamentally problematic and contentious" (1997: 57).

The Ethnic Imaginary

Given the limitations of Taylor's conceptualisation, I would therefore like to propose that the social imaginary is intertwined with what I am calling an ethnic imaginary. The social imaginary conceptualises the ways and means in which individuals imagine and understand their social surrounds, including those largely secularised, western democratic institutions focussed on by Taylor – the economy, the public sphere and democratic self-rule. The ethnic imaginary allows a focus on the ways in which cultural differences are increasingly foregrounded and are often used to 'explain' social relationships and complexity, especially in multi-ethnic societies. In particular, the ethnic imaginary allows a nuanced focus and exploration of the sorts of everyday complexities which exist alongside, beneath or even as part of common and collective practices and understandings; this ensures that "common" and "collective" practices can be interrogated. The ethnic imaginary offers an intensely quotidian insight, one which is largely bypassed by the social imaginary. It focuses on the daily negotiations and attitudes, on the multiple representations, ways and tactics via which people imagine and situate themselves and others and the fluid, shifting and contradictory ways – from moments of openness and exchange to dissonant and tension-filled interactions and expectations – in which they do and do not (want to) fit together with others, and how things go and do not go on between them and their fellows. It focuses on how people understand and situate themselves in their everyday, taken-for-granted worlds.

I am specifically using the term ethnic imaginary, rather than say, cultural imaginary, because an ethnic focus particularly emphasises the nuances, negotiations and complexities of how people see themselves as fitting *and* not fitting together in a multi-ethnic society. I am particularly emphasising the importance of ethnicity as a dominant factor in how people see themselves in relation to each other. The ethnic imaginary highlights the extent to which there is a heavily ethnicised lens, or ethnicised consciousness, that pervades everyday life in Mauritius.

The ethnic imaginary is not being proposed as an alternative to the social imaginary, but rather that it is intertwined with the social imaginary. Where the social imaginary emphasises a focus on how individuals see themselves fitting together within the social structures and institutions of a modern, democratic society, the ethnic imaginary concentrates on the foregrounding of ethnicised identities, boundaries and differences as part of complex yet common everyday understandings within a modern democracy. These two imaginaries are not mutually exclusive, but rather, they are interwoven within people's understandings of their 'backgrounds'. The ethnic imaginary is an important conceptualisation of everyday multi-ethnic relations in complex, multicultural non-western societies.

Mental Maps: Imagining a Multi-Ethnic Existence

The first layer of the ethnic imaginary I wish to discuss is the 'mental maps' of ethnicities, ethnic groups and ethnic differences. These mental maps constitute an awareness of the multiple ethnic groups that do reside in Mauritius and they form part of the way in which Mauritians imagine and understand their everyday ethnicised existence. Taylor speaks of the social imaginary as "an implicit map of social space" (2004:25); this can be adapted within the ethnic imaginary as 'an implicit map of ethnicised understanding', where all Mauritians carry some level of awareness about ethnicity in the island – about the various ethnic groups on the island. As well as an implicit map of how social space is meant to function, a map of ethnicised understandings offers a sense of the pervasiveness of ethnicity and as well as a sense of particular ethnic categories. As we will see, not all Mauritians will visualise their

mental maps with the same level of immediacy, with the same depth of diversity, or in the same order. At any given time, depending on any combination of their particular social, emotional and physical circumstances, Mauritians might offer a more, or less, in-depth awareness of the variety of groups, which might well change as their immediate circumstances change. These mental maps are fluid and shifting, dependent on the individual's (external and introspective) circumstances at any given time, and as such, are subject to change.

Nevertheless, there are a broad number of groups in Mauritius that all Mauritians are aware of, and that form a basic element of the mental maps. The most frequent categories drawn out by my Mauritian interviewees and respondents are the broad groupings: Afro-Mauritians, Franco-Mauritians, Indo-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, these initial broad divisions – based on places of origin – have been constantly reinforced throughout the settlement of Mauritius. Because these broad groups arrived in staggered timeframes and within specific social and economic contexts, the ensuing "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992:7) meant that links back to different spaces and lands of origin have been constantly imagined, re-imagined, emphasised and reified. These broad groups form a basic, central part of Mauritians' mental maps, a starting point in their imagining and comprehension their multi-ethnic island world.

In a combination of ways of mobilising differences, these broad divisions are further cross-cut by intersections of religion, phenotype (that is, physical features), 'race', caste, language and class (Eriksen, 1989, 1991, 1998; Joypaul, 2001; Miles, 1999; Nave, 2000; Srebrnik, 2000). The particular differences which dominate are dependent on the relevance or importance of particular intersections over others to the mental map holder. As discussed in the Introduction, there are a number of orthodox categories that are regularly mobilised. These include: Creoles, Franco-Mauritians, Hindus, Muslims and Tamils, Telegus and Marathis and Sino-Mauritians. This forum of intense multi-ethnicity is cross-cut by multiple potential boundaries and layers of differences, which can filter into Mauritians' mental maps.

Eriksen, in his 1998 ethnographic book on Mauritius, proposes the following taxonomy, of his own invention, as an illustration of all possible ethnic categories and differences. It is a possible visual outline of a mental map in this taxonomy (see Figure 5). Eriksen's initial broad segmentation alternatively uses the categories of 'General Population', 'Sino-Mauritian', 'Muslim' and 'Hindu' as the broad basis in his taxonomy. Eriksen's seemingly arbitrary initial division, which specifies on the one hand, the religious distinction between Hindu and Muslim, while on the other hand, simultaneously combining the Creole and Franco-Mauritian categories under the awkward label of 'General population', is not his own, but is instead based on officially carved out categories. Christopher explains that, in the lead-up to Mauritius' independence:

> … [T]he Mauritius census commissioners sought to divide the complex multi-cultural population into ethnic and political communities. The symbolism of a 'general' category to which a remarkably wide racial spectrum of the population has usually belonged illustrates the virtual impossibility of effecting a racial classification, based on physical characteristics. British politicians, as frequently noted elsewhere on decolonisation, adopted a community-based constitution for Mauritius (1992:63).

These four awkward categories remain in application, particularly at the political level, where they are written into the constitution. I shall discuss the official place of these four categories in the *Towards Mauritianité* chapter, but for now, I want to clarify that, despite their official status, these four categories which begin Eriksen's taxonomy are not necessarily the categories used by Mauritians within any mental maps as the basis for initial differentiation. In spite of its long history as an official category, 'General Population' is not a term in daily parlance. Mauritians are instead more likely to use a variety of combinations of religion, skin colour, ancestry, language and phenotype as the basis for demarcation, which means that there are any number of initial categories that Mauritians can carve out in their individual mental maps. This is something I will discuss in more detail shortly. In spite of the use of the awkward term 'general population', Eriksen's taxonomy is nevertheless an exhaustive one which covers most of the racialised, linguistic, religious, class and caste divisions that any given Mauritian could make under any given circumstance.

Yet, as Eriksen goes on to point out, Mauritians' "classifications become successively more detailed the more closely the categorisation approaches their own experienced
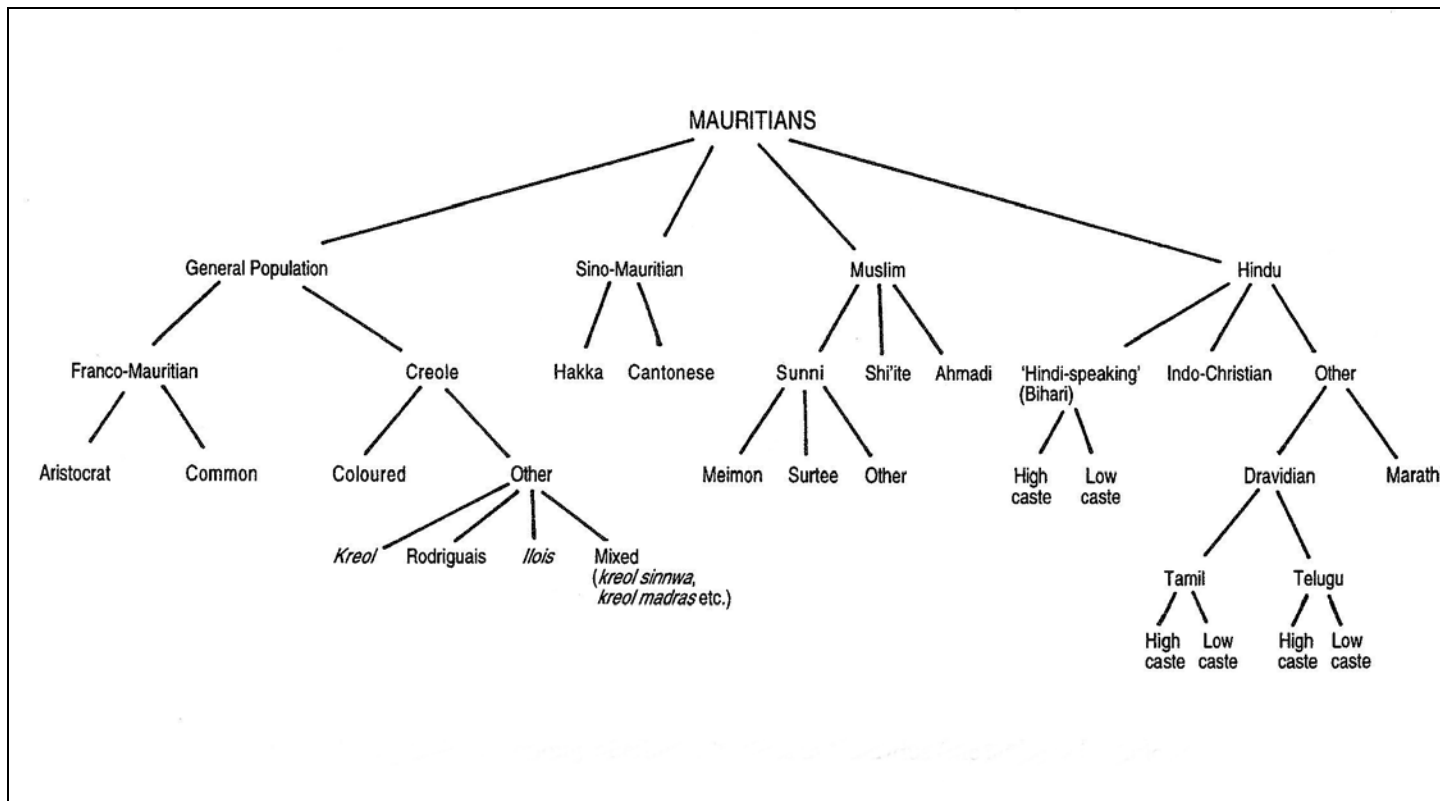
Figure 5: Eriksen's taxonomy of Mauritian ethnicities (1998:51)

life-world and the differences that make a difference to themselves" (1998:52). Eriksen uses two further taxonomies – one, a Tamil-focussed taxonomy and two, a Franco-Mauritian-specific taxonomy – to illustrate this point. Each of these two category-specific taxonomies provides greater details of divisions in the Tamil and Franco-Mauritian categories respectively, alongside a simultaneous lack of divisions amongst other ethnic groups. Mauritians are all aware of, and hold such mental maps of the detailed differences that can be carved out, and can mobilise and apply this map of differences at any given moment.

Drawing on memories of my Mauritius childhood and what I brought with me when I moved to Australia, generating my own childhood-based mental map proved to be an interesting little exercise in retrospection and in the examination of particular childhood memories (see Figure 6). Firstly, it is interesting to note how my mental map illustrates my obliviousness to any further subdivisions drawn along any linguistic, religious, class or skin colour lines – not unnatural for a childhood perspective perhaps. Secondly, my automatic starting point was the Hindu group; even if I did not situate myself completely as a Hindu (the Anglo element of my hyphenated identity was the reason for this), I was nevertheless situated firmly within the Hindu milieu. As such, I was familiar with the broad breakdown of Indo-Mauritians to the point that I would group them slightly closer together; indeed, I had the habit of chanting all the different groups in this particular order. I knew these groups were meant to be distinct, even though I would not have been able to articulate what the particular religious differences between, for example, Telegus or Marathis, consisted of. It is also interesting to note that my ordering of the Indo-Mauritian groups ranges from the largest group downwards. My overall groups were geographically divided up to places of origin – the Indian subcontinent, Africa, China and France.

Such mental maps are part of the ethnic imaginary – they illustrate a pragmatic way of imagining and conceptualising the different ethnicities that make up Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism; they also illustrate how all ethnicities in Mauritius are understood as 'fitting together' within the nationally imagined island community and where and how individuals see themselves within this map. They are not part of any
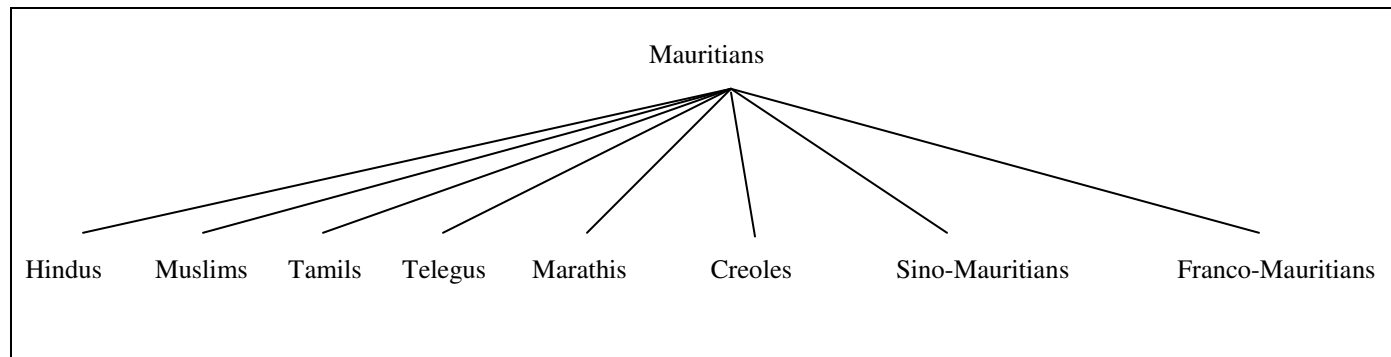
Figure 6: Author's childhood mental map

official discourse, but are rather part of an everyday informal imaginary in the way people understand their world around them. Within this 'implicit map of ethnicised understanding', there is an underlying grasp and awareness of the various categories and subcategories of membership, belonging and exclusion that contextualises understandings of how people imagine their everyday existence and also how they fit together and/ or do not fit together with others. As one layer of understanding of the island's multiple ethnicities, these mental maps are a way in which people understand their everyday social existence, within a particular, culturally foregrounded focus. These maps are not 'set in stone'; certain categories can be made more or less detailed depending on individuals' particular positionings and awareness.

These maps are simplistically conceptualised. Within them, ethnicity can be seen as being understood as constituting the property of a cultural group, rather than being recognised as arising out of any processes of ascription and differentiation. Brubaker comments on the distinction between ethnicity in practice as compared to the analysis of ethnicity (Brubaker, 2005:10, cited in Modood, 2007:91). Similarly, Banton argues that "no group defines itself in terms of ethnicity" (2000:536). Even if ethnicity is being treated as the property of a group – where Mauritians conceptualise such elements as ancestry, religion and language as belonging to particular groups – this nevertheless (analytically) illustrates the processes of articulation and negotiation that Mauritians use to conceive of their everyday existence and how they relate to each other.

Further, there is an apparent rigidity to the ethnic categories and also, an equally static rendition of differences. Not unlike the critiques of discourses of first world policies of multiculturalism, these categories seem equally rigid, essentialised and reified, with a finite number of differences which can be drawn. These mental maps then, imply a conceptualisation of ethnicity in Mauritius that is understood and acted upon in terms of ready (rigid) catalogues or labels and a correspondingly easily-navigable map of differences. This is not to say that these categories are actually closed, bounded systems in experience (and reality), rather that they are conceptualised as such within these mental maps. Modood makes such a point in his summary of Baumann's writings: "[p]eople in multiethnic locations sometimes speak as if

everybody belonged to one or another ethnic group… but at other times they are more savvy and appreciate that there is considerable internal diversity" (2007: 92). As part of the ethnic imaginary, the mental maps list and present categories and understand them as separate, even as the reality is inevitably more complex, messy and intersected.

Within Mauritians' mental maps, the contexts and ways in which differences can be articulated and negotiated around are infinitely flexible. In fact, the seeming rigidity of the ethnic categorisations of these mental maps actually offers the potential for flexible manoeuvring within and around differences. There might be repeatedly reified categories but how and when and where people may choose to use and apply these differences or categories is nuanced, complex and contradictory. Awareness and uses of categories are employed sometimes casually and unreflexively and sometimes ironically and deliberately. But the knowledge and place of these categories is a dominant part of everyday life in Mauritius. Mental maps offer up categories and differences that are seemingly static and persistent, but how and when these maps are articulated and negotiated is fluid, open to change and contradictory.

Nancy Fraser critiques the reification of group identities, arguing that, "[t]he overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations" (2000:n.p). While Fraser's point firmly recognises the complexities of peoples' daily lives, Hall and Appiah offer a more nuanced view on the persistence of group identities generally. Hall states that, "[t]he past narrows the field of contingency. There are collective projects and there are therefore collective identities. Those identities are not given forever, but they're hard to shift. The longer you live them, the more historical weight they have" (Hall in Osbourne and Segal, 1999: 404). Similarly, Appiah argues that, "collective identities … provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories' (2000:613). These mental maps of ethnic group identities in Mauritius are anchored, supported and reinforced by what Hall and Appiah respectively term 'collective identities' and 'scripts'. These are reified, repeatedly narrated and they reinforce existing categories; they offer participants an

easy entry into existing ethnicised narratives via which to locate themselves and others.

Looking and Acting the Part: Performing and Classifying Ethnicity

Ethnicity as a visual concern is a strong element within the ethnic imaginary. Ethnic appearances, ethnic performances and ethnic self-presentations and displays alongside a relentless curiosity about and classification of Others, means that in quotidian Mauritian life, there are a multiplicity of complex ways in which people are constantly imagining and situating themselves and Others. There are particularly daily ways in which ethnicity can be presented, performed, interrogated and classified. Performances of the Self, and interpretations of Self and Others are another layer of the ethnic imaginary.

In an informal conversation with two friends, Gayatree and Varuna, on the importance of 'looking an ethnic part', they readily acknowledged that they did have a particular curiosity in classifying and understanding Others. Struggling to come up with an English term to describe what and how she 'read' Others, Gayatree eventually used the unintentionally humorous phrase of "bottom features" – to conceptualise her focus and analysis of people's appearances. By 'bottom features', Gayatree was referring to the visible, underlying physical features that make up the way people look. Phenotypes – that is, people's physical appearances, their somatic features – are an inevitable aspect of identification, of ascription and classification in the island. Distinct places of ancestry, different historical waves of arrivals along with surprisingly little miscegenation have resulted in phenotypes being constituted as a marker of identification. There is a connection drawn and reified "between 'looks' and 'place of origin'" (Tan, 2006:69). Robert Miles' notion of 'racialisation', which he explains as "a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other (usually, but not exclusively) somatically" (1989:75), sheds light on the focus on physical appearance.

Thus, Afro-Mauritians (Creoles), Franco-Mauritians, Indo-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians are understood as having originated from different places, as looking different and signifying themselves and each other as being as separate and different. Combinations of skin colour, hair texture, eye colour, eye shape, nose shape are all mobilised into ideas of what particular ethnic 'types' look like. I stated earlier that Indo-Mauritians prefer to demarcate themselves further on the bases of religion and language practices; this demarcation is reinforced along racialised lines also, in that there are perceived 'gradients' of skin colour attached to the three broad groups of Hindus, Muslims and Tamils – where Muslims are popularly perceived as being generally lighter-skinned than Hindus, while Tamils are perceived as being darker-skinned. The mental maps, therefore, include a racialised factor in the imagining of an ethnicised 'type' (a phenotype rather than a stereotype) – in the interpretation of a person's 'bottom features', what a person of any particular ethnicity looks like, or should look like. This imagining is understood and shared across groups – with members not only aware of the 'required' elements of their ethnic selves but also those required by ethnic Others.

However, in addition to these 'bottom features', where there is a racialised focus on physical, somatic features as one part of ethnic identification and categorisation, ethnic identities are also performed – they are actively presented and placed on display. Names are one such aspect of ethnic performance and classification. As Nakashima points out, "[i]n a diverse society, we read names as signifiers not only of one's individual identity and membership in a particular family, but of one's membership in a particular racial, ethnic, and/or cultural group… (with) a more complete nominal representation of a person's ethnicity (being) dependent upon his or her 'given names'" (2001:114). Mauritian first names usually have clear Christian or Indo-sourced roots, with Christian names heralding the owners as very likely belonging to one of the Creole, Franco-Mauritian or Sino-Mauritian ethnicities, while Indo-rooted names clearly signify an association with one of the Indo-Mauritian ethnic groups. Surnames offer similar inferences, with the addition of Sino-language roots to many Sino-Mauritians' surnames. In addition, such factors of everyday life as daily rituals, choices of food and choices of clothing are all ways in which the ethnic self can be performed and situated and inserted into mental maps, as well as being

simultaneously interpreted and classified into these maps by others. While these multiple performances of ethnicity are not necessarily done with the overt, self-conscious intent of adhering to particular categories, performances are nevertheless carried out with some level of matter-of-fact awareness about ethnicity. The following example of Shalini will offer an illustration of the complex layers and ways in which ethnicity can be performed and presented.

Shalini: Performing the Ethnic Self

Shalini is an unmarried woman in her mid-twenties who identifies uncomplicatedly as a Hindu and who, by virtue of her name and surname, is uncomplicatedly identified by others as a Hindu. She works in the civil service, within an administrative department of an island-wide government organisation and lives at home, following the broad Mauritian social more of children living in their parents' house until marriage. Unlike some Hindus, she eats meat (though never pork or beef), but will partake in meat-free 'religious fasting' (known as doing *karem* – borrowed from the French term connoting abstinence from particular foods in the lead-up to a religious event) as a form of bodily purification in the lead-up to Hindu religious festivals. During these times, depending on the level of bodily purity required for the religious festivals, she might abstain from eating 'out' altogether – from buying food outside the home – or she might opt for vegetarian options only, or she might restrict herself to buying vegetarian foods from Hindu food-sellers, with the understanding that these particular sellers are also either doing *karem* or are cognisant of, and sympathetic to, the *karem* process.

She dresses in mostly 'western' clothes for work and other everyday wear, but might also wear the occasional *churidaar*. For special social or religious occasions, she will only wear *churidaars* or *sarees*. While dressed in a *churidaar* or a *saree* during special occasions, she will also wear a bindi on her forehead. A frequent bindi colour she wears is black; this colour choice is deliberate, as the black colour is a traditional symbol of her unmarried status. Her (married) older brothers are likely to make pointed, if gently disparaging comments if she should ever wear a *churidaar* without a bindi.

Shalini has thought about getting a *phouli* (a traditional Indian decorative nose piercing and adornment) but she will not get one because she feels her nose is 'broad' and to wear a *phouli* – no matter how traditionally Hindu a practice it is – will only draw attention to the broadness of her nose. Shalini is also very conscious of her wavy, curly hair, which her father has deridingly described on more than one occasion as being 'creoline' (a reference to the very curly, 'typically African' hair of Creole girls). Ironically, her curly hair is a feature inherited from her father. She keeps her hair long as per Hindu tradition (and also, at the time of fieldwork, a fashionable style in Mauritius), but she also coils in a bun most of the time to hide the curliness – no matter whether she is dressed for work or for a special occasion. She also maintains a small subtle middle part at the front of her hair so that, upon marriage, she will be able to successfully apply the red *sindur*[3] – the traditional symbol of a Hindu married woman, even though many married women equally choose to not wear the *sindur* or to only wear it on 'special' occasions.

Within her family home, her consumption of popular culture is largely oriented towards Hindi music on the radio (to the point of switching off the radio or switching channels when the western music programs commence) and the bulk of her television viewing comprises Bollywood films and Hindi serials. In her bedroom, murder-mystery and romance novels (in French or English) make up a significant part of her leisure reading material; she also has a small radio where she sometimes listens to English, French and Creole programs, so that she is *au fait* with popular songs, singers and current hits. She admits that, in the privacy of her bedroom, she has taught herself how to dance the Sega. Sega is a local dance form characterised by fiendishly complex hip and waist gyrations that is accompanied by the local Sega music, both of which are accepted as being the cultural property of the Creole community. (I discuss the position of Sega in more detail in chapter five, "*L'Affaire Kaya*"). Shalini does not practise it dedicatedly, but only when she feels like it or if an especially compelling Sega song comes on the radio.

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[3] *Sindur* refers to the red powder traditionally applied along the parting in the hair of a married Hindu woman. Contemporary usage of *sindur* includes a brief 'dab' just at the start of the hairline, which allows different hairstyles to be worn.

Shalini provides an interesting example of how ethnicity gets constantly presented and performed in both un-self-conscious and deliberate ways. In many ways, Shalini is un-self-consciously oriented towards her Hindu identity. Her name and surname, her observances of meat-free *karems* or 'fasts' and associated abstinences of outside food at particular times of the year, and her consumption of Hindi-oriented popular culture within the family home are all carried out in a seemingly matter-of-fact way. These are performances of her ethnicity that Shalini does not self-consciously approach as being specifically Hindu; they are taken-for-granted aspects of her everyday existence, in that these facets of her Hindu identity were discernable through participant observation rather than information volunteered directly by Shalini. By contrast, her choices regarding the presentation of her self – when and how she wears a *bindi*, how she wears her hair and why she has chosen to not wear a *phouli*, as well as her choices of popular culture consumption within the private space of her bedroom, was information that she made a point of sharing with me. In expressly pointing out these particular choices and making comments alluding to her reasons, the deliberate, self-conscious quality of Shalini's choices is heightened.

Many of Shalini's self-conscious preferences about how she presents herself are about situating herself unambiguously within the Hindu ethnic group. Nagel comments that the dialectical process of ethnic identities means that it is a case of "what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is" (1994:154 – author's emphasis). Stuart Hall similarly posits identities as "[a]lways (being) constructed through splitting. Splitting between that which one is, and that which is the other" (2000:146-7).

Shalini's self-presentation preferences are nuanced and geared towards removing any potential misinterpretations or associations with a range of Other ethnicities – where she wants to be seen as fitting, and not fitting, ethnically. Her membership and association with the Hindu ethnic group is intended to be unambiguous on any person's mental map, so that 'they' (as per Nagel) cannot misinterpret her ethnic identity. Thus, when she teams a *bindi* with a *churidaar*, the *bindi* is an important part of the outfit. Although *churidaars* are traditionally considered to be a Muslim garment, they are worn by all Mauritian women whose ethnicity is linked to the

Indian subcontinent – that is, Hindu, Muslim, Tamil, Telegu and Marathi women – while they are rarely, if ever, worn by Creole, Franco or Sino-Mauritian women. As Jackson, Thomas and Dwyer point out, clothes can still be considered as being "a marker of racialised identities" (2007:921) and that "clothing choices are highly charged and deeply embodied social practices" (2007:922). Teaming a *churidaar* with a bindi is a way of emphasising a Hindu, Dravidian or Marathi ethnicity, in particular contrast to Muslim women who are expected to eschew bodily adornments and make-up. Shalini is thus careful to always wear, at the very least, a simple black bindi with any *churidaar* outfit. This careful differentiation from a Muslim identity is one that can even be policed by her family members.

Similarly, Shalini is extremely self-conscious about her hair. The length of her hair as well as the subtle front part she is encouraging as preparation for *sindur* application upon marriage are deliberate choices she has made to emphasise her Hindu ethnicity to herself. These Hindu symbols applied to her hair are not an obviously public performance of her ethnicity, but they are nevertheless symbols of significance for Shalini, possibly as a reaction to her father's criticism of her hair as being 'creoline' – as a characteristic of an Other. Her constant wearing of her hair in a bun in order to disguise its waviness is a further self-conscious reaction to her father's criticism and is another visible attempt to limit associations to this Othered, Creole identity. Her refusal to wear a *phouli* because of her fear of drawing attention to the apparent broadness of her nose is equally another carefully-considered element in her presentation of her Hindu self. Although a *phouli* on its own would be a traditional symbol of her broad Indo, if not Hindu, ethnicity, it is not clear enough a gulf between her Hindu Self and a Creole Other for Shalini's liking – partly because of the combination of her 'creoline' hair and her apparently broad nose – racialised elements of her Self. The potential for misinterpretation was further reinforced for Shalini by the western adoption of the *phouli* as a fashion accessory at the time of fieldwork, which then filtered back into Mauritian youth as an item of fashion, rather than an item of cultural significance, where it was particularly popular amongst Creole girls. In her everyday life then, Shalini is deliberately and self-consciously performing and presenting her Hindu ethnicity in a number of ways. Shalini is thus an example of one Mauritian's negotiations within the ethnic imaginary. While there is a lot that is

taken-for-granted in her self-presentations, there is equally much that is nuanced and strategic.

In his *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1972), Erving Goffman applies the theatrical metaphor of the stage to everyday life, where performances of the self can be paralleled with performances taking place on a stage. Within this analogy, the stage comprises the 'setting' – the physical setting, and the 'personal front' – those items of "expressive equipment" required of the performer in order to convincingly act out their part (Ritzer, 1996:354). The stage itself can be demarcated into a 'front stage', where actors perform for an expectant audience and a 'back stage', where actors prepare for their roles. This conceptualisation is useful in reflecting on the case study of Shalini, but it is very much focussed on the individual as a performer.

Eriksen, in his discussion of ethnicity in Mauritius, quotes one of his informants as using the term 'inner circle' (1998:47) – a notion of a backstage setting characterised by a distinct mono-ethnicity and usually made up of close-knit family members. Eriksen explains the inner circle as part of a depiction of a mode of belonging "as a set of concentric circles where loyalty, in absolute terms, becomes weaker as one moves outwards from the centre" (1996:n.p). He points out that such a view is static and that a far more nuanced view includes:

> an alternative view of social identification could represent a person's identities as a set of partly overlapping group allegiances. Such multiple identities cannot be placed in concentric circles in orderly ways… They cut across each other: each person has a shared identity with different people at different times, according to the situation (ibid.)

Eriksen's alternate view emphasises the mobile, multiple and intersected links and allegiances a person has in their everyday life.

Nevertheless, I find the notion of the 'inner circle' a useful one, not least because it was a term that was also used by some of my informants. The concept of concentric circles is useful for encapsulating the differing levels of intimacy of different 'stages', the degree of cultural diversity of the different audiences as well as the performer's levels of familiarity with different audiences. As such, I conceptualise four concentric circles that represent the varying degrees of cultural diversity of the (front and back) stage audiences. These can influence how people perform, enact their identities and

ethnicities, and self-present: the inner-most circle is mono-ethnic and is made up of immediate family and long-standing close friends; the next circle remains quite mono-ethnic and incorporates extended family members and close friends; the third circle contains a more obvious mix of ethnicities, including wider friendship networks, acquaintances and work colleagues; the final widest circle is comprehensively multi-ethnic and constitutes those bare acquaintances and strangers with whom interactions happen in the public sphere. These concentric circles are by no means locked in and unyielding. Rather, they shift and ebb and flow according to the social and physical circumstances that can influence any stage and audience.

There are parallels between these two conceptualisations which shed interesting light on the case study of Shalini's daily ethnic performances. The two outer-most, concentric circles can be paralleled to Goffman's front stage where performances of the ethnic self are at their most desired, expected and required – against an audience of multiple ethnic Others. Thus, Shalini pays particular attention to the incorporation of important symbols (such as her *bindi* use alongside her *churidaar* wear or maintaining a subtle part in her hair) or the avoidance of other symbols (keeping the curliness of her hair tightly hidden and bundled and avoiding a *phouli*) as part of her 'expressive equipment' to ensure there is no ambiguity or misinterpretation of her 'personal front', her performance of her ethnicity, by her multi-ethnic audience. In this way, Shalini's performance highlights her affiliation with and her membership in the Hindu-Mauritian category within her and her audience's implicit maps of ethnicised space; her audience can therefore classify her in their mental maps with as little ambiguity as possible.

The innermost concentric circle, which is usually mono-ethnic, can be paralleled to Goffman's notion of the 'back stage', where there is no need for performances, and/ or, where preparation for performances can take place. Shalini's positioning within this inner circle and back stage private space is more complex than her public front stage performance. On the one hand, home is a space where her Hindu self-presentation is unself-conscious – her nickname, the food she eats, the music she listens to in the communal kitchen, the programs she watches on television – can all be interpreted as an uncomplicatedly mono-ethnic backstage presentation or

preparation. However, this space is also where she has already encountered censure from some of her family (especially via the description of her hair as being 'creoline', and potential additional censure for such performance 'failures' as failing to team a *churidaar* with a *bindi*). Thus, on the other hand, the communal home space still requires some level of performance by Shalini, particularly in keeping her hair as un-'creoline' (that is, keeping it bundled up) as possible.

In fact, the main 'back stage' available to Shalini is in her private bedroom space. And it is within this back stage space that she 'practises' and tests out different possible self-presentations; it is in her bedroom that she wears her hair down and tries different ways of bundling it up, that she works on maintaining the subtle part in her hair and that she consumes western popular culture leisure pursuits, including novels and music in English and French, and it is in this backstage space that she practises the Sega. Her backstage practices include a combination of reinforcing symbols that aid her 'personal (Hindu) front', but also of moving beyond the boundaries of her ethnic requirements – especially with her practices of the Sega. Her Sega practice is particularly noteworthy in light of her painstaking attempts to minimise any aspect of her self-presentation to the Sega-owning Creole group. But this 'back stage' practice remains very much 'back stage'; Shalini shot me a witheringly disbelieving glance when I asked her if she ever would show off her Sega skills within her communal family setting. Her visual reaction clearly indicated that she thought my question to be an obtuse one, although she politely refrained from saying so out loud. She then clarified that she would never even bring up anything Sega-related beyond any close-knit, trusted friends and any relatives/peers within her extended family structure with whom she felt close.

Shalini's ethnic self-presentation is detailed, nuanced and complex. Her practices and performances on the back stages and especially on the front stages are heavily oriented towards emphasising her ethnic identity. Shalini wants to overtly situate herself and be uncomplicatedly recognised as a Hindu; she incorporates Hindu symbols where appropriate to ensure that she negotiates her performance away from any Others. Although she is happy to push her ethnic boundaries with her consumption of non-Hindu popular culture, including the Creole-'owned' Sega,

within the privacy of her 'back stage' bedroom space, this is not intended as any kind of a performance in front of any kind of an audience. Taylor speaks of a notion of 'social embeddedness', which he describes as "the inability to imagine oneself outside a certain matrix" (2004:55); although he focuses on what he terms the "Great Disembedding" (2004:67) in the wake of modernity, this notion of social embeddedness is useful in its translation to the ethnic imaginary. It is not that Shalini cannot imagine herself outside her ethnic matrix, but rather that she imagines, understands and situates herself within it.

Shalini is a good example of the complex and nuanced ways in which Mauritians present and negotiate their ethnic identities. Shalini knows when, where and how she needs to show herself as fitting and not fitting alongside certain Others, and where in mental maps she fits and want to be understood as fitting, and she makes full use and careful avoidance of all the required "cultural stuff" (Barth, 1969:15) to ensure successful performances. Simple everyday tasks, from how to dress and what to eat can have ethnically-influenced reasonings behind them, which can be deliberately or unquestioningly recognised as such. Her various public performances are illustrative of the ways in which Mauritians can imagine and situate themselves within the ethnic imaginary, employing, emphasising and obfuscating ethnic codes and boundaries as needed to do so.

But alongside this deliberate focus on the presentation of the self is equally a curiosity about Others – in particular, in the ethnic classification of Others. Just as many elements in Shalini's daily self-presentation are geared towards emphasising her Hindu ethnicity and minimising any elements which could be construed as non-Hindu, there is an expectation that all individuals' daily performances will provide clear indications about their ethnic identities. Particularly in everyday public spaces – the widest concentric circle – there is a relentless focus on others and in being able to interpret and accurately categorise ethnicities within mental maps, in being to situate who fits into what categories.

Deeya: Interpreting and Classifying Ethnicity

A Hindu Mauritian, Deeya, provides an interesting example of this curiosity about ethnicity. Deeya, who works at the University of Mauritius, told me about the story of her new work colleague; she mentioned this story in front of her family members, who also identify as Hindu-Mauritians. When Deeya and her office co-worker Navina (a Tamil) were introduced to their new work colleague, the combination of his first name and his physical facial features meant he was immediately and easily classified within the broad Indo-Mauritian category and more specifically within the Hindu or Tamil ethnicity. However, this was still too broad a classification. Deeya and Navina then proceeded to ask some seemingly innocent, introductory questions. The first question they asked was the new colleague's surname. Unusually, the new colleague's surname didn't shed any further light onto his ethnicity (where a combination of first name and surname is usually enough to clearly identify a person's ethnicity). To growing laughter from her listening family members, Deeya explained how the second question she then asked was, "do you have a brother? I used to work with someone with your surname". The new work colleague didn't have a brother. Navina then took a turn; she named the area where she lived and commented that a family with the same surname (as that of the new work colleague's) lived nearby, and asked if there was any connection. The new work colleague replied that he had no association with the family. Deeya was openly laughing along with her family members as she explained how she then applied her last innocent question, "do you have a sister? Because I'm pretty sure I went to school with a girl with the same surname as you." But the new work colleague didn't have a sister either, leaving Deeya and Navina temporarily thwarted about how to identify the ethnicity of her new work colleague.

The range of Deeya and Navina's questions, while seemingly impertinent, are in fact permissible and frequent during introductions in Mauritius, as there are many instances of 'six degrees of separation' – unsurprising on such a small island. Through kinship and knowledge networks, people can often establish a variety of connections between themselves, particularly within ethnic groups. As such, questions such as those asked by Deeya and Navina are not uncommon in introductory conversations. However, such questions are not often posed with the

ulterior motive of classifying a person's ethnicity. The new work colleague's 'personal front' as part of his front stage performance was not clear enough for an unambiguous classification into Deeya's and Navina's mental maps. Mauritian audiences of self-presentations carry an implicit expectation of ethnicity being one element of the performance. Where this was an active focus for Shalini in her self-presentation, it was obviously not of similar importance to Deeya's new colleague or at least, had not been emphasised to the same degree. As audience members, Deeya and Navina obviously expected a clear, ethnic self-presentation and were dissatisfied enough that they began overt, albeit circuitous, attempts to get a more accurate classification. Significantly though, a direct query about their new work colleague's ethnicity was not considered; it was out of the question. Indeed, the circuitous and indirect line of seemingly innocent questioning that was followed was where the humour of Deeya's re-telling was to be found – and that, in spite of the carefully roundabout questions chosen, the ultimate punchline of her story was that she and Navina were ultimately thwarted.

That a direct question was not, or could not, be asked illustrates the delicate positioning of ethnicity in everyday Mauritian life. On the one hand, it is central to many people's everyday self-presentations, with audiences' curiosity and classifications being equally central. Yet, on the other hand, it is a subject that is rarely overtly discussed, particularly in public contexts – in the widest concentric circle made up mostly of strangers and/or acquaintances. Discussions about ethnic activities such as religious rituals or festivals that are part of people's everyday lives are easily discussed, particularly when they constitute elements of self-presentations. However, ethnically-based opinions, processes of Othering and overt foregrounding of any kind of an ethnic focus – such as curiosity about Deeya's new work colleague – do not feature in the widest concentric circle; such matters are more frequently restricted to the inner two circles at most. Ethnicity is simultaneously foregrounded in self-presentations and audience interpretations, yet is equally skirted around in the public contexts of the widest concentric circle. Interactions around ethnicised pitfalls or tensions are, by and large, avoided by mutual understanding and consent. This is a matter I shall discuss further shortly.

In knowing that they could not broach the matter openly, Deeya and Navina instead 'colluded' together. They recognised each other's curiosity about ethnic classification and worked organically, bouncing off each other, to come up with plausible queries via which to try and satisfy that curiosity. Deeya and Navina can be considered as having no more than a friendly workplace relationship; they are really two people thrown together as part of their working circumstances. They work in the same office space and might gossip about their weekend activities, or office politics, for example, but their relationship is not one where they would even frequently lunch together, never mind socialising outside of work situations. There is no particular closeness between them, yet they were able to recognise each other's unspoken curiosity, and worked together, framing their questions accordingly. In acknowledging each other's foregrounded ethnicised curiosity, their colluding approach fits with the type of knowing, joking relationship more characteristic of friends (the second or third concentric circle) rather than the acquaintances that they are. Interestingly, this was a one-off instance, which did not bring Deeya and Navina closer together as friends; instead they retreated back into acquaintances, dismantling the precedent and preventing the possibility of foregrounding future ethnic matters.

Conversely, during Deeya's re-telling of the story to her immediate family members within her 'inner circle', the instance was laughed over, with further 'innocent' questions being tossed around as part of the subsequent humour-filled discussion. No-one questioned either the 'need to know' of the new colleague's ethnicity, nor did they query the possibility of posing the question overtly. These were taken-for-granted elements of the story re-telling, illustrating familiarity with the place of ethnicity in public contexts – as a part of people's self-presentation, yet equally, as something to not be dissected openly. Further, the chat that followed illustrates the ease and openness with which the matter could be discussed within the inner circle – the back stage.

The multiplicity of ways in which people situate themselves and classify others as part of the ethnicised everyday world of Mauritius, can be extremely banal. Deeya's recounting of her subtle questioning was noteworthy mainly because her new colleague was not readily classifiable and was therefore an exception. The ethnic

imaginary is thus not necessarily characterised by significant or memorable moments of presentation or interpretation, but rather, multiple mundane moments where ethnicity is a salient feature in people's everyday lives.

Religious Occasions: Public Performances of Ethnicity

There are not only individual performances of ethnicity as ways of emphasising belonging within the ethnic imaginary; there are also collective performances of ethnicity that take place in the public arenas making up the outer circle. Given the wide range of ethnicities in Mauritius, it is not surprising that there are many religious festivals that take place throughout the year. The festivals I wish to focus on in this section all have a particular element of public participation, which can be seen as a display of ethnic identity. Although these religious festivals have a serious formal intent, public participation is neither formalised, nor ritualised. Not unlike the steps Shalini takes in her everyday life to align herself to her ethnicity, so participation in these religious festivals allows a performative display of ethnic belonging, but without it being a formal display.

Officially, there are fifteen public holidays in Mauritius' calendar year, nine of which are religiously derived, while the remainder are nationally-based. (I will discuss the place of the public holidays within official, national discourse in the 'Towards Mauritianité' chapter). However, there are obviously more than nine religious occasions throughout the year. Religious occasions in particular provide moments where public performances of ethnicity happen, with rituals and displays ranging from the audible to the visual and to the corporeal. The Chinese New Year, for example (as well as, to a lesser degree, Christmas and the orthodox New Year) are marked by the informal releasing of fireworks; from approximately fifteen minutes before midnight, fireworks are released so continuously from so many celebration points that the noise blends into one unceasing wall of sound. This audible celebration is readily associated with Sino-Mauritian ethnicity. Other visual performances and celebrations include the Hindu festival of Divali, where Hindu houses are decorated with festive lights[4], and also Holi, where participants get liberally covered in red dye. Both these visual elements are instantly classifiable as being part of the Hindu

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[4] These lights are termed 'fairy lights' or 'Christmas lights' in Australia; in Mauritius, they are commonly called 'Divali lights'.

religious realm of celebration and worship. However, other festivals incorporate a stronger, more visible and long-lasting public performance; there are a surprising number of religious occasions involving processions which require a pilgrimage from one point in the island to another.

From the Christian faith, Easter and Corpus Christi (known in Mauritius as '*Fête Dieu*' – the 'Festival of God') involve processions through the streets of all the island's parishes; during Corpus Christi especially, the largest procession winds through the streets of Port Louis from the Saint-Louis Cathedral to a temporary altar set up at Champs-de-Mars (Ramdoyal, 1994:151). Champs-de-Mars is a large, grassy space in Port Louis, which functions most regularly as a racetrack, although it is equally used for public meetings, rallies, concerts and religious events. There is also the more locally-specific Christian pilgrimage to Sainte-Croix, celebrating the memory of Père Laval. Père Laval was a priest who arrived in Mauritius in 1841. His religious deeds and influence were such that, following his death in 1864, his memory was maintained through an annual pilgrimage marking the anniversary of his death on the 9th of September. Reports of past and present miracles are an ongoing element in the Père Laval narrative, reinforced by his beatification in 1979. People leave their homes throughout the island; they meet at fixed points throughout the island and then in Port Louis, before converging towards his shrine in Sainte Croix (opposite the Sainte Croix church in Port Louis), in time for the masses held on the 8th and 9th of September (Ramdoyal, 1994:156, 158).

Within the Hindu religion, the festival of Maha Shivaratri – the occasion for the worship and remembrance of the Hindu God Shiva – incorporates the one of the most drawn-out processions of any in the Mauritian calendar. Preparation for the festival takes at least two weeks, with rituals incorporating a week-long purifying *karem* and frequently, the building of '*kanwars*'. *Kanwars* are large decorative structures made of bamboo and paper, constructed almost as mini-shrines or mini-temples that pilgrims carry on their shoulders during the procession (see Figure 7). The majority of *kanwars* are large enough that they need to be carried by at least four people (usually young males). The *kanwars* are carried by pilgrims from their local temples throughout the island towards the volcanic lake of Grand Bassin.

Figure 7: Maha Shivaratri Procession

Grand Bassin is the southern half of the island and is a natural volcanic lake that has become the Mauritian equivalent of the Ganges River. In 1897, a Hindu priest had a dream that saw the source of Grand Bassin's water as being the Ganges. This dream-based connection between Grand Bassin and the Ganges rapidly became a popular one, with the result that Grand Bassin has since been regarded as a holy space of worship for Hindus (Ramdoyal, 1994: 24). In 1972, water from the Ganges was brought back to Mauritius, poured into Grand Bassin (ibid.), ritually joining myth and reality. Proof of the lake's sacredness is illustrated in the 'fact' that, whilst other open sources of water in Mauritius carry the likelihood of disease, the Grand Bassin water can be drunk without harm. Those living furthest away from Grand Bassin start out earliest and are hosted and sheltered by temples along the way. Up to a week before and after Maha Shivaratri, groups of pilgrims carrying *kanwars* along the sides of roads are a common sight. In the final couple of days leading up to the actual night of Maha Shivaratri, the roads immediately around Grand Bassin are thronged with processions of devotees, and traffic jams are inevitable.

Thaipoosam Cavedee – a Tamil festival dedicated to the deity Muruga (or Murugan) – also incorporates a procession, but a day-long one (see Figure 8). As with Maha Shivaratri, there is a week-long cleansing *karem* in the lead-up to Cavedee. Cavedee pilgrims carry structures ('kavadees') during the procession, framed with wood and bamboo and decorated with such auspicious objects as the image of a deity, palm leaves, peacock feathers, flowers, limes and the carved inner flesh of bamboos; these always house a brass container of milk as an offering. This milk is frequently cited as evidence of a miracle. Although it is carried around all day, often during hot summer sun, the milk does not spoil. (If it should spoil, it is regarded as being the fault of the pilgrim, who could not have been pure of mind and spirit and whose *karem* could not have been wholehearted; having said this, I was not told of any stories of instances when the milk spoiled).The kavadees are meant to be carried by the individual worshipper and range in size from small to large and intimidatingly elaborate.

Worshippers are also notable for the 'piercings' they can choose to take on during Cavedee, which can be applied to the face, tongue, chest, back and legs and which famously do not draw blood nor leave scars. Cavedee can be seen as a twenty-four hour event: worshippers construct the bulk of their kavadee overnight; in the morning, they meet at a pre-arranged river for prayers, purification and for the ritualised piercings; the procession to the nominated kovil takes most of the day; there is an additional ceremony at the kovil where the offering of milk is presented and blssed; in the evening the fast is broken.

These processions constitute organised, ritualised and highly visible performances of ethnicity in everyday public spaces that take place annually throughout the island. They constitute another layer of ethnicised performance within the ethnic imaginary. Ah Eng makes the observation that, "[s]pecial occasions confirm and strengthen ethnic community, giving it meaning and identity; at the same time, they provide the basis for others' ethnographic knowledge and socialization about the ethnic community" (1996:107). Participants literally become performers on a public stage as they move past the informal 'audience' members of ethnic Others gathered on the sides of the road (watching with any possible combination of empathy, interest, curiosity or passing-of-time).

Figure 8: Pilgrims carrying Kavadees during Thaipoosam Cavedee

During these processions, ethnic identities are performed, presented and Otherness may be generated. Audience members are able to gather surface knowledge about these Other processions, religions and ethnicities. This knowledge would be randomly-acquired, patchy and without much depth, rather than the detail implied in Ah Eng's "ethnographic knowledge" (ibid.). Such knowledge, however incomplete, becomes part of a generally embedded awareness if not understanding about Others within the everyday ethnic imaginary. Others may not know exactly what Père Laval did, or the religious details of what Maha Shivaratri or Cavedee celebrate, but they hold (however disinterested) knowledge about aspects of these religious rituals and performances, they know what the processions look like, and that these are important to the devotees. There are, then, any number of performative elements to expressions of belonging that characterise the ethnic imaginary.

Colours of Ethnicity

Thus far, I have argued that ethnic performances and classifications as being a significant layer of the ethnic imaginary. The ethnographic examples of Shalini and

also Deeya illustrate the nuances and strategies that can characterise performances and audience interpretations in differing inner and outer circles with front and back stage settings. Religious festivals and processions are another form of ethnic performance, which are given significance by the level of public participation in the processions as well as in the audience. But in addition to these two very different formats of performances, I posit that there is a third format of ethnic presentation which is more abstract and less recognised as being an ethnically-specific performance.

After a visit to a Tamil family in the lead-up to the Cavedee religious festival, I shouldered my bright yellow drawstring bag into my ride back to home base. Despite the fact that I had carried this same bag in the car on my way *to* the Tamil family's house, as I got back into the car, the driver threw a glance at my bag and asked flippantly, "are they giving bags away now or something?" His comment was in direct reference to the colour of my bright yellow bag. Further conversation revealed that there are broad colour codes associated with broad ethnic categories, which means that mental maps can actually be seen as being colour-coded. Hindus and Sino-Mauritians are associated with red, while Muslims are linked to green. Tamils (and also, Telegus and Marathis) are strongly associated with yellow, while Franco-Mauritians are connected with blue. Creoles, interestingly, do not have any strong colour correlations, but, as per the mental maps and the commonality of Christianity, there is a default closeness with the Franco-Mauritian group. It was this ethnic colour association that made the driver wonder out loud about whether my yellow bag had been a gift from the Tamil family I'd been visiting. It is interesting to note that these main colour codes can be found on the national flag, which consists of four horizontal stripes of red, blue, yellow and green. Although there are national (that is, non-ethnic) explanations for each of the colours (which I will discuss further in the "Towards Mauritianité" chapter), there are nevertheless neat divisions where each broad ethnic group can claim (or be allocated) one element of the 'national' colours, although these colours are rarely referred to as such.

The application and performance of these colours is occasional and considered; the colour codes are visible on places of worship – where Hindu *mandirs* are painted

mostly white with red-accented décor, while Sino-Mauritian pagodas also make use of red touches. Although Tamil *kovils* are decorated with many pastel colours, there is nevertheless a significant yellow element to the architecture and décor, while Muslim mosques hold to a white and green combination. Again, interestingly, churches – the religious spaces of Creoles and Franco-Mauritians – are colour-neutral, in that they are either painted in neutral colours (white or cream without coloured accents) or are constructed out of stone.

In the coffee-table book, *Festivals of Mauritius*, written by a Mauritian, Ramesh Ramdoyal, and published in Mauritius aimed as much at a Mauritian readership as at a potential overseas audience, this colour code is replicated. Hindu, Tamil, Telegu and Marathi festivals are collapsed together in the one category and are described within chapter headings marked in an orange colour (a blend of the Hindu red and Tamil yellow, if you will); the Muslim festivals are within green chapter headings; the Sino-Mauritian festivals are within red chapter headings, while the chapter headings marking Christian festivals are in blue. Had the book been produced outside of Mauritius, an argument could have been made for a case of mere coincidence, however, the colour allocation is too particular. Similarly, the argument that the chapter headings use the national colours is weakened by the fact that the Indo-Mauritian festival chapter is in orange rather than the national flag's yellow, and further, that the chapter colour order does not cohere to the national flag's order of red, blue, yellow and then green. Instead, the chapter order privileges numerical dominance with Indo-Mauritian (orange), Muslim (green), Sino-Mauritian (red) and then Christian (blue) religious festivals. Although employed symbolically, these coloured accents are ethnically particular.

These symbolic colour associations are sometimes adhered to during the festivals themselves. During the Cavedee procession, many devotees wear yellow or pink (the other auspicious colour linked particularly to Cavedee, but that is not otherwise associated with Tamils in the way that yellow is), while the Kavadees are dominantly green and yellow in hue (see Figure 8). Similarly, during Maha Shivaratri, pilgrims converging on Grand Bassin wear white garments with red accents, with their devotional offerings (*kanwars*) also being mostly white with red accents (see Figure

7). Many Sino-Mauritian festivals also feature strong red accents to the decorations, although Muslim and Christian religious occasions do not feature the same emphasis on colour. It is interesting to note though, that in Ramdoyal's book, one of the initial photographs illustrating the chapter on Christianity captures people in prayer, who are wearing combinations of white and blue (1994:139).

Further, it also appears that this colour correlation seems to apply to Mauritian houses, although most Mauritians I spoke to did not feel that this was the case. Houses are built with concrete bricks that are rendered and then painted. By far, the great majority of houses are flat-roofed and have at least two storeys. The majority of these houses are also painted white with accents of colour on window sills, roof edges and concrete balcony railings. The most popular accent of colour is red, with white and red houses appearing frequently throughout the island (see Figure 9). While it could be argued that this colour scheme is merely a fashionable choice, it is also the case that there is a large majority of Hindu houses in particular which make use of this white and red colour scheme. Many Hindu houses are clearly identifiable from the street by the religious shrines which sit in the gardens. As part of the shrine, two bamboo poles, each with a red cloth attached, are staked into the ground. These poles rise above garden hedges and walls and are visible from the street. While not all Hindus follow the specific form of worship requiring this type of garden shrine, a significant majority do, and it is these shrines which are indicative of a Hindu household. Many of the houses which have these shrines also use the white and red colours. During my time travelling across the island, I only ever saw one house painted in pastel shades of green which also had this garden shrine. It could be argued that this prolific use of the white and red combination is merely a case of fashionable colours or coincidence; indeed, many Mauritians I spoke to about this felt that coincidence was the most appropriate explanation, that there was nothing ethnically-influenced about house colours.

While people are actively curious about ethnically categorising and understanding their fellow citizens, they do not have the same overt approach towards houses. Yet, when I suggested to various Hindus (all of whom had the white and red colour scheme on their respective houses) that, if there was no ethnic undertone to house

Figure 9: A popular house colour combination: white with red accents

colour, another colour combination would be equally appropriate, I was greeted with looks which ranged from disbelief to dismissal. I was never told why the white could not be paired equally with any of the other 'designated' ethnic colours of green, yellow or blue. This does imply that there is some level of performance of the ethnic self, or at least, some form of ethnicised colour preference in something as broad as the colour of Mauritian houses. As the final public presentation before the inner circle (the borderline between the front and back stages), there is a definite argument that can be made for the presentation of the ethnic self in the colour of Mauritian houses. The symbolism of colour then, is recognised and is widely infused into ethnic categories on mental maps. It is not rigidly or even consciously adhered to, but the colour association nevertheless exists – particularly during religious occasions, and also, arguably, in the mundane, taken-for-granted public 'face' of house colour.

Quotidian life in Mauritius is filled with performances of ethnicity, incorporating self-presentations which – subtly, overtly or self-consciously – mark affiliations with a particular ethnic group and simultaneously away from Other ethnic groups, drawing a

boundary of belonging. These performances can sometimes take place in individuals' inner (mono-ethnic) circles, but more so in outer circles, where multi-ethnic audiences hold a relentlessly curious and classificatory gaze. This 'need' for clear, unambiguous classification around ethnicity is part of the ethnic imaginary; through their actions and self-presentations and situating of others, people 'embed' themselves and others within ethnicised frames of understanding.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued for the usefulness of a notion of the ethnic imaginary. Drawing on Charles Taylor's concept of the social imaginary, the ethnic imaginary allows a focus on people's quotidian experiences of multi-ethnicity in light of the intensive multiculture that characterises Mauritius.; it encapsulates not only how people see themselves and others as fitting and not fitting together in a multi-ethnic society, but also, *the extent* to which, and the circumstances in which, ethnicity impacts on people's daily lives.

This chapter has discussed two aspects of what I have termed the ethnic imaginary. Mental maps, as one layer of the ethnic imaginary, constitute an implicit map of ethnicised understanding (Taylor, 2004:25); I have argued that these mental maps offer a shared awareness of the range of ethnicities which exist in Mauritius. This is not to say that all people share the exact same understanding of the one unyielding map, but rather, that it contains common components that people are aware of, and that they know that others are aware of. This awareness is rarely overtly articulated, instead remaining implicit in people's everyday lives. The tacit positioning of ethnicity in the public realm as compared to its more open status in private settings is an issue I shall return to in subsequent chapters. The levels of detail in these mental maps differ from person to person, are dependent on people's awareness about ethnicity at any given moment, as well as being influenced by their current surrounds. These implicit maps of ethnicised understanding can be seen as constituting one way in which people imagine their everyday social existence, within a particular,

culturally foregrounded focus – including and how people see themselves as fitting together and not fitting together with others.

Following on from the mental maps, I argued that there is a second layer of the ethnic imaginary which incorporates a more active, agency-filled component. Everyday presentations of the self are significantly influenced by ethnicity. These can range from overt choices, to more subtle decisions, to the avoidance of particular accoutrements, all of which combine to present self-images indicating clear ethnic alignments – where people see themselves as fitting and not fitting with Others. Such presentations can be seen as front stage performances, in that there is an equal curiosity in interpreting and classifying the ethnicity of others. Presentations and classifications are active, performative aspects of the ethnic imaginary.

The ethnic imaginary, then, is a multi-layered conceptualisation of the dynamics of living with intense cultural diversity. The following chapter, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", expands my argument of the ethnic imaginary in looking at further negotiations around ethnicity that are also central to people's senses of belonging and non-belonging, and which add to the complexities of quotidian life in Mauritius' multiculture. As well as looking at the openness and exchanges which contribute to a sense of "*tou korek*", there will also be a focus on those ethnic dissonances, ambivalences, tensions and (in)tolerances that are implied in what Priya (in the introduction to this chapter) struggled to articulate in her expression of "Yes, Mauritius is multicultural, but…".

3. Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius

Introduction

The ethnic imaginary foregrounds the everyday, taken-for-granted elements of living with cultural diversity. Developed out of Charles Taylor's concept of the social imaginary (2002, 2004), the ethnic imaginary generates a particularly cultural dimension to the focus of the social imaginary. Taylor's social imaginary conceptualises "[t]he ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows" (2004:23). These are guiding concerns for the ethnic imaginary also. However, Taylor applies uncritical use of the social when he speaks of "common" understandings and "normal" expectations that he punctuates by the unproblematic use of 'we' and 'our'; by contrast, the ethnic imaginary focuses on the complexities, the situating and the negotiating that underpin the 'we'. The ethnic imaginary then, in focussing on how people imagine their social existence, also crucially focuses on how people do and do not see themselves as fitting together.

In the preceding chapter, I opened with an informant, Priya's, struggle to articulate her ambivalence about Mauritius' seeming multi-ethnic success. She used the phrase, "Yes, Mauritius is multicultural, but…", before eventually offering an eventual description of everyday Mauritius as being somewhere between "*tou korek*" (all ok) and moments where "*on ne s'entend pas aussi*" (of not getting along also). This chapter continues the exploration of quotidian experiences of multi-ethnicity. Where the previous chapter discussed the multiplicity of ways in which ethnic identities get situated, performed and classified in everyday contexts, this chapter expands the concept of the ethnic imaginary to focus on articulations and negotiations around ethnicity that take place on a daily basis. In focusing on negotiations around ethnicity, this chapter delves into the disjunctures, ambivalences and crevices – what Mukherjee calls the "gritty aggravations of every day" (1998: 79) – that can characterise Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism as much as openness and exchange.

I argue for two additional layers to the ethnic imaginary. Firstly, the focus will be on articulations around ethnicity – on narratives and verbal assertions of Self and Other, and the place and complexity of language in negotiations around multi-ethnicity. Secondly, the negotiable potential in the ethnic imaginary will focus on those moments where ethnicity gets strategically sidestepped or overlooked, and the ramifications of such avoidance of ethnic boundaries. This chapter will build on the ethnographic material of the previous chapter, in expanding the discussion of how ethnicity is made and re-made as important on a quotidian basis, the different contexts under which it gets mobilised, as well as the breadth and depth of daily ethnic influence and awareness.

Articulations around Ethnicity: Language and Labels

Language provides another layer to the ethnic imaginary. On the one hand, language is used to articulate mental maps and people's senses of belonging and embeddedness within particular ethnic categories; ethnicity is not just imagined or performed into being, it is also spoken and narrated. There is a discourse of ethnicity which accompanies the mental maps, and the situatings, imaginings and performances of ethnicity. Following Madianou, I am using working with the notion of discourse "in the broadest sense as any form of spoken interaction, formal and informal" (2005:525). On the other hand, language is also the means of communication across ethnic boundaries, of negotiating around differences, in sidestepping potential ethnic minefields, and in generating openness.

(La) Kozz Kreol (Speaking Kreol, or, Because of Kreol)

When speaking of language within the Mauritian context, I am focussing mainly on the daily spoken vernacular of Kreol, rather than any of the ancestral languages (such as Bhojpuri or Cantonese) or French, which can still predominate as some people's primary means of communication in certain pockets of the island. Kreol is the everyday informal *lingua franca* that is understood and spoken by most, if not all, Mauritians (Baker, 1972). As I discussed in the "Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood" historical chapter, Kreol developed as a necessary means of basic communication in the face of the "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992:7) of slavery; Kreol has

remained as a long-standing means of informal communication. It is the main language spoken in daily situations within the home; within the public sphere, informal daily interactions – such as those with shopkeepers, bus conductors or lunchtime conversations between colleagues – would equally be carried out in Kreol. French and English are usually employed in more formal settings – including such circumstances as meetings within institutions, lectures and parliamentary discussions (Eriksen, 1998). The main daily newspapers are mostly in French, with the odd English article; in one of the dailies, *l'express*, the one-panel political cartoon has Kreol dialogue, but that is the extent of any Kreol presence in most newspapers. Kreol is thus not viewed as a 'proper' language by most Mauritians.

Although its lack of any formal, grammatical structure means that many Mauritians consider it to be an unsophisticated and incomplete language, Kreol is also a hybridised language that grew out of the contact zone of Mauritius' settlement. It has developed and grown out of the borrowing and incorporation of terms from other languages (Lionnet, 2005). As one informant, Radha, put it, "to me, Kreol is a magnetic para-language with whatever other language is in use. It picks and drops words in any language without need for new words in Kreol." Although Radha retains the view that it is not a legitimate language, she nevertheless emphasises the fluidity, adaptability and usefulness of Kreol's expressive potential. Further, Kreol also contains some unique terms, in some cases, without obvious connections to any of the colonial or ancestral languages also in the contact zone. Some of these terms are noteworthy for the ambiguity of meaning they offer. Thus, while the grammar and sentence structure might be crude or simplistic, the terms, ideas, actual speech – the ambiguity and applicability of some terms, as well as its ready borrowing from other languages – allows it to be a sophisticated and nuanced form of expression. Kreol is the primary language through which the ethnic imaginary is expressed and interpellated; quotidian expectations, understandings, imaginings, explanations are all articulated primarily in Kreol.

To begin with, however, it is the *absence* of certain terms in Kreol that is noteworthy. It is a particular irony in my conceptualisation of the ethnic imaginary that the words 'ethnic', 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic identity' are rarely used in everyday Mauritian discourse; these terms are understood of course, however, they hold very little

discursive or conceptual weight. Similarly, descriptive terms of cultural diversity such as 'everyday cosmopolitansim', 'multi-ethnic', 'multicultural', 'poly-ethnic' or 'multi-religious' (or any other combination thereof) are equally absent. While some of these terms can and do get employed in formal literature (such as tourist brochures, government documents and coffee table books – see Ramdoyal, 1994), they do not feature much in informal, everyday discourse. Even broader terms and notions such as 'culture', 'community' or 'identity' – in the sense of ownership of 'my culture', 'my identity', 'my community' or 'this is my culture' – are not in wide circulation within everyday parlance or understanding.

This led to some memorable difficulties during interviews, where I had to struggle to find a way to ask interviewees how they situated their ethnic identity, trying to find terminology that was more relevant and less alien(ating) to the interviewees. My attempted questions varied between, 'what is your ethnicity?', 'what do you feel your cultural background is?' or 'how do you see your identity?' Ethnicity ('éthnicité') and identity ('identité) are translatable and adaptable to Kreol, but none of these terms had any direct resonances with the interviewees. The only interviewees who responded easily to the term 'ethnicity' were two academics within the University of Mauritius whom I had approached for interviews because of their respective interethnic marriages. Neither interviewee was working within a specifically Humanities-oriented subject area, but they were familiar with the term through its prevalence in academic discourse, rather than its relevance within their everyday lives. Modood points out that there can be "ethnic groups or a cultural plurality without having clear-cut ideas of what is an ethnic group or a culture" (2007:97). I would argue that Kreol provides the means for alternative conceptual terms via which to understand, express and suppress references to Mauritius' quotidian multi-ethnicity. These alternative terms allow for a combination of articulating and foregrounding ethnicity and ethnic differences, making them easy to articulate, and simultaneously making them easy to subsume or sidestep.

Kreol terms dominate the labels on people's mental maps. My Anglicised, hyphenated terms of Afro-Mauritians, Franco-Mauritians, Indo-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians are never used in everyday Mauritian vernacular. Instead, Afro-Mauritians are known locally as Creoles (or sometimes as 'Crétiens' – Christians), Franco-

Mauritians are known as *blancs* ('whites') and Sino-Mauritians are known locally as *Sinnwa*, the Kreol pronunciation of 'Chinese', while the religiously differentiated groups – the Hindus, Muslims, Tamils, Telegus and Marathis – are known by the French/Kreol pronunciations of their religious identities, that is – *Hindous* (pronounced with a silent 'h'), *Musulmans*, *Tamouls*, *Telegus* and *Marathis*. These labels signify 'groups' that are, of course, ethnic groups without the 'ethnic'.

In Kreol, ethnicity is framed in terms of a sense of 'group belonging', which is more subtly and ambiguously inflected. The term '*groupe*' can be applied and understood in Kreol, given Kreol's flexible appropriation of other languages' terms. However, the dominant term used to convey a grouping effect is the particularly Kreol notion of *bann*. Best translated as being somewhere between 'the' and 'all', this very flexible term offers a sense of a collective; *bann* does not directly mean 'group' but rather, it offers a sense of a group. It can be used to speak of small units – "*bann Bruno*" ('Bruno and his family' or 'Bruno and co' or 'Bruno's lot') – through to large categories – "*bann politissiens*" ('politicians' or 'the politicians'), "*bann jeunes*" ('the youth'), or "*bann modiss*" ('dressmakers'). Its flexible applicability is such that it can be equally employed for any number of contexts as "*bann lissiens*" ('dogs'), "*bann légimms*" ('vegetables') or "*bann karokann*" ('the sugar cane fields'). It is this same grouping logic that is equally and generally used to refer to ethnic labels: "*bann sinnwa*" ('the Chinese'), "*bann blancs*" ('the whites' – Franco-Mauritians), or "*bann Hindous*" ('the Hindus'). With ethnic groups especially, *bann* helps to articulate boundaries which then generate a sense of a group; it verbally gathers the edges of a category together and draw out a sense of group boundaries. While not specifically ethnic, the term can be equally applied to ethnic groups, and significantly, its use allows the sidestepping of such conceptual and linguistic terms as 'ethnicity', 'ethnic groups' or 'cultural groups'. The neutrality and wide grouping applications of these terms also 'naturalises' ethnic categories as simply one more group.

Alongside *bann*, *nou* and *zot* are the most direct Kreol equivalent of 'us' and 'them'. However, these terms do not provide a sense of the binary division and unbridgeable separateness implicit in the English use of 'us' and 'them'. While *nou* offers a definite sense of 'we' or 'us', *zot* can mean either 'them' or, crucially, it can equally mean 'you' (in a plural sense). "*Ki zot pé faire?*" can either mean 'what are they

doing?' or 'what are you (all) doing?' *Zot*, then, does not have the same dividing and distancing effect as the English 'them'; in offering dual meanings of either 'them' or 'you', *zot* still reifies a notion of difference, but it does not Other to the same degree as 'they' or 'them' does in English. *Zot* is without the same sense of a binary division or incommensurability woven in 'them'; rather, it Others, but still offers the space for a dialogue with the Other. *Bann* is often used in combination with *nou* and/or *zot*. It can be used to collectively describe a sense of 'us', as in "*nou bann sinnwa*" ('we are Chinese', or, 'we are the Chinese group'). It can also articulate the 'them' or the 'you' with *zot*, as in "*zot bann Marathis*" ('they are Marathis' or 'you are Marathis'). However, *bann* can also be expanded into a more overt sense of Otherness – of the 'group that is not us'. *Bann-la*, refers to a less-ambiguous sense of 'them'. "*Ki bann-la pé faire?*" ('What are they doing?') has a clearer 'they'/'them' connotation, sidestepping the inclusive potential of '*zot*'. Like *bann*, *Bann-la* does not only have ethnicised usages, however it has easy applicability to ethnic contexts: "b*ann-la, zot bann Hindous*" ('them [over there], they're Hindus' or 'them [over there], they're the Hindu group'). *Bann-la* can also be split and employed with greater curtness: "*Bann Hindous-la*" ('those Hindus').

These Kreol-specific terms provide a particularly local logic for articulating group categories, belonging and difference. Language, Nadel-Klein comments, "forms a dynamic element in the discourses of boundary-making" (1997:96). Ethnic identities and differences can be informally reified but without self-consciousness, and crucially, without contrived binaries of 'us' and 'them'. These Kreol terms are particularly noteworthy for their ambiguity and possibilities of meanings. Between such terms as *bann*, *bann-la*, *nou* and *zot*, ethnicity, group identities, differences and Otherness can be articulated and foregrounded. However, some form of dialogue with an Other can also be maintained during any articulation of ethnicity thanks in particular to the inclusive potential of *zot*; additionally, the ability to sidestep or obfuscate potential ethnic divisions or pitfalls is relatively easy as a result of the lack of ethnic specificity attached to these grouping terms.

Ethnicised Nicknames and Stereotypes
Whilst the language of groups and 'groupness' is flexible and offers space for negotiation around and within ethnicity, this is offset by the circulation of particularly

ethnicised labels and stereotypes. Within everyday parlance, there is a ready catalogue built up around *bann* ethnic groups. Most of the ethnic categories that feature in the mental maps, for example, have a 'nickname', an informal label associated with that particular group (see Table 1). These nicknames, sourced through informal conversations with my extended networks, are in frequent casual usage. In the particular case of the Creoles, the Hindus and the Sino-Mauritians, their nicknames are directly linked to, not necessarily their direct ancestral place of origin, but the last port or place of call before arrival in Mauritius (usually still within the broad ancestral continent). Thus, the historical trajectory is traced through Creoles being associated with Mozambique, Hindus with the port of Malabar (India) and Sino-Mauritians with the island of Macao (usually unambiguously linked with China). Ports of call as nicknames are reminders of the particular contexts of arrival for the groups (slavery for Creoles, indentured labour for Hindus and trade for Sino-Mauritians).

The labels applied to Muslims are open to interpretation – *marron* usually refers to the colour brown and in this context, can be seen as a deliberate insult against Muslim and Indo-Mauritian preferences for paler skin. But *marron* is also a term that was in use during times of slavery, applied to runaway slaves; it can therefore also be interpreted as a deliberate undermining of the fact that Muslims arrived in Mauritius mostly as traders, rather than as slaves or indentured labourers. In either interpretation, *marron* is a deliberately insulting label. *Lascar* was used originally to refer to sea merchants and a particular type of vessel used in what is now Pakistan; *lascar*, then, can be interpreted as a reminder of the trading impetus which brought many Muslims to Mauritius.

Potiss is also an ambiguous term; some informants did not know that it meant anything in particular, while others understood it as a Kreol reference to Franco-Mauritians' status as being of European descent, but born/living outside of Europe. (*Potiss* is equally applied to English/Anglo-Mauritians as *Anglais Potiss*). *Potiss* is not too far removed from the original notion of Creole – being, as Benedict Anderson puts it, "of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born outside of Europe" (1991:47). However, crucially, *potiss* emphasises the impurity in the European descent, rather than the purity. Similarly, *milatt* is a Kreolised version of 'mulatto',

Ethnic Group	Ethnic Nickname	Source of Nickname/ Approximate Translation
Creoles	*Creole Mazambik*	Creoles from Mozambique
Dravidians, Marathis	*Madras Calain*	Possible reference to skin colour as well as the port of Madras
Franco-Mauritians	*Français Potiss; Milatt*	French Creoles; Mulattos
Hindus	*Hindou Malbar*	Hindus from Malabar
Muslims	*Musulman Marron; Lascar*	Brown Muslims; Sailors (The association between 'lascar' and sailing is not a commonplace one. As well as referring to skin colour, *Marron* can be seen as an insulting reference to escaped slaves, although this is not a commonplace association)
Sino-Mauritians	*Sinnwa Macao*	Sino-Mauritians from Macao

Table 1: Ethnic group nicknames

which even more overtly articulates and emphasises the hybridised ancestry of the Franco-Mauritians (for many years, the dominant, governing, colonial group). *Calain* as a term was advised to be a direct reference to the darker skin colour linked with Dravidians and Marathis, whose ancestral home of Southern India is associated with a darker skin colour than Northern India.

All these nicknames target, articulate and emphasise a perceived sore point for each ethnic group – either of the historically disempowered moment preceding arrival in Mauritius, or of a deliberate point to do with skin colour and emphasising either impurity or an implication of dark skin colour. These nicknames are invariably mobilised in discussions about Others. They are rarely used by individuals about their own identifying groups, with most of my informants looking visibly taken aback when I asked about this possibility. These labels can be used as the most derisive and offensive of insults; in such situations, the ethnic label can be dropped with only the 'nickname' being mobilised. Thus, references to *bann Malbars*, *Lascars* or *Potiss* are usually derogatory in meaning and intent, and are usually employed out of earshot of anyone of that particular group – 'behind their backs', so to speak – unless they are being employed in a deliberately provocative and confrontational way. However, they can also be mockingly used in friendly, teasing contexts – usually among close friends, where people are at ease enough to poke fun at the labels. Even light-hearted approaches to playing with these nicknames though, inevitably reinforce differences. These nicknames constitute a ready arsenal, heavily tied to ancestral spaces, that allow for reification of ethnic differences.

The catalogue of nicknames is compounded by the presence of stereotypes. Stereotypes of ethnic groups include both negative and positive representations. Eriksen has listed a series of stereotypes held by some of the broad ethnic groups in Mauritius (see Table 2). These stereotypes contain commonly-held ideas about other groups, and are frequently applied as 'explanations' of particular situations and behaviours. Together with the nicknames, these stereotypes contribute to a narrative that builds up ideas and ideals of Self and *bann* Others. Ethnic self-identities are mobilised against at least one Other, although, given Mauritius' multi-ethnicity, the Self is usually positioned in relation to multiple Others. These narratives offer a discursive accompaniment to the mental maps. They offer useful ways of

understanding exactly how people situate their ethnicised existence – in offering glimpses of how they see themselves fitting and not fitting together with Others within the ethnic imaginary. *Bann* groups are constantly re-articulated, reified, Othered and categorised in terms of the broad ethnic categories on mental maps – generating ethnicised discourses. These processes of articulating ethnicity – of constantly re-situating Self and Others – are part of the ways in which people conceptualise the ethnic imaginary; these are verbal understandings and iterations of how and where people do and do not want to fit together.

The frequency and variety of contexts in which these stereotypes and labels get employed is wide-ranging. Questions I posed during formal settings (namely interviews) but also semi-formal and informal situations (occasions where I particularly asked for, or was volunteered, local knowledge and clarification) frequently generated answers which drew directly from the stereotyped explanations. Some examples are:

Example one: Nadia was an interviewee who has – unusually in Mauritius where most marriages are endogamous (Nave, 2000) – a dual ethnic parentage with a Sino-Mauritian mother and a Hindu father. Even though her facial features display evidence of her Sino-Mauritian parentage, she prefers to orient herself to the Hindu element of her identity; she has married a Hindu, further cementing her Hindu identity to herself. Nadia explained that her preference for her Hindu identity as being partly because of her Sino-Mauritian mother's abandonment of the family while Nadia was still young. But she immediately followed this up by confidently stating that the primary reason she did not resonate with Sino-Mauritians (*bann Sinnwa*) because of their secretiveness and selfishness. Nadia phrased this statement as though it was a fact to be applied to all Sino-Mauritians. I asked for clarification on the point of whether all Sino-Mauritians could be classified in such a straightforward manner. Her response was a surprised, "haven't you noticed that this is the case?" My answer, in the negative, was responded to by a shrug from Nadia and an assertion of, "well, I've always found that they don't like sharing; they're always secretive. That's been my experience." Nadia's assertion drew straightforwardly on the negative stereotype associated with Sino-Mauritians. In stating that she had herself experienced and been

Ethnic Group	Stereotype of Self	Stereotype as Other
Creoles	Sincere, humane	Lazy, merry, careless
Hindus	Sensible, care for family, moderate	Stingy, dishonest, hardworking
Muslims	Members of proud, expanding culture	Religious fanatics, non-minglers
Sino-Mauritians	Clever, industrious	Greedy, industrious, secretive
Franco-Mauritians	'True Mauritian', dignified	Snobbish, decadent, non-minglers
Coloureds	'True Mauritian', intelligent	Clever, conceited, overambitious

Table 2: Stereotypes of Self and Other (Eriksen, 1998:54 with additional adaptations from my own fieldwork research).

subjected to this negative trait, she was simultaneously distancing herself from a negative character trait that she felt didn't apply to her, as well as silently claiming the positive Hindu stereotype she preferred to relate to. My initial querying of this blanket representation also disrupted the expected order of the conversation. Nadia was genuinely taken aback when she asked, "haven't you noticed this to be the case?" She had employed the stereotype, and had simultaneously positioned me into the role of sympathetic listener – it was not a point I was meant to query. Rather than making further generalised comments along the lines of "they're *always* secretive" (my emphasis), she then amended it to "that's been my experience." Nadia was subsequently reserved and spoke less freely for a while until the interview conversation took a different line.

Example two: One experience occurred when the local bus I was travelling on was detoured due to roadworks; it was directed off familiar main roads and instead had to carve its way through some very well-kept residential roads. One particular house in one of these 'off the beaten track' roads was evidently a child care centre or a playschool, and was busy with parents and children hurrying back and forth; the narrow street was edged with cars, causing the bus to have to drive through slowly and carefully. Of particular note in this experience was the markedly white skin and non-black hair of all the parents and children moving between cars and the child care centre. It was a child care centre with a dominantly (if not exclusively) Franco-Mauritian clientele. There was a clear, startling juxtaposition between the skin colour of those on the bus and those outside; and it was clear that the aging bus, with its loud engine, polluting exhaust and dark-skinned passengers were the out-of-place notes in the daily routine of this particular secluded street.

This was an area not far from where I had grown up in Mauritius in Curepipe, and I had had no idea of its existence. It was a startling sight to me, as I almost felt as if I could have been back in Australia, where pale skin, hair and eyes are an everyday experience (unlike most of my experiences of everyday Mauritius). When relating this experience to people (Indo-Mauritians) afterwards, rather than, for example, acknowledging the upper socio-economic strata of that particular pocket of town, their responses drew exclusively upon notions of Franco-Mauritians (*bann blancs)* as being 'non-minglers' and 'snobbish' to comment on the situation. Socio-economic

privilege is implied in the non-mingling and snobbish stereotype, but it is not foregrounded as the main reason. I explained my surprise at this existence of this Franco-Mauritian 'pocket' so close to where I had grown up without knowing of it, but although my listeners did not know of it either, their explanations via stereotypes meant that surprise was unnecessary. The responses were along the lines of 'well, yes, what would you expect? They don't mingle.' Indeed, the responses suggested that surprise would be needed only if there was a departure from the non-mingling and snobbish Franco-Mauritian stereotype.

Example three: On a further occasion, I was being driven past a particular village in a lower socio-economic area, where there were many Creole males sitting around, seemingly aimlessly on the sides of the road, under trees, watching the traffic go by – in what Eriksen might term 'liming'. Eriksen explains 'liming' as 'the art of doing nothing' (1990) and is a term and a practice in use in Trinidad. I use it here in its broader sense of 'hanging around' or 'idling', rather than in its particularly Trinidadian context as "a form of performing art" (Eriksen, 1990:n.p). It refers to those instances I observed in Mauritius where, at any given time of the day or night, people (usually males) would be sitting by roadsides, under trees, sometimes alone, sometimes in twos, threes or a group, not seemingly doing anything in particular other than watching the world and passing cars go by. This is quite a common sight/experience when driving through villages in Mauritius, although this particular village had so many 'limers', it was especially noteworthy. As all 'limers' tend to watch traffic going by, in this experience, the sheer volume of people meant that there were multiple gazes on the car as we drove through – which made the drive through a rather daunting experience. It is worth noting that, this particular village, like many others where liming is visibly prevalent, did not have any shared community spaces such as a shop, which means that roadsides, trees or pavements frequently act as the only public spaces to be outside – to hold conversations, network or gossip.

Although in this particular instance the 'limers' were Creole, 'limers' in general do not belong to any one ethnic group; Indo-Mauritian 'limers' are also prevalent, although I never saw any phenotypically Sino-Mauritians or Franco-Mauritians 'limers'. During this one particular drive, I asked the Tamil driver why he thought

there was so much liming, in that particular village. His reply was prompt: he felt that it was a 'typical' example of Creole laziness, in not wanting to work and living for the fun of today (a critique of Creoles which draws heavily on the 'lazy' and 'careless' stereotypes). He then drew a direct parallel between Africa being a third world continent and the African ancestry of Creoles to their overall low socio-economic standing in Mauritius and commented that "they don't try" as though there was a logical connection between the two instances. The views of the Tamil driver were asserted as 'fact', rather than opinion, and because I had asked the question of the driver, rather than a conversation, he did not expect any response, sympathetic or otherwise. He finished his comments with (the Kreol equivalent of) a disapproving 'tsk'. This example is significant for the way in which ancestral spaces, current socio-political circumstances and stereotypes get linked seamlessly together by the driver.

Example four: In one of my final experiences during my most recent fieldtrip, I accompanied a young Hindu woman, Rekha, who had been invited by her Tamil friend, Amritha, to join in her in participating in the procession of Tamil festival of Cavedee. Rekha and I were also joined by her older brother and his children. None of the Hindus had ever seen the festival from beginning to end before, and had previously only stood to watch sections of the pilgrimage if they happened upon it while being out and about. The day finished with myself and Rekha, her sister and their nephews and nieces all dining at Amritha's family's house, eating foods which are considered to be Tamil specialities. On the way home, driving through the back streets of Amritha's lower socio-economic neighbourhood, the car headlights suddenly picked out what looked like a violent fight. A group of males of all ages – from young boys up to adult men – were clustered threateningly in mob fashion around a cowering shirtless older male. Such back roads are theoretically wide enough to allow two cars to pass each other, although the more common practice is for cars to pull over and to take turns through. The mob was easily large enough to have stretched across the entire road (at least twenty, probably more); they parted to either side of the road to allow our car minimal access.

As we drove silently through, the group clustered to the same side of the road as the single shirtless male did not dilute their angry expressions towards him. It is possible to speculate endlessly about what was the cause of that situation without ever having

recourse to the truth. However, as soon as we had driven through and were back onto the main street, the car driver (Rekha's older brother) broke the silence in the car, saying half-flippantly, half-seriously, "see? This is what happens now that their festival is over!"

None of the participating males looked definitely 'Tamil'; they were all clearly broadly Indo-Mauritian, but not necessarily Tamil per se. Nor was this neighbourhood viewed as a definitely Tamil area. Yet this was Rekha's brother's initial comment. Rather than, for example, speculating about the causes of the violence, or reproving the presence of young children in that setting, he instead immediately implied that this was 'typical' behaviour of Tamils once their religious commitments were completed. In many ways, this can be seen as an unnecessary comment. Rekha's brother had helped transport the devotional offerings to the river at the beginning of the day without a demur, battling heavy traffic to do so; his children, along with their Aunt Rekha, had participated in the large portions of the Cavedee procession, including the end-of-procession religious rituals at the *kovil* and, subsequently, dinner at Amritha's family's house. Many of the day's activities could be characterised as part of an openness to exchange, where Rekha and her nephews and nieces took part in the procession, experiencing an Other religious occasion. In other words, Rekha and her nephews and nieces got to see and experience how they did fit together alongside Tamil others – in participating in complementary rituals that translated relatively smoothly and easily between Hindu and Tamil religious frameworks. The experience allowed an imagining and understanding within the ethnic imaginary, within the mental maps, that focussed on the blurring of boundaries between the Hindu Self and Tamil Other.

With his blunt comment about the mob incident, Rekha's brother re-drew, reinforced and reified the boundary between Hindus and Tamils. Within the context of openness and exchange characterising the day, it was a harsh and uncalled-for comment – a rejection of the commonalities, hospitality and sharing experienced – and re-affirmed the Hindu identity at the deliberate expense of the Tamil ethnicity. The comment, half-flippant and half-serious, forces an artificial reminder that Hindus and Tamils may have commonalities, but that they are not the same and do not always fit together. Hindus are implicitly positively represented in his statement, 'this is what they do

when their religious fast and festival is over'; it draws on the stereotype that Hindus cannot possibly behave in this violent manner because they are sensible and moderate. Interestingly, Tamils (as well as Telegus and Marathis) do not have a separate stereotype, being generally 'lumped in' together with Hindus, as holding 'sensible' and 'moderate' for their positive stereotype. Yet Rekha's brother deliberately carved out a difference, keeping Hindus as 'sensible' and 'moderate', while Othering Tamils as being inconsistent or contradictory in their religious observances. It is a weak demarcation, but it is a demarcation that is, nonetheless, drawn out.

These four, very distinct examples illustrate the promptness and ease with which stereotypes can be mobilised as explanations for a wide variety of situations – from personal lack of connections towards entire ethnic groups (as in Nadia's case) to socio-economically-influenced situations (the perceived invisibility of Franco-Mauritians in daily settings and the very visible presence of 'limers') and sometimes, by drawing a very long bow (as in the case of Rekha's brother). Although the majority of these examples were generated specifically as a result of questions/comments that I initiated or by my presence as an outsider who was asking questions, they nevertheless illustrate the ready catalogue of oversimplified explanations arising out of stereotypes.

These ideas and stereotypes about Self and Other are frequently mobilised in everyday contexts and are used to provide seemingly rational, logical explanations about particular individuals as well as groups. Individuals, groups, behaviours are easily couched and interpreted within pre-existing, stereotyped frameworks and discourses that get woven into the ethnic imaginary. *Bann* Others can thus be readily, simplistically and sometimes inaccurately explained and explained away. While this resorting to stereotyped explanations suggests a wilful disengagement from the complexities of how historical, cultural and socio-economic factors impact on people's lives, it is as much about an approach to the quotidian multi-ethnic world that foregrounds cultural differences as a way of explaining and understanding realities, and that contextualises ethnic groups as distinct. Brown and Theodossopoulos comment that "[r]eading the local use of ethnic or religious stereotypes as straightforward evidence for prejudice or hatred perpetrates a form of blinkered liberalism" (2004:5). The constant drawing on stereotypes and ethnic labels

is less about outright hatred, than it is about constant re-articulations of Self versus Others, usually with a juxtaposition against a specific Other.

The ethnic imaginary, then, as well as having layers of mental maps, classifications and performances of ethnicity, and colour-coded ethnicities, also contains catalogues of nicknames and stereotypes which offer a discursive means of articulating ethnicity and Otherness. The complexities of ways in which ethnicity is recognised, situated and verbalised as part of the ethnic imaginary illustrates the strength of its pervasiveness in people's everyday lives; it is arguably an inevitable element of living in a state of everyday cosmopolitanism.

Narrating Otherness: Within the Inner Circle

Where the above four examples cited were singular instances, the articulation of ethnicity was also less random and more frequent in other settings. I was also able to record other comments during informal conversations within the inner circle, where stereotypes and labels were frequently employed. As discussed in the previous chapter, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius", the inner circle usually comprises a mono-ethnic, extended family-based membership; it usually congregates within the family home which can generally be considered a 'back stage' area where self-presentations are minimised because of a lack of a multi-ethnic audience.

My access to such inner circles was restricted to my networks of family and friends where I was granted 'entry' and 'access' as a result of long-standing pre-fieldwork connections. As a result, this ethnographic data is necessarily filtered through the prism of those Hindu-Mauritian inner circles to which I had access. These informal conversations were where the narrative of stereotypes and ethnic labels were popularly employed; random comments, queries and non-sequiteurs frequently drew upon, justified and reinforced negative stereotypes of Others while simultaneously invoking positive stereotypes of the Self. In particular, many of the instances from these Hindu inner circles draw on the narrative of Hindus as being moderate in their religious observances, in direct contrast to the stereotype of the extreme and fanatical Muslim. These conversations offer insights into articulations and narratives people use to imagine and situate themselves as well as Others.

Calls to prayer in different parts of the island in particular, sparked a number of comments by different Hindu-Mauritians in particular:

> I can understand that the call to prayer was necessary back in the days when people couldn't afford watches. But things are different now. Everyone has a watch. Therefore, there is no longer a need to keep this call to prayer going.

This comment was made seriously to me in particular, with no overt sign of jest. The speaker knew I was in Mauritius 'doing fieldwork' and made his comments in a reasonable tone, using a seemingly-neutral modern logic as a reason why the call to prayer was no longer necessary. I responded equally seriously (if naively), and pointed out the importance of the invention of tradition and how the call to prayer had a deeper and more symbolic role to play than mere time-keeping. My reply was greeted with a nonplussed silence, and after a short pause, was side-stepped as the conversation returned to the main point that the call to prayer was not something that should be impacting on and inconveniencing all non-Muslims with its volume and frequency. This comment, then, was not made for the sake of debate about traditional religious practices; rather, it was about fitting Muslims into the negative stereotype as being 'fanatical' or uncompromising about their religion – particularly evidenced in the way the call to prayer was viewed as an intrusion in all non-Muslims' lives. Left implicit within this conversation is an unspoken but positive self-representation of the Hindus in the room as being sensible, rational and moderate – especially where religion is concerned.

Another comment, made in a different and place, espoused similar sentiments:

> The call to prayer is so loud! Why does it have to be so loud? We're a small village here and there are four mosques – four mosques! – in the area. Why do they need so many?

The area in question where this comment was made is one of the largest regional towns in the northern part of the island. The numerically largest two ethnic groups in this particular area are Creoles and Hindus. This comment draws on negative stereotypes of Muslims, albeit covertly. Without saying it directly, there is a clear inference that four mosques in "a small village" are too many. The place in question is a village that was within one of the larger regional towns – the four mosques are scattered throughout the regional town area, rather than being all located in close

proximity of the one village area. But the statement condenses the town space while simultaneously magnifying the number of mosques, almost giving the impression that there are four mosques a few buildings apart.

The follow-up question, "why do they need so many?" further lends itself to an answer drawn directly from the negative, Othered stereotype of Muslims as being 'fanatical' about their religion. Interestingly, it is difficult to convey the tone in which this comment was made, yet it contributes much to the process of demarcation of Self and Other. The entire comment, and especially the last question, was phrased in a patient, struggling-to-comprehend tone, rather than any kind of overt irritation. This exaggerated patience also incorporates the positive Hindu self-representation of 'sensibility' and 'moderation' against which to juxtapose the negative 'fanaticism' of Muslims.

Both of these particular comments were directed straight at me as the 'outsider' in the room; the catalyst to both these comments was when the call to prayer started; and both these comments were made in eminently logical, reasonable tones. In the first instance, my attempt to engage with and counter the modern logic was shown to be beside the point. Such conversations incorporating negative stereotypes of Others are rarely open to challenges or critiques; instead, these narratives are accepted and reified as 'facts' rather than opinions. There is an expectation of understanding and sympathy; even if the speaker and listener are from two different ethnic groups, sympathy will be expected through the commonality of the negative depictions of a third other. In the second instance, I murmured an awkward 'mmm' in response, a sufficient enough response to be interpreted as sympathy, so that the conversation went on smoothly and resumed its earlier directions.

Other comments offered during my participation in Hindu-based inner circles have taken on conspiracy-like proportions and have included reports of Muslims trying to smuggle guns into Mauritius during Ramadan and Muslims who killed a dog because it was barking during the Muslim call to prayer. The most recent over-the-top conspiratorial comment in this vein I was made privy to, was the "little-known fact" that "Muslims get free bread during Ramadan that is paid for by the Government". The reasoning behind this bizarrely extreme accusation was based on the experience

of one Hindu-Mauritian, who, during the most recent Ramadan *karem*, needed to be at work during the early hours of the morning and bought some bread for his breakfast at 3am. (The bakers and bakeries operate earlier hours during Ramadan to accommodate the pre-dawn food requirements of their Muslim clientele). When this particular Hindu-Mauritian attempted to pay for his bread, he was told, "No, *Tonton*. No need to pay, it's *Karem* time now, remember?" (*Tonton* is a Kreol term meaning uncle and in this context, seems to denote a combination of respect without formality).

From this singular experience, the 'logic' that has been added to the telling of the story includes government stipends to bakers (to make the bread available free of charge for Muslims during the pre-dawn hours), which is therefore an unadvertised government favour directly to the Muslim community. Folded into this 'logic' also, was the commonly-held local assertion that the at-the-time Mauritian Prime Minister, Mr Navin Ramgoolam, had a Muslim mistress in London; comments then draw a 'logical' conclusion of Mr Ramgoolam pleasing his mistress by pleasing her ethnic community. Alternative explanations for this singular instance were not considered. For example, the baker could have also been a Muslim who chose to not accept payment for his produce in the pre-dawn hours as a spiritual approach to religion and his customers during Ramadan, or, the baker might have been generally spiritually-minded and made such pre-dawn offers to all customers during all religious instances of *Karem*; these are two alternative interpretations of the factual events that took place, but these were not deemed likely.

The place of truthfulness in these particular comments, stories and rumours is rarely emphasised; instead they are presented as undeniable facts that are in no need of substantiation – as though the content of the information makes it real. Without fail, all these particular stories frame Mauritian Muslims with the negative stereotyped qualities of perceived religious extremism while simultaneously, implicitly, reinforcing the positive stereotyped features of sensibility and moderation attributed to Mauritian Hindus. The telling of all these particular stories was restricted to the privacy of the inner circle – the private, back stage setting of the home; I never heard any of the speakers utter similar sentiments in any other context. Eriksen points out that there is little to no censorship around othering within this 'inner circle' and that it is also considered a 'safety valve' (1998:47). Similarly, Hill and Wilson comment

that "the politics of identity can take place in any social setting, and are often best and first recognised in domains of the private" (2003:2).

Interestingly, most of these instances were sparked by the call to prayer – not just the opinions debating the necessity of the call to prayer, or of questioning the number of mosques, but also the extreme allegations of gun-smuggling and dog-killing. Bhabha points out that, "[t]he 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'" (1990:4 – author's emphasis). Similarly, Brown and Theodossopoulos state that, "rhetorics of 'otherness' in everyday life… (are)… a means of affirming social solidarity and membership" (2004:7) and that, "the rhetorical use of stereotypes… draw boundaries of inclusion around a speaker and his or her audience" (ibid.). The articulation of many of these stories and opinions can be seen almost as a reaction to the (audible) penetration of the call to prayer into the inner circles of Hindu homes. Although I found the call to prayer easily slid into my experiences of the everyday 'backdrop', within these Hindu inner circles, this was not the case. It appeared that, to ignore the call to prayer would be to not highlight its Otherness, while acknowledgement of the call simultaneously reinforces and articulates its position as being Other than Hindu within the ethnic imaginary. Thus, while stereotypes are a form of representational violence, their use is not necessarily motivated by hate; petty irritations, dissonances and ambivalences perhaps, and perhaps more simply, a reminder of a nearby Other community.

Narrating Otherness: Within the Outer Circles
In contrast to the inner circle examples, ethnicity is rarely explicitly articulated in the outer circles. It is performed, presented, interpreted and classified – all of which usually take place non-verbally; ethnicity is rarely articulated or discussed at all, let alone with the openness or degree that it gets addressed within the inner circles. As one interviewee commented, "we don't always talk about these (religious) matters in all circles. It can produce difficulties or problems of fanaticism... They are taboo subjects and it is better to preserve peace". Iqbal, another interviewee, similarly commented:

> [t]here are things that we're going to say in public, there are things that we say in
> groups and there are things that we say amongst ourselves (*il y a des choses*

qu'on va dire en publique, il y a des choses on va dire en groupes, et il y a des choses on va se dire entre nous)".

The articulation of certain Othering and stereotype-reliant ideas within the inner circle is matched by its converse absence within the wider, more public spaces and circles. I was made privy to an exception – where ethnic Othering was brought into play within an outer circle situation. It was a popular story recounted by various members within the one family and consisted of the story of the eldest son, a schoolboy, who, while playing an informal game of football with several friends (of mixed ethnicities) in a local park, was interrupted by the Muslim call to prayer in the distance. The Muslim members in the group were then informed that their God had to be deaf – 'why else would the call to prayer have to be so loud?!' The Muslim kids promptly retorted to their Hindu teammate (who had made the initial comment) that, in that case, Hindu Gods were therefore greedy – 'see how much food is always being given to them as offerings!' And, not to be left out, the Creole (and Sino-Mauritian) kids in the group were then targeted in turn and informed that their Christian God had to be blind – 'because of all the candles that always need to be lit in churches!' This story is particularly noteworthy for its overt ethnic references, in that three of the major religions are focussed on, in turn. I was not aware of many such stories or experiences, where Othering – and processes of Othering – are this overtly articulated in the outer circles.

There are three points worth making about this story. Most obviously, as already mentioned, three of main religions in Mauritius are targeted in turn; there is an 'egalitarian' approach to the insulting and Othering within this situation, so that no obvious religion or religious practice is spared, nor is one particular religion overly focussed on or victimised. In the same way that, if one schoolchild calls a schoolmate by their ethnic label, there is a ready 'right of reply' with the return ethnic label. Further, the insults rest on pre-existing knowledge about Others' religious practices; this can thus be seen as also being a form of intercultural exchange through the airing of knowledge about Others' religious rituals.

Secondly, significantly, there is the use of humour in the insults of each of the Gods. The differing elements of worship in each of the three religions receive the focus of the humour: the call to prayer means a deaf God; offerings of food during worship

means a greedy God; and practices of candle-lighting means a blind God. Ah Eng, in discussing the everyday situation in Singapore, develops the notion of 'ethnic expletives' (1996:98-99), within which she incorporates verbal abuse, ethnic insults and derogatory language. She particularly states that:

> [t]he degree of sensitivity and seriousness with which ethnic insults are made and received depends on each situation and level of familiarity among parties. But in the first place, they do not assume the seriousness of hate abuse. In most instances of friendly joking, bantering and excited play, they are not meant to be taken so seriously that the situation turns sour; instead, they require an attitude of humour appropriate to the situation for mixed play to be possible (1996:99).

Werbner makes a similar point: "[h]umour defuses potential conflict and blunts racist stereotyping, while glossing over persistent tensions and ambivalences" (2004b: 902). The humour in this situation worked because there was space for across-the-board insults to be delivered. Exasperation at the call to prayer which led to the initial insult to the Muslim kids' God might well have had the potential for conflict if there had not been grounds for an equally humorous tit-for-tat insult in reply; possible tensions were arguably defused and glossed over, even while ethnic boundaries were articulated and reified.

Thirdly, a crucial element in this instance is the place of Kreol as a non-ethnic-specific language which allows the easy crossing-over between ethnic boundaries and differences. Earlier, I discussed the useful ambiguity in Kreol words like *bann*, which sidestep the need for such self-conscious terms as 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' in everyday vocabulary. I also discussed the useful ambiguity in the terms *nou* (we or us) and *zot* – particularly *zot*, which can equally mean 'them' or 'you'. This ambiguity was important to how the 'insulting of the Gods' situation unfolded; the ambiguity of *zot* means that *nou* and *zot* – does not present the same overt binary distinction of us/them. Rather, *zot* offers an us/you divide which incorporates a sense of commensurability (rather than the incommensurability presented in us/them). In taking turns insulting each others' Gods, use of *zot* allows the meaning of 'your Gods', rather than 'their Gods'; it is therefore articulated as a dialogue towards the Other, which provides all *bann* groups with a voice and a place in the discussion, rather than being a monologue about a silenced Other (in direct contrast to the conversations taking place in the inner circles). In this example, particularly given the outer circle – the public space – in which it took place, ethnicity is foregrounded but

done humourously and with a Kreol language use that is not as incommensurably binary as it is in English or French so that divisions are articulated, reified, yet crucially, are simultaneously diffused and defused.

Articulations of ethnicity are frequent in quotidian Mauritius. As part of these articulations, ready, shared catalogues of ethnic nicknames and stereotypes can be mobilised. On the one hand, given that identifying the Other is equally about identifying (and distancing) the Self (Bhabha, 1990:4; Hall, 2000:146-7), inner circle articulations can be seen as simplified (and often random) assertions of ethnicity. These casual and repeated declarations make full use of nicknames and stereotypes, airing and dissipating dissonances and petty irritations. On the other hand, outer circle articulations of ethnicity are more complex. Often, outer circles expressions of ethnicity are done in self-presentations and performances, rather than in direct verbal statements. Kreol's concept of general 'groupness' (*bann*) facilitates and neutralises assertions of ethnicity, whilst the binary of 'us' (*nou*) and 'them' (*zot*) is less stark and more conducive to an idea of a dialogue, thanks to 'you'/'them' duality of *zot*. The example of the schoolboys jokingly insulting each others' Gods is illustrative of the complex identifications and simultaneous dialogue which can be had as part of articulations of ethnicity.

Overlooking Ethnicity: Sidesteps and Transgressions

Thus far in this chapter, I have explored an additional layer of the ethnic imaginary – the articulations of ethnicity – focussing on the complex combinations of ways in which Mauritians understand and situate themselves and Others, as part of their everyday lived experiences of multi-ethnicity. While many Mauritians may frequently observe the limits and borders of their ethnic identities (and those of others), there are equally tactical sidesteps and transgressions – a nuanced discounting or avoidance of the ethnic groups and boundaries – that can equally constitute part of people's negotiations of ethnicity on a daily basis. In such situations, ethnicity and ethnic performances get ignored or subsumed, with ethnic boundaries being broached, blurred or overlooked.

I would argue that decisions to overlook ethnicity are deliberate and self-conscious, and in overt defiance or rejection of the dominant filter of ethnicity evident in everyday Mauritius. Like the strategic diffusive potential offered by the neutral, non-ethnic Kreol, skating over ethnicity offers approaches for negotiating and avoiding moments of ethnic friction or tension, when there are moments of 'not getting along also' – as per Priya's sentiments which opened the beginning of the previous chapter. Overlooking ethnicity can take two forms: on the one hand, an overt sidestepping of ethnicity, or, on the other hand, transgressions of ethnicity. The overt sidestepping of an ethnic identity is often substituted by an alternate identity structure with equivalent resonance, while transgressions of ethnicity require tactical shifts into the liminal spaces in-between ethnic groups, where the boundaries get blurred. In an approach of sidestepping ethnicity, the ethnic categories on the mental maps are subsumed within other overarching categories deemed to be of greater relevance – such as age, occupation or national, Mauritian-based identities. In an approach of transgressing ethnic boundaries, cultural properties are shared and/or appropriated, performances are diluted as categories are negotiated and moved between. Drawing on the notion of mental maps, a sidestepping of ethnicity requires a deliberate self-positioning *across* ethnic groups, while transgressing ethnicity uses a temporary self-situating *in-between* ethnic groups.

Sidestepping Ethnicity, Asserting Mauritian-ness
Of my interviewees, only a small minority decidedly expressed themselves as being Mauritians, above any ethnic identity. This is not to say that they ignored, were oblivious to, or consciously disembedded themselves from any ethnicised self-positionings, but rather that they consciously cultivated a sense of a Mauritian identity to be applied as part of their everyday understandings of the world around them. Iqbal and Bernard were two such interviewees. Iqbal argued for a sense of commonality-across-difference with all other Mauritians, pointing out that "I define myself firstly as a Mauritian. I live like others [like everyone else], I eat like others, I get by like others. I see no difference between me and someone of a different (an other) religious persuasion" – ("*Je vois pas de différence entre moi et quelqu'un d'un autre confession religieuse*"). He explained his conscious approach to sidestepping ethnicity by saying that, "there are various different (food) dishes, but for me, there aren't any differences between these dishes; for me, they are just dishes". Rather than

focus on those facets of everyday performances and self-presentations that emphasised (ethnic) differences, Iqbal drew out the similarities across the ethnic differences. Differences, especially ethnic differences, were subsumed beneath the broad daily social structures that he felt everyone had in common. Thus, for Iqbal, it wasn't about ethnic differences (the varying contents of the dishes), but in how everyone had to operate within comparable social dynamics and pressures (the need for a dish itself). Iqbal's view looked to social requirements beyond ethnic differences as a way of establishing Mauritian-ness and similarity.

Although he also drew on a Mauritian identity, Bernard had a different approach from Iqbal's, stressing his own personal sense of across-the-board participation in all ethnic activities, particularly religious festivals. He stated that, "if there's a Hindu festival, I'll go. If there's a Tamil festival, I'll go. Chinese New Year, I'll go. I feel myself as one (as belonging) in all these religions." This, Bernard explained, was why he described himself as "a pluri-cultural Mauritian." Bernard's approach to Mauritian-ness was a determinedly all-inclusive one compared to Iqbal's 'sameness across difference' platform. Bernard's view of Mauritian-ness incorporates an acknowledgement of ethnicity as existing and influential, but, crucially, with porous borders which can be traversed, entered and exited and which are subsumable beneath the sense of Mauritian-ness. Eriksen (1998) and Hills (2002) have both commented on the preference of some Mauritians to sidestep ethnicity in favour of a nationally-based identity. But sidestepping ethnicity in favour of any alternate identity does not mean ignoring the presence of ethnicity. Both Iqbal and Bernard can be seen as being keenly aware of the ethnic saturation of the quotidian around them, in spite of (or because of) their desire not to elevate its significance within their own lives. However, unconsciously or otherwise, they each made reference to their own particular ethnic groups first (Muslim and Creole, respectively) when referring to *bann* ethnic groups during their interviews, either by listing it first, or by providing examples drawn their personal ethnicity. Further, Bernard, in asserting himself as "a pluri-cultural Mauritian", listed all the Other ethnic festivals he would participate in, but without mentioning his own, assuming perhaps that it was obvious or a given; in doing so, he illustrates an awareness of his own ethnicity, even as he is sidestepping it. In the experiences and outlooks of these two individuals, ethnicity is self-consciously made less important, while being overlaid with a sense of Mauritian-ness.

Strategic Transgressions of Ethnicity: Exchange and Anxiety

But alongside the sidestepping of ethnicity, another form of negotiation around the dominance of ethnicity is what I am calling strategic transgressions, where any movement in between groups and categories is carefully and tactically done. While ethnicity gets sidestepped or subsumed in favour of an alternative identity, strategic transgressions ultimately end up highlighting boundaries, the groups and the differences between them and ethnicity is ultimately reified. Spivak (1990) speaks of 'strategic essentialism', which is described by Noble, Poynting and Tabar as: "the articulation of an irreducible otherness, which is operationalised primarily for the critical speaking position it offers minority intellectuals" (1999:31). What I am calling a strategic transgression is an inversion, where people deliberately cross the confines of their particular ethnic categories and venture into obviously 'Other' territory, rituals or practices. These strategic transgressions are nuanced, tactically and carefully carried out and, crucially, are usually short-lasting – in that the boundary or border crossings (between self and other) are not kept blurred for any significant length of time. Instead, boundary crossings (or elasticising) serve to emphasise the place and strength of both, ethnic categories and ethnic boundaries. Like the sidestepping of ethnicity, strategic transgressions can allow (temporary) openness and exchange, especially in quotidian contexts, but unlike the sidestepping of ethnicity, the focus does not shift onto an alternate, overarching nationally-derived identity. Strategic transgressions do not diffuse or distract from the dominant focus on ethnicity – instead, if anything, they reinforce it.

Strategic transgressions are therefore not a wholehearted shift into a realm of hybridity. Hybridity, according to Young, "makes difference into sameness and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different" (1995:26). It comprises a "logic of both/and" (Felski, 1996: 12) which forges something new and in-between. Similarly, Bhabha's focus on hybridity as comprising an in-between positioning, where "difference is neither One nor the Other" (1994:219), has led to his concept of the 'third space' – where disruption, displacement, translation and negotiation mean that alternative positionings can be developed (Bhabha, 1994; Rutherford, 1990). Strategic transgressions take place with an awareness of 'both/and', but without trying to

achieve any kind of permanent 'third space' positioning; disruption, displacement, translation and negotiation are all part of the transgressive experience, but are usually temporary. Noble et al. propose the notion of 'strategic hybridity' which they use in concert with an everyday-based discussion of strategic essentialism (1999:39). They explain that "[s]trategic essentialism and strategic hybridity are not the strategies of different groups, but different moments of negotiation that each performs in successive interactions …(This should not) simply be seen as contradictory, but as positional" (ibid.). The tactical, positional and contextual hybridity is closer to the notion of strategic transgression that I am arguing for. Strategic transgressions allow forays into the in-between-ness of Self and Other, but usually in temporal, liminal situations. These transgressions are strategic; they play with, test, extend or reject ethnic embedding and ethnic boundaries into temporarily mixed, blurred, creolised and hybrid spaces. However, in so doing, the transgressions ultimately serve to reinforce ethnic borders and boundaries.

Strategic transgressions are one of the ways in which openness and exchange can be generated, particularly those boundary-blurrings which are mild, short-term and tend to reinforce boundaries and differences between Self and Other. Interestingly, religion constitutes one of the realms in which boundaries do get strategically transgressed. Eriksen frequently cites the Mauritian proverb "*Sakenn prier dan so fason*" ('Each prays in their own way') (1998); this was not a proverb that I came across readily either through interviews or general conversations, with only one of my interviewees mentioning it, and then, without much emphasis; however it does imply an idea of religious equity. Openness then, can be generated as a result of strategic extending of boundaries, but *not* at the expense of rupturing the ethnic status quo.

Wedding celebrations, particularly those of Other ethnicities, as well as special religious events offer occasions for very mild forms of boundary blurring which equally constitute occasions for exchange – especially in the form of food. Food and its consumption is one of the most frequently-cited forms of sharing and exchange in multi-ethnic situations (Ang, 2001; Chua, 1998; Ah Eng, 1996). Many informants spoke of Others' religious festivals in terms of the food delicacies they could

anticipate. These include such items as the Sino-Mauritians' *gateaux la seer*[5], often available after Sino-Mauritian festivals such as the Chinese New Year; Tamil weddings and festivals were eagerly spoken of by non-Tamils in terms of *rasson* and *sagoût*[6] among others; and Hindu festivals and weddings feature numerous sweet cakes[7]. These ethnically-specific delicacies are separate to other foods which have distinct ethnic roots, but which now can be regarded as everyday foods – what Hills calls "Mauritian food" (2002:295) – in that the ethnic particularity attached to them has more or less evaporated. These foods include everyday dishes and street foods[8] and are not imbued with the ethnic particularity that remains attached to the (usually sweet) delicacies associated with religious and special occasions. These foods get shared around in the outer circle – in workplaces, schools, and among friends – and are looked forward to by those in the outer circle with no direct connection to the occasions.

When I asked whether the making of these Other delicacies could be taught and learnt, the response was muted. One informant, Geeta, said decisively that, "*li pas pareil*" ('it's not the same'); while this was intended as an acknowledgement of superior skill born out of long-term experience, it also implies a correlation between ethnic membership out of which arises experience and skill in ethnic delicacy-making. Although this is on a very surface and simplistic level, the consumption of these ethnically-specific delicacies in the aftermath of the special ethnic occasions can still be seen as a form of participation and exchange across ethnic boundaries. It is an exchange rather than any form of real transgression. Even though it is short-lasting, it offers a sense of sharing of ethnically-particular cultural property and reciprocity through mutual sharing – and is without any permanent blurring of boundary lines.

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[5] *Gateaux la seer* is best translated as 'wax cake' and so named for its resemblance and texture to floor polish; it is the common, Kreol name for the cake and is so labelled without derogatory intent.

[6] These are, I believe, the Tamil names for these dishes. *Rasson* is a spiced dish (resembling a curry), however, it is served in a glass and is a dish that one drinks. *Sagout* is the Kreol term for 'Sago' and is served as a dessert. Where *Rasson* is understood as a Tamil dish, *Sagout* usually needs the Tamil context clarified. Thus a non-Tamil might state, "I went to a Tamil wedding on the weekend, and the *Sagout* was so good!"

[7] Including *Luddou*, *Gulab Jammun* and *Rasgulla*, which are not restricted to special occasions, but which become part of sweets giveaways especially in the aftermath of religious or special occasions.

[8] These foods include, among others, *gateaux piments* (literally 'chilli cakes' in Kreol); *bhajia* (this is the correct Hindi pronunciation, but they are just as readily termed '*baajja*' with a more Kreol pronunciation); *rougaille* (a tomato-based dish that is frequently featured in overseas shows on Mauritian cuisine) and *briani* (it is known by this, its official Indo-language name, but it is also called *briyyé*, its Kreol equivalent).

In the previous chapter, I touched on the organised public performances of ethnicity generated out of particular religious rituals – Père Laval for Christians, Cavedee for Tamils and Maha Shivaratri for Hindus – involving pilgrimages through the streets from one place to another. Although the overwhelming majority of devotees participating in the processions are from the celebrating ethnic group, several of my respondents made a point of saying that they participated in the various pilgrimages, accompanying friends whose religious occasion it was. While it appeared that the social aspect of joining their friends on the processions was the main motivator, they nevertheless readily cited it as an example of their open-mindedness in making the pilgrimage. As with participations in weddings, this procession participation is tactical, partial and comprises a strategic transgression. It is undertaken with the acknowledgement and endorsement of a friend acting in the role of insider (respondents commented that they would not have participated in such Other processions without their insider friends present). While there is no requirement of *Karem* bodily purification, the Othered participants might consume blessed foods offered around at the end of the ritual.

However, none of the respondents took part in the actual religious (worshipping) ceremony at the procession destination; this was neither expected nor raised as an issue. Other participants can thus temporarily blur boundary lines by readily joining in the pilgrimage, showing openness and gaining some insight or "ethnographic knowledge" (Ah Eng, 1996:107) into religious rituals (if not ethnicity). But by *not* joining in the rituals themselves, these Other participants remain little more than audience observers, whose presence – however minimally transgressive – ultimately means that ethnic identities and boundaries are actually confirmed, reified and made more settled. It is a tactical transgression resulting some form of open understanding and possibly exchange, but without any long-term repercussions of having disrupted the existing ethnic landscape, categorisation or boundaries. (I discussed the example of Rekha in the previous section, who, along with her nephews and nieces, accompanied her friend Amritha during the procession of Cavedee. At the end of the day of exchange and some minimal blurring of boundaries, even though it was an annual event with a one-off invitation, Rekha's brother nevertheless used a random local dispute as a long bow via which to repair, reassert and re-articulate the

boundaries between Hindu and Tamil, retreating heavily from any blurring of ethnic categories). However, although the intersections and transgressions are temporary and ultimately emphasise ethnic boundaries, possibilities of openness and exchange are generated out of these transgressions and the possibilities remain.

Following on from their Maha Shivaratri pilgrimage to Grand Bassin, it is expected that pilgrims will then visit their local *mandir* and perform a *pooja* (a ritualised prayer)[9]. For reasons to do entirely with convenience, as she lives next door to a Tamil kovil, Anjili opted to carry out her *pooja* at the kovil, rather than make her way over the more significant distance to the nearest Hindu temple. Anjali is quite orthodox (and even traditional) in her performances of her Hindu ethnicity; unlike many of her siblings and peers, she wears sarees as an everyday garment rather than on special occasions only, she always wears a bindi (even at night), a selected few of her marriage bracelets can no longer be removed from her wrists, she is staunchly vegetarian and India has been her only international destination to date. Yet she had no qualms about carrying out her *pooja* at the next door *kovil*. She justified this particular transgression, saying with a sweep of her hand, that "God is God". Any other form of religious building however, would not have afforded the same transgressive option to Anjali as *kovils* are the only other religious building which house the *Shivling*; further, the Tamil, Telegu and Marathi faiths are quite readily situated as folding within the broader Hindu/Indo-based faith and belief system. Anjali's airy "God is God" logic, which provides a higher moral justification in support of her transgression, is thus a strategic one, in that, it is a boundary that she can blur but also, readily retreat from. It is a one-off, or at most, an annual instance of transgression.

A devout Hindu-Mauritian woman in the south-east of Mauritius has turned her garden into a temple; dwarfing her single storey home is a large, two-storey building which houses all types of Gods and deities in models as well as image formats. The *Mataji* holds a small weekly 'service' attended by worshippers from all over the

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[9] Following the traditional Hindu creation myth, poison was released during the creation of the universe, which Shiva swallowed in order save humankind. Shiva is thus frequently depicted in human form, but is coloured blue because of this poison. As part of the remembrance and giving thanks to Shiva, part of the post-procession Maha Shivaratri ritual is to pour the Grand Bassin water over the *Shivling* – the stone icon representing the God Shiva, to symbolically cool Shiva's throat.

island. What is of particular note about this (literally) home-grown temple is that, while most of the Gods and deities on display for worshipping purposes are drawn from the large array of Hindu Gods as well as past and present spiritual leaders, they are not exclusively Hindu. As well as Tamil, Telegu and Marathi icons of worship (which usually fall uncomplicatedly enough within the broad Hindu religious narratives), there are also a couple of statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus on display. These are very much in a minority, but these Christian icons of worship are nevertheless present and sharing the same space as Hindu icons of worship. This is an unusual sharing of religious space that I did not encounter elsewhere within Mauritius. The *Mataji* explained that it was her personal philosophy that all religions were equal in spirit and value. When I asked the *Mataji* if I could take some video footage of the breadth and width of multi-religious Gods in her temple, she was agreeable and made a point of pulling out her copy of the Qu'ran which she placed in a spare space on a green mat with a lit incense stick before it; she particularly drew my attention to the Qu'ran for inclusion on the video footage, and reiterated her views that all religions deserved equal attention and consideration. After filming however, she also removed it without saying why.

On the couple of occasions I attended the temple when the weekly 'service' was on, the worshippers were not homogeneously Hindu (going by phenotype); there were Creole worshippers also present, albeit in a very small minority. Broad Hindu religious worship protocols were followed, including the removal of shoes at the entrance to the temple. The *Mataji*'s approach to worship can be seen as tactically transgressive in that she combines religious icons into the one space of worship, using the 'higher' moral and philosophical judgement of all religions being equal – in opposition to the ethnic-specific focus dominating people's ethnic imaginaries; there is a sense of 'both/and' at play. However, although this inclusive religious space clouds religious and ethnic boundaries, it does so temporarily – without remaining in-between for any length of time. The religious space itself may be transgressively inclusive, but the majority of icons in the temple remained Hindu. Worshipping mores and rituals, including conservative dress, the removal of shoes, the use of incense and ritualised prayer patterns, also remained heavily Hindu-oriented. While there were equally some Christian icons within the temple space, Hindu worshippers for example did not always pray before these particular icons. Further, while there

was something of a multi-ethnic audience of worshippers, there was little to no interaction between them, before, during or after the 'service'.

These transgressions are strategic and mild. It is not surprising, I would argue, that many of the transgressions that generate a sense of openness and exchange are religious ones. They allow a high moral "God is God" view of worship and interethnic interaction that justifies a pushing of ethnic boundaries, but without erasing them. The "cultural stuff" contained within gets juxtaposed, and spaces may be shared and/or crossed, but without necessarily generating something 'new'. They are transgressions which can be made and retreated from without long-lasting negative repercussions or 'fallout'.

Pushing Boundaries, Patrolling Borders

However, not all boundary-blurring generates a sense of openness or exchange. Many transgressions can equally generate a form of ethnic border anxiety, where comments, questions and gazes are part of the accompanying negotiations – no matter how mild or temporary the transgressive behaviour might be. Nundeeta, an interviewee, described it as a sense of "keeping the (group) circle closed". Such anxiety seeks to patrol, reify and re-emphasise ethnic categories and their boundaries.

Vishan is a Hindu teenager whose hobbies include football, computers, manga and listening to contemporary popular music[10]. His first three interests were rarely ever acknowledged by his family members. In contrast, his enjoyment of Sega – even though it was not his only choice of music – frequently drew comments from his family within his inner circle, whether he was present or not. Vishan was matter-of-fact about his liking of Sega – neither overtly forthcoming, nor reticent. Although he was frequently teased – to his face – about how he listened to "Creole" music, he accepted the comments with shrugs, small smiles or silence, letting the comments wash over him and never trying to defend his preferences. The repeated attention that was brought to it by his immediate inner circle of relatives is illustrative of their concern with the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. Even though it is a mild

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[10] Mauritius radio's popular music playlists are drawn from the European and US charts – made up of English, French and Bollywood music, the occasional pop piece in Arabic – as well as the local Mauritian Sega music

transgression in that it involves the consumption of (what is perceived to be) another ethnic group's cultural property (albeit one that is part of popular music), it is an ongoing transgression – one that can take place and be experienced within the inner circle of the home. As such, it was frequently highlighted and spoken about – which really served to reinforce its Othered status.

In contrast to Vishan, Nundeeta is a young Hindu woman who has overtly embraced a very 'western' lifestyle in terms of her consumption of popular culture, with fast food, dining out, going out, night clubs, western music and dancing featuring significantly in her leisure pursuits. She has a circle of friends from all ethnic groups and socialises (and dates casually) outside her ethnic group. Her multi-ethnic friendships are close enough that she situates them as being within her first and second circle of intimacy. Nundeeta said she frequently had to negotiate comments about her friends from her family members; there was also family awareness of her western leisure pursuits, albeit without detail, as her attendance at night clubs, restaurants, fast food places largely remained outside and beyond her family's knowledge. (Her casual inter-ethnic dating life was successfully couched within her socialising and so escaped her family's gaze).

The most frequent comment from family members over her ethnically-mixed friendships were along the lines of 'oh, such and such is your friend? That's a (*Sinnwa* or *Musulman* or *Tamoul*) name, isn't it?' That Nundeeta's choices of friends were viewed as transgressive is clear, in that there is a deliberate highlighting of her friends' ethnicities couched within the seemingly-polite curiosity of the question – drawing attention to the boundary between ethnic groups. Nundeeta said her way of dealing with such questions by close and extended family members was to either ignore the ethnic boundary line being drawn, by making a bland, non-committal affirmative or, to pre-emptively (and defiantly) stress the differing ethnicity herself. Nundeeta also took every opportunity she could to additionally, strategically and visibly transgress further Hindu ethnic boundaries, such as consuming meals with pork[11] (considered an 'unclean' meat) and then describing in minute detail what the meal was like and how good it was, under the disapproving gazes of her family

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[11] Pork has taken on the status of a 'forbidden' or 'unclean' meat across most of Mauritius, with the exception of Sino-Mauritians and Chinese restaurants, where it features prominently in menus.

members, or deliberately opting for the *Kreol* pronunciations of Hindi-derived words. Nundeeta was very aware of her ethnic boundaries, and made a point of transgressing them whenever she could. But her multiple transgressions, although visible and even confrontational, were still mild – strategically so. In being deliberately petty, provoking or irritating in her choice of transgressions, Nundeeta was constantly highlighting and drawing attention to the boundaries of Hindu ethnicity, but without straying irrevocably beyond those boundaries.

These transgressions were not out of any attempt to reject her Hindu ethnicity. Although exasperated by the ethnicised constraints placed upon her by her family circle, Nundeeta was nevertheless quite pragmatic about her place within the ethnic imaginary. She felt that, even if she chose not to ethnically embed herself, ethnic categories and identifications were still heavily imagined, understood and imposed onto her. She commented that this aspect of her identity was "*inévitable en Maurice*". Having said this, she nevertheless stated quite firmly that she had no qualms about continuing to press certain boundaries and limitations that she felt were imposed on her. Nundeeta was very aware of the mental maps of ethnic groups that make up the ethnic imaginary in Mauritius and frequently strategically positioned herself so as to blur or extend as many mild boundaries as she could.

Dr Ameerally is a well-known medical specialist, who is a self-consciously non-practising Muslim; he is a drinker of alcohol and a chain smoker, in overt defiance of Muslim prohibitions of both alcohol and cigarettes. At the informal dinner party where I met him, every glass of whiskey he accepted and every cigarette he smoked was done with a comment about the prohibitions he was breaking. He was intensely aware of the transgressions he was choosing to make and reinforced and called attention to these transgressions with repeated comments about his Muslim identity. Dr Ameerally was patrolling and drawing attention to his own positioning on or near his ethnic boundary. At one point during the aperitifs, the evening Muslim call to prayer was heard and the doctor commented, seemingly irrelevantly, to all the other guests (who all happened to be Hindu-Mauritians, including the hosts) that it was time to do prayers. He made no move to actually go and pray; indeed, his comment about it being prayer-time was the extent of his acknowledgement to call to prayer. Dr Ameerally can be seen as being acutely aware of the boundaries of the Muslim

identity that he is constantly transgressing. Yet, in drawing attention to these particularly Muslim mores in a social setting where they are of little relevance to the other non-Muslims present, he is actively highlighting his Muslim identity and affiliation as well as his awareness of the flouted requirements and boundaries of that ethnicity.

These ethnographic examples illustrate the multiplicity of ways in which boundary crossings and transgressions, however strategic and ultimately short-term, become a source of anxiety and surveillance. Comments, questions and gazes are frequent and can be impertinent or over-the-top, illustrating the extent of anxiety and concern with re-emphasising the boundary as well as the group identities on either side of the boundary.

Interethnic marriages – Circumventing Hybridity

Unlike the previous discussions in this section, where many of the transgressions have been deliberately strategic and mild, and which frequently reinforce ethnic categories, interethnic marriages appear to be the epitome of transgressions, strategic or otherwise. Interethnic marriages can be seen as one of the strongest, boldest, most transgressive acts that can be made in ethnically-saturated Mauritius, in that they constitute a public and highly visible declaration of a union that appears to irretrievably cross ethnic boundaries – in direct opposition to the dominating ethnic mindsets that I have been arguing make up the ethnic imaginary. It is not surprising then, that, by and large, endogamous marriages prevail in Mauritius. Although historically, during the early settling of Mauritius, interethnic marriages, relationships and offspring were common, Nave explains that, in contemporary Mauritius, "there is a strong preference for ethnic endogamy (by individuals), as well as pressure from their families to marry endogamously" (2000:344). Interethnic marriages do happen in contemporary Mauritius, but they are very much the exception rather than the rule. Iqbal candidly commented that, while "such (interethnic) marriages happen, they are not well-received." Such marriages constitute alliances that symbolically, publicly and culturally cross ethnic boundaries and open up the potential of what could be called Bhabha's 'third space' (1994) – a space of mixedness and hybridity, incorporating the possibility of 'both/and'.

However, this space of negotiation and potential in between ethnic groups rarely eventuates, and there is instead a retreat away from any potential space of newness or ongoing hybridity and back to the overriding ethnic categories. Partners within the marriage themselves might find themselves in continual negotiations around boundary transgressions, particularly in the outer circle public sphere, in terms of their dual self-presentation as a couple. Further, there is usually a heavier alignment with one partner's ethnicity over the other's. Nave makes the point that, "[m]ost often, children of inter-ethnic couples in Mauritius seem to adopt the ethnic identity and corresponding culture of one parent over the other" (2000:345); in other words, a stable place is found or created within the common place mental maps.

Two female interviewees whom I interviewed together, Parvati and Fariyal, agreed that, while long-term interethnic friendships were one thing, interethnic marriages brought on a whole other range of difficult issues; with the involvement of children, "what religion to follow" and "what names to give (the children)" became of primary, difficult importance. A potential hybrid identity and positioning for such 'mixed' children was not really considered to be an option by these two interviewees. Given the prevalence of ethnic coding, there is no being in-between religion and nor are there many in-between given names. Thus, the decision to be in an obvious interethnic relationship is an ongoingly transgressive one for the partners involved, in that they may need to negotiate their togetherness status, especially during public self-presentations of identity. However, the daily practices within the union itself soon settle into adherence within the orthodox boundaries of one or the other partner's ethnicity, including the raising of the children. Hybridity, in other words, is largely circumvented.

Shabana and Anita are two Mauritian women who both grew up in the Hindu ethnic milieu and who married Muslim men. These two interviewees had never met each other and were at different stages of life: Shabana was in her mid-twenties, working full-time and planning a family with her husband, while Anita was a middle-aged stay-at-home wife and mother of one son in his late teens. Both women made a point of stressing that Islam had felt "right" to them as a form of worship, and both Shabana and Anita expressed their long-standing dissatisfaction with the Hindu religion prior to meeting their husbands and converting to Islam. Shabana stated that

even as a child, she had always questioned her mother about "why we have to worship idols in Hinduism"[12]. And they both expressed their successful adherence to the values of their adopted religion. Anita dwelled repeatedly on her son's academic and social successes and repeated that he was "*un bon garçon*" – "a good boy" who had a good and respectful circle of friends. Shabana explained that she opted not to wear make-up or bodily decorations and to restrict herself to conservative clothing out of respect to her husband, even though her husband frequently urged her to wear make-up or to dress up. Both these women had had to negotiate strong family pressures in order to forge ahead with their trangressive relationships; Shabana was more candid about this and commented that part of the protracted 'negotiations' of making her relationship happen included not speaking to her parents for an entire month (while living under the same roof). But Shabana also pointed out that part of the success of her transition into the Muslim ethnicity was her parents' acceptance, exemplified in her mother's regular purchases of Halal food when hosting Shabana and her husband to dinner. This can be seen as a form of openness allowing strategic transgressions: rather than generating any sense of hybridity, compromises, concessions and exchanges within an inner circle instead allow a sense of family intimacy. Shabana and her husband's Muslim ethnicity are reinforced when juxtaposed against Shabana's parents' Hindu ethnicity. In both Shabana's and Anita's situations, there was a wholehearted embracing of Muslim values and practices, with no thought of hybridising ethnic practices.

Nadia, whom I mentioned earlier in this chapter, is an example of a Mauritian whose Sino-Mauritian parentage can be clearly 'read' in her phenotyped features, while her self-presentation emphasises her Hindu situatedness – in particular, by her incorporation of the adornments and symbols of a Hindu married woman including, a *phouli*, a *bindi*, *sindur* and multiple bangles as well as frequently wearing a saree. I met Nadia at the University of Mauritius where I was giving a guest lecture. When I mentioned the words "interethnic marriage" in the Mauritian context in the lecture, the entire class (approximately fifty people) turned around to look at Nadia – the only person in the class whose dual ethnic heritage was visible as an inevitable part of her

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[12] It should be pointed out that, although there are variant sects within Hinduism itself which also reject idol worship, it is nevertheless mobilised as one of the strongest markers of difference between the Hindu and Muslim faiths.

self-presentation. It is debatable whether she was regarded by her classmates as an example of someone in an interethnic relationship, or as the product of an interethnic relationship, or both. Although she inherited her Sino-Mauritian mother's phenotyped features, she was brought up by her Hindu father. His was an irreligious Hinduism – a sidestepping of the overt requirements of ethnicity that allowed his initial interethnic marriage to happen, even if it didn't succeed – but Nadia has preferred to embrace her Hindu ethnicity. (I have already discussed her sentiments relying on negative stereotypes of Sino-Mauritians as a way of diminishing any connection to her Sino-Mauritian ancestry – see pg. 103).

Nadia's orientation to her Hindu identity was 'cemented' with her marriage to her Hindu-Mauritian high-school sweetheart. She said she was also at ease wearing a saree, and would wear one quite often as everyday wear. In spite of her determined situating of herself within the Hindu category, she matter-of-factly confirmed that she frequently received looks and comments in the street – especially from Hindu women, and especially when she wore a saree. Comments such as "why is that *madame Sinnwa* wearing a *bindi* for?!" were usually spoken in suspicious or aggressive tones that were intended to reach Nadia's ears. This same patrolling of boundaries can be seen in the focus on Nadia by her classmates at the words "interethnic". Within the orthodox mental map of ethnicity, Nadia gets judged as a cultural impostor – as not belonging – because of the seeming clashes in the symbols of her ethnic self-presentation; Hindu accoutrements juxtaposed against her Sino-Mauritian "bottom features". Her self-presentation is judged, with the result that, even though she sees herself as belonging quite securely to the Hindu group, she is interpreted and classified as not belonging; her self-presentation is instead seen as a transgression. Nadia can be seen as an example of an ethnically-in-between Mauritian – except that she does not want to be in such a third-space and does not situate herself as such, even though the situation she frequently finds herself in, is one of constantly negotiating and circumventing hybridity.

Sophie is a young Creole woman whose boyfriend, Julian, is a relatively wealthy upper-class Hindu-Mauritian of high caste. Their interethnic relationship is a highly visible one. Sophie had not thought of being in an inter-ethnic relationship prior to Julian and commented that he had had to pursue her for some time before she was

convinced his intents were genuine. When she invited him over to her house for dinner and to meet her family, one of her brothers shook hands with Julian reluctantly and shortly after muttered audibly that he didn't want a *Malbar* in the house; but one of her older brothers reprovingly pointed out to this particular brother that he had just shaken hands with a *Malbar* and therefore welcomed him in, and any disrespect was belated and contradictory. Julian claimed to not be concerned with being called a *Malbar*, given that interethnic relationships are quite uncommon in Mauritius. Julian defused the potential hostility from Sophie's brothers by heading into the kitchen to meet her mother, declaring the cooking food smelt wonderful and then sampling the food on the stove – a bold and informal move which made her mother laugh and which significantly relaxed the atmosphere.

Neither Sophie nor Julian can be seen as being particularly in-between ethnic groups as a result of their interethnic relationship. Rather than a situation of in-betweenness, the relationship has produced a series of strategic transgressions. Sophie initially felt that dating Julian was probably the extent of her transgressiveness, however, Julian pointed out that she was an avid consumer of Bollywood movies and songs with an in-depth knowledge of the different actors, their movies and any gossip – something, he claimed made Sophie much more transgressive than he, in that she possessed much more Hindu-oriented pop-cultural capital than he felt he would ever have, or was ever interested in having. Sophie retorted that Julian was also heavily transgressive; as well as being the one initially open to an interethnic relationship, she pointed out (with a wrinkled nose) his fondness for pork, including ham and bacon. Julian laughed and explained that he had been first tricked into eating pork by a cousin while studying overseas, but had enjoyed it so much he saw no reason to remain restricted to taste-based Hindu requirements. He then pointed out that there were no Creole-specific religious or cultural requirements which made pork taboo or 'unclean' to Creoles, and that Sophie's particular adoption of this Indo-Mauritian taboo was again transgressive of her Creole boundaries. With her nose still wrinkled, Sophie reiterated that she did not see avoiding what she felt was an 'unclean' meat as being ethnically-specific and described Julian's pork-eating habits as obnoxious and that she was still hoping to break him of the habit.

It is interesting to note that, while Sophie and Julian tended to dismiss their own transgressions as being individual habits and self-presentations without particular importance, they were aware enough of these transgressions in each other's habits to readily point them out. Sophie and Julian, then, whilst in an interethnic relationship which in itself is heavily transgressive, were equally aware of the small, taste-based transgressions that the other person employed and would comment on and highlight these – in effect, patrolling each other's boundaries – which, again, ultimately serve to reinforce their individual ethnicities, whilst circumventing any sense of hybridity.

Most of the examples of interethnic relationships discussed thus far illustrate how, although such interethnic marriages constitute highly visible unions that overlap ethnic boundaries, there is rarely an ongoing sense of 'both/and', forging some sense of hybridity or newness. Even in these transgressive marriages, ethnic identities remain influential. Iqbal, whom I presented earlier as a Mauritian who prefers to identify as a Mauritian rather than an ethnic Mauritian, is married to a Hindu. Given that Iqbal resolutely sidesteps the ethnic identity prevalent amongst everyday Mauritians, he was nevertheless acutely aware that his was an interethnic relationship, and described it as a marriage between a Hindu and himself as a Muslim, rather than saying, for example, that it was a marriage between two Mauritians. But, unlike Shabana and Anita, Iqbal's wife had not converted to Islam. This seems to suggest a particular avoidance of developing an ultimately endogamous relationship and maintaining some kind of middle (Mauritian?) ground, which can be seen an attempt to create a hybridised, third space incorporating the possibility of 'both/and'. However, Iqbal also went on to use the term "building bridges" when speaking about overcoming (what he described as) the "confrontation of norms, values, ways of seeing things, ways of living". Iqbal's 'building bridges' metaphor utilises a literal 'skating over' – across boundaries; ethnic groups, boundaries and identities are being self-consciously overlooked, but their presence and influence remains. It can be seen as being a negotiated position of 'both/and' but this rests alongside the dominant 'either/or' of Self and Other ethnic filter. Indeed, Iqbal admitted that he and his wife faced repeated and impertinent questioning:

> people often ask whether everything is ok in your relationship, as a couple (laughs)… this type of question(ing) annoys us, but well, we say, 'yes, everything's fine'. Even though it disturbs [disrupts/unsettles] you somehow, that

> people feel they can be so inquisitive about your private life, even though everything is going well with this particular marriage…

Thus, in spite of Iqbal's deliberate adoption of a Mauritian identity, he is not (allowed to be) completely disembedded from his ethnic identity. As with other strategic transgressions across ethnic boundary lines, the salience and dominance of ethnicity and ethnic identities are reified and reinforced even by positioning across boundaries. Even though Iqbal has chosen to articulate himself as a Mauritian, an articulation which offers an openness and orientation towards a more hybridised stance – a stance further reinforced by his interethnic marriage – any hybrid spaces seem to be few and far between, with his sense of a Mauritian identity resting alongside his still-heavily-saturated ethnicised social experiences.

Although in Iqbal's example, the potential of a hybridised 'both/and' is possible, it is a partial, negotiated "strategic hybridity" (Noble et al., 1996) at best. Invariably, the influence and presence of ethnicity remains prevalent. There are quotidian strategies that get employed to help overlook the dominance of everyday ethnicity – either by self-conscious sidestepping across boundaries or by strategic transgressions in-between boundaries. However, such shifts across or in-between ethnic boundaries remain subject to particular anxiety by the multi-ethnic audiences responding with patrols, (impertinent) questions and surveillance. Only the particularly short-term transgressions – usually incorporating shared religious participation or food consumption – seem to generate moments of openness and exchange rather than anxiety. Even interethnic marriages frequently 'default' to an endogamous inner circle. Whilst there are many movements in-between ethnic groups, these do not tend to be long-lasting nor impact in any shifts in people's mental maps. An awareness of ethnicity can be seen as being continuously present in everyday Mauritius.

Conclusion

This chapter has built on the notion of the ethnic imaginary introduced in the last chapter, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius". That chapter focussed on ethnicised everyday life in Mauritius, with a particular focus on how ethnic identities are maintained, performed, reified and made important. I argued that Mauritians hold

a series of 'mental maps', which contain the broad ethnic groups in Mauritius, and which can be increasingly detailed to include additional intersections of difference according to the ethnic orientation of the individual map holder. The ethnic imaginary focuses particularly on the nuances and complexities of ways in which people do *and* do not fit together and how they see themselves in relation to their fellow citizens and islanders.

This chapter has moved through additional layers of the ethnic imaginary – the various layers of ways in which people understand themselves as belonging and not-belonging together. The focus was firstly on articulations of ethnicity. The neutral potential offered by Kreol especially in public contexts was juxtaposed against the inner circle applications of ethnicised nicknames and stereotypes. The second half of this chapter looked at ways in which the ethnic imaginary incorporates the deliberate overlooking of ethnicity. Short-term strategic transgressions across religion or food boundaries offer ongoing instances and moments of openness and exchange and a sense of *tou korek* ('all ok'). There are also strategies and techniques of overlooking ethnicity – through sidesteps or strategic transgressions – as ways of negotiating in across as well as in-between ethnic categories and boundaries; however, many moments of overlooking ethnicity can be seen as having a reifying effect. This chapter, then, has explored some ways of being-in-the-world in everyday Mauritius, with a view to uncovering the "buts" that can punctuate a seemingly successful quotidian multi-ethnicity.

This intense focus on ethnicity as one of the dominant features of quotidian life in Mauritius is expanded in the next chapter, where I explore the place and influence of ethnicity at the national level, and the seeming contradictions of accommodating such an intensely ethnically-influenced everyday into an imagined community (Anderson, 1991). I will expand the notion of the ethnic imaginary to look beyond how Mauritians do and do not see themselves as fitting together, and to look at various "common understandings", "collective practices" and "normal expectations" (Taylor, 2004) that lie between the complexities of an ethnicised everyday and a sense of a Mauritian identity. The next chapter shifts from a quotidian focus to a national focus and the relevance and influence of Mauritius as a nationally-imagined island community.

4. Towards Mauritianité: Ethnicity and Nationhood

> When did we become 'a people'? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? What do these big questions have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others? (Saïd, 1986:34)

Introduction

The oldest botanical garden in the southern hemisphere can be found in Mauritius. It was established by Pierre Poivre, the Intendant of Mauritius and Reunion Island[13] in the 1760s (Corn, 1999:219-226). The gardens used to be known as the Pamplemousses Royal Botanical Garden (in English) and the *Jardin Pamplemousses* (in French); the local name of Pamplemousses still persists today in spite of the official name change to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Gardens in 1987. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam is commonly referred to as "the father of the Mauritian nation"; it is a reference to his active political role in leading Mauritius towards independence, his status as Mauritius' first post-Independence Prime Minister, and other subsequent political positions, including as Governor-General and also as leader of the Opposition.

There have been many (re-)namings in Ramgoolam's honour, including, among others, the airport, an art gallery, a cultural centre, a memorial park as well as multiple streets and buildings. However, unlike other sites which bear his name, the garden is the site of not one, but two, monuments dedicated to Ramgoolam. One monument consists of a shrine (a *samadhi*) constructed on the spot where his funeral pyre was held; it is surrounded by a low, white wrought-iron fence (see Figure 10). The other commemorative monument is a fountain in the shape of a lotus flower carved out of local volcanic basalt rock; this lotus fountain is situated within a larger paved area that includes three interconnected, blue-tiled water basins (see Figure 11). The lotus monument rests on a square base, with each side of the base featuring the inscription, 'In beloved memory of the father of the nation', in one of four languages – Chinese, English, French and Hindi. As one faces the English inscription, a

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[13] Or the L' Ile de France and Bourbon, as Mauritius and Reunion were then named.

Mauritian flag on a flagpole is visible in the background, part of the overall commemorative monument (See Figure 12).

The need for two physically separate monuments within the same garden space is particularly noteworthy. The samadhi is a particularly Hindu religious shrine, and as such, inevitably marks the moment where an ethnic Hindu cremation ritual was held; while the monument itself may not look overtly ethnic, its significance is particularly ethnically specific. The lotus monument by contrast is overtly nationally-oriented and is deliberately inclusive through its assertion of Ramgoolam as "the father of the nation" in four different language scripts that all have relevance in Mauritius. Even though the languages used on the memorial are by no means comprehensive, the variety of languages offers an idea of the Mauritian nation as arising from a base (literally) of multi-ethnicity. The lotus monument thus self-consciously situates Ramgoolam less as an ethnic Hindu (unlike the samadhi) and much more explicitly as the "father of the (Mauritian) nation". This nationally-oriented position is reinforced by the visibility of the nearby Mauritian flag.

In the case of the two memorials honouring Ramgoolam as the "father of the nation", on the one hand, they can be seen as an attempt to keep the nation ethnically-neutral. On the other hand, they can be interpreted as a form of creative management – a sort of spatial hyphen, as it were, between the ethnic identity and the national narrative. However, they can also be seen as being unresolved – in that there have been two separate and ambitious projects proposed to revive and expand the memorial area – in 1999 and 2006 (*Le Mauricien Week-End*, 10 December 2006; *l'express*, 14 December 2006).

The physical sixty-odd metre divide between two monuments both dedicated to no less a figure than the attributed "father of the nation", throws into sharp relief the awkwardness of aligning the ethnic and the national. There is no neat synthesis between ethnicity and the nation in a single monument; instead, the ethnicity of the "father of the nation" and his national leadership have been separately memorialised – as two spatially separated monuments. There is no easy unity between marking of Ramgoolam's ethnicity as a Hindu and his status as the first political leader of Mauritius. These two distinct memorials are a useful illustration of the complex

negotiations, the messiness, the creativity, the tensions and the 'unresolution' that are at play in how ethnicity and the national are intermeshed and managed. This chapter will focus on the complex interplays between the ethnic and the national in Mauritius, which, I am arguing, are neither easily nor simply resolved.

In the previous two chapters, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius" and "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", I argued for a notion of the ethnic imaginary as a way of encapsulating the different layers and ways in ethnicity is situated, performed, articulated and negotiated on a daily basis in Mauritius. This chapter expands my focus to incorporate a discussion of the nation, the nation-state and nationalism in multi-ethnic Mauritius, and, in particular, to explore the relationship between the ethnic and the national in Mauritius. Ethnicity, I argued in the previous chapters, is pervasive in quotidian Mauritian life. How is the dominance of ethnicity – with all the attendant frictions, divisions and "buts" (to quote my informant, Priya, from the previous chapters) – managed and reconciled at the national level? Edward Saïd's pensive questions, at the opening of this chapter, would be thought-provoking in the discussion of any nation, but are particularly useful in reflecting on the context of Mauritius. To paraphrase: "when did Mauritians become 'Mauritians'? When did (do) they stop being Mauritians? Or are they in the process of becoming Mauritians? And what do these big questions have to do with their intimate relationships with each other and with others?" (1986:34).

This chapter will look at how the nation and the national are made important in the ethnicised everyday. Rather than suggesting that the ethnic imaginary is readily subsumed beneath a nationally-imagined community, or that any sense of nation is weakly-imagined in the face of the daily saturation of ethnicity, I am positing that Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism has resulted in complex intersections of both, ethnicity and the nation. I argue for a process of what I call Mauritianité, which is made up of constant, multiple intersections and negotiations between the ethnic and the national that take place in Mauritius. Of crucial note is the lack of easy resolution with these intersections; they are often in flux, often being engaged with, and rarely reaching some form of equilibrium. There is a lack of easy resolution between the ethnic and the national (epitomised in the need for two memorials to Ramgoolam as the "father of the nation") that I am arguing is characteristic of multi-ethnic Mauritius.

Figure 10: Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Samadhi in foreground (Chateau de Mon Plaisir, a nineteenth century building is in the background) (Deutsch Wikipedia, 2008)

Figure 11: Postcard of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam national (lotus) memorial (Chateau de Mon Plaisir in the background) (Ng, n.d)

Figure 12: The Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam national (lotus) monument with its memorialised message in English, Chinese, Hindi and French (in clockwise order)

Nations, Nation-States and Nationalisms

Although concepts such as globalisation, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism emphasise the diluted influence of the national – of national borders, influences and loyalties – in the face of constant movements of people, commodities, media and finances (Appadurai, 1990, 1992; Werbner, 1999) across the globe, nations nevertheless remain one of the most influential modes of political organisation in contemporary times (Anderson, 1991:3; Billig, 1995, 1996; Calhoun, 1993:216). All the "dry spaces of the globe" (Billig, 1996:184) are demarcated into nations, marked out by clear, unambiguous boundaries on world maps, even though the 'on the ground' reality in many places is arguably far more complex, porous and contestable than world maps allow. Popular usage tends to apply the terms interchangeably, but nations and nation-states are distinct entities (Clifford, 1997:251). Where a nation-state refers to the sovereign political organisation of a given territory, including the instituting and administering of formalised rules of law (Giddens, 1985, 1993; Heywood, 1992:141-2; Guiberneau and Rex, 1997:4-5), a nation can be understood as the people living within the nation-state (Billig, 1995:24). McCrone and Kiely explain the differentiation of one where the nation is tied to the cultural while the nation-state is associated with the political (2000:22).

Closely tied in to nations and nation-states, is the associated notion of nationalism, which Billig explains as the linkage of the nation to the nation-state (ibid.) – that is, people living within the state generating an association or sense of belonging with the idea of the nation as nation-state (see also Gellner, 1983:1; Heywood, 1992:142; Smith, 1991:73). Invented traditions, nationally-framed myths and memories and narratives, and constituents of the social imaginary are forms in which senses of belonging and attachment are generated by people living in the nation-state to their nations (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992; Bhabha, 1990; Smith, 1991).

Many western academic discussions on nationalism make use of the distinction between 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism. The 'civic' approach to nationalism conceives of the nation primarily as an artificially-formed legal and political entity, populated by citizens whose participation and commitment is voluntary (Smith, 2006; Lecours, 2000). Within this approach, social and cultural divisions such as class,

ethnicity or gender are considered to be subordinate to the equalising, rational and individually-framed "political will of belonging" (Winter, 2007:496; Kearton, 2005:27). The 'ethnic' approach to nationalism, on the other hand, emphasises the nation as being built around the sharing of cultural commonalities such as language, religion, kinship structures and memory which are narrated into myths of 'peoplehood' and 'homelands' (Smith, 2006; Winter, 2007; Brown, 2000, Kearton, 2005). 'Civic' nationalism tenders what can be seen as a rationally-framed social contract of nationality and belonging which can be terminated as and when a citizen should wish to end their association; it offers an impersonal, artificial association (Singer, 1996). It is a recent approach strongly linked to modern democracy and developed economies characteristic of 'the West' (Lecours, 2000), initiated as part of the "fateful and irreversible transition from Traditionalism to Modernity" (Hall, 2000:211).

By contrast, 'ethnic' nationalism is imbued with affective attachment, where belonging takes on an emotional quality with similar virtues to family membership – with perceived bonds of love, 'blood', and the nation as parent (the motherland or fatherland) – and is imbued with a quality of belonging does not end with migration. Within this 'ethnic' approach, narratives of the nation also tend to emphasise the nation's perceived links to antiquity as well as "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). Lecours comments that this "ethnic nationalism is usually associated with the social and economic structures of the Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, or with those of the pre-industrial West" (2000:153). Winter comments on the "affinity of civic nationhood with Society and ethnic nationhood with Community" (2007:496). As with the overlaps and intersections between 'society' and 'community', these nationalisms are rarely clearly distinguishable as being only one or the other, with most nationalisms considered as incorporating elements of both (Smith, 2006:170).

However, the 'ethnic' approach tends towards an assumption of a homogeneous set of cultural commonalities. Contemporary nations are far more likely to be characterised by overlapping, contested or multiple claims to 'ethnicities', 'peoplehoods' and 'homelands'. Complex mixes of such factors as migration, indigenous sovereignty, competing claims of belonging, globalisation and the associated movements of people, mean that all nations are "to a greater or lesser extent ethnically divided" (Eriksen,

1991:263). Regardless of how much both civic and ethnic nationalisms have assumed or projected a homogeneous populace, the reality has arguably always been more complex and mixed. Nation-state reactions to the obvious heterogeneity of increasingly culturally diverse populations have been characterised by policies ranging from exclusion to assimilation (Rex, 1997:280; Ang and Stratton, 1994; Hesse, 1999).

However, as I discussed in the Introduction, over the last few decades, in many western nation-states in particular, there have been incorporations of policies of multiculturalism as a way of managing diversity – where nationalism is self-consciously adapted to incorporate and recognise multiple ethnic identities and loyalties as co-existing within the civic, legal and political boundaries of the nation (Brown, 2000:128; Rex, 1997:269-282; Winter, 2007). The policy and politics of multiculturalism are still open to much debate and contestation. Stuart Hall explains that some of the critiques of multiculturalism from the conservative Right frequently rest on perceived threats to the cultural purity of the nation (drawing on an 'ethnic' approach to nationalism), while liberals are concerned that multiculturalism's focus on difference and "group rights" disrupts the neutrality of the state and compromises liberty and formal equality (which follows a more 'civic' model of nationalism) (2000:210-211). Multiculturalism thus presents a challenge to both these approaches of understanding the nation. Even as it generates "such diverse and contradictory enemies" (ibid.), Hall argues that it is precisely multiculturalism's contested position that gives it value. Brown similarly suggests multiculturalism as a third approach to nationalism – 'multicultural nationalism' – although he does so with the immediate concession that this approach is one that "is not so generally accepted" (2000:128).

These understandings of nationalism usefully emphasise the approaches and content that make up ideas about nations. However, they can be seen as being rather abstract. In positing his influential argument of nations as 'imagined political communities', Benedict Anderson (1991) emphasises the agency and investment of people in participating in their nations and sheds lights on ways in which senses of belonging and attachment to nations are generated, including why people are willing to kill and be killed for their nations. Bulmer and Solomos make a similar emphasis when they comment that, "[p]eople are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the

idea of the nation…" (1998:227). In presenting nations as imagined communities, Anderson accentuates the active consent required by people as national citizens to participate in, recognise and reify nations into existence; he simultaneously underlines the artificial, created element of nations, disrupting problematic assumptions of the nation as a "real identifiable entity" (Game, 1990:105; Alonso, 1994:382).

Not unlike the dialectical processes which generate identities and ethnicities, so nations – imagined communities – equally rely on other nations against which to juxtapose an awareness of different imaginings and Other communities. Anderson also specifies the limited quality of any nation, pointing out the "finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (1991:7). Further, Anderson also argues that, "it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (1991:7), where members see themselves and each other as all being "in it together" (Miyoshi, 1993:732).

Although Anderson generally highlights the role of belonging and membership by people involved in the imagining of community, critiques have focused on the nuances of participation. Ana Marìa Alonso, for example, argues that Anderson "does not go far enough in identifying the strategies through which 'the imagined' becomes … embodied in material practice and lived experience" (1994: 382), while Sanjinés particularly questions Anderson's points about the "deep horizontal camaraderie" implied in imagining communities (2007:300). Michael Herzfeld, in his *Cultural Intimacy* (1997), addresses these two particular critiques and takes Anderson's ideas further, focussing in at a detailed level on the interrelationships between citizens and the state. Herzfeld speaks of it as "exploring the relationship between the view from the bottom and the view from the top" (1997:3). Central to his thesis is the uncomfortable and sometimes difficult coexistence between the formal processes of the state (1997:4) and what he terms 'cultural intimacy' – "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (1997:3). Herzfeld allows for, and actually emphasises the awkwardness, the embarrassment, the dissent and the irreverence that can characterise

citizens' relationships to their state; he argues that it is the very recognition (by the state and citizens) of such moments of dissent that helps to bind and legitimise state and citizenry operations. He states:

> [t]he pivotal idea is that all citizens are, in some unarguable sense, all alike; this is what Benedict Anderson's (1983) "imagined communities" implies. Most nationalists fear variant cultural readings – minority self-determination, youth non-conformism, cultural dissidence – that might undermine their universalist claims. In fact, not only do alternative readings coexist with the dominant interpretations, but most nationalisms would have a hard time keeping popular support without such disruptive familiarities. National embarrassment can become the ironic basis of intimacy and affection, a fellowship of the flawed, within the private spaces of national culture (1997: 27-28).

Herzfeld thus argues for a very localised and sophisticated form of nationalism-in-everyday-action, where the imagining of community is 'rooted' and made concrete through interactions with apparatuses of the state. Crucially, flaws, variances and margins are central to the processes of understanding and appreciating the nation as bonds of shared fissures and embarrassment.

There are, then, many approaches to understanding nationalism. There are multiple ways of conceptualising and framing people's participations and attachments to their nations and nation-states, particularly when seeking to understand the nuances involved in being, becoming and/or not being 'a people'.

Mauritian Nationalism: A Moral Expectation

Mauritius is, as I presented in the chapters two and three, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius" and "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", an intensely multi-ethnic space that is characterised by complex layers of interethnic relationships. I termed this constant and quotidian ethnic awareness 'the ethnic imaginary' as a way of reflecting the different layers of awareness-of-diversity and living-in-diversity that are infused throughout many Mauritians' daily lives. Using a theoretical framework adapted from Charles Taylor's notion of 'the social imaginary' (2002, 2004), I argued that the ethnic imaginary allows a focus on the foregrounding of cultural differences as a way of understanding, interpreting and explaining social relationships in Mauritius' multi-ethnic everyday. I highlighted four particular 'layers' of the ethnic

imaginary – mental maps, performances and classifications of ethnicity, articulations of ethnicity and the strategic overlooking of ethnicity – that Mauritians use to situate themselves and others ethnically, and to highlight the fluid, shifting and contradictory ways in which they see themselves as fitting and not fitting together. Everyday Mauritius is marked by a strong and saturated influence of ethnicity, characterised by ongoing tensions between moments of things being '*tou korek*' but also of 'not getting along' – all of which are recognised and anticipated within the ethnic imaginary. Given the sheer multi-ethnicity of quotidian life, the ethnic imaginary, with its foregrounding of cultural differences, permeates people's everyday lives in ordinary and unremarkable ways.

The sheer daily intensity of the ethnic imaginary in Mauritius can imply a comparatively muted national focus, and a weakly-imagined national community (Srebrnik, 2000:8). However, it is not a situation where ethnicity predominates at the expense of the national; instead, I would argue for a more persistent, if intangible, privileging of the nation. Senses of the national can be seen as being particularly heavily manifested in the state apparatus. As Dinan, Nababsingh and Mathur put it, in their discussion of Mauritius' cultural accommodation in a UNESCO case study of multicultural nations, "[t]he great levelling agent within the Mauritian society has been the official government policy of parity of treatment for each citizen, irrespective of religious faith or ethnic origin" (1999:83). There is a distinctly 'civic' approach to this level of the national, in that, the legal and political frameworks of everyday life are secular and (compared to the ethnic imaginary) ethnically neutral.

In his conceptualisation of the social imaginary, which is elaborated within the particular context of western modernity, Charles Taylor refers to three particular facets of modernity. These are: the economy, the public sphere and the practices and outlooks of democratic self-rule (2002, 2004). Where the ethnic imaginary helps to underscore the everyday nuances of how people negotiate quotidian cultural diversity, Taylor's social imaginary highlights common understandings, practices and expectations "that make up our social life" (Taylor, 2004:24). These constituent elements of the social imaginary can nevertheless be seen as contributing to the 'civic' element in the way in which Mauritius the nation is understood and imagined – where the economy, the public sphere and the concept of democratic self-rule,

along with such associated principles as equal rights and justice, contribute to a particularly non-ethnic or ethnically-neutral imagined community (Eriksen, 1991; Bunwaree, 2002).

This civic nationalism is without the same degree of affective attachment imbued in the everyday ethnic identities and the ethnic imaginary. How then does the national, the nation, get made relevant alongside the ethnic imaginary? Elaborating on the social imaginary, Taylor further describes it as, "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (2004:23). He adds that it also "incorporates a sense of the normal expectations we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life (which) incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice" (2004:24). A central element underpinning these civically-oriented "common understandings", "normal expectations" and "senses of legitimacy" is Taylor's related notion of the moral order. Taylor explains the moral order as one which "tells us something about how we ought to live in society" (2004:3). Containing idealised principles characterised by such verbs as 'ought' and 'should', the moral order offers a prescriptive set of ideas about how things should be done, but without carrying any "real expectation of its integral fulfilment" (2004:6). The connection between the moral order and the social imaginary is drawn out by Morello; the moral order "shapes the social imaginary and, through it, has influence on our ordinary life… This idea gives a sense of normal expectations of how things usually go and how they ought to go" (2007:622).

The concept of the moral order is not a new one. Harold Garfinkel (1984) and Gerald Suttles (1968) have both previously worked with conceptualisations of the moral order. Garfinkel's ethnomethodological approach focussed on the shared implicitness of certain types of cultural understandings which establish social order as moral order (Garfinkel, 1984; Noble, 2007). Suttles expressed his approach as an alternate system of understanding developed to suit the particular public and social circumstances of a particular slum area, in direct contrast to broader public and social mores and rulings, but one that is understood by those who inhabited the slum social space (1968). These differently-contextualised notions of a moral order all highlight the shared

understandings that can exist in large and contained social worlds, and which allow for the generation of 'normal' and 'common' expectations.

As such, rather than any kind of an overt moral order, the social imaginary – with its potential for contributing to a sense of a civil nationalism – also incorporates an unspoken moral expectation, or a moral imperative, that the national remain as important, if not more so, than the everyday ethnic imaginary in Mauritius. As Eriksen puts it, "[t]he success of Mauritian nationalism seems to depend on the containment of such differences to contexts where ethnic segmentary oppositions do no interfere with the principles of the state" (1991:274). The ethnic imaginary is how the daily experiences within the Mauritian nation can be understood, but the Mauritian nation is simultaneously valorised and positioned as ultimately taking precedence over any ethnicised matters. Thus, while the ethnic imaginary might be more influential in people's daily lives, it is not at the expense of the national, but rather, with the unspoken recognition that the national should and does matter.

This moral imperative for imagining Mauritius as a nation is facilitated by a number of factors, including Mauritius' island-ness, its relative newness, and its place in the international world. Unlike many other nations with arbitrary and/or contestable geopolitical borders, Mauritius is an unambiguously finite island space, limited by geography rather than politics. As such, Mauritius' nationhood is easily and undisputedly located on a small land mass[14]; it is visibly and limitedly an *island* nation. This means that Mauritius sidesteps many of the issues faced by other nation-states, in that there is none of the ambiguity of porous borders and contestable limits. That Mauritius is an island is a fact that can be reinforced daily. Even in the centre of the island away from the coastal areas, the geographical plateau means that the ocean is visible at different points throughout the island (see Figure 13), offering a clear and constant visual reminder of Mauritius' physical borders. This is reinforced by Mauritius' French name. L'Ile Maurice (literally, 'the island of Mauritius', or, 'Mauritius Island'), is interchangeable with the English name; they are both in use – in everyday formal and informal discourse. However, it is 'L'Ile Maurice' that is in wider everyday use, as it fits more smoothly into the French-based Kreol than the

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[14] As stated in my Introduction, Mauritius' land mass is approximately 1860 square kilometres.

English-oriented Mauritius. It can reduced to just 'Maurice', but the 'L'Ile' is just as likely to be included as not. This island label, while being used unthinkingly, is nevertheless present and prefigured in daily conversation. On a basic geographical and therefore geopolitical level, then, thanks to its island status, Mauritius as a nation is without ambiguity.
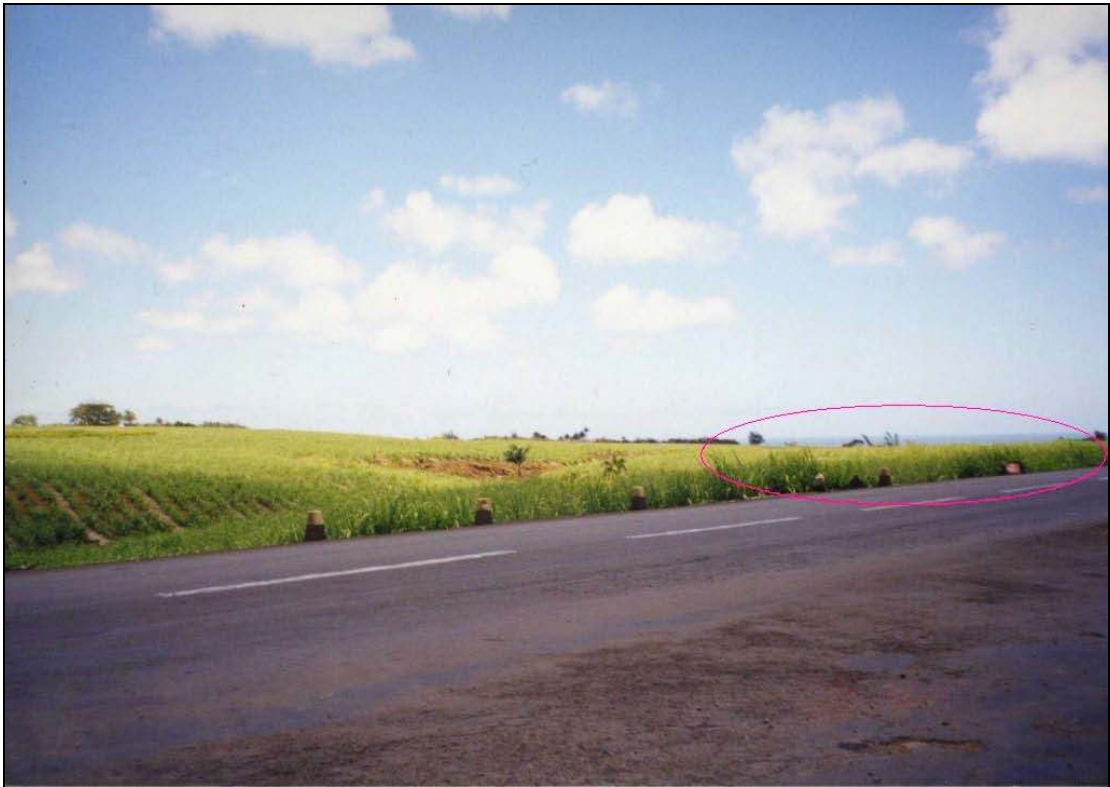
Figure 13: Visibility of the ocean from inland

Further, as was presented in the Introduction and in chapter one, without any indigenous population, nor any associated pre-colonial heritage, Mauritius' establishment and settlement is undisputedly recent. Independence in 1968 can be seen as the official accession into nationhood, through the enacting of various orthodox benchmarks of democratic sovereignty, including, among others, the constitution, flag, anthem, legislature, judiciary, and currency. Unlike many other claims to nationhood, which "are often rooted in a rhetoric of pre-existing ethnicity" (Calhoun 1993:214), Mauritius is an obviously and self-consciously recent nation. As a result of this undeniable 'newness', perspectives of primordiality, subjective antiquity and invented traditions (usually associated with ethnic nationalisms) are without context or relevance in Mauritius.

Mauritius' economic success since its independence has been another facet of straightforwardly imagining the nation. On the international stage, in the "world community" of nations (Billig, 1995), Mauritius' success is recognised (Miles, 1999:91; Chicoro, 2005:2). This has resulted in such labels as the 'African Tiger' (Rubenstein and Eaker, 1999) or 'Tiger in Paradise' (*Financial Times*, 1994, cited in Aumeerally, 2005b) being applied to Mauritius. Economic success has resulted out of such strategies as developing tax-free international investment strategies and Export Processing Zones (EPZs), garment manufacturing industries, and, more recently, a IT-oriented 'cybercity' initiative[15]. As Bunwaree points out, the "economy has been for a long time the rallying factor" (2002:3) in the awareness of Mauritius as a nation.

Mauritianité: Negotiating the Ethnic and the National

The everyday influence of ethnic imaginary, then, is tempered by the recognition of the moral importance of the nation. As a result, intersections of the ethnic and the national in Mauritius are frequent and unavoidable. My introductory example of the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam monument(s) offers one significant moment where the ethnic and the national are heavily, if awkwardly, interlinked in Mauritius. In the case of these Ramgoolam memorials, the need for two monuments is indicative of both the uneasiness and the creativity with which the (un)meshing of Ramgoolam's ethnicity and the national narrative of his status as "father of the nation" take place. Eriksen posits that imagining the Mauritian nation has followed two particular strategies – "a multiculturalist one depicting the nation as identical with its cultural 'mosaic', and a universalist one depicting the nation as supra-ethnic" (1998:144). The 'multiculturalist' strategy links the ethnic imaginary to a sense of Mauritius-the-nation, where the nation is understood and imagined in terms the multi-ethnicity experienced daily, while the 'universalist' approach emphasises the nation as providing the overarching framework of belonging before and above any ethnic allegiances. Although not a uniquely 'Mauritian' approach by any means, these two strategies can be seen as being in simultaneous operation in Mauritius, albeit not

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[15] See www.e-cybercity.mu

always smoothly nor successfully. These two strategies can be seen as being uneasily tied together in the Ramgoolam memorial. The Ramgoolam lotus monument can be seen as fulfilling both the 'multiculturalist' and the 'universalist' requirements of Mauritian nationalism, in that it acknowledges the multi-ethnic mosaic (however partially), it incorporates the national flag, and it asserts the nationalistic narrative of 'father of the nation'. And yet, Ramgoolam's ethnicity is symbolised separately via the ethnically-specific Samadhi. Further, these monuments have also been the focal point for at least two proposed projects of expansion. It is this very lack of an ongoing, neat synthesis between ethnicity and the national, which, I am arguing in this chapter, is characteristic of multi-ethnic Mauritian society.

The interconnections between the ethnic imaginary and the national in Mauritius can be best conceptualised as a series of complex, ongoing and messy negotiations that are forever in flux and being re-negotiated – without ever quite being or ever reaching some point of equilibrium or 'harmony'. These intersections are, as Said puts it, "in the process of becoming" (1986:34) but without ever achieving any easy, firm resolution. I am calling these ongoing and restless moments between the ethnic imaginary and the national a process of 'Mauritianité'. Mauritianité encapsulates the 'clunkiness', the gaps and the creativity involved in multiple moments of cross-hatching between the ethnic and the national. Mauritianité particularly describes those moments where the 'multiculturalist' and the 'universalist' approaches cross-over – sometimes smoothly, other times awkwardly. The process of Mauritianité is arguably central to Mauritius' success as a multi-ethnic nation, in that it encapsulates those different situations and operations which allow the successful co-existence and interaction of the ethnic imaginary with the imagining of the nation.

Mauritianité can be seen as having echoes of Édouard Glissant's conceptualisation of Antillanité (and the subsequently expanded concept of Créolité). The latter two terms are focussed on formulations of identities based on notions of *métissage*, openness, and positions of being in-between or "not quite" (Shireen, 2006:90; Guilbault, 1994:163); these terms and ideas have also been developed and applied to the Indian Ocean context (Hofmeyr, 2007:9; Lionnet, 1993). However, Créolité's focus on the politics of identity is removed from my proposed conceptualisation of Mauritianité,

which is instead focussed on the infusion of ethnicity within notions of nationhood in the multi-ethnic Mauritian context.

Additionally, Mauritianité is being proposed in preference to the more orthodox 'Mauritian-ness'. The suffix of '-ness' is frequently associated with an expression of national identity (comprising stereotyped and reified narratives, performances and artefacts) and is imbued with a static quality. I want to instead use the '-ité' suffix to express a sense of the shifting dynamics characteristic of ongoing series of negotiations. I am deliberately combining the English 'Mauritian' with the French '-ité', rather than going with the all-English 'Mauritianity' or the all-French 'Mauricienité'. In a similar vein to 'Mauritian-ness', 'Mauritianity' too closely resembles an amalgamation of 'Mauritian' and 'nationality' or 'identity', suggesting a static representation of particular cultural content that would make up the island nation's reified national identity. Similarly, 'Mauricienité' offers the French equivalent of 'Mauritianity'. Mauritianité however, with its awkward bringing together of English and French, is intended to also reflect the uneasiness, the contradictions and the creativity that characterise the managing and becoming but without ever resolving.

The interweavings of the ethnic and the national that make up Mauritianité are shifting and variable, happening at different moments, in different contexts and with varying degrees of intensity. Certain moments of Mauritianité can be seen as being laissez-faire, in that they do not excite much debate or interest, while other instances are heatedly contested. Contexts which can be characterised as laissez-faire should nevertheless be seen as having the potential to shift into moments of overt critique and contestation. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I wish to present some of the different contexts of Mauritianité.

Laissez-Faire Mauritianité

'Laissez-Faire Mauritianité' refers to those intersections of the ethnic and the national which, while characterised by degrees of awkwardness or contradictions, are taken-for-granted, and are without any great degree of contestation or debate. It

encapsulates those particular moments where the 'multicultural' and the 'universal' are relatively easily folded together and are regarded matter-of-factly. The 'messiness' that is characteristic of Mauritianité is relatively muted and easily overlooked. These laissez-faire instances of Mauritianité are typically 'top-down' initiatives, in that there is some definite level of state organisation and involvement, which successfully contribute to an imagining of the Mauritian nation that is intersected with multi-ethnicity. These initiatives are usually easily and uncritically received by many, if not most, Mauritians – in that they are accepted, consumed and/or participated in on many levels.

Television News

Television news is a medium where moments of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité are constantly encountered. In 1999-2000, Mauritius had several overseas channels which could be subscribed to (such as CNN from the USA, Sky News from the UK, Canal + Maurice and Deutsche Welle from Germany); there was also the neighbouring island, Réunion's RFO channel as well as three local channels – MBC1, MBC2 and Channel 3. With MBC standing for the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation, television is still heavily state-run. Radio has been deregulated, and most newspapers are independent of the state, but local television is primarily made up of the MBC channels.

Many of the MBC's television programs are imported from overseas (a mixture of America, Europe – mostly France and England, but also from Germany – and India), with many of the European and American shows and films being frequently detoured via France and being dubbed into French. As such, the television guides frequently have a one letter language listing for each program: A for Anglais, F for Français, H for Hindou, M for Marathi, T for Tamoul and U for Urdu. Television programming thus accounts for its multi-ethnic audience and again offers an easy imagining of multi-ethnicity as comprising the nation. There is a recognition and catering to all ethnic groups, even as the majority of programs are in French.

More pertinently, it is the local television news bulletins which straddle the moments of intersection between ethnic particularity and national 'universalism' and which encapsulate processes of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. The main news bulletin, 'le journal télévisé et la météo' is at 7:30pm, is an hour long program without

advertisements. It incorporates a weather report and finishes with a "résumé en Kreol" – a summary of the main news items in Kreol. During my fieldwork, this bulletin was televised simultaneously on both MBC1 and MBC2.

From the opening montage to the weather report and the news items in between, the focus of the news is invariably Mauritius-wide. The opening montage features various illustrations and photographs of the island itself, the flag, the national colours as well as snapshots of the Mauritian people. The news items usually have a national focus, reporting on national government decisions and are generally aimed at a nation-wide audience. Similarly, the weather reports prominently feature satellite and as well graphic images of Mauritius' limited island-ness in the Indian Ocean, surrounded by other nearby islands. In discussing the concept of 'banal nationalism', Billig stresses the very ordinary and unremarkable aspects of national symbols as a way of reinforcing a sense of the nation without drawing attention to it. He comments that, "[i]n routine practices and everyday discourses, especially those in the mass media, the idea of nationhood is regularly flagged. Even the daily weather forecast can do this" (1995:154, 155). Dodds similarly highlights how "everyday phrases such as 'the weather' and 'the news' presuppose a geographical imagination founded on national boundaries and jurisdictions" (2000:120). This unremarkable, banal reflection of the nation is structured into the Mauritius news bulletin, and adds to a sense of imagining the nation.

However, during the prime time evening hours, there are not one but three news bulletins; the main French-language 'Le journal' is centrally-programmed in between a half-hour news program at 6:00pm entitled 'Samachar', which is presented completely in Hindi, and a late news slot in English (variously titled 'News' or, '*Informations en Anglais*'). While the news programs offer repeated and banal flaggings of Mauritius as a nation, they also do so in three separate languages – four languages, if the five-minute 'Resumé en Kreol' is also counted. Thus, while the news provides multiple opportunities for situating and imagining the nation – banally and otherwise – it presents these opportunities in multiple languages. This is a programming routine which is played out every weeknight, and, as such, offers an ongoing, quotidian series of moments of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. The national is imagined; it is presented, underlined and discussed overtly as well as banally. But this

particular imagining of the island nation is framed and intersected in three different language programs. Multi-ethnicity is wrapped into these banal imaginings of Mauritius as a nation.

The newsreaders themselves for all three news bulletins are visible representatives from all ethnic categories, with a majority being male and invariably attired in conventional western suits and ties. But it is the presentation of the weather reports ('la météo' – that accompanies the main news program in French) where there is a reinforced sense of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. During my fieldwork, it was observed that the regular météo presenters were clearly drawn from a number of broad ethnic groups. The majority of the presenters were females. As was discussed in the previous chapter, combinations of names, surnames and phenotyped features make ethnic identification and classification a fairly simple matter within the ethnic imaginary. There was two female Creole presenters; there were two female Indo-Mauritian presenters, one of whom appeared to be Hindu, while the other appeared to be Tamil (using a combination of names and phenotyped features as a guide); and there was a male Sino-Mauritian presenter. The météo heavily reinforces a sense of the nationally-imagined community through its particularly visual content that emphasises Mauritius' limited island-ness. In addition to the differing news language bulletins, a sense of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité is further generated through this overtly multi-ethnic stable of météo presenters.

Further, it was observed that the female météo presenters in particular did not restrict themselves to ethnically-based clothing choices, with the result that the Creole presenters were just as likely to wear a saree or churidaar as the Indo-Mauritian presenters. As I discussed in the chapter two, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius", the cross-over and ready exchange of ethnically-specific accoutrements or 'cultural property' is rare. This was particularly vividly the case with Nadia, whom I discussed in chapter three, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius". Nadia's hybridised Sino-Hindu-Mauritian parentage and her phenotyped features meant that she was readily, if simplistically, classified as a Sino-Mauritian. Nadia identified more readily with her Hindu-Mauritian ethnicity and was married to a Hindu-Mauritian. Yet, her self-presentation and performances as a Hindu-Mauritian (in the wearing of such items as sarees, bindis and bangles) were constantly on the receiving

end of looks, glares and comments from strangers who classified and judged her as a Sino-Mauritian. Yet, in all the different 'inner circles' of homes I visited while the météo was on, there were never any comments or critiques about the overt transgressions in ethnic dress between the female presenters. This is in contrast to the comments received by someone like Nadia. The lack of commentary further underlines this facet of the météo as another moment of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. These daily weather reports can be seen as contributing to the banal imagining of Mauritius as an island nation. However, the presence of the météo presenters injects reminders of ethnicity, multi-ethnicity and even inter-ethnicity (with the transgressive cross-ethnic clothing choices) into the banal imagining of the national – even if, as I discussed in the previous chapter, boundary transgressions are more heavily policed in these self-same audience members' own everyday lives.

In addition, it was also observed during my fieldwork that during any ethnically-based religious festivals, as well as at least one news report describing the contexts of the event, the météo presenter on duty always ended their piece by "wishing our brothers and sisters [from the relevant ethnic group] well during the [particular religious] festival". The météo presenter was invariably from an obviously different ethnic group to the one whose religious festival it was. This practice can be seen as an important part of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. The météo is situated at the tail end of the news hour, and it is without the same level of formality expected of news delivery. The well wishes are informal but are present and are made across ethnic lines. The good wishes to "our" celebrating ethnic "brothers and sisters" overtly sets up the idea of the national 'family'. As well as the varied ethnicities of the presenters and the inter-ethnic dress occasionally performed, these good wishes reinforce the ethnic and the multi-ethnic into banal instances of imagining the nation.

Public holidays

Unlike the quotidian taken-for-grantedness of the television news and météo, public holidays in Mauritius can be seen as clearly defined and marked out moments of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. Calendars in Mauritius contain 15 public holidays (see Table 3). All of the main ethnic groups in Mauritius are catered to in this annual list, with a maximum of two public holidays per religion. The Christian occasions are Christmas, with the second public holiday alternating between All Saints' Day and

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary each year. The Hindu festivals are Maha Shivratree and Divali. Ganesh Chaturthi is the Marathi celebration. The Muslim festival marking the end of Ramadan is Eid-Ul-Fitr. The Tamil occasion is Thaipoosam Cavadee, while Ugadi is the Telegu New Year. The Sino-Mauritian public holiday is scheduled for the Chinese New Year. There are many more festivals during the year which are not public holidays, but these are the selected (or nominated), state-recognised occasions. Several of these dates change every year (for example, the Chinese New Year, Eid, Divali and Ugadi among others) because of their dependence on the lunar calendar; the public holiday dates are likely to vary from year to year.

It is interesting to note that the Abolition of Slavery and the Arrival of Indentured Labourers public holidays are not religious occasions, but they are nevertheless ethnically-specific, in that they memorialise the historical circumstances of those two ethnic groups' arrivals on the island. Mauritius's National Day (12th March) is one of four days in the public holiday calendar that is neither religiously nor ethnically affiliated, with two of those four days being related to New Year's Day (January 1st and 2nd). The only other overtly non-ethnic holiday is the "Fête du Travail" or Labour Day (1st May).

These public holidays offer a state-endorsed, official national recognition of ethnic groups' religious festivals. By allocating each group with a maximum of two public holidays, there is a set limit which does not privilege any one ethnic group above others, regardless of how numerically large or small any ethnic group is. These public holidays can be seen as comprising equal participation and recognition by and of all ethnic groups, while simultaneously contributing to a shared national imagining of Mauritius' multiculture. Dinan et al. comment that, during major religious festivals, "the government has, in recent years, been displaying large dioramas in public spaces to illustrate the message and spirit of these respective festivals" (1999:85). This government initiative suggests overt efforts to encourage understandings between ethnic groups. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the depth or quality of actual inter-ethnic exchange during festivals is ambiguous. While several interviewees asserted that they particularly participated in Other religious festivals – particularly

Public Holiday	Date	Schedule
New Year	1-2 January	Fixed date
Chinese New Year (Spring Festival)	Late January, early February	Variable date; dependent on new moon
Abolition of Slavery	1 February	Fixed date
Thaipoosam Cavedee	Late January, early February	Variable date
Maha Shivaratri	February/March	Variable date
National (Republic) Day	12 March	Fixed date
Ugadi (Telegu New Year)	March	Variable datea
Labour Day	1 May	Fixed date
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*	15 August	Fixed date, but held on alternate years*
Ganesh Chathurthi	August/September	Variable date
Eid-Ul-Fitr	October/November	Approximate; dependent on the visibility of the moon
Divali	October/ November	Variable date
All Saints Day*	1 November	Fixed date, but held on alternate years*
Arrival of Indentured Labourers	2 November	Fixed date
Christmas	25 December	Fixed date

Table 3: Public holidays in Mauritius

those which had a pilgrimage element, other informants equally expressed their lack of knowledge about Other religious pilgrimages. However, the point to be made here is how the framing and even distribution of ethnically-'owned' but state-endorsed public holidays make up a smooth series of intersections between the ethnic and the national – the public holidays contribute to a sense of the nation, as well as recognition of ethnic groups' important religious events.

These public holidays are inscribed on most calendars in Mauritius (see Figure 14). Edensor cites Barker's point about "sporting events, political and royal ceremonies and soap operas" (2006:535) and how the television transmission of such events add to senses of national or nation-wide viewing, as well as helping to situate people "in the rhythms of a national calendar" (Barker cited in Edensor, 2006: 535). Mauritian calendars and public holiday lists can equally be seen as contributing to a sense of synchronised, recognised, national imagining around multi-ethnicity (Edensor, 2006). These calendars, then, offer an example of laissez-faire Mauritianité; they list and record the equal validity of all ethnic groups in a Mauritian calendar year. Multi-ethnicity and the national are simultaneously, subtly and unproblematically underlined in this instance.

Flagging the Nation: Independence Day/ National Day

Where the television news and météo offer an example of a quotidian Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, public holidays are a formalised, periodic series of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, National Day can be seen as an annual such instance. National Day, formerly Independence Day, in Mauritius is on March 12, and it is a public holiday. When Mauritius became a republic (within the Commonwealth) in 1992, 12 March was resignified as National Day. It is referred to as such in official discourse, although informally, it still gets called Independence Day. National Day is arguably the only public holiday and event in the national calendar that prompts any kind of an overt demonstration and reflection of national consciousness in Mauritius. It is also a distinctly 'top-down' affair, in that the celebrations and activities are all very much led by the government. Most Mauritians have a passive, 'hands-off' role and are recipients or audience members of whatever programs are initiated at the state level.

Figure 14: Year-at-a-glance 2006 calendar listing public holidays (Ahmod, 2006)

There are two separate events marking National Day; the main event marking the National Day proper is the parade held at the large Champs-de-Mars racecourse. The parade is well-attended, and is also transmitted on television. The parade attracts a large live audience, and is equally well-watched on television. Although some might, it is not generally a day earmarked for going to the beach, while shops and facilities are generally all shut. The Parade features officers from the police force, fire brigade and ambulance, representatives of the Special Mobile Force[16] and Majorettes – all active public service elements, which can be seen as civic (non-ethnic) elements of everyday social life. Another part of the parade consists of exhibitions of certain sports like boxing, karate and judo. These latter exhibitions are equally non-ethnic and if not directly incorporating any civic elements, they incorporate the presence of '*la jeunesse*' – Mauritian youth. Traditional songs and dances of the ethnic groups, such as Sega dances, Bhojpuri songs and Chinese dances also form part of the event. These cultural contributions can be seen as being in the same genre as the 'traditional', reified cultural performances that take place at events in western multicultural societies celebrating 'multiculturalism' or 'harmony'. However, regardless of the content it takes, the actual ethnic presence is arguably what is important. A sense of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité is developed through the juxtaposition of those civic and youth-based components alongside the 'traditional' cultural performances. Ethnicity is included and all ethnicities are represented and acknowledged as making up the national. However, ethnicity is one component of the ceremony, not the dominating focus; this contributes to an easy, relatively unproblematic sense of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité.

The national flag – made up of even horizontal strips of red, blue, yellow and green – is a feature of National Day. Eriksen comments that, "[t]he Mauritian state, recognising the immanent dangers of the potential dominance of one ethnic category, has taken great pains to develop a set of national symbols that can be endorsed by anybody, and that are thus not associated with one particular ethnic category" (1988:168). This is true of many of the natural symbols associated with Mauritius – the dodo, the island-ness, the beaches as well as such elements as the 'national

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[16] Known as the SMF (the pronunciation remains the same in English, French and Kreol), they are the closest organisation to an army; while their roles are usually peaceful and rescue-oriented, they are also called upon during such instances as illegal demonstrations (Eriksen, 1998:148).

flower'[17]. However, the flag is one particular national symbol that has been infused with a subtle and informal form of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. The official explanation of these colours rests on geographical as well as nationalistic associations: "red represents the struggle for freedom and independence; blue represents the Indian Ocean in the middle of which Mauritius is situated; yellow represents the new light of independence shining over the island' green represents the Agriculture of Mauritius and its colour throughout the twelve months of the year" (*1st Republic Day and 24th Independence Anniversary Souvenir Magazine*, 1992:2). However, as I touched on in the previous chapter, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius" and will shortly discuss in relation to currency, there are also readily drawn correlations between ethnic colours. Red is readily associated with Sino-Mauritians and Hindu-Mauritians; blue, rather by default, has a Franco-Mauritian and also a defaulted Christian and therefore Creole connection; yellow correlates to Tamils, Telegus and Marathis (the Dravidians); and green is linked with Muslims. This ethnicised affiliation to individual flag colours is by no means an official one. But as the ultimate international symbol of nationhood, in spite of its official civic and geographical colour associations and explanations, the national colours of the flag are nevertheless equally imbued with an unofficial, taken-for-granted and evenly-shared-out ethnic undertones.

Flags remain a significant feature of National Day celebrations. Shalini, an informant, advised me that, in 2008, courtesy of the government, every student was given a large flag for flying either on roof of their home or on their car "to show they are patriotic", to use Shalini's words. This state-led initiative appears to have been successful, with many households flying their flag from their roof[18] for a period of about a week in the lead-up to Independence Day before bringing it down again (see Figure 15). Fewer cars displayed the flags. Shalini said that her household flew the flag and added that a smaller flag was stuck to one of the rear passenger windows of her household's main car, and it was also removed after the space of about a week. When she initially informed me about this new public layer of celebration, Shalini vaguely thought the flag initiative happened "a few years ago", before realising it had only been in 2008,

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[17] The *Trochetia Boutoniana*
[18] Mauritian houses are built out of concrete blocks and are mostly flat-roofed; there are invariably aerials or steel posts extending upwards, from which flags can be flown.

the previous year. 2008 marked the 40th anniversary of Independence and the 17th anniversary of accession to a Republic within the Commonwealth. It is obviously for this reason that an extra surge of nationalism was initiated and encouraged in 2008, although Shalini did not appear to connect the 40th anniversary as the reason behind the flag initiatives.

Figure 15: Houses flying the Mauritian flag for National Day 2009 (Madhoo, 2009)

Decorating the outside of houses for ethnic festivals and special occasions (such as weddings) is commonplace. Divali, Thaipoosam Cavedee, Chinese New Year, Ugadi and Christmas are some of the festivals where lights and/or blossoms are used to decorate the outside of houses. These external decorations can be seen as an extension of Goffman's 'personal front', in that these decorations convey an ethnic identity (Ritzer, 1996:354). The hoisting of flags on people's houses becomes one more occasion with a public holiday to express a (state-encouraged) personal front. This year, informants advised me that, while more public buildings than private homes put up the flags and national colours, they pragmatically felt the ritual would gather momentum and private homes would continue to put up the national flag, particularly if the government kept providing free flags.

In addition to personal, voluntary participation by individual citizens, national colours in the form of flags, long banners and posters were on prominent display on a variety of public and commercial buildings for the 2009 National Day celebrations (see Figure 16). The short-term ubiquitous displays of the national colours remove it from

Figure 16: National flags and banners on display for National Day 2009 (Madhoo, 2009)

its banal, half-noticed status and bring it to the forefront of people's awareness – literally generating a sense of national consciousness. However, it can be argued that this focus on the national is a short-term one. It is one event in a national calendar of mostly ethnicised public holidays, and indeed, it is sandwiched by particularly ethnic festivals. While National Day emphasises the nation, it is largely done on a short-term and symbolic level that, as a celebratory event, does not overtake the significance of other ethnically-based public holidays and festivals. Even on National Day, multi-ethnicity is not straightforwardly subsumed beneath the national; it remains instead, heavily entangled with the national.

Swaying Mauritianité

These instances of what I've called Laissez-Faire Mauritianité are quite varying and illustrate some of the differing contexts in which the ethnic and the national can be uncritically interwoven. 'Swaying Mauritianité', by contrast, encapsulates some of the less matter-of-fact intersections between the ethnic and the national. It particularly reflects the strategic elements at play in the negotiations between the ethnic and the national, where sometimes the ethnic will be emphasised at the expense of the national or, at other times, the ethnic will get sidestepped in preference to the national. There is a flexibility of negotiation between the two, so that moments of contradictions and inconsistencies can be accommodated and skirted, but without being at the expense of either the ethnic or the national. 'Swaying' accentuates a flexibility that can be used to avoid or sidestep as well as to highlight particular issues. The introductory example of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam's two memorials can be seen as fitting into this type of Mauritianité. In being both dedicated to the one person, but also being two physically separate structures, there is a very awkward intersection, rather than any neat, unifying one befitting a 'father of the nation'.

Swaying Mauritianité utilises the same flexibility of negotiation to be found in the Kreol terms '*bann*' and '*zot*', which I discussed in the previous chapter, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius". As a brief reminder, *bann* means somewhere between 'the' and 'all'; it has a flexible application and offers a sense of a collective. *Bann* does not directly mean 'group' but offers a sense of a group. *Zot* can mean

either 'them' or, crucially, it can equally mean 'you' (in a plural sense). These two terms allow the foregrounding of ethnicity, but in a way where implied divisions and tensions can equally be sidestepped and/or entered into dialogue. Ethnic groups can be simultaneously talked about and engaged with. This was particularly evident in the example of the schoolboys who jokingly insult each other's gods. These two terms, then, offer flexibility and potential of emphasising ethnic boundaries even as communication can happen across boundaries. Swaying Mauritianité employs the same approach of foregrounding, overlooking and sidestepping the ethnic and/or the national, depending on the context.

Unity in Diversity

'Unity in Diversity' is a phrase which conveniently envelops the contradictions of the 'multiculturalist' and the 'universalist'. The phrase is well-used and well-recognised within Mauritius; it features prominently in such public arenas as political speeches, media commentaries, political and social discussions as well as tourist brochures. This same phrase has been used in several nation-states characterised by pluralism, and is nothing new. 'Unity in Diversity' contains an inherent contradiction (Eriksen, 1994: 558); it self-consciously and awkwardly folds a national awareness – a sense of 'unity' – around the complex realities and politics of everyday diversity. 'Unity in Diversity' is an ideology that has the strong support of all the various political factions in Mauritius (Hills, 2002:289), as well as being employed matter-of-factly by Mauritians. However, 'Unity in Diversity', like multiculturalism, is not an official policy in Mauritius. It is used and applied as a popular phrase or catch-cry that is government endorsed; it features in political rhetoric, but it is not an official slogan, nor is it policy.

This phrase, used in official and public contexts without actually holding any official weight, is an example of what I am calling Swaying Mauritianité. The slogan is a contradictory one in attempting to stitch the messy realities of the everyday ethnic imaginary into the unified imagining of the Mauritius nation. But it does not have any official status. It is used officially, in formal contexts, and in official speeches, but in itself, is not a formal, official phrase. This strategic, slippery informality rests on an avoidance of any formal articulation about how Mauritius' multi-ethnicity is managed as a nation.

(Un)Official Languages

Similarly, the places of languages in Mauritius are another contested site which can be seen as being characterised by a sense of Swaying Mauritianité. Not unlike the slippery positioning of 'Unity in Diversity', languages are characterised by a similar shifting combination of foregrounding, sidestepping and backgrounding, at both the official state level, but also in how they are received and applied at the everyday level. Reflecting the history and complexities of settlement, there are a number of officially-recognised languages in Mauritius, including English, French, Kreol as well as ethno-religious languages. This condition makes it difficult to apply Billig's assertion that, "language is a prime determinant of nationalist identity" (1995:29), in any straightforward way to Mauritius.

English, as a result of being the language of colonial administration prior to independence, is the official language of Mauritius. However, Dinan et al. point out that this official status "is not spelt out in the constitution" (1999:86). Nevertheless, English's official status can be seen as being cemented through its application and practice at the state level, with formal government practices being carried out in English. However, as I discussed in chapter one, "Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood", the prevalence of French was not disrupted by the 1810 British take-over of the island thanks to the terms of surrender and transfer that had been negotiated; this meant some change to the existing French administration, in being overlaid and mixed in with a veneer of English officialdom. Because of its lack of ethnic ownership in Mauritius, English can be argued as being truly 'neutral', unlike French which holds clear and distinct associations to the Franco-Mauritian community (Eriksen, 1998:148).

The influences of both English and French on the global stage are implicit in discussions about the relevance of these languages in Mauritius. They are both taught at primary school level and they are the official languages of instruction from the first grade onwards. English's importance on the world stage is stressed in the *Mauritius Primary National Curriculum Framework*: "The role and importance of English in the global context today… cannot be overemphasized" (n.d:22). The importance and presence of French in the Indian Ocean, as well as across the five continents (n.d:45)

is equally underlined. However, while English is the official language, in terms of competency and popularity of use, it remains a poor second to French. French is more widely and more readily spoken, whilst English, if spoken at all, is often heavily French-accented; French remains the dominant language in formal and semi-formal situations within the public sphere. Indeed, the bulk of newspaper articles are in French, as is the prime-time televised news bulletin. Both these languages thus jostle each other in official arenas.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Kreol is also spoken in Mauritius. But while everyday Kreol is informal and unself-consciously used, any juxtaposition with any context from outside of Mauritius – whether it be tourists or the comparison with nearby islands such as Reunion and Seychelles and their different patois – solidifies it as a uniquely Mauritian language, one that has developed in Mauritius. As the only truly nationally-spoken and understood language, Kreol lends itself to the ready imagining of a national community. This is not to say that Kreol holds an unproblematically ethnically-neutral, national status; Eriksen points out that there might still be an "ideological linking of Kreol … with the Creole ethnic category (because of) the historically correct assumption that Kreol began as a contact language used by African and Malagasy slaves" (1998:78). This ideological association has the effect of situating Kreol firmly within the ethnic imaginary rather than as an unproblematic means of imagining community. Nevertheless, Kreol remains as the only language in Mauritius that is readily spoken island-wide. Further, Kreol is not formally taught in schools, nor is it widely written; although there is a standardised spelling structure (as per the International Phonetic Alphabet), any writing is usually influenced by French orthography, making it a difficult language to read (Eriksen, 1998: 21).

Indeed, Kreol is not even viewed as a 'proper' language by most Mauritians. During the 1982 elections, a political campaign to make Kreol the island's national language was unsuccessful; the platform was widely unpopular and derided. The attempted formalising of Kreol at the state level was rejected by Mauritian citizens. Critiques ranged from Kreol being too crude to be a proper national language to accusations of condescension from working-class Mauritians who, although they spoke Kreol exclusively, felt that their adaptability and working knowledge of French was being

undervalued and rejected (Mukonoweshuro, 1991). Most of the critiques situated and valued French above Kreol; the latter was (and is) not seen as a legitimate language. Nevertheless, there are Mauritian proponents who have long argued for the legitimising of Kreol, most notably, the public intellectual Dev Virahsawmy, who has translated and/or adapted many of the classics from English, French and Indian literature into Kreol (Lionnet, 2005:204-5). But in contemporary Mauritius, Kreol still remains an unofficial national language that is only spoken, and then mainly in informal contexts.

Kreol thus remains informal in use, in status and in application. Although it can be positioned as the 'national' language in that it is a unique patois, it has not been ascribed any kind of official national status. Kreol holds a supple, flexible positioning in Mauritius – one that is simultaneously foregrounded and backgrounded. It is foregrounded as the everyday language, making it a truly national language (albeit with a clear historical association with a particular ethnic group), but also backgrounded in that it has no formal status. The question of what is the national language of Mauritius then, is not readily answered with a ready one-word response; any answer instead needs to be qualified and expanded. Dinan et al. comment that, "[t]here has been no officially declared or well-defined language policy in the country; it would seem there is a deliberate absence of explicit policy in this field so as not to provoke tensions among the different sections of the population" (1999:86). Rather than an explicitly-asserted positioning, Mauritius' daily languages can instead be seen as shifting combinations of formal and informal, foregrounded and backgrounded – as making up moments of Swaying Mauritianité. As with the use of 'Unity in Diversity', there is a deliberate fluidity around the official positioning of these languages particularly at the state level, which allows for their easier use at the everyday level.

Ethno-Religious Languages
The mix of European languages and Kreol in Mauritius is rendered more complex by the place of ancestral, religious languages. While Dinan et al. argue there is no "well-defined language policy" (ibid.), there is however, "an official policy to promote ancestral languages in schools" (ibid.). Ethno-religious languages are mostly spoken at home, within the inner circle, and less so in the public sphere. The main public venue where ethno-religious languages are given predominance is in schools. These

ethno-religious languages are characterised by a similar fluidity in terms of emphasising their importance (at the policy level) while simultaneously backgrounding their management.

At an administration policy level, these ethno-religious languages can be seen as constituting a moment of Swaying Mauritianité. In secondary schools, the learning of these religious languages becomes optional, unlike their compulsory status in primary schools. Mauritius' *2000 Population Census* estimates that "[a]bout 70% of the student population" (Central Statistics Office, 2005:15) learns an ethno-religious language. The *Mauritius National Primary Curriculum Framework* does not specify what these ancestral languages are, instead calling them "Asian languages & Arabic" (n.d:66). By contrast, another official government document, the *2000 Population Census* utilises the term "oriental languages" (sic) as its catch-all label and it does itemise the ethno-religious languages as being made up of "Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Arabic and Modern Chinese" (Central Statistics Office, 2005:15). In the Curriculum document though, the only indication of what these 'Asian' languages are, is in the Curriculum chapter's introduction, which states that, "[w]ith the emergence of India, China and the Arab countries as global economic players, knowledge of an Indian language/Mandarin/Arabic is a great advantage" (*Mauritius National Primary Curriculum Framework*, n.d:66). Nowhere else in the document is there any overt indication of what the remaining languages consist of. The labelled 'Asian' languages are then given a combined series of brief learning competencies stretching across two pages, with the exception being Arabic, which has a separate list of learning outcomes and goes for five pages[19]. Given that there is an express policy of promoting ancestral languages in schools (Dinan et al.,1999:86), this lack of itemised detail about what these 'Asian' languages consist of, can be seen as a form of sidestepping ethnic and ethno-religious specificities.

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[19] I can only speculate about the inclusion of separate learning outcomes for Arabic as compared to the collective approach applied to the 'Asian' languages. Judging by the different formatting and organisation of the learning outcomes in the different chapters, the Curriculum appears to be made up of the work of separate authors. A contribution focussed particularly on Arabic may thus be the reason behind its dedicated, expanded series of learning statements; another possible explanation is the that the relative recency of Arabic's inclusion in the Curriculum has resulted in its greater attention and detail.

Yet, in practice, the ethno-religious languages make up a daily part of the primary school teaching routine as well as being a component in the final year (standard six) leaving exam, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). The primary school system is structured to include a daily ethnic language lesson by a specialist language teacher. The numerical majority in many classrooms are Hindu students, so there are usually more than one parallel Hindi classes, while students of other ethnicities within a grade congregate in separate classrooms. Muslim students used to learn Urdu, but now Arabic has also recently been introduced into the curriculum (Mauritius National Primary Curriculum Framework); Tamil students (usually in a minority in any given classroom) join their peers from other classes in the same year to learn Tamil. It is interesting to see, then, that the subject which probably requires the most on-the-ground administration (in terms of both, the recruitment of specialist language teachers, and the allocation of the classrooms) is not broken down into the various languages, in the official Curriculum document.

In addition, Creole students do not learn an ethno-religious language; they are the only ethnic group without a convenient ancestral language – the result of the system of slavery which underpinned the arrival of many Creoles' ancestors'. (This is a matter I have discussed in the first chapter, "Making Mauritius: From Ethnicity to Nationhood", and is a matter I return to further in the following chapter, "*L'Affaire Kaya*"). During my time in primary school, Creole students undertook Christian and Bible studies during the ethno-religious language subject timeslot. Creole students arguably constitute the remaining 30% of primary school students, who, according to the *2000 Population Census*, do not learn an ethno-religious language (Central Statistics Office, 2005:15). But this specificity is not made clear in the Census discussion, which sidesteps the issue through a resulting absence of ethnicity. Similarly, the lack of specificity in the Curriculum document about any of the ethno-religious languages means that the residual, ambiguous positioning left to Creole students who do not have the recourse to an ancestral community-forming language is also left without attention.

Further, at the practical, daily level, there is no formal classification process for ethno-religious language learning; students are usually segmented into their ethnic language streams according to classification in mental maps, including names,

surnames and phenotype (I discuss the notion of mental maps in full in chapter two). In my personal experience of primary school in Mauritius, I was initially something of an anomaly. The surname of 'Dobson' is not a ready indicator of ethnicity, nor of religious affiliation. My mother advised that she had had to specify our religious language instruction to my (and my brother's) first year primary school teachers. Eisenlohr comments about this school-based practice:

> Students are automatically assigned to Hindi classes without consulting the parents, and as several school administrators told me, the selection is made solely on the basis of the students' names, from which their religious identity is inferred with the aid of local knowledge about families' ethno-religious identification (2004:67)

This informal process offers a good indicator of how application of national policy initiatives, such as an official ancestral languages policy, is reliant on the ethnic imaginary in order for it to be successfully put into practice.

The place of official languages in Mauritius are thus characterised by processes of Swaying Mauritianité. There are ebbs and sways which allow such inconsistencies and contradictions as the official language of English that is truly ethnically neutral but that few people speak well and even fewer people claim as a first language; the place of French which dominates in the official public sphere but which is not the official language; the position of Kreol as a nationally-spoken but unofficial language; and a series of officially-endorsed but not often spoken ethno-religious languages. Further, there are many moments of swaying and sidestepping in the management of these ethno-religious languages, in writing (at the curriculum level) and in practice. These moments of swaying serve not only to facilitate management of the ethnic and the national, but can be seen as masking and gliding over potential difficulties between nationally-administered documents and the practical challenges and omissions that happen in practice.

National Anthem(s)

The fluid positionings of languages that make up Swaying Mauritianité are epitomised in the national anthem. The Mauritian national anthem is *Motherland* (see Table 4) and is described by Eriksen as one "which sounds like any other national anthem with lyrics in English written by a Francophile Creole poet" (1998:148).

Official Mauritian national anthem: *Motherland*
Glory to thee, Motherland, O Motherland of mine Sweet is thy beauty Sweet is thy fragrance Around thee we gather As one people As one nation In peace, justice and liberty Beloved country, may God bless thee, Forever and ever

Table 4: Official Mauritius national anthem

Curiously, *Motherland* does not once mention Mauritius by name; it extols the island's sweet beauty, calls on God's blessings and briefly acknowledges the civic ideals of "justice and liberty". The closest reference to the nation's multi-ethnicity, however, is skirted around in the glib lines, 'as one people, as one nation'. *Motherland* is marked more what by it omits about Mauritius than what it mentions.

There is also, however, a Kreol version of *Motherland*, which has apparently been around for at least twenty-five years, although I never heard of it during my time in primary school in Mauritius, nor during my time on fieldwork. Queries to my informants suggest also resulted in negative responses, suggesting that it is perhaps not too widely known nor circulated. Although untitled, the Kreol version uses the same tune; the lyrics (and their direct translation) are included in Table 5.

Kreol version of the Mauritius national anthem	
Mauriciens, Mauriciennes	All Mauritians
Bisoin marche la main dans la main	We need to walk hand in hand
Pou prospérité	To prosperity
Pou bonhère lé peuple	For wellbeing of the people
Pou bâtir ène nation	To build a nation
Nous coorpéré	We cooperate
Nous travaille dir	We work hard
Dans la zistice ek liberté	In justice and liberty
Maurice nous pays	Mauritius our country
Ki Bon Dié fine béni	That God has blessed
Nous fiers nous vive ici !	We're proud we live here!

Table 5: Kreol version of the Mauritius national anthem

Perhaps reflective of the overtly and self-consciously nationalistic outlook which prompted the 1982 government-led push to make Kreol the official national language, this Kreol version from that same era also sidesteps any mention of ethnicity. This Kreol version makes mention of Mauritius and Mauritians; it emphasises the building of the nation, prosperity, hard work, pride and cooperation, as well as holding onto the civic element of *Motherland* – of "justice and liberty". "Hand in hand" and "cooperation" are the closest acknowledgements of managing multi-ethnicity, but even these are vague and imply a more generalised ideal of national unity rather than any kind of 'unity in diversity'.

Additionally still, there is also a Hindi version of the national anthem that I was taught during Hindi classes in primary school. It was a version Hindi students were usually taught or sang in the lead-up to (as it was then) Independence Day. It might be more accurately called a Hindi national song, however, because of its particular application to Independence Day, it was generally considered as the Hindi version of the national anthem (in spite of its completely different tune).

Hindi version of the Mauritius national anthem	
Mauritius hain desh humāra Jyān se ap-pani hum ko pyārā Hindu, Muslim, Boud, Issāyi Aap passa me hain bhāyi, bhāyi Bhāyi ka ho, Bhāyi pyāra Jannat hain ye desh humāra (x3)	Mauritius is our country We love it more than life Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians We live as brothers, As brothers, there is brotherly love My country is like heaven (x3)
Mauritius hain desh humāra Jyān se ap-pani hum ko pyārā Hindu, Muslim, Boud, Issāyi Aap passa me hain bhāyi, bhāyi Bhāyi ka ho, Bhāyi pyāra Aysa hoga challan humāra (x3)	Mauritius is our country We love it more than life Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians We live as brothers, As brothers, there is brotherly love This is how we peacefully move forward (x3)

Table 6: Hindi version of the Mauritius national anthem

Interestingly, this Hindi national song is much more overt in its assertions of religious tolerance and fraternal, familial togetherness between religious (rather than ethnic) groups. Further, the claims of religious brotherhood are, in both verses, sandwiched in between declarations of Mauritius nationhood, national pride and national future. Conversely, this song makes no reference to any civic elements of nationhood. This

song, probably because of its lack of any official status and its lack of recognition in the official public sphere, makes some explicit joins between multiple religious groups and the Mauritian nation – areas completely sidestepped by the official and Kreol anthems.

The content of these three songs vary, with the official national anthem arguably containing the least descriptions about Mauritius, including Mauritius' name. At the other end, the most ethnicised of the three songs (being neither English nor Kreol, both of which as I have already argued, are imbued with some perception of neutrality), the Hindi song is the most unequivocal in its representation of multi-religiosity within the nation. However, regardless of the content of these national songs, it is their very existence and circulation that can be seen as another example of Swaying Mauritianité. These alternate, unofficial versions of national anthems – however minimal in the case of the Kreol version of the official anthem, and however partial in the teaching of the Hindi national song – nevertheless exist. The different languages of these two other 'anthems' as well as their varying content, illustrates the complex and shifting positionings in which Mauritius is conceptualised and articulated as a nation.

Fractious Mauritianité

'Laissez-Faire Mauritianité' refers to those intersections of the ethnic and the national which, while characterised by degrees of awkwardness or contradictions, are taken-for-granted, and are without any great degree of contestation or debate. 'Swaying Mauritianité', by contrast, encapsulates some of the less matter-of-fact intersections between the ethnic and the national. It particularly reflects the strategic elements at play in the negotiations between the ethnic and the national, where sometimes the ethnic will be emphasised at the expense of the national or, equally, the ethnic will get sidestepped in preference to the national. There is a flexibility of negotiation between the two, so that moments of contradictions and inconsistencies can be accommodated and skirted, but without being either at the full expense of the ethnic or the national.

'Fractious Mauritianité' refers to those intersections of the ethnic and the national which are much more intensely focussed upon and contested. Moments of 'Fractious Mauritianité' are thus in greater flux; negotiations are more characterised by tension, and can be seen as containing potential 'flashpoints' – where the balance between the ethnic and the national is significantly more delicately poised and fraught. However, it is important to underline that, however messy and awkward the negotiations and interweavings are, they can, for the most part, be seen as successful – in that tensions and contestations take place, are recognised and can erupt, but are ultimately managed and contained so that Mauritianité continues. The balancing act continues and Fractious Mauritianité is continuously negotiated through, with flashpoints being continually defused, but also being sometimes ignited. While Laissez-Faire Mauritianité is largely comprised of taken-for-granted, state-endorsed instances, and Swaying Mauritianité is heavily characterised by strategic negotiations and avoidances (at both the state and citizen levels), a large portion of the keen contestations between the ethnic and the national that make up Fractious Mauritianité are frequently both top-down and bottom-up affairs.

The Political 'Best Loser' System

It is in the political arena that Fractious Mauritianité is most profoundly, visibly at play. Post-Independent Mauritian politics have remained reliant on the four official ethnic categories drawn up by the pre-independence census commissioners (Christopher, 1992:63). All political candidates need to cite membership to one of the categories of 'General Population', 'Sino-Mauritian', 'Muslim' or 'Hindu'. The Mauritian Constitution states in its First Schedule (section 31(2), sub-section 3) about 'Communities', that:

> [T]he population of Mauritius shall be regarded as including a Hindu Community, a Muslim Community and a Sino-Mauritian community; and every person who does not appear, from his (sic) way of life, to belong to one or other of those 3 communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population, which shall itself be regarded as a fourth community.

There is no means of entering into the political system without a declaration of community membership. The Constitution allows for official, legal contestation of the self-nomination of community, with provision for the Supreme Court to resolve 'any question as to the correctness' (Mauritian Constitution, First Schedule (Section 31 (2)), Subsection 3.2) of any candidate's claim about their community. However,

although community nomination is compulsory, the Constitution states that, 'the community to which any candidate belongs… shall *not* be stated upon any ballot paper' (Mauritian Constitution, First Schedule (Section 31 (2), Subsection 3.3 – my emphasis).

The logic behind this enforced ethnic/community membership is to ensure that the number of elected parliamentary members is always in proportion with that community's percentage of the overall population, so that all ethnic groups enjoy some minimal level of political representation. The Mauritian Constitution (in its First Schedule (Section 31 (2), Subsection 5) contains 10 paragraphs detailing how the 'best loser' system works. In addition to the sixty-two seats for members representing constituencies, there is provision for a further eight seats. These default eight make up the 'best losers' system, with "candidates from under-represented ethnic communities who stood for election for recognised parties but who were defeated – mak(ing) up the difference … (which) guarantees seats for ethnic minorities such as the Chinese and Muslims" (Srebrnik, 2002:278; see also Eriksen, 1998:68).

This strict adherence to ethnic categories within the political framework is, in Mukonoweshuro's words, "a political spoils system which has ensured that each ethnic group has an established stake in the system, (which ensures that its) … legitimacy and legality is accepted by all the dominant political forces on the island" (1991:200). However, other commentators such as Nave (1998) have critiqued this 'best loser' system because of the forcible membership and its dependence on essentialised ethnic categories. Nave argues that such a system "legitimises the use of communal labels to predict the behaviour of individuals" and so "…is a propagator of stereotypes" (Nave, cited in Srebrnik, 2002:179). Against Mukonoweshuro then, Nave argues that the best loser system is ultimately divisive and reifies difference. However, Bunwaree perhaps best sums the dilemma of the best loser system when she states:

> Although some people generally argue that the best loser system breeds communalism, splits Mauritian society and hampers the development of the Mauritian nation, others think it helps to tame communalism and is a contributory factor to the political stability 'à la mauricienne' and a democratic system – a rather rare quality in the neighbouring African continent... The best loser system may well be contributing to the maintenance of democracy in Mauritius, but it is certainly not contributing to making Mauritius a united nation (2002:4).

Ethnicity, then, is directly interwoven into the democratic process of political nomination (albeit via the four imposed and simplistic categories). It is an essential component in processes of political nomination, as well as being a key factor of the 'best loser' system. Ethnicity is thus inextricably entrenched into what would otherwise be a distinctly civic component of the Mauritian political system. Further, while there have been clear ethnic undertones in the make-up of most political parties (Eriksen, 1998:68), these have rarely been made explicit. Yet, it is equally noteworthy that ethnicity is particularly absent from the actual hands-on democratic process of voting. That is, candidates' ethnic or community identities are not cited on actual voting ballots, although it could be argued that the ethnic imaginary nevertheless provides clear indicators of candidates' ethnic orientations. This ethnic element in Mauritius' democratic political system makes it a key moment of Fractious Mauritianité. There are not only combinations of foregrounding and strategic omissions of ethnicity that make up Mauritius' political system, but there are ongoing debates, critiques and contestations about the benefits and pitfalls of the 'best loser' system. The ethnically-prefigured 'best loser' system does not fit seamlessly into a civically-functioning democratic political system.

The unresolved, 'always becoming' element of Mauritianité is particularly heightened in moments of Fractious Mauritianité; the ongoing complex, messy negotiations for balance between the ethnic and the national are permeated by concerns about 'communalism'. Fenton (1999:1) provides an understanding of communalism:

> (In) South East Asia, India and the Caribbean ... group identities, and especially political competition based on group identities, are commonly referred to as 'communal' and the political manipulation of these identities is described as 'communalism'....

Communalism is commonly understood in Mauritius as ethnic orientations, interests, tensions and intolerances prevailing and dominating in the public sphere, usually at the expense of the wider nationally-imagined community. Communalism can be seen as the fear of the breakdown of Mauritianité, where perceived ethnic partialities and tensions could undermine and destabilise the nation, and disrupt the ongoing balance between the two that makes up Mauritianité. In its heavy ethnic focus, communalism further undermines the unspoken moral imperative of the national and, as such, is

uniformly viewed as negative and detrimental to Mauritius the nation. Mauritius' political system, with its ethnically-based 'best loser' approach, is thus seen as having 'communalist' overtones. In providing a legislative space for ethnicity in what is traditionally a civic and non-ethnic political system, ethnicity remains foregrounded in the overall political process. Any other national or civic matters which have an overt ethnic component are equally regarded with concern and contestation.

This is not to say that ethnic partialities and prejudices are not prevalent within the private spheres and inner circles of people's homes. Ethnicised critiques or comments are prevalent and an everyday element in people's personal opinions and private conversations. However, these, as I argued in chapters two and three, are more to do with assertions and reifications of personal ethnic identities than having any communalist intent as such. However, there is a recognition that these are personal opinions which are not intended for repetition in the public sphere. Thus, it is likely that a person might make an ethnicised critique of an event in their own home, but see no contradiction of inconsistency in criticising someone who might make a similar comment in public or, for example, on the news. Eriksen provides an example:

> 'Sak zako bizin protez so montayn,' said a prominent Hindu politician in 1983 ('Each monkey has to protect his mountain'), and thus broke an unwritten rule in Mauritian public life: 'Although you practice communalism, never promote it explicitly in public!' (1998:68).

This politician's comment can be seen as being indisputably communalistic in tone. As a public comment (or even as a private one, given his public standing as a nationally-elected representative), there is a wholesale, overt rejection of any attempt at Mauritianité; there is no attempt to negotiate or manage a balance between the ethnic and the national. Overtly communalistic public comments such as Eriksen's example have been neither frequent, nor the norm. Communalism undermines the process of Mauritianité, with concerns about communalism then, being an unspoken accompaniment to moments of Fractious Mauritianité.

Money Matters

Mauritius banknotes would ordinarily be included as an example of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, as they offer a good example of how multi-ethnicity is intersected with the national in the everyday usage of money. Instead, I wish to discuss a particular

moment when the banknotes slipped from being a taken-for-granted laissez-faire form of Mauritianité and into Fractious Mauritianité. To begin with, though, I need to briefly outline the banal Laissez-Faire Mauritianité elements of the everyday banknotes. Notes in current circulation are available in amounts of Twenty-five Rupees, Fifty Rupees, 100, 200, 500, 1000 and 2000 Rupees. The obverse sides of the notes contain images of notable Mauritians as well as the amount of legal tender in writing; the reverse sides hold an illustration of some form of labour or civil enterprise – of trade, law, commerce or politics, with the amount of legal tender in numbers. A summary of the notes and their illustrations is included in Table 7, and images of the notes are included in Figure 17.

Currency Amount	Obverse image	Reverse image
Twenty-five Rupees	Sir Moilin Jean Ah-Chuen	Rodrigues; a fisherman
Fifty Rupees	Mr Joseph Maurice Paturau	Le Caudan Waterfront Complex
100 Rupees	Mr Renganaden Seeneevassen	Court House
200 Rupees	Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed	Market stalls within a colonial building
500 Rupees	Mr Sookdeo Bissoondoyal	University of Mauritius
1000 Rupees	Sir Charles Gaëtan Duval	State House
2000 Rupees	Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam	Bullock and sugarcane cart

Table 7: Summary of Mauritius banknotes and their illustrations

Although the notable Mauritians on the banknotes are uniformly male, all the broad ethnic groups are represented in these banknotes. Ah-Chuen is a Sino-Mauritian; Paturau is a Franco-Mauritian; Seeneevassen, Bissoondoyal and Ramgoolam are all Hindu Mauritians; Mohamed is a Muslim Mauritian; and Duval is a Creole Mauritian. The presence of a high number of Hindu representatives on the notes can be explained in neutral, non-ethnic terms, with Seeneevassen, Mohamed, Bissoondoyal, Duval and Ramgoolam all having played active political roles during the lead-up to, and after, Independence. All ethnicities are represented, but the majority of those depicted having all made some form of political contribution to the nation; this culminates with the highest value note displaying Ramgoolam, the "father of the nation".

Figure 17: Images of Mauritius banknotes

Twenty-five Rupee Note:
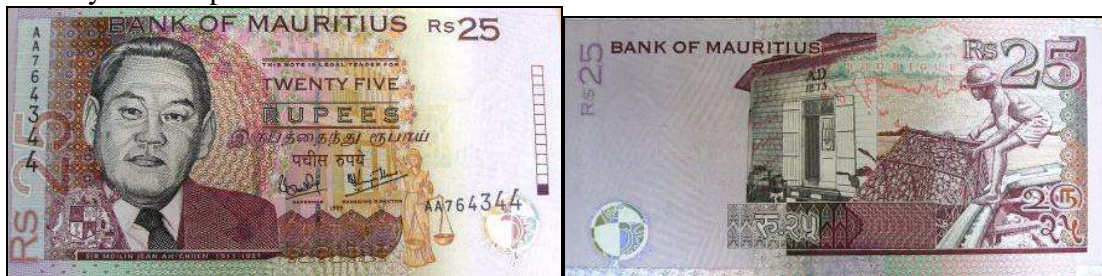
Fifty Rupee Note:

100 Rupee Note:

200 Rupee Note:

500 Rupee Note:

(Tomonis, 2009)

1000 Rupee Note:

(Tomonis, 2009)

2000 Rupee Note:

(Travel Mauritius, 2006)

The infusion of ethnicity into these nationally-used notes goes beyond the inclusion of ethnically-notable Mauritians. There is also something of a muted correlation between the civically-framed images (of economic and political institutions or activities) on the reverse of the notes and the historical associations of those activities with the ethnicity of the person on the front of the note (see Table 7 and Figure 17). In chapter one, I discussed the different circumstances of arrival by the different ethnic groups and how these contributed to the reification of ethnic divisions; in chapters two and three, using the notion of the ethnic imaginary, I argued that there are ongoing performances and narratives around ethnic identification. These ethnic correlations are present in several of the banknotes. Franco-Mauritians are well-represented in commerce; Hindu-Mauritians are dominant in politics, the civil service and education; and Muslim Mauritians historically arrived in Mauritius as traders. Gaëtan Duval on the 1000 Rupee note is a well-known Creole politician which allows a correlation with State House on the reverse, even though politics is more heavily dominated by Indo-Mauritians. However, Sino-Mauritians also historically arrived as traders and have not been overly associated with the agriculture or fishing industries depicted on the reverse of twenty-five Rupee note. There are thus clear associations that can be made between the ethnicity of Mauritian on the front and the civic or commercial depiction on the back, but it is not the case for *all* the notes.

In addition, there is a further subtle insertion of ethnicity across these banknotes. In an earlier example of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, I discussed the infusion of ethnic colours within the national flag, where Sino-Mauritians and Hindu-Mauritians are associated with reddish colours, Franco-Mauritians and Creoles with blue, Tamils with yellow and Muslims with green. This colour correlation is repeated throughout all the banknotes (See Figure 17). The dominant colour of the twenty-five Rupee note is a darker red (leaning towards crimson), the colour associated with Sino-Mauritians; the fifty Rupee note is light blue in colour, typically associated with Franco-Mauritians; the 100 Rupee note is a lighter red with an orange hue linked to Hindu-Mauritians; the 200 Rupee note has an overall green tint, familiarly correlated to Muslim Mauritians; the 500 Rupee note is a rusty shade of red, keeping the association with Hindu-Mauritians; the 1000 Rupee note is dark blue, readily associated with Creoles; and the 2000 Rupee note is a bright red again in association with Hindu-Mauritians.

There are thus multiple intersections of ethnicity into these national banknotes – ethnic representatives, alignments of ethnicity with historical and stereotypical activities, and also correlations of ethnic colours. These all make Mauritius' banknotes a rich, yet taken-for-granted, example of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité – a neat intersection and representation of the different ethnic groups into the national legal tender.

The reason I am discussing these bank notes at this point is because of a particular instance which illustrates how moments of Mauritianité can shift from being ordinarily laissez-faire and taken-for-granted into an issue that is more fraught and contested. On Mauritian bank notes (see Figure 18), the amount of legal tender is noted numerically, in English writing, then in Tamil writing and then lastly, in Hindi writing[20]. But in 1999, a new series of bank notes was released with the order adjusted, so that the Hindi writing followed the English, with the Tamil writing relegated to last place (see Figure 19). These new notes were released without fanfare into general circulation, without drawing attention to the change of writing order. But

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[20] The presence of the English writing is clearly linked to the pre-Independence colonial administration. However, the reasons behind the inclusion of only the Tamil and Hindi writing on the Rupee notes were not known by any Mauritians I spoke to.

the shift of the Tamil writing to the bottom of the order was quickly noticed, and quickly became the source of heated debate. Changing the order of writing on the bank notes served no practical, political, social or economic purpose. But, added to this, it was the fact that the order was changed without notice and without explanation that made it into a political issue, particularly as the change privileged the Hindu writing at the expense of the Tamil writing.
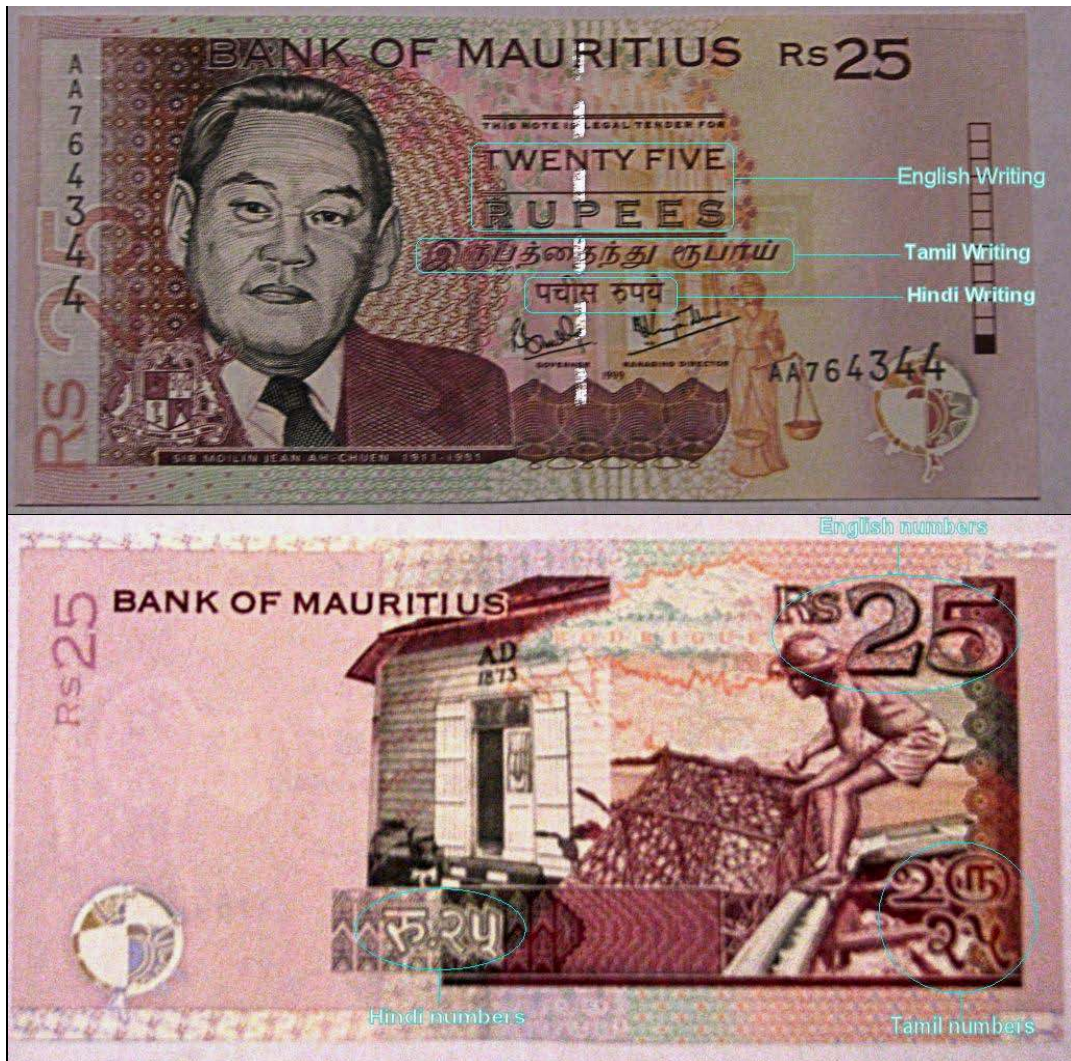
Figure 18: The order of English, Tamil, then Hindi scripts on banknotes

Figure 19: 1999 banknotes with the Tamil and Hindi scripts swapped around beneath the English script (Tomonis, 2009)

Led by the Tamil community especially, accusations of communalism, of Hindu hegemony and self-interest (however symbolically) were levelled at the government in power. The Prime Minister's neutral civic government position was called into question against his Hindu ethnicity. The lack of national benefit in making the change in writing order was viewed as obvious. In public spaces such as workplaces, the general consensus was that it had been a poor decision by the government. Controversial issues around ethnicity are frequently not discussed publicly as a means of sidestepping potential ethnic tension. However, this particular issue featured in lively workplace discussions where blame was deposited entirely at hands of the government. Hindus I spoke to declared themselves to be against the change, claiming it to be a ridiculous government decision, thus denying any (communalistic) interest in the symbolic privileging proffered to the Hindu community by the change. Hindus echoed the feelings of all other Mauritians I spoke to about this matter; none could see the use of the decision, as it had merely served to raise communalistic concerns over national legal tender – something which had previously been a non-issue and should have remained a non-issue.

In the wake of the backlash, the government quickly backtracked. They overturned their previous approval of the bank notes, and recalled those changed notes and organised for a new series of bank notes to be printed and re-issued, this time with the Tamil writing restored above the Hindu writing. Whilst many people felt that it was the only action that could be taken, over an issue which should never have happened, this official government backtracking was also met with some critical comments. In particular, a prevailing critique was that it wasn't a sign of a strong government to capitulate to the demands of the public so quickly, particularly on an ethnic issue, with the feeling was that a precedent had been set for future ethnic-specific claims, including symbolic ones. Other criticisms included it being a waste of resources to recall perfectly viable legal tender and to issue a whole new series of notes – particularly given the symbolic nature of the controversy.

This situation shifted the bank notes from the domain of Laissez-Faire and into Fractious Mauritianité, accompanied by accusations of communalism. The ethnic and national balance was viewed as being unnecessarily shifted, with the ethnic being foregrounded without the benefit of national justification. The accusations of communalism can be seen as being justified; change, however symbolic, benefited only one ethnic group. This can be seen as a 'textbook' instance of communalism. The government backtrack was needed to diffuse accusations of communalism as well as to restore some semblance of Mauritianité. Interestingly, the post-backtrack critiques sidestepped the ethnic elements that made the issue so explosive to begin with. They instead took a civic interpretation in seeing the government as weak for not sticking to its guns, as well as criticising the expense involved in the disposal and re-issue of legal tender. This entire instance illustrates the delicate balancing act characteristic of, in particular, moments of Fractious Mauritianité.

The Road to Grand Bassin

In contrast to the situation with the bank notes, the issues around the road to Grand Bassin are a lot more ambiguous and provide an interesting and comparative case study. Grand Bassin is a volcanic lake. It has become a Hindu 'sacred site' that has been mythologised as the Mauritian equivalent of the Ganges River. It is a popular Hindu site of worship at any time, but especially, as I discussed in chapter two, during

the festival of Maha Shivaratri when people make pilgrimages from all over the island, carrying offerings to the lake. As a result, the lake is also a cultural tourist attraction and it receives a large number of tourists. In the late 1990s, a decision was undertaken to widen and improve the roads to, and facilities near, Grand Bassin. The official (government) reason for the maintenance attention to this particular road was that it was a tourist destination, and, given tourism's importance to the Mauritian economy, investments in infrastructure had to be made.

While this was deemed, to a large degree, an acceptable decision by the population, there were nevertheless many sceptical comments about the 'real reason' about why this particular road was having maintenance done to it. It was felt that this was a case of favouritism by the dominant Hindu government for the dominant Hindu majority. There were frequent debates about it on the various local media and it remained a topical news story for the duration of the road's expansion, with particular accusations that the cost of the work was, in terms of taxes, far outstripping the proportion of the population who would most benefit.

This is again a situation where rumbles of communalism were raised. This situation however, is less clear-cut than the writing order shift on the bank notes, in that this roadwork had a plausible, non-ethnic explanation. As such, the controversy remained around this issue, with repeated references to the non-ethnic explanations to fend off accusations of communalism. This can be seen as an instance of intensely Fractious Mauritianité, in that the ethnic versus national benefits were constantly being debated, with the issue of communalism never being completely resolved. Unlike the case of the bank notes, tourism furnished a seemingly non-ethnic justification, but this was constantly juxtaposed against the obvious ethnic benefit to the Hindu community.

Indeed, in a government organisation, a heated debate arose via email about the issue of Grand Bassin road. One organisation employee had appeared on a television program in which the Grand Bassin road maintenance was discussed. The employee had made what she called an "à peu près" (approximate) cost-per-head estimate about how much the road was costing Mauritians and Hindus as part of the discussion. The next day, another employee emailed the person who appeared on television (via the email-all facility, which meant every single person within that organisation was

copied into the email exchange) querying her particular comment about the cost-per-head estimate. In English, the initial emailer expressed concern that his income-tax details and his right to privacy as a "Mauritian *citizen*" (emailer's emphasis) had been violated if his colleague on television had been able to make such a prompt estimate about the cost-per-head basis about tax spendings. The colleague who had appeared on television heatedly responded, pointing out that it was an estimate based on an approximation of Mauritius' population and had nothing to do with access to citizens' tax details and was based on her opinion as a professional, not as an ethnicised professional. She also condemned the initial emailer for using the 'email-all' facility and not troubling to find her particular email (this was at a time when this particular organisation's email facilities had not been standardised). The email exchange continued in English, skirting the initial issues of ethnicity and citizenship, and drifting into the predictable territory of rights of expression and rights of reply within a democracy. Other colleagues chipped in about the right to privacy, while others suggested the delete button for those who didn't wish to follow the discussion.

The exchange only ended when a group of outsiders (using an anonymous, free web-based email account) sent an email in French to the organisation's email-all facility, adding to the debate but taking what can be seen as a communalistic reaffirmation of Hindu rights. The email finished with an 'Aum' symbol and 'Jai Hind'[21]. There was then the realisation that the exchange had been leaked outside the confines of the organisation, and all internal email exchanges on the subject abruptly ceased, although they may have continued verbally. The outsider email's communalistic tone can be seen as another reason for ceasing the email exchange – the email debate had been carried out in something of a public forum and, indirectly, had invited the overt external communalistic email.

The entire project of the Road to Grand Bassin can be seen as an instance of Fractious Mauritianité. The national benefit was couched – at the state level – in completely non-ethnic terms, but Mauritian citizens were quick to point out that it was the Hindu ethnic group in particular which benefited. Assertions of communalism, whilst easier to officially counter than the banknotes (in that there was a non-ethnic justification),

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[21] Long live India

were not readily diffused and added to the push-pull contestations and debates over the ethnic versus national benefits of the project. The organisation's email debate can be seen as a microcosm of the nation-wide discussions, replicating the contestation between ethnic anid national benefits and priorities, but also including some overtly communalistic views.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore Mauritius as a nation and, in particular, how multi-ethnicity is managed in this island-nation. How to fit the multicultural into the imagining of an overall nation is a dilemma faced by many increasingly such multicultural nations. I have argued that, as a result of its everyday cosmopolitanism, Mauritius's brand of nationalism is particularly made up of complex interplays between the ethnic and the national, which I have termed processes of 'Mauritianité'; the crucial point to stress with processes of Mauritianité is that there is no simple point of resolution nor 'equilibrium' to be reached. These intersections can be any combination of messy, creative or awkward. Mauritius' nationalism is made up of multiple such moments of intersections between the ethnic and the national.

I have identified different moments of Mauritianité: Laissez-Faire Mauritianité (the taken-for-granted moments where ethnicity and the national intersect), Swaying Mauritianité (less matter-of-fact intersections that are instead characterised by strategic emphases or sidestepping of either the ethnic or the national), and Fractious Mauritianité (these intersections are more heavily contested, with negotiations characterised by tension; they can be seen as containing potential 'flashpoints' – where the balance between the ethnic and the national is significantly more delicately poised and fraught). These different moments of Mauritianité encapsulate the varying degrees of intensity which can characterise the intersections. This is not to say that what can be characterised as Laissez-Faire or Swaying Mauritianité cannot shift into more heated and disputed moments of Fractious Mauritianité. And equally, what can be identified as Fractious Mauritianité can equally slide into a less contentious Swaying or Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. Mauritianité and the complex enmeshings which can take place are arguably recognised as such by Mauritians. Fractious

Mauritianité in particular can be seen as contributing to what Herzfeld terms cultural intimacy. This example of Fractious Mauritianité can be seen as encapsulating Herzfeld's 'cultural intimacy'. Cultural intimacy is characterised by any combination of awkwardness, dissent, embarrassment and irreverence – multiple forms of contested interactions – by citizens towards their state; crucially, it is these interactions and knowledge of these interactions that ironically serve to bind citizens more firmly towards the state in what Herzfeld calls 'a fellowship of the flawed' (1997: 28). Yet while this flawed quality of intercultural negotiations is often the basis of a pragmatic liveability, it also maintains lines of tension which can, in any given moment, fracture or erupt into large-scale crisis. In the following chapter, "*L'Affaire Kaya*", I will examine such a crisis.

5. *L'Affaire Kaya*

Introduction

On Thursday 17 February 1999, the Mauritian singer Joseph Réginald Topize, better known by his stage name of Kaya, was arrested on a charge of smoking marijuana. Kaya's arrest took place two days after he had performed at a concert held by a political party called the Mouvement Républicain (the Republican Movement, which in 1999 was a recently-organised party with particularly youth-oriented ideologies). The main purpose of the concert had been a call for the legalisation of marijuana. Kaya was one of several arrested, however, he was the only one who was incarcerated. Two days after his arrest, Kaya died whilst in police custody sometime during Saturday night (the 20th February) leading into Sunday morning (the 21st February). The police attributed his death to a "violent epileptic fit" (Eriksen, 2004:86) – an explanation met with varying degrees of scepticism, disbelief and anger, and Kaya's death quickly became the catalyst for a series of riots. Initially manifested as anger towards government buildings, the unrest and riots quickly degenerated into looting, violence, island-wide loss of law and order, and confrontations and conflict which took on a definite ethnic dimension. Four people died, and all social, economic and political activities ground to a complete halt throughout the island. It was four days before public life was cautiously rekindled, and it was a full week before things were relatively 'back to normal'.

The 1999 riots were described by a newspaper columnist as only taking "a few hours to re-open wounds which had taken nearly 30 years to heal" (Antoine, 1999:4 – my translation). These unspecified "wounds" refer to the ethnic clashes and violence which took place just before Independence, which was the last time there had been such overt social chaos, especially with a definite ethnic dimension, during the riots of 1967-8. These 1967-8 riots took place in a context of ongoing social and political uncertainty in the lead-up to Mauritius' independence. By contrast, the 1999 riots were completely unanticipated and happened at a time of relative social and economic prosperity as well as political stability. The rapidity and unexpectedness with which the island slid into complete and utter turmoil came as a shock to many Mauritians.

As was discussed in the previous chapters, Mauritians are not unaware of the tensions and irritations that can characterise everyday life in their multi-ethnic nation-state. The concept of the ethnic imaginary captures the awareness of differences, moments of alignment and moments of othering that are pragmatically accommodated, participated in and tacitly acknowledged on a quotidian basis by Mauritians. Equally, there is an awareness of the difficulties, frictions and 'buts' that punctuate everyday life in a multi-ethnic society. Intertwined with this everyday informal awareness is the national level, where processes of imagining the national community incorporate and acknowledge multi-ethnicity in a myriad of ways and practices that is always evolving and never reaching a stage of equilibrium – a process I have termed Mauritianité. The riots, complete breakdown of social infrastructure and rapid rise of ethnically-based tensions and clashes all brought into sharp relief the fragility and the 'knife-edge' on which both, Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism and processes of Mauritianité, rest.

L'Affaire Kaya (*Zafair Kaya* in Kreol, or, the Kaya Affair) rapidly became the phrase by which both, the ambiguous circumstances of Kaya's death and the subsequent riots, became known. The Kaya Affair is an example of a significant moment in Mauritius' history where its multi-ethnicity collapsed and its seeming unity unravelled rapidly and drastically. Given the breakdown of taken-for-granted quotidian contexts, this event allows an exploration of the complex ways in which multiple threads and influences of the ethnic imaginary, as well as processes of Mauritianité, were all at play, but in ways which were simultaneously more heightened and obvious and also, more brittle.

Creole Malaise

To begin, I wish to focus on *Le Creole Malaise*, a phrase that has been in use in Mauritius since the early 1990s (Miles, 1999:218) to describe the continuing social, economic and political disadvantages being faced by a disproportionate percentage of Creoles in Mauritius. *Malaise* translates across both English and French, reflecting notions of melancholy, disquiet and dissatisfaction in the former and sickness or

ailment in the latter. Put together, the terms convey a grim state-of-being for many Creoles as a result of continuingly depressed socio-economic circumstances and ongoing social exclusion.

Why is it that Creoles as a group tend to experience social exclusion? It is not a case of minority status alone, as Franco-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians are also minority groups who face very different conditions. There is no one ready answer to the Creole Malaise, but there are many elements that can be woven together to produce an approximate picture. In particular, Creoles' historical circumstances and experiences in Mauritius can be seen as having a significant influence. Within a historical socio-economic context, slavery and the subsequent social and political conditions immediately post-slavery are significant. The abolition of slavery was meant to have been 'wound down' with a six-year apprenticeship. However, the widespread and large-scale substitution of indentured labour from the Indian subcontinent from the 1830s onwards as an alternative source of cheap labour meant that few of these apprenticeships were served out. As I stated in chapter one, it is unclear whether former slaves marrooned in large numbers, reluctant to work under conditions that had changed little, or whether they were "chased off" (Carter, 1995:19). Work in towns and along the coast for former Creole slaves was restricted to agricultural trade especially in the form of fishing and also, manual labour. Indeed, fishing is a trade associated almost exclusively with Creoles (Eriksen, 1998:62).

Indentured labourers "eventually succeeded in breaking through socio-economic barriers to become landowners, traders, and professionals" (Miles, 1999:215); but this is not to say that there was no equivalent upwards movement within the Creole community. As noted in chapter one, prior to the large-scale arrival of Indian indentured labour, there was a stratified system of Creole slaves, '*gens de couleur*', and French landowners and administrators. While theoretically distinct categories, there was inevitably some mobility, especially in the '*gens de couleur*' category. Usually the product of unions between French landowners and Creole slaves, the '*gens de couleur*' occupied the most fluid category; they filled the 'gap' between the Creole slaves and the French socially, economically in terms of free status, culturally in terms of commonalities of religious worship, and also visually in terms of skin colour (Miles, 1999:216). This group formed a middle class and intelligentsia during

the early twentieth century and contributed to a cultural link between the poorer Creoles and the richer Francos. However, in the lead-up to independence, with fears about the future of the island compounded by political and ethnic unrest, a significant proportion of the '*gens de couleur*' and some Franco-Mauritians chose to migrate to places such as Australia, South Africa and Canada (Miles, 1999:216). This had the effect of leaving a sudden and inaccessible gap, socially, economically and culturally, between poor and working class Creoles who could not afford to leave, and the wealthy Franco-Mauritian minority who had chosen to stay.

In terms of cultural commonalities, Creoles are again in marked contrast to other ethnic groups in Mauritius. Creoles are the most heterogenous group, with the most fluid boundaries (Eriksen, 1998). This is in large part due to, as I discussed in chapter one, slaves being brought to Mauritius from different parts of West and East Africa, as well as Madagascar (Alpers, 2000:85; Boswell, 2006:43), as well as the fact that Creole is also a residual category, "absorbing everyone who does not fit well into other categories" (Eriksen, 1998:176). However, because most Mauritians define themselves within a particular ethnic group, Creole is mostly strongly associated with those of African ancestry (ibid.). Adding to this heterogeneity is a lack of an ancestral language, which is in contrast all the other ethno-religious groups, whose cultural (and often, religious) links to places of origin remain comparatively strong. The heterogeneity of the Creole category is overlooked as a result of the dominance of essentialised orientations of identity and otherness. Ironically, the very term 'Creole' is one that is anti-essentialist, with connotations of hybridity, mélange and newness. The Creole category is subject to repeated processes of reification and essentialising understandings and stereotypes, as are all ethnic groups in Mauritius. Boswell cites an instance at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture when the Minister of Arts and Culture rang to request a definition of 'Creole'. The best working solution was forwarding the ministry "a series of documents that approximated to a definition of the Creole" (2006:44).

Eriksen points out that as a result of this cultural heterogeneity, Creoles are a very loosely-bonded community, with comparatively weak kinship obligations (1999:88). This more individually-oriented outlook, he argues elsewhere, emerged as a result of the system of slavery, in which the importance of family and kinship was erased

(1999:9). This looser network approach has resulted in a significant disadvantage for Creoles economically and politically. Indo-Mauritians, by contrast, have very strong kinship lines, which has led to "an employment culture of kinship obligations" (1999:88). This nepotistic culture has resulted in a dominance of Indo-Mauritians in many aspects of the civil sector.

Similarly, in the field of politics, Creoles' weak social organisation and Indo-Mauritian numerical dominance has meant that Indo-Mauritians have successfully dominated politics and membership in political parties. The 'best loser' system ensures that no ethnic group remains unrepresented, but nor does it significantly diffuse or diversify an Indo-Mauritian dominance. Nevertheless, one of the most important political leaders in post-Independence Mauritius was a Creole, Gaëtan Duval. Although he emphasised a Creole identity, Eriksen points out that he was "nonetheless politically associated with the right, and could scarcely be said to be a spokesman for the poor and powerless" (1999:9).

Creole disadvantage is also evident in the field of education. Students are required to sit three exams during their primary and secondary school years: the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) is undertaken by final year primary school students, while the Secondary Certificate (SC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) comprise the exams taken in the penultimate and final years of secondary schooling. Fierce competition for sought-after tertiary scholarship places, particularly overseas ones, has meant that additional out-of-school classes known as 'tuition' (*leçons* in French) are part of the normal routine of students' everyday lives. When I was in primary school in Mauritius, tuition was offered from standard three onwards (with an average student age of eight years). After-school and weekend tuition is the norm, for which teachers are paid separately and privately. Education is free, however, Miles describes the culture of tuition as "a veritable parallel pedagogic industry in private extra-curricular tutoring" (1999:218). Funds required for these additional classes mean that families in disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances are further disadvantaged.

These different realms, the historical legacy of slavery and the associated arrival of indentured labour, the heterogeneity of the Creole group, the weak social organisation and the extra-curricular costs of a good education, have all contributed, in varying

degrees, to the continuing socio-economic disadvantage experienced by a disproportionate number of Creoles in Mauritius. In the previous chapter, I argued that the intersections of Mauritius' multi-ethnicity within a national framework can be understood as a process of Mauritianité. Mauritianité encapsulates the ongoing management of multi-ethnicity within and by the state. The three different layers of this process include: Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, Swaying Mauritianité and Fractious Mauritianité; each layer describes the taken-for-granted, the strategically managed and the heavily-contested elements of such intersections. Part of the reason the socio-economic disadvantage of Creoles has persisted can be understood via of the notion of Swaying Mauritianité. At the state and policy level, ethnicity and multi-ethnicity can be strategically emphasised or avoided in situations of Swaying Mauritianité. The issue of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage is not often officially acknowledged as being as a situation with a disproportionate number of Creoles. The overrepresentation of Creoles is recognised but is rarely openly discussed as such. Miles comments that, "[w]hen reformist politicians euphemistically speak of eradicating 'exclusion', from Mauritian progress, it is understood that the 'excluded' are disproportionately Creole" (1999:218). It is understood as such, but is not officially acknowledged; or to put it another way, the exclusion is acknowledged, but the ethnic element of this exclusion is not.

This avoidance characteristic of Swaying Mauritianité is not only in the realm of political discourse, but can sometimes equally take place in practice. A social worker informed me about exceptionally bad levels of truancy taking place in one particular, lower socio-economic area of Rose Hill that he was working on. He and his colleagues were charged with making sure the children were attending school; however, regardless of multiple interventions, he believed that the children were truanting in order to work and to contribute to the family income. He was sympathetic to the families' financial needs, but felt he also had to prioritise taking into account concerns over the children's educational capacities. He said nothing about the ethnicities of these truanting children until I asked. It was only then that he readily identified the children as Creole. He later commented that, until I had posed the question, he had not thought about the commonality of ethnicity across the truanting children, and was not required to identify ethnicity anywhere in his reports. I found his personal (and/or official) 'ethnic blindness' surprising, given my experiences of

Mauritians' acute awareness of their own and others' ethnicities. However, his personal 'ethnic blindness' was echoed in the deliberate omission of any recording requirements about ethnicity at the official, administrative, bureaucratic level. This intentional avoidance is an example of Swaying Mauritianité. Social work is a role performed within the sanctions of the government, with reports and records all adding to social knowledge, policy development and general governance. Social workers, by the very definition of their roles, focus on providing some form of state-coordinated and state-level assistance. If social workers are unaware of or are not recording the ethnicities of those they are assisting, it suggests an intriguing form of strategic swaying and avoidance of ethnicity as a means of social management. On the one hand, the lack of recording of ethnicity sidesteps the danger of stereotyping all working class Creoles as being victims of the Creole Malaise. On the other hand, in not recording ethnicity, the extent of disproportionate Creole representation in social exclusion remains muddied and unclear.

Sega, Kaya and Seggae

In light of the Creole Malaise then, the place of Sega in Mauritius is particularly interesting. Sega comprises both a style of music and a style of dance; it is usually considered to be quite specific to Mauritius. Sega is strongly associated with Creoles, and is considered to be the cultural property of Creoles. The actual origins of Sega are unknown. There are variants of Sega in the islands in Mauritius' vicinity – islands which also received an influx of African slaves (Alpers, 2000:92) – particularly Rodrigues, the Seychelles (where it is called *moutia*) and Reunion (where it called *maloya*). An 1822 piece by Arago (vol. I, 223-4, cited in Boswell, 2006) highlights connections between the Mozambican dance known as *chéga* or *tséga* and the Brazilian fandango, both of which can also be seen as having similarities to the Sega – particularly in the common focus on strong hip movements and the comparatively still upper body (Boswell, 2006:61), as well as the obvious linguistic parallels. Boswell also cites Benoit's (1985) hypothesis of a strong Malagasy connection to the Sega. Rather than similarities in the physical style of movement, Benoit's argument lies in the contexts of the dance; the Merinas' (the ethnic highland Malagasy people) ritual of 'the turning of the bones' can be paralleled to a particular form of Sega

which comprises a mourning of the dead and incorporates the deceased's body into the ritual (Benoit, 1985 in Boswell, 2006, 61). Given both the Mozambican and Malagasy origins of slaves brought to Mauritius (among others), the likelihood of Sega's origins as being connected to either/or these places is high, although not conclusive.

Sega was performed in plantations during slavery, although it is unclear whether it was used more as a form of resistance or escapism from the brutal realities of the conditions of slavery, or as a form of 'encouragement' for better work productivity, or a combination of both (Edensor, 2001:70; Alpers, 2000:92; Boswell, 2006:62-63). Danielle Police argues that Sega was a site of contestation, emancipatory thought and also of memory, which historically provided slaves with a counter-discourse within the colonial system and which continues to act as an ongoing counter-discourse (2000).

Because of its historical development within the system of slavery, Sega retained a significant element of class for many years, in that it was frequently associated with working class Creoles. Boswell states that Sega was:

> excluded from formal celebrations, especially amongst wealthier Creoles, because the dance was associated with the lowest category of Creoles, and was perceived as a barbaric dance by the Franco-Mauritians and non-European middle classes… (and) was frowned upon by the Church… (2006:62).

It was only in the 1960s (after Mauritius had received its independence) that a Creole singer, Alphonse Ravaton, also known as *Ti Frère* (Little Brother), popularised the style. Prior to this, it had been mainly a home-based activity, rather than having any space or significance in the public domain (ibid.). Although the timing of *Ti Frère*'s popularisation of Sega may be coincidental, it is interesting to speculate about the correlation between its popularisation and its subsequent appropriation as an "invented tradition" in a newly-independent Mauritius.

Sega is characterised by the sophisticated use of percussive instruments. A characteristic instrument is the hand-held drum known as *ravanne*[22] (see Figure 20). Musically, the rhythm of the songs frequently plays with the on and off-beats, where the entry of the different percussive instruments within each bar is staggered. This results in a music that has an off-beat (like reggae), even as it remains on the beat. Technological developments have contributed to the evolution of Sega, in its embracing of contemporary instrumentation and production techniques and pop/rock sensibilities (Edensor, 2001:70).

Figure 20: Traditional Sega instruments: ravanne, maravanne and triangle (Rasoanaivo, 2009)

Like older Sega songs, contemporary songs in this tradition continue to deal with a wide range of subjects. There are many pieces that focus on such everyday 'universal' matters as love, family, work and money; others address historical, social and political concerns – ranging from the place of Creoles in Mauritian society to and the impact of communalism on Mauritius' future, to the need for peace. Sega songs are usually in Kreol, but can equally incorporate English, French and Hindi words or phrases. Sega songs can thus be seen as having quite a localised, often Mauritian-specific focus.

Sega is often contradictorily positioned in Mauritius as both, ethnically specific and nationally distinct. On the one hand, Sega is strongly (although not exclusively) associated with Creoles in Mauritius and, as such, can be frequently incorporated into essentialised discourses about Creoles by non-Creole Mauritians, where ideas, images and perceptions about Sega and Creoles are linked together. Existing negative

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[22] *Ravannes* are hand-held drums which are made from goat skin, cured and stretched to fit over variously-sized frames of wood. They have a wide diameter.

stereotypes about Creoles are, as we saw in the "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius" chapter, part of a broader discourse within the ethnic imaginary, where every ethnic group has a positive self-perception and a negative stereotype of other ethnic groups. Skill and proficiency in Sega and music, for example, can be interpreted by non-Creoles in terms of the stereotypes of Creoles prioritising leisure over more serious pursuits, in line with the stereotype of 'living for today'.

Additionally, the Sega dance (see Figure 21) can incorporate an erotic or sexual element, described by Benoit (1985) as "suggestive and lascivious contortions" (Benoit, cited in Boswell, 2006:64), although Boswell argues more positively that is a celebration of "the sexuality and vitality of Creoles… celebrated in the physical performance of Sega" (2006:64). The sexuality implied in the dance and in certain lyrics means that perceptions of loose morals or vulgarity can be slotted alongside existing negative stereotypes about Creoles (of laziness, 'living for now' and carelessness).

Figure 21: Sega dancers (Mauritius Government, 2005)

Paradoxically, this Creole cultural form is also situated both within Mauritius and overseas as being a 'distinctly Mauritian' style of musical expression as well as a 'distinctly Mauritian' cultural activity and tradition. It is often framed as such in fora with an international component, such as organised hotel entertainments for tourists, in tourist brochures, in Mauritian contributions to ceremonies and entertainments during international events, and during Mauritius Independence Day celebrations. There have been critical discussions of the place of Creole Mauritians especially in hotel entertainments, concerning the sexualisation and objectification of the dancers for the titillation of hotel guests, and the westernising of the music and performance

aesthetics (Edensor, 2001:70), as well as modes of resistance within these entertainments through the incorporation of languages other than Kreol, use of political messages and performances of non-Sega-based dances (Boswell, 2006:64). Sega's status as a 'unique and traditional' Mauritian cultural product is reinforced through its repeated presence on international stages, but its status remains ambiguous within Mauritius. Sega is a cultural form arising out of the particular Mauritian contexts of colonisation and slavery and is caught in an ambiguous positioning of being considered the cultural property of the Creole community, even as it is continually borrowed or appropriated as a 'uniquely' Mauritian cultural product on the international stage.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a distinct evolution in local music in Mauritius. Kaya is recognised in Mauritius as the creator of the influential music style of 'Seggae'. A fusion of Sega and reggae, Seggae combines the staggered-but-always-finishing-on-the-beat rhythms of Sega with the clearer off-beat rhythms characteristic of reggae for a rhythmically complex sound. Musically, there is a significant amount of cross-over between Sega and Seggae. However, in terms of political impetus, a difference is more clearly articulated. Seggae has a more self-consciously transnational orientation. Particularly through its reggae influences, there is an immediate borrowing of many reggae-based narratives, icons, ideals and ideas. These include: an awareness of belonging to the African diaspora; an ideology of African roots; an awareness of slavery and subsequent survival; the musical influence of Bob Marley; and performances and practices of Rastafarianism – including smoking marijuana, the frequent usage of the colour combination of green, yellow and red, and the wearing of dreadlocks among others (Police, 2000:67; Boswell, 2006:67). In spite of these broader transnational influences, Seggae nevertheless includes a recognition of the Mauritius-specific experiences of Creole communities. In the Mauritian context, as with Sega, Seggae is still associated with Creoles, however, unlike Sega, Seggae is not mobilised as a national, traditional cultural artefact. Seggae has not been 'appropriated' to the same degree as Sega and therefore offers an alternative means by which to produce narratives and counter-discourses about many aspects of Creole and Mauritian life.

Kaya, Seggae's creator, situated himself firmly within the Creole communities in Mauritius (see Figure 22). Kaya embodied many Seggae influences – not surprising given that he was the creator of this particular style of music. To begin with, Kaya identified as, and was identified as, a "Rasta". Rastafarians comprise a very small percentage of the Mauritian population and are made up largely, but not exclusively, of members from the Creole community, in which the influences of reggae and Seggae are very significant (Fox, 1999:19). Additionally, Kaya got his stage name early on in his career as a result of singing the Bob Marley song, "Kaya"; it was well received, and in his own words, "that's what people started calling me" (Kaya, 1999: radio interview – my translation). *Kaya* is a Jamaican slang word associated with cannabis. Kaya sported dreadlocks, and many of his album covers employ the green-yellow-red colour combination.

Although his musical style is distinctive, the ideas in Kaya's songs (as well as other Seggae songs) are not that different from the sorts of issues covered in Sega songs. A selection of his album titles throughout the 1990s reflect the varying themes of peace, hope, roots and identity, music and Marley: *La Pé Universel* – World Peace (1991); *Seggaeman* (1992); *Racine Pé Brilé* – Roots are Burning (1994); *Erzats de Bob Marley* – Ersatz Bob Marley (1995); *Zistwar Revoltant* – Revolting Story (1996); *Mo La Mizik* – My Music (1997). Further, Sega and Seggae both incorporate references to the Creole Malaise. This does not mean that every single Seggae song will make reference to it, but that many songs might. Kaya's album *Zistwar Revoltant* is suggestive of it, while his Seggaeman song incorporates lyrics about Seggae being "an emancipatory Mauritian music".

Figure 22: Kaya the singer (*Week-end*, 1999:25)

The Death of Kaya and After – A Chronology of Events

Before Kaya's Death

On Tuesday 16 February 1999, a concert was organised by the Mouvement Républicain (the MR), a political party with youth-oriented ideologies and members, which was founded and (at the time) led by a lawyer named Rama Valayden. The concert was held in the inland town of Rose Hill and it doubled as an MR meeting, the main purpose of which was a call for the legalisation of marijuana. Approximately 2000 people attended the concert, which had a reggae theme, with several local artists performing, including Kaya (*l'express*, 1999:5).

The next day, on Wednesday 17 February, the concert was described in front-page headlines in the daily *l'express* newspaper: "Rose Hill: Marijuana smoked openly during MR concert" (1999:1 – my translation). The fact that marijuana was smoked openly was emphasised four times in the newspaper with the repetition of the word "ouvertement" (openly) in both the headlines on two different pages. The newspaper also made a careful note of the fact that the police were present at the concert-meeting and that no arrests were made. In fact, *l'express*, in its second paragraph, juxtaposes the following sentences:

> The majority of the smokers were young people who were displaying a
> strong preference for reggae. The police were present at the meeting. No

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arrests were made because of the consumption of marijuana, according to our information (ibid., 1999:5 – my translation).

The language used in this paragraph is interesting; it specifies that the "*majority* of the smokers were *young people* who were *displaying a strong preference for reggae*" (ibid., my emphasis). While this language can be interpreted as largely factual, it is also quite specific in identifying firstly, that it was youth who were the bulk of the marijuana smokers. Given the MR's identity as a youthful political party, the language in the article reinforces the view that youths are attracted to its ideas. Secondly, the language of the article is clear in suggesting that a large segment of the youth at the concert preferred reggae. Given that sega and seggae are both strongly associated with the Creole Community in Mauritius, to have stated that the marijuana-smoking youth preferred sega or seggae, would have been the equivalent of specifically pinpointing Creole youth as marijuana smokers within the ethnic imaginary. Thus, "preference for reggae" avoids directly making such an accusation. However, associations of Sega and Seggae to reggae, along with associations of Bob Marley, Jamaica, 'Rastas' and marijuana are nevertheless there, with more long-winded and diluted connections still to be associated with the Creole communities within the ethnic imaginary.

On Thursday 18 February, Kaya was arrested. He was not the only one questioned, but he was the only person arrested; his arrest was due to his admission that he had smoked a cigarette with some marijuana in it at the Tuesday 16th February concert. Kaya was placed in the Line Barracks Detention Centre, better known in Mauritius as Alcatraz on Thursday 18 February. Two days later, he was dead. He died some time on that same night, somewhere between Saturday 20 February and Sunday 21 February, between the hours of 11.15pm and 5.00am (Rivet, 1999:11; Martial, 1999:10). There are conflicting reports about exactly how and when he was found and under what circumstances.

Despite the lack of evidence, the fact that Kaya had died so suddenly while in prison, led to immediate suspicions of police brutality – that Kaya's was yet another death in custody at the hands of the police. Common knowledge obtained through casual conversations about the Kaya's death revealed an awareness of at least five or six

other deaths in custody over the past year – some of whom had been Creole, while others had been "Hindou".

The official police statement released in the immediate aftermath of Kaya's death was included in full in the *Week-end* newspaper for Sunday 29 February (1999:10). It was not particularly illuminating.

> On 18/2/99, Joseph Réginald Topize, also known as Kaya, aged 39, residing in Beaux-Songes was arrested by the police for having committed an offence under the Dangerous Drugs Act. On 21/2/99 at 3h57 on a routine visit, he was seen to be alive and well in his cell. At 5.00hrs, he was found collapsed at the Line Barracks Detention centre. An autopsy has been carried out by the Police Medical Officer. The medical evidence shows beyond any doubt that this man did not suffer from any fracture of the skull. A counter autopsy will be carried out in the light of which a further release will be issued by this office. At this stage, the police is in presence of a statement of an independent person indicating that this man's behaviour prior to his collapse almost certainly led to this own death.

This statement is intriguing for what it does not say, as much as for what is actually said. According to an "independent person", Kaya's behaviour somehow contributed to his own death. Who this witness was, what they saw, and what behaviour Kaya displayed that induced his own death, were not made clear at the time and remain unclear. Further, the autopsy finding by the police forensic pathologist Dr Baboo Harish Surnam put the cause of death as "…une blessure – traumatique ou naturelle, il reste à le confirmer – à la tête" ('an injury to the head, whether as a result of trauma or natural causes is yet to be confirmed') (*Week-end*, 27-28 February 1999:10 – my translation). This conclusion is not conclusive. But this is sidestepped in the police statement, which instead emphasises that, "beyond any doubt (Kaya) did not suffer from any fracture of the skull" (ibid.). This particular sentence is aimed at countering the alternative view which rapidly and informally circulated – that Kaya had died as a result of a fractured skull. A fractured skull is not readily self-inflicted and would lend weight to the accusations of suspicious circumstances of his death.

Sunday 21 February 1999 – Monday 22 February 1999
On Sunday 21 February, news of Kaya's death broke. It is cited as the day on which the riots commenced (Achille, 1999:10; Eriksen, 2004:86). However, it may be more accurate to say that the unrest 'bubbled' throughout the day. It was during the Sunday night that the anger and frustration in and near Kaya's home town of Roche-Bois

exploded. "[T]he police stations of Abercrombie and of Roche Bois came under attack during the night, and barricades were disrupting the freeway" (Antoine, 1999:28). On the morning of Monday 22 February, the radio was broadcasting notification of "disturbances" in the region of Port Louis, with the only additional information being that most of the roads were being blocked. People were being advised to not go anywhere near Port Louis except for the most urgent, unavoidable business. The reasons for the "disturbances" were not being made clear.

The unrest quickly degenerated into riots as the morning went on. Several dozen "protestors (were) blocking the freeway and hurling rocks at members of the SSU (Special Support Unit) and SMF (Special Mobile Force) who were trying to contain them" (Antoine, 1999:9, 28), as well as uprooting and overturning everything that they could (ibid.). Suburbs north of Port Louis were likened to a battlefield as the barricades multiplied (Antoine, 1999:28). A Mauritian who works in Port Louis, and who had gone to work as per usual that Monday morning, told me about his experience. The streets had been strewn with rocks that motorists returning home from work were being forced to either clear or negotiate as best they could. He said his response to the situation had been to wonder why the police weren't doing their job and clearing the rocks, but found out why they were nowhere to be seen when he drove past the police station. "Li ti complètement crazé" ("It was completely flattened"). This dramatic statement illustrates the level of violence that was initially directed against the police – the state-endorsed body deemed directly responsible for Kaya's death.

This tension between the police and the rioters was further fuelled when it was revealed that Berger Agathe, another singer and friend of Kaya, had been killed during the riots in Roche-Bois. Agathe's death was nevertheless a source of further anger to rioters. The anti-police sentiment was now compounded by a sudden additional situation where the police were directly implicated the death of yet another well-known member of the Creole community.

On that same Monday evening, a meeting was held between the Prime Minister, Navin Ramgoolam, and Kaya's widow, Veronique Topize. The meeting was recorded and televised that same evening, as well as being broadcast on radio, after the

'Tribute to Kaya'. During the televised meeting, Dr Ramgoolam presented Mrs Topize with his condolences, and gave assurances that all the circumstances of Kaya's death would be "brought to light." He also announced that he had readily acquiesced to demands for a counter-autopsy by someone "from outside the country, from Reunion Island". As part of their meeting, both Mrs Topize and the Prime Minister asked for calm to be restored to the island. They also asked that people not give in to "communalisme" and to not listen to rumours. They further constructed a narrative of Kaya as a man of peace and love, who was opposed to violence and anger. This narrative was echoed by Kaya's brother Alain Topize, and also the President of the Republic, Cassam Uteem, whose statements were included within the broadcast. The narrative of a peace-loving Kaya was further emphasised by the reporter. However, the combined appeal for calm failed.

The MBC news that evening provided some of the only footage of the riots to be aired on television. The images, which gave an idea of the seriousness of the situation, included: an SMF (Special Mobile Force) truck rumbling down a street at night; a fire in the middle of the street; confrontations between police and an angrily gesticulating group of young men; a group of more than a hundred, standing shoulder-to-shoulder across the entire width of a road obstructed by rocks and crates, as people watch from an overhead pedestrian bridge; and black smoke billowing up from a large fire in a built-up area (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Scenes of disturbances on MBC news Monday 22 February 1999 (ghettooceanindien, 2007:YouTube)

Tuesday 23 February 1999

The island attempted to carry on with normal everyday events on the Tuesday. Businesses, shops, schools and all other forms of social and bureaucratic infrastructure all opened and attempted to operate as 'business as usual'. But it was clear that the unrest had not abated. During the day, the disturbances spread from Port Louis and its suburbs to the nearest central big towns of Beau Bassin, Quatre Bornes and Rose Hill (see Figure 3 on pg. 4). Throughout the day, reports in Kreol detailed which roads were inaccessible, with all roads to the north of the island in particular being closed. By the afternoon, news reports had expanded to include warnings of bus

timetable cancellations and advice to return home immediately. By the afternoon, the tensions had reached the main inland town of Curepipe. Schools, shops, businesses, workplaces all began closing by early afternoon. Public transport was also terminated early in the afternoon. The few buses that were still running in my local area of Curepipe were filled beyond capacity, carrying well over their regulation number of passengers.

On the evening news, the crippled infrastructure was the leading story. Unlike the previous evening, confrontations and unrest were not shown; only the effects of the violence such as burnt and damaged buses and buildings were shown. News reports advised that all administrative, bureaucratic, commercial and educational establishments would remain closed next day, Wednesday 24 February 1999. It was about this time that the realisation sank in that the riots were actually worsening, that the situation was deteriorating, rather than being contained.

The second item of the evening news on television and radio focussed on the second autopsy of Kaya's body by the non-Mauritian, Franco-Réunionnais Dr Jean-Paul Ramstein (see Figure 24). The opening sentence was – "Not a fracture of the skull. That has been the finding of the counter-autopsy of Kaya's corpse this morning" (Sugar FM news, 23 February 1999 – my translation). In an echo of the initial police statement, the emphasis of this opening statement deliberately counters the primary rumour that Kaya's death was due to a fracture to the skull. The newsreader then went on to emphasise that the counter-autopsy "had been practised this morning by the Reunionnais doctor, Doctor Jean-Pierre Ramstein, who arrived in Mauritius this same morning. The autopsy took place in the Hospital of the North, in the presence of other Mauritian doctors. …He has not made any statements for now about the possibility of blows being inflicted on the victim" (ibid.). Again, the emphasis is on what did not happen, rather than what did. Ramstein's official conclusion regarding the cause of death was as being "une hémorragie méningée" (a brain haemorrhage).

Figure 24: Franco-Réunionnais, Dr Jean-Paul Ramstein, invited to carry out the counter-autopsy on Kaya

Ramstein's full report was released in early March 1999, in which he specified the types of injuries that took place, but only sketched out the ways in which those injuries could have been inflicted. Louis summarises the report thus: "two types of intercranial lesions, resulting from hard contact with the ground and shaking of the head" (1999:10). Both these types of injuries can (theoretically) have been self-inflicted or been the result of foul play. There is continuing ambiguity about the actions that led to the injuries.

Wednesday 24 February 1999

By Wednesday, the island was at a standstill; all the major towns and villages were in a state of paralysis and/or unrest. In my area, there were no signs of life in any houses. The tense atmosphere was compounded by the intermittent sounds of loud thudding explosions in the nearby town of Curepipe – explosions that I imagined were Molotov cocktails. The utter silence of the normally busy street added to charged, waiting strangeness of the day, which ironically, was a beautiful tropical summer day. The main traffic was of the pedestrian kind; throughout the day I saw several groups of male youths, mostly in twos or threes (never alone), walking towards the Curepipe town centre. They were noticeably well-dressed in a 'smart-casual' style, which seemed at odds with the lawless, disturbed atmosphere suggested by the explosions sounding in Curepipe.

Tensions in many major towns were high. Quatre Bornes where the commercial complex in nearby Candos had been heavily damaged and looted, was one town on a knife-edge. *5-Plus dimanche* reports that "several thousand Hindus mobilised at Candos, ready to attack (the nearby) Cité Kennedy" (Bablee, 1999:9), where Creoles make up a significant percentage of the town's population. By contrast, in its report, the *Week-end* emphasised the defusion of tensions (1999:6). It pointed out that rumours, fear of (pre-emptive) attacks, and violence perpetrated by those who did not live in the area, all contributed to the disturbances. The report then highlighted the intervention of the SMF, as well as leadership and negotiation roles taken by Creole and Hindu religious, cultural and community organisation leaders. Rose Belle was another town where, as a result of damage done, tit-for-tat violence was being feared and threatened. However, reciprocal violence did not eventuate.

Elsewhere on the island, two funerals took place. The funeral of Berger Agathe – the singer who died during the riots on the Monday – was held at 10am. Kaya's funeral was held afterwards. Many people attended the funerals to pay their respects; the scheduling of the funerals in Roche Bois may well have contributed to the comparative calm in and around Port Louis on the Wednesday.

Media reports continued to focus on the damage that had been done (see Figure 25), and on providing information about road blockages and riots. But there was very little information about the 'who', 'when' and 'how' of the damage caused. The omission of information that would have allowed a sense (however partial) of what was actually happening, meant that rumours proliferated. Unsubstantiated third-hand stories, mixed in with each teller's variations, fears and prejudices, were the only alternative source of information. Rumours were rife, unconstrained by any alternative official, substantiated version of events. Rumours included houses, schools, and/or places of worship being burnt, damaged or destroyed. There was a constant fear of what might happen next.

Figure 25: Damages done to a commercial complex in Candos, near Quatre Bornes (*Weekend*, 28 February 1999, p. 8)

It was in the two major northern villages of Goodlands and Triolet where rumours aggravated existing tensions to the point of actual violence, where a small number of people lost their lives. Both Goodlands and Triolet have significant percentages of Creole and Hindu populations. One such rumour, about these northern villages, was told to me as if it was factual. It consisted of Creole threats of attacking the Hindu homes in one of the villages; this threat was pre-empted by Hindu men leaping onto trucks and going and attacking the Creole homes first. The reverse rumour was in equal circulation – whereby it was Creole men going to attack the Hindu homes before the Creole ones could be attacked. Each rumour set up, in these northern villages, Creoles and Hindus in turn, as victims or defenders, or aggressors. This is not to say that the rumours were without truth, but that rather it was difficult to know what was happening, what had happened and what had not. The result of such swirling rumours was that, in both Goodlands and Triolet, houses were burnt, or pillaged. According to the newspaper, *Le Mauricien*, (25 February 1999:5), in Goodlands, approximately twenty houses were attacked (burnt or pillaged), with some cars also being burnt, while in Triolet, some sixteen houses were looted (ibid.). Phone calls to the police were in vain, and no help arrived from the authorities in either of the two villages.

Thursday 25 February 1999
Thursday was expected to be the worse day of violence. Tensions were high in all major towns. Both Goodlands and Triolet remained on a knife-edge. Confrontations and violence were fearfully anticipated in these two villages, as were the

repercussions of such ongoing violence. Instead, an eerie sense of calm seemed to prevail; elsewhere, in the remainder of the country, much of the tension had not spilled over into the expected violence overnight.

This unexpected lack of violence had an immediate impact, with people starting to re-venture out onto the streets. We had our first visitor since the Sunday night – my uncle, who had gone to buy a newspaper and had dropped by to see how we had fared. He told us how several buildings were badly damaged in Curepipe. The queues for newspapers had been very long, with people desperate to find out additional information. As we sat and chatted, the odd bus went past with a few people on board – it was welcome, visual evidence that buses were running again and people were using them.

Seeing people out and about, venturing into the front garden, hearing stories of long queues to buy newspapers all contributed to a sense that the streets were being reclaimed, and a feeling that the worse was perhaps over. The afternoon newspaper, *Le Mauricien,* reinforced this feeling with the headline "*Reprise progressive du travail ce matin*" (1999:1), and detailed the re-opening of offices, shops, and banks in the Port Louis capital and the re-establishment of buses along bus routes. Beneath the headline was a photo showing a street of Port Louis in a state of relative normality (see Figure 26).

This was reinforced in the evening television news, where, for the first time that week, the issue of tension and anticipated violence in Triolet was the direct focus of a news report – mainly because of the lack of violence. The visual footage was one of streets that were completely empty except for two (white) female tourists on bicycles riding into Triolet. The anticipated tensions and possible counter-violence were definitively shown to have not materialised. Reports also began estimating the cost of damages – to the infrastructure, to the economy, and to the country's international reputation.

Figure 26: Scene of normality in Port Louis (*Le Mauricien*, 25 February 1999:1)

Friday 26 February 1999 – Sunday 28 February 1999

By Friday, nearly all activities on the island had returned to normal. Buses returned to their original schedules. Most businesses and bureaucracies operated as per usual. Schools were the only institution to remain closed until Monday. Many people ventured out, either by car or on foot, to visit family members and friends in person, catching up on their experiences of the past week.

By the weekend, shops were operating, people were out and about, roads were busy and affairs appeared to be back to normal. It was hard to imagine that only a few days before, things had been at a standstill. However, damaged, looted and burnt buildings were a clear reminder of the riots. Large basalt rocks which normally sat in clearings, usually by the edges of sugar cane fields, were either still scattered over the road or had been roughly cleaned up (see Figure 27). They were an ominous reminder of how roads had been barricaded. Indeed, they looked as though they had been hurriedly rather than properly cleared.

Figure 27: Volcanic rocks used as road obstructions (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:7)

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Subsequent weeks and months

A month after the riots, a large peaceful gathering was organised as an initiative of the then-President Cassam Uteem's office. Entitled the *Rallye pour l'Avenir – Ensam Pour Touzours* ('Rally for the Future – Together for Always'; the latter half of the title is in Kreol), the aim of the event was to "retrouver l'unité nationale" ("recover a sense of national unity") (Uteem, cited in *l'express*, 5 March 1999:5). The rally was held on the one-month anniversary of the start of the riots (and of Kaya's death) on 21 March 1999 and used themes of 'peace', 'justice' and 'unity'.

There were two parts to the event. The first part commenced at 9am with a "chaîne d'amitié" (a friendship chain), a grass-roots event where people, dressed in white t-shirts symbolising peace, participated in creating a human chain. Organised and assisted at the ground level by "clubs, service, and other organisations" (Achille, 1999:9), the intent was to create a friendship chain which could stretch (along a pre-plotted route) throughout the whole island. This is not to say that the chain was unbroken throughout the pre-assigned route, but that, nevertheless, many people participated (see Figure 28). At 10am, the national anthem was sung. After the island-wide friendship chain, the President addressed the 25,000-strong crowd at the State House in Kreol, speaking of the need for peace without injustice (ibid.). National flags as well as all-white flags denoting peace were waved.

Figure 28: The Chaîne d'amitié during the *Rallye pour L'Avenir* (*Week-end/scope*, 29-30 March 1999:9)

Other events requiring crowd participation at the event included the individual writing down of values that Mauritians wished to bequeath or inherit into a large urn; there was also a large map of Mauritius onto which people placed flowers (see Figure 29) (Achille, 1999:8).

Figure 29: A child places a bouquet of flowers in a map of Mauritius (*Week-end/scope*, 29-30 March 1999:8).

Nevertheless, additional disturbances happened in May which, in light of the February events, are less convincing as 'isolated incidents'. In mid-May, a road accident in Palma led to "a minor riot" (Eriksen, 2004: 87). Also in May, the first division final of the Mauritius football league, featuring the Fire Brigade versus the Scouts, had a controversial outcome. Football teams in Mauritius were initially established on ethnic grounds (the teams included the Creole-based Fire Brigade, the Hindu Cadets, the Muslim Scouts and the Tamil Sunrise). Initiatives to overturn this ethnic team construction and support happened in the late 1980s, but even though the teams are no longer mono-ethnic in terms of player make-up, there are nevertheless continuing associations with those ethnicities (Edensor and Augustin, 2005). The controversy of the 1999 football final rested in contentious refereeing decisions, whereupon the Scouts had two goals overturned, including an equaliser in injury time. Scouts supporters trashed the stadium seating, the players damaged their dressing room, and nearby fields were set on fire (Eriksen, 2004:87; Edensor and Augustin, 2005:91). The violence spread to Port Louis, where a police station suffered some external damage and, in particular, a well-known a Sino-Mauritian family-run

gambling club was set on fire, which resulted in the deaths of seven people (Eriksen, 2004:87).

Amplification of the Ethnic Imaginary

As I discussed in chapters two and three, the ethnic imaginary is a useful way of conceptualising the quotidian experiences of everyday cosmopolitanism – of living with ethnicity and multi-ethnicity, including all aspects of performing the Self, awareness of Self and Others, narratives about Others, and strategic interactions with and around Others. It is a constant, taken-for-granted facet of living in diversity. During the Kaya Affair, the everyday ways in which the ethnic imaginary gets mobilised, were amplified. Thus, ethnic identities of Self and Other, tensions, stereotyping, and tolerances were augmented and took on rapid, communalistic and often negative inflections.

Embodying Ethnicity – Kaya's Funeral

The riots resulting out of Kaya's suspicious death in police custody could not have been anticipated. Yet, in light of the Creole Malaise (and with the benefit of hindsight), his death was always going to have the potential of being a catalyst for unrest. Kaya was well-known in Mauritius. His development of Seggae provided a new medium of expression in Mauritian music which was without the national status attributed to Sega, and further, it also fused stylistic and content themes adapted from reggae into a Mauritian context. In addition, Kaya's home town was Roche Bois, a poor suburb on the outskirts of Port Louis, the capital. The Creole Malaise is evident in several areas in this region, including Roche Bois. As a musician, Bertie Fok, put it in the documentary *Zafair Kaya*, Kaya "a vecu ça" (Vuillermet, 2000); he was seen as having lived and experienced the Creole Malaise. Kaya's death, then, was the death of a well-known Creole artist whose work provided commentary on the Creole Malaise, and whose residence was a suburb strongly impacted by the Creole Malaise. As a result of both, his musical legacy and the circumstances of his death, Kaya became the embodiment of Creole identity and Creole Malaise and disadvantage.

Given the Creole community's comparative heterogeneity in the face of the other readily-essentialised ethnicities in Mauritius, Kaya's funeral on Wednesday 24 February was a strong expression of Creole identity. At the Roche Bois stadium, Kaya was placed in a glass covering along with his Gibson guitar. Dressed in a robe with the "typical rasta colours" (*Week-end*, 1999:32) of leopard-skin-pattern and red, he also had one white bandage tied around his neck, and another which appeared to tie from his chin to his crown – an unsettling reminder of the unclear circumstances of his death (see Figure 30). People gathered in their thousands to pay their last respects in an extremely charged atmosphere (see Figure 31).

Figure 30: Kaya's body, featuring symbols of Rastafarianism and bandages (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:32)

Figure 31: Thousands gather to pay their respects at Roche Bois stadium (Vuillermet, 2000)

Kaya's body was not the only expression of a Rastafarian Creole identity. There were many Rastafarian symbols present throughout the funeral ceremony itself. Several Rastafarian flags were present in the funeral procession as well as on the casket itself,

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in horizontal bands of colours in red, gold and green[23]. Frequently, the flags had the Rastafarian Lion of Judah symbol across the central gold band. Other flags had the word 'Kaya' written on it, while others had the image and/or the words of 'Bob Marley' written on them. There was also a poster of Kaya (taken from one of his albums) being held up (*Week-end*, 1999:32; *Le Mauricien*, 25 February 1999; *Zafair Kaya*, 2000). The use of Rastafarian colours, the Lion of Judah and Bob Marley are all clear influences associated with Kaya and his development of Seggae (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Rastafarian images, colours and symbols were on display during the funeral procession (*Le Mauricien*, 25 February 1999:12)

These symbols were added to by the songs sung during the event; they included Kaya's songs, *Simyer Lalimyer* (The Road of Light), *Racine Pe Brilé* (Roots are burning), and *Ras Kouyon* (Ras idiot), and also, the Bob Marley's songs *No Woman, No Cry, Stir it up,* and *I shot the sheriff* (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:32). Going by the documentary, *Zafair Kaya* (2000), two of Kaya's songs in particular, *Ras Kouyon* and *Racine Pe Brilé*, appear to have been sung organically. As the procession reached the church, those participating in the procession and those who waited outside the church, all appeared to either clasping hands above their heads, or clapped hands, and joined those in the procession in singing the wordless chorus from Kaya's song, *Ras Kouyon* (Ras Idiot). The volume of the repeated chorus got louder and louder until the

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[23] The red, gold and green colours – Rastafarian colours – are linked to the Ethiopian flag; Ethiopia is considered to be the birthplace of Rastafarianism.

coffin was, with many hands, placed carefully down in the church (*Zafair Kaya*, 2000); the singing temporarily dissolved in clapping and whistles, before picking up briefly and then dissolving into more clapping and whistles. Although it is unclear whether there is an edit in the documentary footage, the clapping appears to pick right up into the chorus of a different song, *Racine Pe Brilé*, where "Morissiens, to racine pe brilé" ('Mauritians, your roots are burning') was repeated numerous times, moving from song to a chant, reflecting the very high level of feeling present. The symbolism of these songs is obvious and patches into the narrative of the Creole Malaise, incorporating Kaya's identity, his musical legacy and the circumstances of his death.

Also worth noting was the fusion of Rastafarian and Christian symbols throughout the ceremony. The Rastafarian flags, colours, Bob Marley and Seggae were present in a funeral ceremony overseen by Christian priests. Once covered, Kaya's coffin was draped in a large Rastafarian flag, while a person held up a long wooden pole, at the top of which was a metal crucifix (see Figure 32). Given that Rastafarianism has Judao-Christianity roots, with the majority of Mauritian Rastafarians also being based in the Creole community – which tends to be largely Christian – the combination of the Rastafarian and Christian mourning rituals fit together smoothly (see Figure 33). The Rastafarian community became part of the larger Creole community, and Kaya was mourned as a member of both.

Figure 33: A fusion of Rastafarian symbols in a Christian funeral ceremony (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:33).

Mauritius' highest Christian figure, Cardinal Jean Margéot, a Franco-Mauritian, was one of several priests present (see Figure 33). Notably, Cardinal Margéot's speech didn't 'sway' away from addressing the malaise which had fuelled anger at Kaya's death in riots. Although, he began with Kaya as a man "of peace, a great artist, and a

man of reconciliation, of pardon" (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:33), he followed it up with advice that "there are people who want us to fall into traps, are creating havoc in our backs. You need to open your eyes, and see who are the ones who are creating disorder/havoc" (ibid.). He also advised the government and the opposition to "open their eyes and to see how people are living… Rs500 million was announced for the building of a big, big road[24]. Priorities need to be known; it's housing" (ibid.). He went on to say, "[l]ook at the percentage of Creoles in government! When people die in prison, what are they? With the CPE (Certificate of Primary Education – end of primary school exams that determine which secondary education institution is attended), only seven percent pass, what happens to those who are left? There is injustice that has been going on for years" (ibid.). Cardinal Margéot's speech was part-eulogy, part-advice and part-critique. Religious figures, like political personages in the public eye, are usually expected to follow a form of Swaying Mauritianité so that public commentaries are strategically and carefully articulated, with ethnicity being touched or avoided as needed. Cardinal Margéot's direct commentary on the Creole Malaise (albeit without using the term Creole Malaise) in such a charged atmosphere in the church, and at a time of such outright tensions, can be seen as being quite unusual. However, the Cardinal can be seen as reinforcing a sense of Creole identity in Mauritius without being inflammatory.

In contrast to the display of Rastafarian symbols, there were no Mauritian flags visible in the crowd, and only two Mauritian flags visible within the ceremony itself. Of these, one hung from the side of the table on which Kaya's casket rested (see Figure 30); and the other which doubled as the waiting point at which people queued up to pay their respects (see Figure 31). Two additional flags present at the venue were incidental to the event itself and were visible thanks only to a long-range photograph of the long queue of mourners printed in the *Week-end*. One flag was a fixture of the Roche Bois stadium perimeter, while the second flag was emblazoned across the top of the tent structure within which the casket rested. Both these latter flags were arguably invisible to the crowd – one was out of sight, visible only from the air, while the other was a long distance away. The Mauritian flags however, were comparatively invisible, reinforcing the view that Kaya's funeral ceremony was an

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[24] This refers to the issue of the road being built to Grand Bassin, which was discussed in chapter four.

assertion and a display of Creole, and not necessarily Mauritian, identity (see Figure 43).

Figure 34: 'Functionally invisible' national flags at Kaya's funeral ceremony (*Week-end*, 28 February 1999:33)

Ethnicised Implications, Ethnicised Amplifications

The Creole identity assertion underlying Kaya's funeral ceremony was but one element in the amplification of the ethnic imaginary during the riots. Another contributing element around the Creole Malaise is the perception of a discriminating government and civil service (including the police). It was against the police and other symbols of governmental authority that anger was initially directed. Ethnic lines are easily drawn, given the Indo-Mauritian dominance of these governance and civil sectors. Thus, the police statements which suggested in vague terms that Kaya was somehow responsible for his own death, were a response that could be all too readily interpreted as a cover-up, and added to the anger and frustrations. Moreover, the rapid police autopsy was carried out by a police forensic pathologist, whose name, Dr Baboo Harish Surnam, was clearly indicative of his Hindu ethnicity. As I discussed in chapter two, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius" (p.74), names are one of the main 'clues' used to decipher people's ethnic identities. That his autopsy findings were cited as supporting evidence in the police statement and as countering the

'fractured skull' rumour, allowed them to be viewed as yet another example of the Indo-dominated administration and of the Creole Malaise in action.

The need for the counter-autopsy conducted by someone who was ethnically neutral reflects the level of importance, suspicion and baggage attached to every single ethnicity. It is important to remember that at the time of the second autopsy, the riots were at their commencement and attempts were being to appease and stem the protests. Dr Jean-Paul Ramstein was a non-Mauritian, and was also a Franco-Réunionnais; that is, he was not a Réunionnais with either African or Indian ancestry. His nationality, skin colour, and name can be seen as signifiers providing him with an undeniably neutral status that was arguably important for the credibility of the counter-autopsy. He was pictured in the front pages of newspapers and was in news reports. During the week of riots, his main finding of a brain haemorrhage as Kaya's cause of death allowed a second, official denial of the skull-fracture rumour; the actual forensic knowledge arising out of his counter-autopsy was as important than his status and neutrality as a non-Mauritian. It is interesting to note that the Tuesday MBC radio news report pointed out that Dr Ramstein's autopsy was carried out in front of Mauritian doctors; in the face of the Dr Ramstein's non-Mauritian-ness, the observing doctors become Mauritian doctors, rather than ethnic-Mauritian doctors.

This politics of ethnicity and ethnic involvement continued in different arenas. Because of the inquiry into Kaya's death, the names of the police officers on duty on the night Kaya died were not revealed in newspaper articles in the immediate aftermath[25], but were done so in the *Week-end/Scope* magazine's report on the Inquiry a month later. "From 2315 Saturday the 20th February until 0730 the next morning… police officers, Anne-Marie, Nepaul and Ramdin were on duty at Alcatraz. The previous shift consisted of police officers, Ramchurn, Manuel and Yew Chan" (Rivet, 1999:11). It is not clear who was on which shift at Kaya's exact time of death. In these officers' names across the two shifts, a bare majority of three (Anne-Marie, Nepaul and Manuel) sound largely Christian and can therefore be ethnically

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[25] As well as the inquiry, it is arguable that these officers' names were not released at the time for their own safety. In many respects, Mauritius' small size means that there are many cases of 'six degrees (or less) of separation'. Even releasing only the officers' surnames at the height of the crisis would have been tantamount to releasing their addresses.

linked to the Creole community; Ramdin and Ramchurn are distinctly Indo-Mauritian names, while Yew Chan can be interpreted as a Sino-Mauritian name. In this case, these names reflect some very fortunate scheduling of rosters, for not one but two shifts, for this particular evening. If the Indo-Mauritian names had been in any way a majority, this would have inevitably been construed as evidence of the Indo-dominated mainstream and prejudice that makes up the Creole Malaise; instead there was only one Indo-Mauritian name in each shift.

The politics of ethnic names and identities applies equally to those heading the inquiry. It is arguably not coincidental that the magistrate in charge of the inquiry is Patrice Kam Sing, a Sino-Mauritian. His is a neutral ethnicity in context of the Creole Malaise, where the focus is on Indo-Mauritian dominance at the expense of the Creole community. His Christian first name can also be seen as creating a faint connection to the dominant Christian Creole community, through a common religion. This connection, however, is without any history of animosity, whereas the ethnicised connotations that would have heavily accompanied any religious variation of Indo-Mauritian or Creole magistrate taking up the post would have inevitably led to accusations of bias or prejudice.

Ethnicised Rumours

Another one of the key elements where the ethnic imaginary was amplified was the persistence of rumours as a source of information. Stymied by a lack of clear and constant information from the media (an issue I shall discuss shortly), rumours proliferated. Stories, unsubstantiated experiences of 'friends of friends' and opinions, became alternative sources of news which provided some sort of picture of what was happening around the island, regardless of its accuracy. Pleas and advice on television and radio news to not listen to rumours were not heeded, especially in the face of an information 'black-out'. Coupled with fears and uncertainty about what was happening and what might happen in a few hours, that night, or the next day, such rumours were not only being spread, they were being panicked over and reacted to. These stories were invariably ethnically framed, often with the ethnic self being the victims or defenders and ethnic others being the aggressors.

Some examples that I heard consisted of the fear that "truckloads of Others (usually Hindus or Creoles) were coming to attack and/or torch villages". This particular rumour and variations of it ran rife throughout the island. In the north in particular, in the villages of Triolet and Goodlands (both of which have large numbers of Hindu and Creole populations), these rumours resulted in pre-emptive attacks on Wednesday 24 February. People lost their lives as a result of these particular rumours. Other stories I heard included a "Chinese family who had their house broken into by Creole youths and the husband and wife who were locked up while jewellery was stolen". A further example focussed on the "Creole mob who had been intent on attacking the Mahébourgh police station, and the police who called in Hindu and Muslim youths to help protect the station. On seeing the police station being well-guarded, the mob turned on the coast guard instead. The coast guards had barely had time to leap into their boat and take off across the water to safety, while the mob burned down the coast guard building". This story invariably finished with the (not always spoken) opinion about the stupidity of 'burning down the coast guard building given that most, if not all, fishermen who rely on the coast guard – are Creoles.' I even had one child (between 5-6 years of age) informing me indignantly that a particular Hindu temple (on the east coast, notable for having been built on an artificially-constructed island connected to the mainland by an artificial isthmus) had been destroyed by the rioters. This particular story was definitively false, but nevertheless illustrates how such re-tellings took place in epidemic proportions, and in some cases, continued regardless of fact.

These examples of re-telling of rumours, second or third-hand experiences and events illustrate the ethnicised outlook of the story-tellers and the ethnic filter through which experiences were generated, contextualised and framed. Invariably, because of my Hindu relatives and networks, the prominent stories I heard repeated where ones where Creoles were characterised as aggressors. Issues of the Creole malaise or continuingly poor socio-economic conditions were not really discussed, other than in popular stereotypes ("Indo-Mauritians are hard-working and conscientious" versus "Creoles are living for today"). I was also informed that "Hindus have also been killed in custody – but never Muslims, because Muslims would never tolerate this". Such opinions rely on simplistic stereotyping, reductive forms of othering, and, in a

replication of the strategies of Swaying Mauritianité, on an avoidance of such issues as the poor socio-economic contexts that contribute to disadvantage and despair.

These rumours resulted in horrific consequences, including the loss of life; people were injured, and damage and destruction were done to several homes. The Wednesday 24 February outright violence in the northern villages of Goodlands and Triolet especially, were situations propagated by rumours. It is clear that rumours had also contributed to very tense situations in other towns and villages. The awareness and saturation of ethnic identities, boundaries and differences that characterise the ethnic imaginary, I have already argued, are a significant part of people's everyday lives. This moment of crisis illustrates in a heightened way, not only the persistence of the ethnicised daily worlds within which many Mauritians live, but also the rapid division and demarcation that happened along ethnic lines.

Pok-Pok

On the other hand however, there was also fear for Mauritius' future. One of the overriding, unspoken feelings about the Kaya Affair, was that of fear, of not knowing what else would happen, how much worse things could get, the irreparable damage that was done, and when things would improve. With knowledge loops that were frustratingly patchy, incomplete and inaccurate, there was no clear detail about what was happening and what was not happening. Beneath this lack of information was a very tangible fear about what might happen – about people's personal safety, how long the chaos and violence would last, how long the infrastructure would remain buckled and inoperative, and what this meant for Mauritius' *avenir*, for its future.

One person, Prakash, described it to me as a situation where he felt "*pok-pok*" – where he felt absolutely petrified that "*tout ti fini pou Maurice. Lin perdi so sance.*" ("Mauritius had lost its chance and it was all over") (personal discussion – my translation). This view was expressed frequently in the days following the return to law and order, although none quite as concisely as this particular person. This "pok-pok" fear and the reasons behind it are noteworthy. The fear was not only for himself, his family or his business, it was about *Mauritius'* future. In this articulation of fear of Mauritius losing its chance and it being all over, is a realisation of the precariously poised 'fine line' that characterises Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism – of the

Mauritianité that manages multi-ethnicity within a national framework. In this moment of fracture, where overt discontentment spilt out from the inner circle and into the public realm, anger and fractiousness were no longer manageable by Swaying or avoidance at the governance and individual citizen levels.

Rather more colloquially, as I attempted to tape the Kaya news reports as part of my fieldwork data, one relative was horrified at the thought that this politically-charged situation would be heard overseas. Her view was, "what will they think of all us *Morissien-lissien*??" This unflattering Kreol phrase means literally "Mauritian dogs" – used because it rhymes. There was an immediate demarcation between overseas people and Mauritians, and the concern was for the bad light that Mauritians would be seen in. At that point, she had hastily created a sense of Mauritian-ness in the face of the overseas viewers. This was in spite of the fact that only seconds before, she had been roundly cursing the stupidity of various ethnic groups, and that, she was equally capable of antagonistic comments about ethnic Others. Again, this illustrates a recognition of the dissonances and fractiousness as not only spilling into the public sphere, but into the ultimate public sphere – the international stage.

These were sentiment that I heard repeated several times over the following weeks, but none quite as memorable or succinct. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to talk about several instances that illustrate the different layers and complexities of identity, positioning, the ethnic imaginary, and processes of Mauritianité and imagining the nation in the island during this week of upheaval.

The (Un)Resolution of Mauritianité

The Kaya Affair demonstrates very clearly how one of the key factors of Mauritianité – the lack of satisfactory, easy resolution in constant, multiple intersections between the national and the multi-ethnic – keeps Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism on a delicate knife-edge. There is no 'end point', nor equilibrium that can be reached, and Mauritianité instead conceptualises the need for ongoing balance and management between matters of the nation and strategic considerations around ethnicity. Often, the process of Mauritianité is initiated at the state level, folding an imagining of the

nation through daily experiences of the ethnic imaginary; there are varying degrees of taken-for-granted or contested engagement by Mauritian citizens, which I have termed 'Laissez-Faire', 'Swaying' and 'Fractious'. This Mauritianité, I argued in the previous chapter, can be used to understand how it is that Mauritius's multi-ethnicity works relatively well, within a nation-state.

With Kaya's death and the riots that followed, the process of Mauritianité was violently undermined. The Creole Malaise is an existing disenfranchisement by a significant portion of the Creole community towards an Indo-Mauritian-dominated civil service and governing state. I argued in the previous chapter that Swaying Mauritianité is characterised by selective highlighting of the ethnic or the national depending on the context. At the beginning of this chapter (pp 199-200), I discussed the 'ethnic blindness' in the processing of truanting students displayed by the government-employed social worker. This is a clear example of a moment of deliberately Swaying Mauritianité, where the social issue of truancy is being administered in terms of truancy alone, without connection to socio-economic or ethnic influences. This avoids the need for an official recognition of ethnic correlations in social issues, with the result that social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage are not formally acknowledged as being a situation experienced by a disproportionate number of Creoles. Yet, the overrepresentation of Creoles in these socio-economic disadvantage is recognised but is rarely openly discussed as such – a further form of Swaying.

The very existence of the Creole Malaise, then, is a sticking point in the process of Mauritianité which allows everyday cosmopolitanism to continue on a daily basis. The very malleability of Swaying Mauritianité which allows flexible inclusions of the ethnic and the national in different contexts, is the same flexibility allowing the non-recognition of the Creole Malaise as a very real issue. If particular ethnic groups see themselves as excluded from the Mauritianité process (or merely used – as in the case of the appropriation of Sega in particular as a national Mauritian dance), then part of the moral imperative of belonging and participating in the imagined community of the nation becomes fragile. The state is more easily conceptualised as unfair, unjust and not to be trusted. There is a rejection of top-down government initiatives. This is not to say that the idea of Mauritius as an imagined community is rejected. Indeed, many

Creoles consider themselves as 'true Mauritians' without ancestral links from elsewhere (and associated hyphens) diluting their attachment and commitment to Mauritius (Boswell, 2006). Rather, it is the government's management of the nation which is viewed with suspicion and resentment.

State initiatives of imagining Mauritius as a multi-ethnic community then, can remain unacknowledged or are not fully engaged with by Creoles, with the result that state and individual ethnic group intersections can remain weak. Given that Mauritianité conceptualises the national across the multi-ethnic, the (in)voluntary detachment of one ethnic group – the Creoles – is not always recognised nor acknowledged at the governance level. The flexibility of intersections and imagining that is Mauritianité's strength can be seen as its weakness, in providing the means for the continuation of the Creole Malaise, with the result that remains a simmering fractious issue.

In this light, the riots then, can be seen as an initial (it could be said, inevitable) expression of "sadness and rage" (Christophe in Vuillermet, 2000) against the government. The state is usually the body which offers ways of imagining Mauritius as a multi-ethnic nation, and therefore the government is the main body which usually manages Mauritianité even as it is part of the process of Mauritianité itself. With the state becoming the 'enemy' to be fought against, the relationship characterised by Herzfeld as cultural intimacy (1997) can be seen as unravelling. Herzfeld argues that the state represents essentialised ideals in people's everyday lives that, as citizens, they are happy to engage with, usually with some degree of support or critique. It is the actual engagement that is of import, regardless of its positive or negative take, as this is how the state is made and kept legitimate in people's lives (1997:2). Herzfeld further posits that it is feelings of embarrassment, rueful self-recognition and irreverence that are salient elements of cultural intimacy; citizens are aware of the fissures and gaps in their state, and it is ironically these very imperfections which bind people together in what he calls a "fellowship of the flawed" (1997:).

The notion of cultural intimacy is helpful in any discussion of Mauritius' everyday working cultural diversity; the intricacies of people's relationships to the state through various moments of Mauritianité are usefully reflected in notions of cultural intimacy. However, Herzfeld's argument also asserts that "nonconformists are often the most

loyal in a crisis" (1997:1). Mauritius' 'Black February' riots deviate markedly from this view. Loyalty was not an overriding sentiment. Rather, fear, uncertainty and anger firstly towards the state, but also towards other ethnic groups, are more accurate descriptors. The concept of cultural intimacy is useful in reflecting on everyday contexts, however, Mauritius' crisis did not generate additional loyalty. Sentiments that were far more nebulous and negative held sway amongst citizens, towards the state and towards other ethnic groups.

The Creole Malaise, coupled with the amplification of the quotidian ethnic imaginary in the time of crisis, go some way towards explaining why the riots initially happened, and why the riots took on an ethnicised turn so quickly. In turn, the process of Swaying Mauritianité in particular has been useful for analysing the persistence of the Creole Malaise. However, Swaying Mauritianité is also useful in the analysis of how and why particular actions that were (not) taken by government bodies during the riots, in particular, the media.

Media and Mauritianité

The main reason I am focussing on the media is because of its role as the main filter through which Mauritians were able to receive information during the week of riots. I will be focussing particularly on the role of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) television and radio (much of the which was government-owned at the time in 1999). In chapter 4, I discussed how especially television news and weather programs offer forms of Laissez-Mauritianité, with the presentation of news in the different languages and the multi-ethnic weather presenters who often acknowledge special religious occasions. This is a relatively easy, quotidian and banal way of offering an imagining of Mauritius as a multi-ethnic community.

During the week of riots, especially on the Monday 22 February evening news, some footage of scenes of unrest was aired (see Figure 23 on pg. 210). However, after this point, footage of actual unrest diminished markedly, with visuals being restricted to abstract scenes from the air, or concentrating on subsequent damage to public and private property, or providing advice about "road closures". Those who had access to do so, quickly turned to the television station RFO on the neighbouring island of Reunion, to find out what was happening in Mauritius.

This lack of information about the MBC's coverage of the riots in general, was justified in the Prime Minister's two-page interview with the *Week-end* newspaper, where he stated that:

> With regards to MBC-TV, I can tell you that, after having spoken to the President of its board, Mr. Moutia: at the beginning of the riots, it chose to show plenty of images. Afterwards, there were apparently many protests from certain people. There were thus two rings of the bell. From that moment on, the national radio-television thus decided to privilege information relevant to road safety and security. For the remainder, it was smooth talk. How much could be shown, how much not… (Marimootoo, 1999:1-2).

The source of the protests and the justification for the lack of any further information was never clarified. Although the MBC in the aftermath of the riots claimed it had shown "the essential", there were several scathing articles, columns and letters in the one *Week-end* newspaper disagreeing with that particular standpoint (28 February 2004:28-9).

> The MBC flattered itself on having 'said the essential', while it hid the essential. …(It avoided) 'the repercussions of dangerous rumours in the absence of all official information and where the presence of our journalists couldn't help but be minimal', where it was actually the absence of information on the evolution of the situation that allowed the existence of rumours (Deville, 28 February 1999:29).

The dilemma faced by the MBC was a paralysing one. The MBC plays a significant role in maintaining Mauritianité. Televising incidents during the riots might be good reportage, but it is not conducive to Mauritianité. Images of any one particular ethnic group as aggressors – because that is invariably how the images would have been interpreted, not as Mauritians being violent but as ethnic groups being violent – would have provided fodder for stereotypes, prejudice, anger and counter-violence within the amplified ethnic imaginary in a situation that was already volatile. Similarly, detailed analyses of the Creole Malaise for example, may have led to complaints about justification of violence. These are just speculations, but I would argue they are educated speculations given the Mauritian context. Instead of providing information about the situation, the only way in which the MBC was able to cover the event without providing an inadvertent ethnic slant, was to, ironically, sidestep details about what was actually happening.

The MBC became paralysed about which way to 'Sway', and in so doing, offered poor coverage about actual events which heightened fear and panic. The result of these attempts by the MBC to provide ethnically-neutral information was the proliferation and persistence of rumours. The rumours were inevitably ethnicised, countering the MBC's attempts to maintain some semblance of Swaying Mauritianité. There were many warnings, requests and pleas on the MBC – to not to listen to rumours, to not give in to communalism, and to remain calm. However, these pieces of advice were provided in a vacuum created by the lack of information. Yet, the process of Mauritianité is such that, I believe, if a similar situation of riots and social unrest were to be repeated in Mauritius, the MBC would react in a similarly paralysed way, characterised by strategic avoidance as well as strategic coverage[26].

The neighbouring Reunion Island's RFO news took a different view, and frankly discussed the issue of the Creole Malaise. Mauritians are also able to pay for RFO reception and those who had the access tuned in, hoping for more information. In spite of the MBC's manoeuvrings to present national, non-ethnicised reports, alternate reports from the neighbouring island were available. One example of RFO's coverage that was cited (in dismay) was the juxtaposition of images of well-dressed Indo-Mauritian children eating ice-creams on Port Louis' Caudan Waterfront, against images of abject poverty of some of the poorest Creole communities in Mauritius, in explanations and speculations about the causes of the riots. Several people spoke about this particular report, expressing fear and dismay about the volatility of such a juxtaposition in such an inflamed situation. These reactions are significant, illustrating people's own investment in Mauritianité, but also illustrating the impossibility of Swaying faced by the MBC.

Additionally, the Prime Minister revealed in a two-page interview with the *Week-end* newspaper (Marimootoo, 1999:2-3), that he had been asked permission for Kaya's funeral to be broadcast live on television. He did not allow the funeral to be broadcast. His reasons for this, in spite of the logic that it would "allow those in touch

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[26] Of course, given the proliferation of mobile technology and also, of social networking sites on the internet, the outcomes of such social unrest in a contemporary setting can only be guessed at.

with the restive crowds to make a call for peace, all while keeping people in their homes, rather than out in the street fighting" (ibid.), were twofold. One was that the MBC didn't have the staff to spare, and his second reason was that they had already refused this genre of request before in the past, and it was therefore not feasible (ibid.). While the first reason comes across as an excuse, the latter reason relates directly to Mauritianité and the need for even imagining and representation across all ethnic groups. In spite of the seeming extenuating circumstances of the riots, broadcasting Kaya's funeral would have set a precedent for another form of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité, one where other ethnic groups would have felt 'entitled' to similar treatment for notable ethnic group leaders.

As it appeared that the worse of the riots was over by Thursday, and definitely Friday, the angles taken in media stories shifted to include determinedly Mauritianité and also, international components. These stories reinforced not only Mauritius' multi-ethnicity, but also Mauritius' place on the world stage. In much the same way that my relative was horrified that I was recording the news reports for an (imagined) overseas audience with her reaction of "what will they think of us Mauritian dogs (*Morrissiens-lissiens*)?", these international reminders force a reminder of the moral imperative of the nation and the idea of the nation. Thus, we read stories about the four billion rupees lost to the Mauritian economy and the private sector's view that the Mauritius' reputation overseas had been tarnished; the emergency plans put into play by the airport; and female tourists venturing into Triolet on bicycles on Thursday 24 February and reminders about the importance of Mauritius' tourism economy. These are just some of the examples of media angles which placed Mauritius within an international context in the immediate aftermath of the riots. In such stories, Mauritius gets emphasised as a nation, and not always as a multi-ethnic one, with Mauritian citizens in a world platform of nations. Mauritianité – the intersecting of the ethnic and the national is re-emphasised as important.

Moments of Mauritianité were also displayed in particular newspapers. *Le Mauricien* newspaper had an article on its front page: "Appel au calme" (Call for Calm) (25 February 1999:1) (see Figure 35). The black and white photograph beneath the headline showed three men (Mr Gujadhur (of the Voice of Hindu movement), Mr Violette (of the *Rassemblement des Organisations Créoles*) and Mr Baboojee (of the

Voice of Hindu movement) sitting together and reading the previous day's edition of *Le Mauricien*. All three men were described as having been active in calming one of the towns of Candos the previous evening. Beneath this carefully structured image of unity amongst the ethnic representatives, are nine points quoting different political, ethnic and religious leaders and their calls for calm.

Figure 35: Asserting Laissez-Faire Mauritianité after the Kaya Affair

The political, religious and ethnic figures are:

- Uteem (President): "Already too much harm has been done to our country"
- Ramgoolam (Prime Minister): "I won't hesitate to take the necessary measures"
- Bérenger (opposition co-leader): "If this continues, our country will explode"
- Jugnauth (opposition co-leader): "Foreign troops will be merciless"
- Monseigneur Piat (Christian religious leader): "We need to throw water on fire, not oil"
- Hindu House: "Let's work to re-establish peace"
- Mouvement Mauricien Kréol Africain: "Calm should be re-established"
- Rama Valayden (leader of the MR) calls for calm
- Hervé Duval (son of Gaëtan Duval, the famous Creole politician), the Arya Sabha Pandit and the Maulana Sahodeea (both Hindu religious leaders) have also called for calm

This is a carefully balanced list of names, featuring Mauritian politicians as well as representatives from mostly Hindu and Christian faiths. It is a tacit recognition that the bulk of the fractiousness and outright violence is between Hindus and Creoles.

Veneer and L'Avenir: Rally for the Future

The rapid return to normality can on the one hand suggest the great resilience of Mauritius' processes of Mauritianité. On the other hand, the abrupt flare-up of unrest and quick return to 'normal', making the event seem like an aberrant 'blip' on the radar, is a common pattern of such restlessness. What must be noted is that the 'return to normal' and the ready maintenance of Mauritianité had happened without any kind of resolution to the matter of the Creole Malaise. According to Laville, things may well have gotten worse for some Creole communities in the aftermath of the riots, with ethnic neighbours' opinions permeating the Creole Malaise (2002:289).

A month after the riots, and ten days after a sober Independence/Republic Day, the *Rallye pour l'Avenir – Ensam Pour Touzours* (Rally for the Future – Together for Always) was held on 21 March 1999. The rally and the associated Presidential speech can be seen as orthodox ceremonies of nation-building. However, the rally incorporated a friendship chain component which is worth looking at more closely. The friendship chain was a more unique component, in that it was an actual performance-based counterpoint to the riots. While Mauritius' everyday cultural diversity is characterised by an unremarkable, taken-for-granted 'rubbing of shoulders', the riots and uncertainty happened very much on the public stage, in the public eye and with the active, aggressive participation by Mauritians. While it may seem like a hollow initiative, it can equally be argued that the friendship chain also took place in the public eye, and equally required active, peaceful participation by individuals. It was not only an imagining of community, it was a manifestation, seeing and touching of community, of actual, literal "rubbing shoulders" (ibid.).

Further, and unlike the many 'harmony walks' which take place in many major cities around the world in the name of multiculturalism, improved 'race' relations or reconciliation, and which often take place at some iconic landmark within the city, the friendship chain stretched locally, throughout the island. Mauritius' island status was

thus of significant advantage. Mauritians did not have to go far from their homes in order to participate; as well as happening nationally, participation was thus also with local neighbours. There was also an imagined element which came in the awareness that the chain was being extended all over the island. This was reinforced by the singing of the national anthem at the synchronised time of 10am, a performance of nationhood, which can be seen as contributing to an awareness of community.

The process of re-establishing the moral importance of the nation was performed through the placement of flowers into an outline of Mauritius (see Figure 29 on pg. 218). This emphasised the limits and geographical finiteness of Mauritius' island borders. It is no coincidence that the colour surrounding map of Mauritius is blue, a further reminder of Mauritius' islandness, surrounded by the ocean.

It is interesting to note though, that this event of Mauritianité was very much focussed on re-weaving the national into the ethnic, rather than the other way around. It was a state-organised affair, that was initiated and led by the President, whose role is a symbolic rather than an actively governing one. Thus, any anger towards the Prime Minister as the ultimate authority figure answerable to the riots and their management, had to remain in abeyance. Moreover, the President's speech was made in Kreol, a powerful way of not only ensuring complete comprehension by the whole crowd, but also of subtly reinforcing its uniquely Mauritian status across ethnic divisions. Further, it is significant that participation in the friendship chain extended to the wearing of white t-shirts. White symbolises peace, but in this case, it also had the effect of covering up ethnic-specific dress, and subsuming at least one element of ethnic identity as a part of a national performance.

Additionally, in parts of the island not near the rally site and without the ceremonial component of the President's speech, the chain was, unsurprisingly, temporary. One report pointed out: "[t]he human chain dissolved within minutes of the singing of the national anthem" (*Week-end/Scope*, 1999:9). This can be seen as a part of the (ir)resolution that is Mauritiantité. It is a singular self-conscious moment of imagining community and re-emphasising the importance of the national, Mauritian identity after a week of ethnicised, stratified violence. The participation and performance of a sense of Mauritiusness is symbolic and is arguably, inevitably short-lasting; the brief

reassertion of the national into the overwhelmingly ethnic offered some sense of equilibria between the two – the basis on which Mauritianité can continue.

Conclusion

I was in Mauritius during these February 1999 events, and my knowledge of what was happening was limited to what was being reported on the television and radio, and to what I was hearing through phone conversations or reports of conversations with others in different areas. Lack of internet and newspaper access at the height of the events compounded my inability to get a clear idea of what was happening. This was no different the situation faced by most Mauritians, one where knowledge loops were frustratingly patchy and incomplete. There was no detail about what was happening, what was not happening, and beneath this lack of information was a very tangible fear about what might happen – about people's personal safety, how long the chaos and violence would last, how long the infrastructure would remain buckled and inoperative, and what this meant for Mauritius' *avenir* , for its future.

Paralleling these feelings was the awful awareness that Kaya's death was a terrible waste of a human life. The lack of clarity about how Kaya actually died still remains, more than a decade later; it seems unlikely that the events that led to his death will ever be revealed. The then Prime Minister Ramgoolam's promise "to make all come to light" remains unfulfilled. The official police explanation has been subsequently described a "violent epileptic fit" (Eriksen, 2004:86). Comments from Kaya's widow, as well as his brothers, at the time and since, have expressed their views that Kaya's death was not a self-inflicted accident (*5-Plus dimanche*, 1999:5; *Zafair Kaya*, 2000; *l'express*, 2008). Veronique Topize has since received 4.5million rupees from the government as compensation; however, she points out that, "[t]his money given by the State is a recognition of its errors and acknowledges its fault in my husband's tragic death. But the truth about his death needs to be said. This is my fight" (*l'express*, 2008). Although an inaccurate barometer, much informal internet chatter (in blog posts and reader comments in other fora such as YouTube) also expresses a great deal of scepticism about the official explanation.

L'Affair Kaya, if nothing else, has highlighted the perilousness, strength and resilience in Mauritius' multi-ethnicity. In spite of its status as a very successful cosmopolitan island-nation, the 1999 riots – at a time of economic success and political stability no less – have shown how perilously fine the line is between multi-ethnic success and failure in Mauritius. The very strategies which allow the everyday living-in-diversity (in particular what I have termed the ethnic imaginary) as well as the state-level management of multi-ethnicity (what I am calling Mauritianité) can be seen as having equally contributed to the unravelling of unity. Amplification of ethnicised awareness meant that ethnicity and ethnic identities were heavily foregrounded especially in the public sphere, which contributed to both, spiralling fear and propagation of rumours. The unresolution of Mauritianité – that is, the constant intersections between multi-ethnicity and the imagining of the nation via the filter of the state – can be seen as having contributed to a paralysis at the state level, especially in government-owned media and news reporting, in dealing with the events. The Creole Malaise as an issue which rests in the unresolution of Mauritianité. The return to normal after the riots happened with the Creole Malaise continuing to be as much of an issue as it ever was. The maintenance of Mauritianité then, and Mauritius' ongoing management of its multi-ethnicity, can be seen as being as gingerly poised and as fragile as ever.

Conclusion

A Moment of Multi-Ethnicity

Figure 36: A multi-ethnic moment

At first glance, this is not a very good photo. But I am proud of it, regardless. It is one of the few photos I took whilst on fieldwork which really illustrates Mauritius' everyday cultural diversity. The tall white tower in the distance is a church, there is a mosque on the right and, in the foreground, there is a Hindu procession as part of the festival of Maha Shivaratri. This photo is, literally, a snapshot of multi-ethnicity in action. I am all the more proud of this photo because the composition was entirely accidental. My focus had been on the procession only and I had not recognised the potential for including the different religious buildings in my composition. This is the only photo in my fieldwork collection which accidentally, yet clearly, displays such multi-ethnicity.

The coincidence of this composition is heightened by the (also accidental) inclusion of the round, green 'Burgers King' sign in the top left of the photo (see Figure 37),

which claims to serve "Indian, Chinese & European Cuisine Halal Foods". Thus, not only is there the earnest and symbolic multi-ethnicity of three separate religions in the photo, but there is also the much more prosaic multi-ethnicity of the fast food sign which caters to all Mauritian ethnicities' cuisines!

Figure 37: 'Burgers King' sign

To me, the photo and the taking of the photo both capture a sense of daily multi-ethnicity in Mauritius. There is nothing formal or tidy about either the image or the way the image was taken. The intersection of multiple religious symbols together with the sign for multi-region fast foods was sheer coincidence. Such random intersections and arbitrary juxtapositions of ethnicities are a feature of everyday public life in Mauritius. The photo epitomises this arbitrariness; it is only one angle, at one moment, at a particular time and place. Daily life in Mauritius is peppered with countless such moments, varying in degree, depth, impact and relevance for different Mauritians as different moments. Many such intersections are insignificant and are disregarded without thought while others undertaken or negotiated with everything from a sense of openness through to discomfort to antagonism.

Negotiating (Multi-)Ethnicity and Nationhood

This thesis has investigated multi-ethnicity as a central and entangled facet of people's everyday lives in Mauritius. My focus has been two-fold: firstly, I looked at the particularly quotidian elements – that is, the ordinary, unreflexive and/or self-conscious aspects – of how Mauritians live in and with ethnic diversity; and secondly, I analysed the influence of the nation and nationalism in everyday life in Mauritius, both in terms of Mauritian citizens' interactions with the state and in state

management of Mauritius' multi-ethnicity. To do this, I argued for two inter-related conceptualisations: the ethnic imaginary and Mauritianité.

My concept of the ethnic imaginary drew on Charles Taylor's concept of the 'social imaginary' (2002, 2004). Taylor's approach conceptualises how people understand their everyday worlds – that is, how people understand and situate themselves and their fellow citizens into the daily social world around them. However, my model of the ethnic imaginary incorporated a focus on a crucial issue sidestepped by Taylor; it highlighted the foregrounding of culture in the ways people conceptualise their everyday worlds. My argument of the ethnic imaginary allowed for an emphasis on the importance of ethnic relations in how people see themselves as fitting and not fitting together. The ethnic imaginary focusses on, not only ways of being-in-the-world, but on ways of being-in-a-multi-ethnic-world.

I argued that the strength of the ethnic imaginary is in its ability to account for and explain quotidian details that make up living with diversity. The dialectic on which identity, ethnicity and otherness rest, with an assumption of at least one Other, is expanded in the Mauritian context so that there are multiple Others, multiple moments of overlap and intersection that are punctuated by shifting instances of disjuncture and suture, together with multiple moments of transgression and boundary policing. The ethnographic approach I utilised was instrumental in generating nuanced details that discussed these points. It is this 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) that provided insight into quotidian experiences of ethnicity, identity and multi-ethnicity. Across two chapters, "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius" and "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", I identified four layers of the ethnic imaginary: the use of mental maps; performances and classifications of ethnicity; articulations of ethnicity, and the strategic overlooking of ethnicity. These four constituent parts captured different aspects of how it is that people situate themselves in any combination of shifting, reductive, or transgressive ways.

In "The Ethnic Imaginary in Everyday Mauritius", I posited the first layer, mental maps, as an implicit map of ethnicised understanding, where all Mauritians are aware about the diversity of ethnicities in Mauritius; the depth of detail in people's individual maps varies and shifts according to context and is dependent on the levels

of similarities and differences required. Thus, in certain circumstances such as politics, Tamils, Telegus and Marathis may be classed uncomplicatedly with and as Hindus; whereas in such matters as religions, differences between these groups will be emphasised.

The second layer of the ethnic imaginary, performances and classifications of ethnicity, shifts from a theoretical understanding performances and practices. I argued that ethnicity is actively embodied in the self. The ethnographic discussion of Shalini, for example, illustrated how this young Hindu Mauritian woman took a particularly nuanced approach to various facets of her ethnic performances. In a poignant example, although she had considered the idea of one, she had chosen not to get a *phouli* (a decorative nose piercing that is traditionally Hindu) because she perceived her nose as being broad; she felt that a *phouli*, together with her curly hair, might generate mistaken interpretations and classifications of her ethnicity as that of a Creole woman, rather than Hindu. Shalini's self-presentations were detailed and carefully worked out, and not just for the public realm but for her inner circle of family also. I also argued that there are different stages for different performances composed of different audiences. Thus, as well as making use of Goffman's ideas (1972) of a front stage and a back stage for self-presentations, I argued that there are different stages with different audiences and audience ethnic composition. 'Inner circles' within the private family realm are often mono-ethnic; the next circle of close friends and extended family is often quite mono-ethnic; the third circle is more heterogeneous, while the widest circle is in the public realm and is characterised by the full extent of Mauritius' multi-ethnicity (as seen in Figure 36). Indeed, the only point where Shalini did not perform her Hindu ethnicity was in her bedroom; it was only in this true backstage area that she allowed herself to experiment with even the consumption of other ethnicities' practices, such as practising the Sega.

I expanded the ethnic imaginary further with what I termed articulations of ethnicity. The importance of Kreol, the local *lingua franca*, to Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism cannot be underestimated. In the chapter, "Making Mauritius: From Territory to Nationhood", I discussed the development of Kreol as part of the history of Mauritius' settlement. I highlighted how and why Mauritius' cultural diversity developed. With being first a French and then an English territory, Mauritius was not

even a 'mono-colony'; it thus has English administration and governance influences (eg following the Westminster system), while the economically-powerful descendants of the colonisers are mostly Franco. Different waves and contexts of arrivals meant that ancestral and cultural group differences were ultimately maintained – with these differences also being politically exploited by colonial authorities. Africans arrived mostly as slaves; Indians arrived as indentured labourers (although many Muslims arrived as traders); and Sino-Mauritians arrived as traders. Alongside the reification of these differences, however, there was also intermingling, creolisation and early cosmopolitanism. Kreol is one of the developments arising out of this early mélange.

In chapter three, "Negotiating Ethnicity in Everyday Mauritius", ethnic identities, categories and boundaries are repeatedly crossed, talked across, patrolled and reinforced on a quotidian basis. I argued that Kreol is one of the crucial ways in which differences can be diffused and defused. As well as being a language not definitely associated with a particular group, it has neutral status. Its specificity to Mauritius also posits it as Mauritius' unofficial national language. Its lack of terminology for such ideas and concepts as differences, divisions and ethnicity, has instead generated terms which allow communications and traversings across difference. *Bann* is one such term; it proffers an idea of a group. That is, it groups things and people into plurals. Thus, it might be used to group '*bann papiers*' (the papers), '*bann travailleurs*' (the workers), or '*bann Tamouls*' (the Tamils). It can provide ethnic groupings, but is not used exclusively for that purpose; it is not a term with exclusively ethnicised connotations. In addition to the term of '*bann*', there is also '*nou*' and '*zot*'. While '*nou*' is relatively specific in meaning 'we' or 'us', crucially, '*zot*' can mean 'you' (plural) or 'them'. It can thus be used to speak *to* an Other in dialogue as well *about* an Other. The flexibility of *zot* sidesteps the binary rigidity and incommensurability of the English 'us' and 'them'. Otherness can be minimised or emphasised with the one term.

Having said this, I further highlighted the complexities in everyday Kreol usage, including the Kreol lists of stereotypes and pejorative nicknames about particular groups (see Tables 1 and 2). As each ethnic group has a positive self image as well as a negative stereotype, these, along with the arsenal of nicknames and labels, constitute not only ready-made insults, but also ready-made 'rights of reply'. These

stereotypes and labels are well-known to all Mauritians and can be seen as part of the catalogue of ethnicity which can be fitted onto mental maps, along with ethnic colours and popular knowledges about the 'cultural stuff' associated with different ethnic groups. The case of Nadia, a young Mauritian woman with mixed Sino-Mauritian and Hindu heritage who preferred to identify with her Hindu heritage and explained that she did not resonate with Sino-Mauritians (*bann Sinnwa*) because of their secretiveness and selfishness, is an example of how stereotypes are mobilised. I additionally demonstrated how the mobilisation of stereotypes in conversations shifts (as do performances) with audiences and the degrees of inner and outer circles. The Muslim calls to prayer, for example, often generated many comments in Hindu inner circles, with the positive Hindu self-representation of 'moderateness' being evident in *how* critiques were made about the call to prayer volume, as much as in what was said. Stereotypes and labels are often used to situate Selves against Others. In the outer circle, the schoolboys laughingly insulting each others' ethnic Gods and prayers rituals is a rich example of a complex moment of exchange and openness. Even though, they were being jokingly insulting, they were also simultaneously drawing on and displaying cultural knowledge about their Other friends, which constitutes a form of exchange. However, as this was a moment of exchange, the joking insults were also reinforcing ethnic boundaries and underlining their distinct ethnic identities.

In the final layer of the ethnic imaginary, I argued that, although there are many overlooking and sidesteppings of ethnic boundaries which take place between ethnic groups (usually facilitated to a large degree by the commonality of Kreol), such transgressions are often temporary and strategic, and while they generate some form of exchange, they also reinforce ethnic boundaries. I did not encounter too many Mauritians who actively stressed their identities as Mauritians rather than as ethnic Mauritians. However, Bernard and Iqbal were two such interviewees. Iqbal stressed commonalities across differences, while Bernard stated that he participated equally in all religious occasions. However, even as they each took different approaches to foregrounding self-consciously Mauritian identities, they were nevertheless aware of their own ethnic identities – drawing on their own ethnicities to provide examples on the one hand, and recognising that in spite of their personal assertions, they were nevertheless perceived and classified ethnically.

In arguing that many transgressions are strategic, I discussed different styles of transgressions. The very mild forms of transgression can be seen as forms of exchange, even though they take place irregularly and are temporary. Attendances at weddings, consuming Others' specialty foods and (peripheral or passive) participation in Others' religious events exemplify these forms of mild transgressions. The case of Anjali, who opted to complete the final component of her Maha Shivaratri pilgrimage (a ritualised prayer at a temple) at the next-door Tamil kovil because it was more convenient and which she justified with the logic of "God is God", is a good example of this form of strategically mild transgression. Other moments of transgressions which can be seen as being equally mild, but which happen with greater regularity, I argued, generate a focus on maintaining boundaries, usually within the inner circle. Vishan's enjoyment of Sega music, and his relatives' repeated commentary about his fondness for "Creole" music, is an example of the reactions of mild anxiety about boundaries that frequently re-surface. But it is not just other members of the inner circle who patrol the ethnic boundaries. In the case of Dr Ameerally, the Muslim medical specialist who transgressed the boundaries of his religion (and his profession) by smoking and drinking and not praying when the call to prayer was heard, he drew attention to these repeated transgressions himself, illustrating his constant re-negotiations with his Muslim identity. It is impossible to not be aware of the existence of ethnicities and their boundaries.

Even the seemingly permanent forms of ethnic boundary transgressions, in particular, interethnic marriages, usually seem to fall into conformity within accepted ethnic categories. Rather than hybridity, or some form of negotiated 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994), the ultimate form of ethnic boundary transgression ends up reinforcing boundaries, with one partner's ethnicity taking precedence in the family. Shabana and Anita, two Hindu women who married Muslim men, exemplify this embracing of their adopted ethnicities. By contrast, the relationship of Sophie and Julian, a Creole Mauritian and a Hindu-Mauritian respectively, was still in its early (dating) stages. There was no obvious dominance of one ethnicity over the other, although both young people were intensely aware of each other's frequent, if banal, transgressions of their own ethnicities. Julian would thus comment on Sophie's love of Bollywood popular culture, while Sophie commented on Julian's fondness for all forms of pork. Even as there are moments of intimate 'rubbing shoulders' in interethnic relationships,

I have argued that ethnic boundaries are brought into sharp relief; negotiations and transgressions that take place are done with an awareness of mental maps, boundaries, performances and articulations that need to be adjusted accordingly.

The model of the ethnic imaginary that I have argued for, is a complex one that is multi-layered and that highlights how it is that Mauritians live in and with intense ethnic diversity as an inevitable and taken-for-granted component of everyday life. It encapsulates the fluid, reified and nuanced expressions, performances and transgressions of ethnicity – of endless articulations of, and negotiations between, Selves and Others – that can be played out, deviated from or reinforced. Ambivalences about the seeming success of Mauritius' cultural diversity such as that found in my informant, Priya's statement of "yes, Mauritius is multicultural, but...", were explored through the focus of the ethnic imaginary on quotidian detail.

The everyday focus of the ethnic imaginary was given an added dimension by my interrelated concept of Mauritianité. In the chapter, "Towards Mauritianité: Ethnicity and Nationhood", my focus on the quotidian cultural diversity was contextualised by the wider, national context. In the face of the everyday pervasiveness of ethnicity, there have been arguments situating Mauritius as having a weakly-imagined national community; however, I argued there is a moral imperative for foregrounding nationhood. Mauritius' geographical island status is visible and unavoidable, and, coupled with its relative recent accession to nationhood, and its economic success on the international stage, I argued that these factors contribute to ensuring the valorisation and importance of imagining Mauritius as a nation. The ethnic imaginary may play a more dominant in people's everyday lives, but it is not at the expense of the nation. I thus argued in favour of a more nuanced interweaving of the ethnic with the national, via the concept of 'Mauritianité'. I conceptualised Mauritianité as a series of ongoing intersections between the ethnic and the national that are forever in flux and being re-negotiated – without ever quite being or ever reaching some point of equilibrium or 'harmony'. The complexities of the ethnicised everyday are recognised and accommodated, tacitly or openly, within everyday articulations of the nation. By 'articulations', I refer to both, the top-down initiatives of governance (including policy directives and symbolic decisions), and the way these initiatives are received.

Within this notion of Mauritianité, I argued for three 'degrees' of intersectioning between the ethnic and the national. 'Laissez-Faire Mauritianité' covered those instances of governance that are largely taken-for-granted and accepted by Mauritians. Public holidays in Mauritius are an example of an unproblematic infusion of ethnicity into the national. The national calendar is marked by 15 public holidays, 12 of which are ethnic occasions. All ethnicities have at least one nationally-recognised event, marked out on the calendar. A maximum of two public holidays per ethnic group ensures that national recognition is evenly distributed. Shifting the public holiday status between two Christian festivals to alternate years illustrates a particularly inventive way of working within the maximum allocation of public holidays, as well as a degree of flexibility by the state in its management of ethnic occasions. This is a taken-for-granted way of managing multi-ethnicity within the imagining of the national calendar. In a different moment, the national flag has a seemingly non-ethnic explanation of its colours: red represents the struggle for independence, blue is for the Indian Ocean, yellow symbolises the light of independence and green represents the island's fertility; yet, tacitly, these self-same colours correspond to existing ethnic colour demarcations, so that all the major ethnic groups are represented in the national colours. Red is associated with Hindus and Sino-Mauritians, blue with Franco-Mauritians and Creoles, yellow with Tamils, and green with Muslims. The flag is also an accepted national symbol, however the infusion of ethnicised codes into the national colours remains necessarily unofficial.

Swaying Mauritianité highlighted those initiatives which have a distinctly calculated element in what is being (not) foregrounded and when and how. It underlines those deliberately strategic moves, where sometimes the ethnic will be emphasised at the expense of the national or, at other times, the ethnic will get sidestepped in preference to the national. Flexibility and fluidity allow skirtings and shifts around moments of particular contradictions and inconsistencies, but ultimately, without being at the expense of either the ethnic or the national. Ethnicity or the nation can be avoided or highlighted, depending on the circumstances, but this also means that contradictions and inconsistencies also remain unresolved or, at the very least, mildly contested. The language situation in Mauritian is a complex example of this form of Swaying Mauritianité. English is considered to be Mauritius' official language, but, as with the

phrase 'Unity is Diversity' which is articulated in official contexts but is not an official policy, there is no official confirmation of English's status (Dinan et al., 1999:86). French is more widely spoken in official contexts. Informally, Kreol is the only truly national language in the island, in that it is at least understood, if not spoken, by the vast majority of all Mauritians. It thus allows and generates moments of openness and communication across differences. However, it is not considered a 'proper' language, and is neither formally taught in schools, nor is it widely written. Conversely, there is an official policy on the teaching (at primary school level) of ethnically specific "ancestral languages"; the carrying out of this policy rests on implicit assumptions of teachers unproblematically identifying and classifying students' ethnicities into appropriate categories on mental maps. Further, the teaching of these ancestral languages leaves Creole Mauritians as being a residual category, who are historically and ideologically associated with speaking only Kreol (Eriksen, 1998:78). Languages in Mauritius are a pertinent example of an issue that is managed, not-managed, foregrounded and backgrounded in a complex, ongoing and shifting combination of official and unofficial approaches and practices.

Thirdly, I posited the notion of 'Fractious Mauritianité', which underscored those elements of governance which face greater contestation and debate and which hold constant and greater potential of 'erupting' into issues of political and social significance. This fractiousness is particularly evident in the political field. Political parties are theoretically heterogeneous in their membership make-up and do not stand on overtly ethnically-particular platforms. However, all candidates are required to cite membership to one of four categories: General Population, Sino-Mauritian, Muslim or Hindu (categories that are a legacy of pre-Independence British administrators). This citation of ethnicity guarantees that all ethnic communities receive some form of political representation in proportion with that community's percentage of the overall population; a 'best loser' system for losing candidates ensures this ethnic proportionality can be achieved. The political need for even ethnic representation rubs sharply against the required insertion of ethnicity as a fundamental part of the political system. This system has its particularly fractious moments as, on the one hand, it offers multi-ethnic representation – in the same vein as public holidays and the teaching of ancestral languages; on the other hand, it presents a slippery slope into ethnicised politics and the subsequent fears of communalism. Communalism is best

understood in Mauritius as the eruption of ethnicised interests, tensions and dissonances prevailing in the public sphere. However, I further stressed that, regardless of the awkwardness of such fractious interweavings, they are mostly successful. Tensions, contestations and frustrations can boil over, but ultimately, they are managed and contained – whether through being sidestepped or being defused – so that the un-resolution of Mauritianité continues.

Parallels can be drawn between my concepts of the Ethnic Imaginary and Mauritianité. The same logic that underpins the mental maps, that is, the recognition of multi-ethnicity, is echoed in Laissez-Faire Mauritianité. Processes of identification, classification and of situating Selves and Others that takes place in people's everyday lives as part of the Ethnic Imaginary, is replicated in more formal, top-down approaches to managing and representing the nation. Thus, public holidays and television météo (weather) presenters are examples of ethnic representations that parallel and endorse mental maps, with Mauritius' multi-ethnicity being displayed, reinforced and reified.

Similarly, characteristics of Swaying Mauritianité – of sidestepping of certain issues and foregrounding of others (such as in the issues of languages and language policies) – are also mirrored in the ethnic imaginary, and in people's negotiations in their multi-ethnic everyday worlds. The use of such Kreol terms as '*bann*' and '*zot*' in everyday conversations are a nuanced example of how everyday forms of swaying can take place in the articulations and switches between 'you' and 'them' – particularly those conversations taking place in the outer circle of the public sphere.

Further, Fractious Mauritianité, characterised by charged issues or moments generating aggravation and contention, can equally be seen as having a corresponding equivalent within the ethnic imaginary of people's everyday lives. Assertions of intolerances, perceived grievances and Otherness are expressed within the inner circle, but these are tempered with the recognition that they are not for repeating in wider circles. Fractiousness arises in the face of top-down decisions which disrupt this balance, where decisions are viewed as being overtly '*communaliste*' and should not have been made (as in the case of the changed order of Tamil and Hindi writing on the bank notes). The avoidance and *paisible* (peaceable) strategies for negotiating

quotidian public life are disrupted. The parallels between the ethnic imaginary and processes of Mauritianité reflect the delicate and fragile bases of Mauritius' multi-ethnic success, and the lack of guarantees. Mauritius' success relies on ongoing series of negotiations, and sequences of management and containment that are always in progress and are also without resolution – at the everyday as well as top-down governance levels.

The fine line of Mauritius' multi-ethnic success was discussed in the chapter, "*L'Affaire Kaya*", where the notion of Swaying Mauritianité usefully analysed how certain ambiguities around Creole Mauritians get perpetuated. On the one hand, the issues of social exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage are not often officially acknowledged as being a situation experienced by a disproportionate number of Creoles. Yet, the overrepresentation of Creoles in these areas is recognised but is rarely openly discussed as such. On the other hand, Sega (music and dance) is emphasised and appropriated as an example of 'Mauritian' culture. In a different vein, Kreol, which is also strongly associated with Creole Mauritians, is used widely and informally but has not acceded to an official national language. Further, when juxtaposed against *bann* other ethnicities, the Creole ethnic category has the weakest ancestral links to places of origin, is the most heterogeneous, and is the least politically organised of all other ethnic groups (Eriksen, 1999:88). There is a residual element to the category, which is politically reinforced with the official 'General Population' category of belonging. Creoles in Mauritius are thus ambiguously and paradoxically situated.

Swaying Mauritianité highlights the numerous ways in which contradictions and ambiguities are negotiated around, as a means of avoiding tensions and fractiousness. However, in the case of the Creole Malaise, this very system of sidestepping around ethnically-contentious issues, is also what allowed it to develop as a site of trouble and tension. Socio-economic issues and disadvantage remain unaddressed in the skirting around ethnic specificity. Kaya's death in police custody was the catalyst for the very visible expressions of anger within the public sphere. I additionally argued that, during the riots, in an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, the everyday ways in which the ethnic imaginary gets mobilised, were amplified. Tensions, stereotyping, and (in)tolerances – which usually remain restricted to articulations within the mono-

ethnic inner circle – were intensified and took on rapid, communalistic and often negative inflections as they spilt into the public sphere. This was particularly evident in the ethnicised rumours which acted as alternate sources of information. I further argued that the matters of rumours was compounded by the MBC's paralysis in not being able to – and not knowing which way to sway. The MBC were literally caught between not-ethnic specific reportage and fear of fanning communalism flames further and as a result, offered Mauritians vague, uninformative content, which, paradoxically, encouraged the swift circulation of damaging rumours. And yet, the unrest was short-lived – at least, in the public sphere. The rapid return to a quotidian state of affairs was quickly punctuated by re-assertions of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité in the form of political, religious and ethnic leaders or representatives all calling for calm. And these moments of Laissez-Faire Mauritianité were reinforced by performances of national belonging and a re-emphasis on the moral imperative of the nation with the *Rallye Pour L'Avenir*.

The very flexibility that is Swaying Mauritianité's strength, is also one of its weaknesses. As in the situation of the ongoing Creole Malaise, sidestepping ethnic issues over a prolonged period can also result in eventual flare-ups. Yet, Mauritius has also continued on relatively successfully in its everyday and top-down management of diversity, in that the Kaya Affair did not mark the start of prolonged social unrest throughout the island. Nothing has really changed in everyday life on the island. The processes of Mauritianité are resilient yet fragile and flawed; they are not perfect forms of managing diversity within a nation. There is an un-resolved quality in the management of the ethnic and the national which underpins Mauritianité's fragility and durability. Similarly, the ethnic imaginary is one that is lived, practised and reified into significance in people's everyday multi-ethnic worlds. It offers ways and strategies for managing and practising sameness and difference. It is less about what ethnicity is, and more about how ethnicity gets mobilised and deployed, in a multiplicity of ways, in a multi-ethnic setting. Rather than any kind of solution to the living and management of diversity, the ethnic imaginary and process of Mauritianité produce ongoing un-resolutions.

Further Investigations of Mauritian Cosmopolitanism

Mauritius has always been characterised by cosmopolitanism – historically through to the present. This thesis has explored quotidian and national elements of this everyday cosmopolitanism. It is important to recognise however, that alongside this everyday cosmopolitanism, there are other forms of cosmopolitanism particularly those arising out of the global flows – of ideas, goods, technologies, finances and money (Werbner, 1999) – which circulate and impact on Mauritius. These global streams influence and add textured dimensions to everyday life in Mauritius. It is interesting to note how places of ancestral and historical origin (Africa, China, England and France, and India and Pakistan) feature prominently in flows to and from Mauritius. The flows are financial: in the particular realms of clothing manufacture, tourism and e-commerce. They are also mediated flows of information: from satellite pay-per-view news channels to international news and entertainment shows programmed into Mauritian television schedules. The flows are also cultural – particularly in the establishment and/or maintenance of cultural centres and/or spaces of religious worship which hold particularly clear cultural (and often financial) correlations to nations of ancestral places.

The global movements of people can further influence issues of cosmopolitanism in Mauritius, and there are different forms of "ethnoscapes" (Appadurai, 1996) which impact on everyday life in Mauritius further and which are worthy of further study. One area not dealt with here is the impact of tourism and tourists on daily Mauritians' lives. This is less about the experiences of first-world tourists in other 'exotic' places (this field of research has been well-covered by such researchers as Bruner (1995), Edensor (1998) and Urry (1990) among others) and more on how Mauritians experience tourism and tourists and how these external, peripheral influences of non-Mauritian-ness impact, if at all, on Mauritians' lives either within the ethnic imaginary or as part of imagining community – how the local gazes back, as it were. Tourism is a significant aspect of the Mauritian economy, although the vast majority of the tourism industry remains edged on the island's coastline peripheries.

There is also more than one type of visitor to Mauritius. Non-Mauritians are also based on the island for work purposes. As part of the industry of the EPZ (Export Processing Zone), some factories import overseas workers to Mauritius on strictly limited and restrictive contracts. The impact of these workers' presence on local Mauritians, as well as these workers' own experiences of being part of a transnational work force remains an under-researched area in the Mauritian context. At the 'white-collar' level, there are management and teaching positions staffed by non-Mauritians within externally-owned and run institutions. The Cyber-City initiative is one such example, and the French-Government-funded technical colleges staffed by a significant number of French staff are another example. There are more opportunities for interactions and connections between these mobile professionals and local Mauritians; this form of cosmopolitanism constitutes another under-explored area of research.

The Mauritian diaspora who have migrated overseas (usually to such first world countries as the UK, England, Canada and the USA) would make an interesting research contribution to the field of diaspora studies. As well as the context of migrants in a more 'traditional' first world setting of multiculturalism, there is also the additional phenomenon of 'Returning Mauritians' – Mauritians who constitute an overseas diaspora and who frequently re-visit Mauritius. The relevance and impact of the conceptualisations of the ethnic imaginary and Mauritianité to those have experienced and lived within them, but who also live and work in quite different forms of (first world) everyday cosmopolitanism, would make for a particularly comparative study, made more complex by the blurring of local/visitor/tourist roles. An alternate approach which further contributes to the field of diaspora studies is focussing on the political, cultural and ancestral connections to all Mauritians' places of origin and the traversings in-between Mauritius and Mauritians' 'ancestral homes'. Thus, rather than a homeward-looking diaspora based in a first-world context, this approach focuses on the mobilities between non-first world nations.

Finally, from a methodological perspective, it would be interesting to see more work being carried out on the Mauritian context by Mauritians themselves – the so-called 'native anthropologists', whose perspectives would differ from those 'outsider' researchers and those 'partial outsider' researchers (such as myself). Interrogations

from within, with full 'privileged' access, can only render a more complex picture of such concepts as the ethnic imaginary and Mauritianité while adding more generally to the existing body of work on Mauritius; it is a form of internal or local everyday cosmopolitanism, which would also contribute to the literature on non-first-world experiences of diversity.

'The Most Cosmopolitan Island under the Sun'?

To return to the question posed in the title of this thesis, is Mauritius 'the most cosmopolitan island under the sun'? My answer would have to be 'sometimes'. It is sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes more so and sometimes less so. As an intensely multi-ethnic island, Mauritius contains a complex system for managing intra- and inter-ethnic relations that allow rapid shifts from being and performing in one ethnicity and participating in processes of Othering in inner circles on the one hand, to becoming *bann* (ethnic) *morrissiens* in certain public settings on the other. There are constant and multiple shifts in asserting and negotiating around ethnicities. There are processes of sometimes foregrounding, sometimes backgrounding, sometimes slipping and sometimes sidestepping – at the level of the individual ethnic everyday, but also at the national level. The governance of Mauritius's cultural diversity is one of negotiation, where the complexities of the ethnicised everyday are recognised and accommodated, tacitly or openly, within the everyday articulations of the nation. 'Sometimes' encapsulates the idea of varying degrees of ambivalence, arbitrariness, wholeheartedness and uncertainty. Crucially, it also allows scope for negative elements of living in diversity such as dissent, frustration and aggravation – which do not necessarily lead to aggression or conflict, but that are nevertheless part of patterns of engagement in everyday situations. 'Sometimes' recognises the patchiness and shades of gray that make up the nuances of everyday life. The conditions and practices that make up Mauritius' everyday cosmopolitanism – the practical ramifications of how people live and cope with inevitable, daily cultural diversity within one small, island space – are what make Mauritius, a sometimes cosmopolitan island under the sun.

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