ATTITUDES TO SLAVERY AND RACE IN SEYCHELLOIS CREOLE ORAL LITERATURE

by

PENDA THERESIA CHOPPY

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham

For the degree of

MASTER of ARTS (by Research)

Postcolonial Literature

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
AND CREATIVE WRITING

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LAW

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

AUGUST 2017

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

Seychellois society is characterized by its people's strong belief in the sovereignty of their independent state and pride in their creole identity and culture. The source of that creole culture however, is sixteenth century slavery, which in Seychelles lasted well after Abolition. Because the Seychellois population has a strong component of African slave descent, the current attitude that slavery and colonialism is no longer relevant to Seychellois society is contradictory. Like in all such creole societies, there is an underlying sense of trauma in the Seychellois' perception of him/herself. This trauma is expressed in the language of the people, in their beliefs and practices, and more particularly, in their folklore. This thesis explores the deep-seated trauma resulting from the Seychellois' painful past of slavery that is reflected in their orature. The analysis of the problem begins with the local historical factors, then moves on to the wider creole world of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, the literature of which offer some useful and interesting insights into the common experiences of Creoles in ex-slave societies and the complex nature of their identity issues. In the case of Seychelles, three aspects of its creole orature, the proverb, the riddle and a dance form called the *moutya*, expose past and present trauma in the painful memories, lingering racism and inferiority complexes they reveal. However, these types of orature also reveal the creativity and resilience of their societies, through the creolization process, which has given them new and more positive identities in the modern world. As such, the recommendations made aims to address the trauma of the past as the beginnings of a healing process, and to expose the Seychellois people to the potentials of their traditional culture, of which orature forms the major bulk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go first to my supervisor, Jarad Jon Zimbler, who has been very subtle in the way he has guided me slowly and surely to the end result of this thesis, but also for his support, patience and understanding when I have been unable to deliver as per expectation. Secondly, I would like to thank Pascal Nadal who was there from the beginning in the preparation of the research proposal, and at the end in the review of the finished thesis. I shall never forget that crucial moment, when I went to Mauritius to sit my IELTS, prior to receiving an unconditional offer from Birmingham, and Pascal received me at his home with his little family, Kristel and Emilie. My thanks also goes to Lisa Young, the Creole Institute Librarian, who, magically, had all the most important documents I needed. I thank also everybody at the Creole Institute who helped me in one way or another, especially Cindy who played an important role in the Social Media research, and Erica who took the time to go to the Nation documentation centre for past issues of newspapers, and who lent me her book of French proverbs. Gabriel Essack and Alain Lucas from the Culture Department were also very helpful in accessing the primary material for study. I sincerely thank them. My thanks goes also to everybody at the University of Seychelles, who have been supportive. Olga Klymenko for reading my methodology section, which I found the most difficult of my tasks, Kelly Hoareau for helping with the plagiarism check, Dean Justin Valentin for his advice, Christine Pejakovic for her constant encouragement, Beryl Camille, for holding my hand on submission day, and my Dean, Ms. Joelle Perreau for her understanding and encouragement. I would not be writing this acknowledgment if the Seychelles Government, through the Agency for National Human Resource Development, had not financed my studies. Thank you. Finally, my thanks goes to my family for their patience, support, and their belief in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	**Chapter 1: Introduction**	8
1.1	Preamble	8
1.2	Negrophobia and the creole identity problem	11
1.3	Research Objectives	13
1.4	Outline	15
1.5	Seychellois orature and its origins	16
1.6	Historical and cultural background in a regional context	18
1.7	Current attitudes to slavery and the creole identity in Seychelles	24
1.8	Previous research on folklore and the impact of slavery in Seychelles	26
1.9	Methodological considerations	33

2.	**Chapter 2: Critical and theoretical approaches to *créolité* and folklore**	38
2.1	Creole identity in postcolonial theory and literature	38
2.2	Deconstructing orature and the creole malaise	39
2.3	Orature as palimpsests of the creole experience	49
2.4	Creoleness and material boundaries	59
2.5	Emigration as a means of escape	64
2.6	Creoleness and psychological boundaries	66
2.7	Anger and bitterness as manifestations of the creole malaise	69
2.8	Folklore as a source of identity reconstruction	71

3.	**Chapter 3: Findings – Creole proverbs and riddles**	77
3.1	Orature in daily life	77
3.2	Creole proverbs and their common roots	80
3.3	Seychellois proverbs with universal traits	84
3.4	Proverbs specific to the Seychellois environment	87
3.5	Seychellois proverbs and the heritage of misery	89
3.6	Proverbs as a social commentary on the slave mentality	92
3.7	Seychellois riddles in the context of creole civilisation	97
3.8	The creole environment in riddle structures and types in Seychelles	99
3.9	Paradoxes of colour, class and race in creole riddles	103
3.10	Crystalizing prejudice into acceptability: The use of *maron* and *grannwanr* in Seychellois creole riddles	106

4.	**Chapter 4: Findings - The Seychelles *Moutya***	115
4.1	The *moutya* and its common origins in the Indian Ocean	115
4.2	Dating the *moutya*	116
4.3	Similarities between the *moutya* and the calypso	117
4.4	A history of oppression	118
4.5	The *moutya* as political tool	119
4.6	The *moutya* as theatrical performance	121
4.7	The structure of the *moutya* lyric	125
4.8	Themes: evidence of creolization	126
4.9	Lamentation genre of the Indian Ocean	129
4.10	Expressions of trauma in the post-slavery to the modern era	132
4.11	The concept of the *makro*	137
4.12	Sexual decadence	139
4.13	Race and hair	142
4.14	Conflicting values	146
4.15	Palimpsest of trauma and signifier of emancipation	148

5.	**Chapter 5: Conclusion**	150
5.1	Hypothesis evaluation	150
5.2	Suggestions for further research and recommendations	156

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables
Page

1. Table showing similarities between a proverb from West Africa,
73 the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

2. Table showing similarities between riddles from the French-based
92 creoles of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

Figures

3. Still from a television footage showing SPPF supporters using a riddle
106 as a slogan.

4. Picture showing a *moutya* dance during n SPUP political manifestation.
113

5. Picture showing Young Pioneers of the Second Republic being taught
116 to play the *moutya* drum.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NHRS:	National Heritage Research Section
SC:	Seychelles Creole
SPUP:	Seychelles People's United Party
SPPF:	Seychelles People's Progressive Front

CHAPTER 1: **Introduction**

1.1 Preamble

The folklore of Seychelles is a testimony of the Seychellois people's traumatic experience as a society created out of slavery and colonialism, and a testimony of their efforts to adapt and create new identities in the face of changing historical and political landscapes. In the decolonization period of the country's history, especially with the accession of the Second Republic in 1977, folklore was closely associated with national cultural identity.[1] In the 1980s, as part of the effort to address the problem of cultural alienation common to post-slavery Creole societies, the Seychelles government made a conscious effort to collect a considerable amount of folklore through the Oral Traditions Section in the Department of Culture. One of the earliest publications of folklore of that period discusses elements of the Seychellois folkloric heritage that were suppressed under the colonial government, namely genres originating from Africa and Madagascar in contrast to genres originating from Europe. These were promoted as part of the national cultural heritage.[2] This went hand in hand with the promotion of the medium of expression of these formerly suppressed genres: the people's language, Creole, as exemplified by its recognition as a national language and the Seychellois mother tongue in 1981, and most importantly, its introduction in formal education in 1982.[3]

---

[1] The leftist liberation movement, Seychelles People's United Party (S.P.U.P), which installed the Second Republic as a socialist regime in 1977, overthrew the First Republic, established upon independence in 1976.

[2] Abdourahamane Diallo and others, *Zistwar Sesel* (Folk Tales of Seychelles) (Mahé: Oral Traditions Section, Culture Division, [1981]) pp. i-iii.

[3] Penda Choppy, 'Les Créoles face aux défis de l'éducation pour tous et de la mondialisation : Les Seychelles', *XIème Colloque International des études créoles* (Cape Verde, November 2005) (Comité International d'Etudes Créoles, 2005), pp. 1-2.

In spite of this early association of folklore with cultural identity, this aspect of culture appears to have lost ground with time. By the start of the twenty-first century, the practise of folkloric traditions had petered off considerably and the large repertoire of folkloric data collected during the enthusiastic years was collecting dust in little used documentation centres. During his research on Indian Ocean folklore in the early twenty-first century, American folklorist Lee Haring criticized the failure to publish the existing data and using it to the advantage of our tourism industry.[4] Even the Creole language, however much the government maintained its policy concerning its status, seemed to be accepted so long as it remained a somewhat romanticised aspect of our folkloric culture. In the opinion of many, however, it has no real place in our everyday realities. A letter to the editor of the national newspaper in February 2016 illustrates this:

> We should put the Creole language in realistic perspective. We will always speak our colourful Creole. We will always sing our many romantic Creole songs but in my view, it is misusing the spirit of nationalism to get our children to learn a Creole grammar when they could spend the precious time in keeping up with the computer age... I would suggest that instead of spending time to learn a Creole grammar, we should spend time to learn SAVOIR FAIRE and SAVOIR VIVRE... Like Mr. Mancham says, 'We must aim to get to Monaco and not Bamako!' [5]

The writer refers to an interview of Sir James Mancham, President of the First Republic (1976-1977) in a weekly newspaper, in August 2014. It is interesting to note that Sir James had actually been answering a question about the state of the economy, and what he had

---

[4] Lee Haring, 'African Tales in Seychelles', *International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) conference*, (Sweden, August 2003), p.10.
[5] Timothe Volcère, 'Creole language must be put in realistic perspective', *Seychelles Nation (Mahé)*, 11 February 2016, p.6.

actually said was, 'We cannot promote Seychelles as a new Monaco and then play Bamako policy'.[6] The reason for this cryptic remark could be that he thought that though Seychelles was on its way to being the 'Switzerland of the Indian Ocean' he had envisioned, it was still lumbered with socialist tendencies. Whether he chose Bamako because Mali has the same socialist background, or because it is one of West Africa's poorest countries is not clear. What is clear is that the writer of the above extract has chosen to exploit a certain disdain towards this African capital that is inherent in the remark.

Thus, the seemingly diminished value of Seychellois folk traditions could arise from the fact that traditional oral culture is often equated with creoleness, in itself a concept that has many conflicting facets in the creole world, mainly because of its association with slavery. In his introduction to his handbook on collecting folklore in Mauritius, Haring discusses the issue of folklore being wrongly associated with ignorance, illiteracy and 'savage customs'. In both Seychelles and Mauritius, and in the minds of the general population, who have for the most part received a Western style education, 'savage customs' would be associated, more often than not, with the colonial construction of 'the savage other'. Haring specifically states that in the colonial era, 'European governments taught colonized people that foreign languages, customs, beliefs and culture were natural and right, and that their old ways were unnatural and wrong'.[7] This is the dilemma of the creole individual. In spite of having fought for and gained independence, and in spite of claiming traditional or indigenous culture as part of that independence, the idea that Western culture is superior to any other lingers. Consequently people in creole societies

[6] James Mancham, *President Michel is becoming more powerful than his party,* (Interviewed by Deepa Bhookun for *Seychelles Today*) (Mahé: Seychelles Today, 14 August 2014), pp. 1 & 3.
[7] Lee Haring, *Collecting Folklore in Mauritius* (Mauritius: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1992), pp. 4-5

continue to discredit that part of themselves that is not western, especially that part that they have been taught connotes 'savagery'. The chapters dealing with the findings of the research set out precisely to reveal this dilemma in Seychellois society.

1.2 Negrophobia and the creole identity problem

When I first began this project, I wondered occasionally about its relevance, particularly in view of the general attitude in Seychelles that race and colour no longer matter. If any Creole society is a melting pot of races, none could be more so than the Seychellois nation where *créolité* means a total mixture of races: a society where slave descendants have mixed with the white plantation families or with the Indian and Chinese merchant class.[8] Furthermore, since the left wing's accession to power, a lot of emphasis has been placed on the equality of all, irrespective of origins.

However, recurring incidents of subtle or overt racism confirmed the need for the research I had proposed. Facebook for example, is increasingly becoming a forum for expression of racist sentiments reflecting our past as a slave society. In May 2016, the Miss Seychelles beauty pageant provoked a spate of racist comments, as in the following: 'It seams [sic] that you have to be almost black to win. Have our European ancestors and the English who started it all been forgotten?'[9] Another comment expressed outrage that the winners would misrepresent the Seychellois people to the rest of the world, the concern

---

[8] Donald Lee Sparks, 'Seychelles, People: Ethnic groups, languages and religions', *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2015) <https://www.britannica.com/place/Seychelles> [accessed 9 October, 2016].
[9] B. Sullivan, 'You have to be almost black to win', (Seychelles Daily, 30 May 2016) <https://www.facebook.com/Seychelles-Daily-1803688183191899/> [accessed 15 June 2016].

being that people would think we were a nation of ugly people, in this case ugliness being equated with blackness.

More recently, a racist term, *nwanr kalele* (black dick), seems to have come in common use on Facebook, especially in the ongoing hostilities between rival political camps, as illustrated by the following post about a dispute on La Digue Island: '*Sanmenm bann nwanr kalele ki bez Fer ladig an retar'* (These are the black dicks who make La Digue remain backwards).[10] *Nwanr kalele* in SC means someone who is illiterate, ignorant and uncivilized.[11] The post thus makes a clear association between backwardness and blackness.

In many other Creole societies around the world, defining both the creole identity and culture remains controversial. The first point of controversy lies in the genetic definition of a Creole as it can mean either people of mixed black and white ancestry, especially in the ex-colonies, or the descendants of white settlers in the colonies.[12] In some specific creole societies, 'creole' can connote black ancestry and this comes with all the negative stereotyping associated with African slaves of the colonial era.[13] Postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and creolists, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant have also pointed at the black genetic element as the source of the scourges of racism and negative stereotyping in the slave descendant's life in Creole societies generally. This brings us to the second point of controversy, which is the dispute among Creole thinkers and writers as

---

[10] Fady Joel Dora, '*Sanmenm sa bann nwanr kalele*', (Seychelles Daily, 28 June 2017) <https://www.facebook.com/Seychelles-Daily-1803688183191899/> [accessed 5 July 2017].

[11] Seychelles Creole Monolingual Dictionary Database (Unpublished: Creole Institute).
[12] English Oxford Living Dictionaries, < https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/creole> (accessed 15 December 2016).
[13] Rosabelle Boswell, *Le Malaise Créole: Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).

to whether to encourage the promotion of African elements of culture in creole societies, such as Aimé Césaire attempted to do in his version of Negritude. Derek Walcott, for example, shows a definite scepticism regarding what he calls 'our African phase'.[14] Kamau Braithwaite on the other hand, makes the link between some aspects of Caribbean oral traditions and their African sources and points out a general skittishness about displaying this heritage.[15] Oral traditions then seem to be a very important link in the chain of heritage and identity creation in postcolonial creole societies like Seychelles.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is thus to challenge the perspective in Seychelles, that slavery and colonialism have been put firmly in the past by the fact of Seychelles being a sovereign state, and the Seychellois people, a modern nation. It addresses the question of how the Seychelles' past as a slave and colonial society has affected its people's concept of their creole identity in the context of the postcolonial creole nation, using an archive of oral literature. My hypothesis is that the Creole as an individual or group is not at ease with the African element of his/her identity, resulting from the trauma caused by slavery and colonialism. The genesis of this hypothesis comes from my own experience as a Creole and a slave descendant, and the many colloquiums and conferences on creolistics I have attended and organized since 1999 when I joined the Creole Institute of Seychelles. Part of my job as a cultural officer was to promote creole identity, mainly through its language and literature – and naturally, orature figured on my agenda. I thus became aware that the

[14] Derek Walcott, *What The Twilight Says* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p.8.
[15] Kamau Braithwaite, *Roots* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp.199-200.

Seychellois have a very schizophrenic approach to their identity and culture. On the one hand, they proclaim their creoleness by virtue of being an ex-slave society where the slave descendants have taken power in their own hands, and have thus given themselves the right to express '*nou kiltir*' (our culture), in which orature figures prominently. On the other hand, certain aspects of our culture remain obscure or stigmatized, especially the African elements. In taking up this study, these are thus the questions that need addressing: How apparent is the trauma caused by slavery and colonialism in Seychellois society? How far do the oral traditions of Seychelles reveal this trauma? In what ways have the Seychellois tried to recreate or reimagine their own identity and to what effect? In this study, I attempt to analyse some of the oral traditions corpus with the aim of addressing the issues outlined in the above-mentioned problematics and research questions.

From a secondary perspective, I hope thus to create a forum for discussing aspects of the Seychellois cultural heritage that have so far been avoided because they evoke painful memories that have been deemed best forgotten. It is also hoped that this will provoke more analysis of the cultural data already collected, for a better understanding of our people and culture, and for the further development of a modern Seychellois literary culture. Through such forums, we might be able to address some of the stereotyping that exists in our society because of our past of slavery and colonialism. African stereotyping is particularly a critical issue because it represents the trauma that we continue to live with as a people primarily composed of African descendants. This of course must be seen in its proper context of the cultural and genetic melting pot. Thirdly, I hope that the study will contribute to theoretical resources about postcolonial issues in Seychelles from a Seychellois point of view and help to place Seychelles in the wider contexts of the African

Diaspora and creoleness, exposing some of our literary heritage to researchers interested in this subject. Too often, publications about the Indian Ocean do not include Seychelles simply for the lack of substantial documentation or literary discourse.

1.4 Outline

I felt it was necessary to introduce this study by establishing the status of folklore in Seychellois society, making the link between cultural identity and folklore in postcolonial creole societies. Chapter 1 thus elaborates on the interplay between traditional folklore and identity issues of slave descendants in creole societies, with particular reference to Seychelles. In order to put the problematic into historical perspective, a brief background is given on the archipelago, from its early settlement period to present times, juxtaposing the local situation to similar creole societies in the region.

In Chapter 2, I engage more deeply in my central theoretical issues, with specific emphasis on the question of creoleness and its links to slavery, and the role that folklore plays in the resulting identity constructions, or deconstructions. I argue that a deeply rooted malaise resulting from their historical past affects the creole consciousness, and that orature is both a palimpsest of the creole experience and a source of identity reconstruction. I discuss the ways in which these theories have been developed by previous thinkers, writers, and theorists.

Chapter 3 presents the first of the two sections of the findings, and it deals with two aspects of Seychellois folklore that are integrated in everyday language: the proverb and the riddle. I begin by discussing the different types of creole proverbs in Seychelles,

from those with universal traits, to those specific to the Seychellois creole environment. I do the same for the riddle genre, and argue that in both genres, there are manifestations of colonial stereotyping and slave mentality, much of which has crystallized into everyday beliefs and attitudes. I also point out that in the riddle genre, there are some instances where the creolization process has resulted in the appropriation of racialized terms that lost their racist connotations with time.

Chapter 4 deals with the Seychelles *moutya*, a traditional form of song and dance which is similar to the Mauritian *sega* and the Reunionese *maloya*, the original forms of which are classified as lamentations by the Indian Ocean slaves of their hardships on the plantations and their exploitation and degradation by their masters. I draw some parallels between the *moutya* and the Caribbean calypso, for example, their theatrical qualities, history of oppression and political impact, followed by discussions of the trauma of slavery evidenced in the lyrics. I argue that like other forms of orature, the *moutya* is both a palimpsest of trauma and a signifier of emancipation.

Chapter 5 concludes the study, summarizing the arguments elaborated in the findings, which corresponds to the hypothesis and research questions set out in the introduction. It also proposes areas of further research and makes recommendations to address some current issues revolving around identity, race and slavery in the domains of education and culture.

1.5 Seychellois orature and its origins

The merging of cultures in the historical and physical environment of Seychelles has resulted in an orature that reflects the adoption and adaptation in a new world, of languages

and cultures from an older world. French, tropicalized and localized into a New World creole, became the dominant language of oral expression by virtue of its being the language more widely used by a majority of the population.[16] Nevertheless, rites, customs, music, song, dance and different forms of expression remembered from the old world continued to play an important role in the lives of both colonizers and slaves, and people who did not fit neatly into either category.

The Culture Department lists the following French forms, which are nevertheless considered part of the Creole cultural heritage: *romans* (old French folk songs), *ronn* (from French, 'rondes', being folk songs danced in a ring) and some lullabies. To this list, I would add other forms such as the *Kontredans* (country-dance), wedding speeches and some French expressions that have entered the Creole language whole-piece. *Semafot* which is 'c'est ma faute' in French, is one such example (It's my error – used to express regret and accompanied by the gesture of pressing a closed fist to the chest thrice whilst reciting the expression). Some Creole forms include *zistwar* (stories), *fab* (fables), *bersez* (lullabies), *zedmo* (riddles), *proverb* (proverbs), of mixed French and African origins. Apart from the *kontredans*, dance genres include the *sega* (a dance where the feet are placed close together with emphasis on hip movements), *moutya* (a dance where the feet are placed wide apart with emphasis on the movement of the backside), *sokwe* (masked dance) and *tinge* (martial arts dance), all of African origins. [17]

---

[16] Robert Chaudenson, *Des Iles, des hommes, des langues* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1992), p.34.

[17] Jean-Claude Pascal Mahoune, *Traditional Dances/Games of the Republic of Seychelles*, (Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2007) <http://www.pfsr.org/seychelles-traditional-dances-games/traditional-dancesgames-of-the-republic-of-seychelles/> [accessed 9 October 2016].

1.6 Historical and cultural background in a regional context

In order to establish the source of identity conflicts in Seychelles, it is necessary to go deeper into the history of the population within the wider context of the Indian Ocean. The dynamics of social co-existence in the creole societies of this region have everything to do with the co-habitation of different ethnic groups under the yoke of slavery and colonialism. In this respect, the Indian Ocean experience is analogous to the Caribbean experience. Slavery impressed upon the black man that he was inferior to the white man, and the white man evidently believed this to be so, just to look at the edicts of the Black Code alone. Works such as Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Jean Bernabé, Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Éloge de la créolité*, discuss, describe and analyse this phenomenon in depth. The resulting complexes in the psychological make-up of such creole societies might be termed 'the black syndrome' as Fanon would have put it. In the Indian Ocean, Boswell aptly expresses this syndrome as 'Le Malaise Créole.' This malaise expresses not only the slave descendants' feelings of inferiority but also their marginalization by other groups considering themselves as superior.

The early history of Seychelles and the Mascarenes is characterized by a confusing series of takeovers by the rival Portuguese, Dutch, French and British colonizers, more or less similar to that of the Caribbean islands. All three were discovered around the 1500s by Portuguese explorers: Seychelles by Vasco da Gama on his second voyage in these regions and Mauritius and Reunion by Pedro Mascarenhas. The French claimed the Mascarennes in the mid-1600s, but it was not until 1756 that Lazare Picault laid a stone of possession in

Seychelles.[18] The first settlers arrived in the mid-1700s in the Mascarennes, and in the Seychelles in 1770. The three islands remained linked from their discovery through joint administration, first as a French chartered colony and then as a French Crown colony with Seychelles being administered as a dependency of Mauritius.

All three Indian Ocean Creole societies are thus convergent in that they share similar histories, languages and cultures; they are however divergent in the way their individual concepts of *créolité* have evolved. The divergence began with the seizure of Mauritius and Seychelles by the British, making them British Crown colonies in 1814, though with Seychelles still being a dependent of Mauritius. La Reunion fell only briefly to the British in these early days of the French and British imperial war – she is an extra-territorial French Department to this day. In spite of the long reign of the British in Mauritius and Seychelles (from 1814 to 1968 and 1976 respectively), the culture of this Indian Ocean Creole zone had already been well established as an essentially French influenced one, especially linguistically, with all three islands speaking a French-based Creole.[19]

The absence of an indentured labour force of Indians and Chinese in the Seychelles archipelago, unlike Mauritius and Reunion, where they had replaced the African slaves in the sugarcane industry after abolition, is one aspect that contributed to the divergent outlook of the Seychellois population vis-a-vis the concept of *créolité*. The lack of arable land made it unnecessary for a large labour force from the Asiatic mainland to be imported. The Seychelles population was further differentiated by having shiploads of slaves

---

[18] Deryck Scarr, *Seychelles since 1770: History of a Slave and Post-Slavery Society* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), p.5.
[19] Chaudenson, pp.33-34.

liberated by the British navy enforcing abolition, dumped on its shores in the 1860s thus inflating its African population and making the general population more indiscriminately mixed.[20] The isolation of the islands seemed to have made it easier to break the social taboos that reigned in more metropolitan areas. For example, regarding interbreeding between whites and blacks, expressly forbidden by the *Code Noir*'s Article 5, Pierre Hangard set an early example by marrying a Malagasy woman, producing the first legitimate coloured children.[21] In fact, the influx of Africans in Seychelles in the 1860s further tipped the population scale towards a black majority, which would historically play a significant role in the power politics and identity debates of the Seychellois revolution, the most important outcome being that the term creole applies to all races and mixes provided they are Seychellois. This is a by-product of the leftists' equality policy.[22]

In La Reunion, the early Indian population also mixed more easily with the whites and to a lesser extent, the blacks, resulting in a 'Creole' population. However, the blacks were always a minority and came to be known as *Cafres*.[23] As for Mauritius, the influx of indentured Indian labourers from 1835 to 1907 brought about a majority of people of Indian origins in the population.[24] A significant number of Chinese immigrants also added to the population mix – but it is important to note that different racial groups in Mauritius have tended to remain within their own groups.[25] Significantly, it is African slave descendants who are referred to as Creoles and who are marginalized. Thus, these early incidents of

---

[20] Chaudenson, p.34.
[21] Scarr, pp. 7-8
[22] *Seychelles People's Progressive Front Constitution*, 2nd edn. (Seychelles: SPPF, 1980), pp.1-2.
[23] Chaudenson, pp.96-97.
[24] Chaudenson, pp.32-33
[25] Boswell, p.45.

history have caused a divergence in the interpretation of the word 'Creole' in the creole zone of the Indian Ocean.

In spite of having the highest proportion of people of African descent in the Indian Ocean Creole zone, the Seychellois population is possibly the most alienated from Africa. Before we explore the evidence that points to this rejection, or rather, wariness, let us look at the slave descendant populations in Mauritius and Reunion to fully establish their own relationships to their African ancestry, and thus make an informed comparison to the Seychelles situation. In Mauritius, as modernization and economic prosperity have gradually resulted in the Creoles, which is to say African slave descendants, having better access to education than they had had previously, a general consciousness of ethnicity has become more apparent, as have manifestations of ancestor valorisation. In the Mauritian Creole community, the slave ancestors had always been associated with the hardships and subaltern status of black people. However, in the 1990s, ethnic identity in Mauritius became more pronounced, described by Boswell as 'the hardening of ethnic boundaries.'[26] As a result, many black Creoles began asserting their links with Africa in an effort to find a rooted identity. Boswell links what she calls, 'the drive to primordialise Creole identity' to the process of national reconciliation and nation building encouraged by the Mauritian government after the 1999 riots following the death of popular Mauritian Creole singer Kaya, while in police custody.[27] This need to affirm identity has manifested itself in the increasing importance given to the commemoration of the abolition of slavery each year on February 1st, which is held at the foot of Le Morne, a mountain that has become the

[26] Boswell, p.7
[27] Boswell, p.7

most famous slave route site and World UNESCO Heritage site in Mauritius. Other manifestations of identity assertions are the Catholic faith and the creole language as common denominators of the social fabric of slave descendants. Though *Kreol* is recognized across the board as the unifying factor in Mauritian society, it is also the closest thing to an ancestral language that the Creole population has. Since 2013, a Creole Speaking Union has been registered alongside the previously existing unions such as the Hindi, Urdu or English Speaking Union.[28]

In La Réunion, the more obvious descendants of the slaves, the *Cafres*, have asserted their African identity through the annual commemoration of the abolition of slavery, *Lafet Kaf*, and through the creation of cultural activist groups promoting Reunionese identity as opposed to French. One example is *Rasine Kaf*, established in 2001.[29] Another is ANKRAKE, established in 1996.[30] In my opinion, however, the most significant manifestation of identification with Africa is the tradition of ancestor worship among those of the Reunionese population who are of Malagasy and African descent. This practice has been termed, *Service Kabare* or *servis zansèt* as anthropologist Yu-Sion Live prefers to call it. The ceremony usually consists of offering prayers to the ancestors, represented by African and Malagasy wooden effigies, and of making offerings of food and other items often found in similar cults of creolized religions in ex-slave societies such as the Haitian Voodoo and the Cuban Santeria. There was a new surge of identity assertion in La Réunion in the 1990s among the descendants of the slaves after the introduction of a

---

[28] Creole Speaking Union Act 2010, Proclamation No. 15 of 2013, (Mauritius, April 2013).
[29] Association Rasine Kaf, The University of Edinburgh, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (Arts and Humanities Research Council), <http://www.mmoe.llc.ed.ac.uk/fr/association/association-rasine-kaf> [accessed 9 October 2016].
[30] Association Ankrake, Manageo.fr, (La Réunion: 1996) <http://www.manageo.fr/fiche_info/403851736/39/association-ankrake.html> [accessed 9 October 2016].

decentralization law, which divided the island into regions and which gave local people a chance to be elected to local government positions. This resulted in the emergence of identity activists who tended to base their campaigns on origins, and it was this that allowed the 'coming out' of the *servis kabare,* which had previously been practiced more or less covertly.[31]

What is significant about African identity assertions in Mauritius and Reunion (in the context of Creole society), is that affinity with Africa and Madagascar is seen as the unifying factor that links a specific group that is marginalized precisely because of their ethnic origins and history. However, it is important to note that these groups, that is, Creoles of Mauritius and *Cafres* of La Reunion, are both minority groups. In the context of the general population or at government level, the creoleness promoted is more of the tourist variety, exploiting the music, (*sega* and *maloya*, both lyrically and rhythmically creative dances of Afro-Malagasy origins), the spicy mix of Creole food, and even the singsong quality of the Creole language and its richness of expression. For example, Reunionese tourism web sites promote their creole food as a harmonious marriage of European, Asian and African cultures.[32] Of the Creole language, one site says: 'c'est un parlé imagé et à la douce musicalité'.[33] The tourist industry and the government promote the music, language and folklore as a shared inheritance and as belonging to the whole population in both Mauritius and Reunion. This is because the Creole brand today has good

[31] Yu-Sion Live, 'Recherche et representation d'un culte de possession à La Réunion: le servis zansèt', *International colloquium: 'Creole culture – Creole academy,'* (Seychelles, 28-29 October 2012) (Creole Institute 2012) pp. 16-17.
[32] *Plats typiques : La cuisine, la réunion des saveurs* (n.d) <http://www.reunion.fr/decouvrir/immersion-culturelle/gastronomie/plats-typiques> [accessed 10 August 2017].
[33] *Ile de La Réunion: Culture* (St. Denis, 2007) <http://www.reunion.fr/decouvrir/traditions/culture-de-l-ile> [accessed 10 October 2016]

market value in terms of tourism and in terms of global promotions of multiculturalism by international organizations like UNESCO. When the Mauritian Government decided to have its own version of the Creole Festival, it chose to do it in December, the peak season for tourism in Mauritius, rather than October, the month in which the international Creole Day falls. In fact, Boswell points out that the Government has failed to acknowledge the Creoles' contribution to the most commonly recognized aspects of popular Mauritian culture, the *sega*, Creole food and the Creole language. In this context, creoleness as a lure for tourism takes precedence over its assertion as the identity of these minority groups of slave descendants.

1.7 Current attitudes to slavery and the creole identity in Seychelles.

If slavery and its effects are rallying points today for the descendants of the slaves in Mauritius and Reunion, in Seychelles, slavery was a focus of resistance mainly during the early revolutionary period. The Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) linked the abject poverty of the masses to their past of slavery and colonialism.[34] After the establishment of the Second Republic, people generally considered that the chains of slavery had been broken. Most of the informants interviewed by Odile de Commarmond and Colette Gillieaux during their research on memories of slavery in 2004 referred to the government of the Second Republic as having liberated the Seychellois people from slavery. Power was considered as being in the hands of the people, the ordinary working class, which was the majority. '*La konmela, pei pour nou*,' said one Leon Desir (Now this country belongs to

[34] *Portrait of a Struggle* (Seychelles: Ministry of Education and Information, 1983), pp.2-7.

us).[35] Because the descendants of the slaves themselves are the ordinary working class and as such the majority, their status is clearly different from that of the descendants of slaves in Mauritius and Reunion.

Today in the Third Republic, with the implementation of the social programmes begun by the Second Republic to level the field of opportunity among the classes, a rise in the economic and social status of a majority of the population has resulted in people generally feeling that they can do away with the past and forget about slavery.[36] During a colloquium in Seychelles in 2008 under the theme, 'The African Diaspora and *Créolité*', Dr. Daniella Police-Michel from the University of Mauritius suggested that the question of reparation does not apply to Seychelles the way it does to Mauritius, because in Seychelles the descendants of the slaves have not been denied access to wealth and social improvement.[37] In this colloquium as in other such forums in Seychelles around the issue of Africanness, it has emerged that many people consider the subject of slavery to be irrelevant in our present society. This was the viewpoint taken by a group of tertiary students in another forum at the Creole Institute in October 2015, around the theme 'Definitions of Creole and Creoleness.' This attitude is strengthened by the fact that the Seychelles Republic has always been careful to officially recognize all three continents that contributed significantly to the Seychellois population and culture, Europe, Africa, Asia, and promote the resulting melting pot brand of creoleness, genetically and culturally. The government's policy towards the creole identity is made clear by the creation of a creole

[35] Odile de Commarmond and Colette Gillieaux, *Memories of Slavery* (Ministry of Education, Seychelles: unpublished, 2004), p. 75.
[36] Multi-party democracy was reinstated in 1993 after a referendum.
[37] Daniella Police-Michel, 'African Diaspora and Créolité: Convergence and Divergence,' *International colloquium: African Diaspora and Créolité in the Indian Ocean* (Seychelles, 27-28 October 2008) (Creole Institute 2008).

institute to promote the creole language and culture, the institutionalization of creole education and the emphasis laid on the annual creole festival. In fact, the Seychelles Tourism Board has adopted the motto 'Victoria, Capital of the Creole World' in the promotion of the festival.[38] More significantly, Africa's contribution to Seychellois culture is celebrated every year in May to coincide with AU's Africa Day. Significantly, this event, named *Fet'Afrik*, which was originally created to celebrate Seychelles' African heritage, tends to highlight exotic aspects of African culture as a sort of entertainment, and the local creole culture is more or less seen as something entirely separate.[39] Thus, in Seychelles, we appear not to have a problem with our creole identity, nor our African ancestry. However, this is belied by the persistence of racist tendencies and inferiority complexes as illustrated by the ongoing discourse on Facebook, something that I feel mirrors certain aspects of our folkloric expressions. Moreover, I find it quite significant that unlike Mauritius and Reunion, Seychelles has not yet felt the need to celebrate the abolition of slavery.

1.8 Previous research on folklore and the impact of slavery in Seychelles.

Past research on Seychellois folklore has been largely limited to data collection of the different genres. The Oral Traditions Section of the Department of Culture, which is today the National Heritage Research Section (NHRS), was responsible for the bulk of the early

[38] Seychelles Tourism Board, *Victoria, the capital of Seychelles is set to be more colourful and vibrant for the 29th Creole Festival* (2016) <http://www.seychelles.travel/en/news/4409-victoria-the-capital-of-the-seychelles-is-set-to-be-more-colourful-and-vibrant-for-the-29th-creole-festival> [accessed 24 July 2017].

[39] Seychelles Tourism Board, *Fet'Afrik* (2016) <http://www.seychelles.travel/en/events/events/event/3-fet-afrik> [accessed 24 July 2017].

collections in the 1980s. A good number of the folktales collected were published as booklets, namely, *Zistwar Sesel* [1981], *Veyez* volumes 1 and 2 (named after the traditional oil lamp by whose light stories were told) in 1981 and 1982.[40] A good many stories were never published and remain in the archives of the NHRS, but are available for consultation and reference. The same applies to the collection of songs, riddles, proverbs and cultural practices. A very limited edition of *Soungoula* stories featuring the Seychellois' most popular trickster hero was published in 2013 to commemorate Africa Day.[41] Antoine Abel published a folktale collection in French in 1981 as part of an international project.[42] Annegret Bollée published an even earlier collection in 1976 featuring famous Seychellois storyteller, Samuel Accouche.[43] In terms of analysis, only a few commentaries or conference papers are available, such as Lee Haring's paper on Seychellois tales originating from Africa (2003). My own collection of trickster hero stories co-authored by Norbert Salomon in 2004 does attempt to provide a detailed commentary of *Soungoula*'s origins in East Africa. It makes a clear case for the theory that the trickster is a hare instead of the monkey most Seychellois had assumed him to be, arguing that he replaced an older version of the Hare character, *Konper Lyev* (Compère Lièvre) with the arrival of slaves rescued by the British Navy in the 1860s.[44]

[40] Diallo and others, *Veyez: Zistoire Kreol Seseloi* (Mahé: Culture Division, 1981). Diallo and others, *Veyez 2* (Mahé: Culture Division, 1982).
[41] *Zistwar Soungoula*, ed. by Penda Choppy (Seychelles: National Heritage Research Section, 2013).
[42] Antoine Abel, *Contes des Seychelles* (Paris: Clé International, 1981).
[43] Samuel Accouche, *Ti anan en foi en Soungoula : Creole Stories from the Seychelles,* ed. Annegret Bollée (Cologne : University of Cologne, 1976).
[44] Penda Choppy and Norbert Salomon, *Soungoula ek Bann Konper* (Seychelles, Mahé: Creole Institute, 2004).

In the proverb and riddle genres, again the NHRS published a trilingual illustrated collection in 2001 with no particular categorization or commentary.[45] The bulk of its total collection is in its archives. For practical purposes, the Creole Institute put together a collection featuring both proverbs and riddles for consultation by students who participated in the institute's annual quiz competition (2002).[46] The institute has also documented a collection of idioms and sayings by Regina Melanie [n.d] and published a collection of the same genre by Marie-Antoinette Alexis (2004).[47] Another collection available for research is Erenia Meriton's compilation of traditional proverbs from Seychelles and the Dominican Republic (2003), but again, it just lists the data and offers no analysis or theorization.[48] Raphaël Confiant does offer a comprehensive background to creole riddles across the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean in his 1998 collection.[49] He explores the genre's origins, linguistic characteristics and proposes the idea of a creole civilization in the linguistic and cultural similarities among Caribbean and Indian Ocean French creole riddles, which he ascribes to their common origins in slavery and similar historical development. His 2004 collection of French-based creole proverbs from the Caribbean and Indian Ocean creole zones also offers an insight into the origins and classifications of the genre and discusses its role in the creolization phenomenon.[50]

---

[45] Diallo and others, *Zedmo Sesel* (Riddles of Seychelles) (Mahé: National Heritage, 2001).
[46] *Proverb ek Zedmo Seselwa* (Proverbs and riddles of Seychelles) (Creole Institute, Seychelles: unpublished, 2002).
[47] Marie-Antoinette Alexis, *Proverb Idyonm ek Lekspresyon Kreol Seselwa* (Seychelles: Creole Institute, 2004).
[48] Erenia Meriton, *Traditional Proverbs: Seychelles – Dominican Republic* (Seychelles: Imprimerie St. Fidèle, 2003).
[49] Raphaël Confiant, *Dictionnaire des Titim et Sirandanes* (Martinique: Ibis Rouge Editions, 1998).
[50] Raphaël Confiant, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes Créoles* (Paris : Presses du Châtelet, 2004).

As for the *moutya* genre, the NHRS compiled and published the largest available collection in a booklet in 1982.[51] The introduction of the booklet gives a brief background of the genre and the context in which the collection had been published, that is, the need to document the large repertoire of folklore which pre-independence oppressions had almost sent into oblivion, and the nationalist move to reclaim cultural identity in postcolonial societies. It also made it clear that data analysis was to be a future activity, priority being given to collecting before the generation with the necessary knowledge died out. Marvelle Estrale compiled the next most significant collection for the Creole Institute in 2007.[52] Estrale offers a much more detailed description of the genre, focusing on the socio-historical and socio-linguistic background and performance. She also theorized about when the *moutya* first appeared in Seychelles, arguing that oppression during the slavery period would have made it impossible to perform the dance, something that my own analysis of ancient lyrics in this study gives me cause to doubt. The time span of almost twenty years between the NHRS and Creole Institute collections enables an analysis of how the lyrics have evolved or been standardized, and of which ones have ceased circulating. Estrale's corpus was also very useful in my own interpretation of the genre as a historical record and proto-theatre in 2006 (prior to Estrale's completion of her project in 2007).[53] Marie-Thérèse Choppy's reference to the *moutya* as proto-theatre in her 2004 paper on women

---

[51] Diallo and others, *Sanson Moutya* (*Moutya* songs), (Mahé : Culture Division [1982]).
[52] Marvelle Estrale, *Tradisyon Oral Dan Kiltir Seselwa: Moutya* (Oral traditions in Seychellois culture: The *Moutya*) (Creole Institute: unpublished, 2007).
[53] Penda Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya as a theatre prototype and historical record* (Creole Institute: unpublished, 2006).

and theatre in Seychelles inspired my own theory in which I outlined the different aspects of the *moutya* performance that conform to general ideas of theatre performance.[54]

Anthropologist Burton Benedict is easily the most referred to author for background information about perceptions of the Seychellois people. His work consists mainly of an anthropological research on the dynamics of money in Seychellois households within the socio-political and historical contexts of 1960s Seychelles, the results of which were first published in 1966.[55] Benedict co-authored another publication with his wife in 1982 following another research on the same subject between 1974 and 1975.[56] I found the Benedicts' work useful for background information on the social conditions of the Seychellois society under the colonial government, especially concerning perceptions of the self from colour and race perspectives. However, the two most important researches on the impact of slavery on Seychellois society, in the context of my own research, are Odile de Commarmond and Colette Gillieaux's collection of interviews and documents on memories of slavery (2004), and Bishop French Chang-Him's MPhil thesis on the dilemma of cohabitation in a Christian society (2010). De Commarmond and Gillieaux's research was part of the UNESCO 1994 slave route initiative to 'break the silence' surrounding the Slave Trade. Apart from photographs of sites and other related documents, the research comprised of a considerable number of interviews with the members of the older generation of different backgrounds, on their memories or understanding of slavery. The work in its totality remains unpublished, but its contents have been used to supplement the history

[54] Marie-Thérèse Choppy, 'Women in theatre in Seychelles', *Southern African Theatre Initiative (S.A.T.I) workshop* (Addis Ababa, 2004).
[55] Burton Benedict, *People of Seychelles*, (Ministry of Overseas Development, Overseas Research Bulletin No. 14.) (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1966).
[56] Marion Benedict and Burton Benedict, *Men, Women and Money in Seychelles*, (Berkeley, L.A and London: University of California Press, 1982).

curriculum on the slavery period in Seychelles in secondary schools. As for the interviews, I have found them very useful in this study as support material. Bishop Chang-Him's thesis has been equally useful in that he has explored the conflicting values of Christianity and the sexual decadence and trauma caused by slavery. He traced the origins of the current situation of mono-parental families and the mistrust between men and women back to the *Code Noir*.[57] This provided the necessary support material for some of my own arguments in this respect.

The different collections of folklore mentioned above are the bulk of the corpus I have used in this study. Separated into their respective genres and categories, they are still somewhat lacking in quantity. A wider variety would have allowed a stronger basis for some areas of discussion, for example, in discussing the structure and narrative of the older *moutya* lyrics. In general, however, they do serve their purpose, though evidently more collections should be compiled for future use.

1.9 Methodological considerations

My choice of methods for this research was greatly influenced by my personal background. I come from a typical Creole family of mixed heritage with a strong traditional background. I grew up hearing stories of my musician great grandfather from my paternal grandmother. My great grandfather had a band that played the *kontredans*, and according to family stories, he was responsible for composing many of the most famous local songs of that genre. My grandmother danced in his cultural troupe, my uncle played the drums

---

[57] French Chang-Him, 'Cohabitation: A Christian Response to Ménage in Seychelles' (Unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Wales, 2010).

and my father's cousin played the violin, and still does in the national troupe today. In my childhood, the neighbours told stories in the evening. My cousins and I played word games inclusive of riddles and my grandmother was always talking in proverbs. My maternal great grandmother was also famous for organizing *moutya* dances in the community. As a teenager, I was a member of my district's cultural troupe, which later became a folkloric group that travelled much of the world exhibiting Seychellois culture to different tourism markets. Thus, by the time I was an adult and had a university degree in English Literature (or rather, literature in English), I had already had some sort of contact with most aspects of Seychellois folklore, inclusive of the corpus with which I have worked here. After being so immersed in the corpus itself, it seemed logical to take an analytic approach to the lyrics, expressions and cultural practices I know so well, in order to test the hypotheses set out my research. The nature of the materials I chose to work with is personal, subjective, and even anecdotal – proverbs, songs and riddles, all reflect people's personal experiences amalgamated into common community experiences over time. My personal experience as a member of the community informed my critical approach as an academic, making possible the combination of the personal and subjective with the analytical, as dictated by the research material. On the other hand, this material mirrors the cultural specificities of Seychellois society, and presents first hand evidence for critical analysis.

The research itself is qualitative in nature since it deals with human subjects, through their oral narratives. It sets out to study the relationship between Seychellois identity, slavery and colonialism. Though I chose not to engage directly with people through questionnaires or interviews, my research does aim to expose aspects of human psyche. To get at these aspects, I analyse instances of oral culture – riddles, proverbs and

moutya songs, which enhances the credibility of the research – and in which are embedded certain communal ideas and ideologies. My aim was to analyse data that represents the feelings and perspectives of a cross-section of the Seychellois population in their creative moments, spanning the centuries from the founding of the first settlement in the late sixteenth century to present times. It is important to note that the research material is generally considered as an inherent part of the Seychellois traditional heritage, and as such, reflect creations that are more or less in the past and have been handed down through the generations, and go as far back as the pre-settlement era in the Old World. My intention was to see how relevant the feelings and perspectives represented by this data still is to current Seychellois society. Analysis of secondary material relating directly to the primary material or to the socio-historical conditions under which this data (that is, oral traditions) was created enabled me to piece together an opinion as to its current relevance in our society, especially in the context of the impact of slavery and colonialism. It is of course not possible to represent any one truth in such a study as 'truth' is subject to individual perspectives and the data employed. I am moreover conscious that as a member of the community under scrutiny, there is a danger that the conclusions I draw might be seen from certain perspectives as biased. However, I felt that it was more important to attain my final objective, which, as Sarah E. Sandri puts it in her thesis on perspectives of African Dance communities in the United States, was 'to provide a forum through which historically marginalized voices and ways of knowing can converse with, and contextualize,

hegemonic narratives'.[58] This perspective can certainly be applied to oral traditions in postcolonial creole societies, especially from the slave descendants' perspective.

The main reason for my choice of method is the overwhelming need for analysis of the huge corpus of data in various fields of cultural studies collected since the 1980s. As such, it would have been a redundant exercise to collect new data when my hypothesis could be tested against already existing data. I mainly engaged in discourse analysis, that is, deconstructing or interpreting meanings (overt or underlying) in the proverbs, riddles and *moutya* lyrics I had chosen as my research material. I thus take on a particular view of language; language in use as an element of social life, closely connected with other elements. Norman Fairclough calls this method, 'interdiscursive analysis,' which he says 'allows one to incorporate elements of 'context' into the analysis of texts, to show the relationship between concrete occasional events and more durable social practices'.[59] As such, my analysis covers not only certain linguistic aspects of my material, but also the way these aspects correlate with other elements of culture, telling us the stories in several dimensions: the factual narrative and the socio-cultural implications. Each set of lyrics, proverbs or riddles represent a case study in that they are investigated in depth from a particular angle. In each case, I move from the general to the specific. For example, in the case of proverbs, I begin by describing the genre and use categorized examples to illustrate aspects of the creolization phenomenon in the context of Seychelles as a postcolonial

[58] Sarah E. Sandri, 'Performance, Politics and Identity in African Dance Communities in the United States', (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 2012), p.6. https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/12328/Sandri_oregon_0171N_10316.pdf > [accessed 17 December 2016]

[59] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (April 2015) <https://balticpractice.hse.ru/data/2015/04/13/1094925608/Critical%20discourse%20analysis_THEORY_FAIRCLOUGH.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2017], p.5.

society. Proverbs featuring animals in the local environment that refer to human behaviour is one such category. I then move to the investigation of categories that refer specifically to the impact of slavery and colonialism on Seychellois society. These categories include issues such as race, prejudice and the traumatic impact of slavery. I repeat this process with the riddle and *moutya* genres, and then proceed to draw general conclusions in the light of the hypotheses and research questions set out in the beginning of my research. This case study method is similar to Chang-Him's method in his study on cohabitation in Seychelles in the Christian context. He points out, in reference to G. Anderson (1993), that a case study approach suits the nature of this kind of research because it allows for investigations of contextual realities.[60] The realities in this case are the complexities of identity perspectives in Seychelles, especially concerning race, slavery and colonialism, as revealed in the aspects of orature chosen as data.

The corpus I used as primary sources includes riddle, proverb and *moutya* song collections researched and compiled by the NHRS and the Creole Institute between the early 1980s and the present time. Together with the National Archives, these are the most reliable sources of authentic material collected and documented in Seychelles. Additionally, some individual collections of proverbs and riddles by both Seychellois and non-Seychellois authors have also been used as primary sources. These are detailed in the introduction in the section on past researches. I also used my own personal collection of orature from both my personal knowledge and experience and from the Anse-Etoile Cultural Troupe's collection in the mid-1980s when I was an active member. I formulated my research questions and developed my main arguments from these original data. Firstly,

---

[60] G. Anderson, *Fundamentals of educational research,* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

that behind the Seychellois' advocacy of their Creole identity lies a deep sense of trauma resulting from their past as a slave society, and secondly, that this trauma or its cause is revealed in both the oral and written traditions, and in people's perspectives of their identity, or in ways that they have tried to recreate their identity.

My secondary resources are comprised mainly of postcolonial theories of creole societies, as well as theories of African orature, which links up with slavery in creole identity perspectives. I have also used some local research with a bearing on the impact of slavery on current identity perspectives in Seychelles, the details of which are also specified in the introduction. I have engaged in some social media research and references from newspaper articles to support my arguments on Seychellois attitudes to race and the linguistic aspect of our creole identity. Online sources have also been used as support material, for example the information about cultural practices in neighbouring Reunion and Mauritius.

The main constraints encountered in this research have been the difficulty of accessing reliable local sources. I started this study at a time when the main library in Seychelles was closed due to a fungus outbreak. The outbreak had somehow spread to the very important documentation centre of the National Heritage Research Section which houses the oral traditions data collected in the 1980s. Fortunately, I was able to get some of the *moutya* corpus and stories through staff of the Culture Department and the Research Section itself. They made up approximately 50% of the corpus of oral traditions I used for analysis. Access to primary documents for historical references was completely impossible because the National Archives is also housed in the National Library building and it was mostly closed during the early stages of my research; but again, officials of the archives

made available whatever digital documents they had. My second main difficulty came from being a distance learner with little access to campus-based facilities. For example, the university library had very little of the references I needed in an online format. Living in such a small country with a poorly developed literary culture also meant that I had to shop online for basic texts or have relatives or friends buy them from bookshops in the U.K, since I visited campus only twice for the duration of my research. I otherwise managed fairly well with additional texts obtained online and in digital form. I also found the Creole Institute library very useful for both primary and secondary materials on folklore.

CHAPTER 2: Critical and theoretical approaches to 'Créolité and Folklore

2.1 Creole identity in postcolonial theory and literature

In addressing the traumatic effects of slavery and colonialism on Seychellois society, and the role of orature in testifying to this trauma, the remarkable literature of and about the Caribbean Creole zone offers a useful starting point for considering particular analytical approaches. The comparison begins with the historical similarity of colonial experiences in both Creole zones and the role that these experiences have played in shaping creole consciousness. These experiences are expressed in both the oral and written traditions of their societies. However, the written tradition of the Caribbean has had a far greater impact on postcolonial theory than that of the Indian Ocean. There are no equivalents in the Indian Ocean to Caribbean literary giants like Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, or to the Martinican creolists, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, or to the Anglophone poets, Derek Walcott and Kamau Braithwaite. Césaire reclaimed Africa as the slave descendant's original homeland and beacon of identity, whereas, in different ways, Walcott and Braithwaite both explore and analyse the identity conflicts resulting from such an approach to Africa (as Fanon does as well). The Martinican creolists, on the other hand, advocate the recreation and expression of a new creole identity, liberated not only from colonial domination but also from the shackles of slave identity, and by association, from an alien and obscure African identity. Working through her verse, the Jamaican Louise Bennett also attempts to portray a positive creole identity grounded in local Caribbean culture. Whilst theoretical prose comment directly on the legacy of colonialism in

postcolonial societies, poetry such as Bennett's and Walcott's illustrate this legacy through portrayals of individual or community experiences, feelings and attitudes. In all this, folklore remains a source of inspiration and an archive to postcolonial theorists and writers alike, in their discourse on slavery, colonialism and the controversies and ambiguities around the issue of creole identity. This is because folklore, as Alan Dundes puts it, is *'autobiographical ethnography'*. It is the way any given society has described itself in terms of its experiences and beliefs, and may as such be relied on as authentic information. Dundes further argues that as a mirror of culture, folklore often reveals areas of concern to specific societies. [61] One such concern might be said to be represented by the question of identity in postcolonial creole societies, which is analysed and illustrated in theoretical and literary prose, and poetry.

2.2 Deconstructing orature and the creole malaise

I shall begin by clarifying my use of some terms that are important in the context of discussions of folklore and identity. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines *folklore* as the traditional beliefs, legends, and customs, current among the common people, and the study of these. It also specifies that in terms of customs and myths, folklore is concerned with the beliefs, legends and myths of the folk, that is, the people.[62] Thus, the emphasis is on what the common or ordinary people believe in and what they practice,

---

[61] Alan Dundes, 'Folklore as a Mirror of Culture', *Elementary English*, 46 (4) (1969), pp. 471-482. *National Council of Teachers of English*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41386525> [accessed 26 June 2017].

[62] Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2017), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/Entry/72546?redirectedFrom=folklore#eid> [accessed 23 June 2017].

based on their communal experiences from the past to the present. Expanding on this dictionary definition, Dan Ben-Amos describes folklore as ‘artistic communication in small groups,’ (1972) and Alan Dundes refers to it as the traditions that a group who share some common factors, call their own (1965). Both emphasize the importance of people and regard their beliefs and verbal practices as art.[63] Notably, Ben-Amos also says that the existence of folklore depends on its social context, and this is where my own concept of folklore meets with the definitions so far provided. That is, I take folklore to include indigenous or traditional knowledge and cultural practices of specific groups (in this case, Creole societies), passed down from generation to generation, generally by word of mouth. These practices come to constitute traditions and include song and dance, proverbs and riddles, tales and legends and other verbal forms. It is important to note, however, that though Ben-Amos’ definition of folklore has dominated its study from the 1960s, its application in today’s age of technology has begun to come under scrutiny. Simon J. Bronner, in a recent paper on the subject, challenges Ben-Amos’ ‘artistic communication in small groups’ definition and its relevance to the practice of folklore in the digital age. One of Bronner’s arguments is that folklorists who adhere to Ben-Amos’ definition continuously ‘face questions in the digital age about the influence of the Internet on the notion of “small groups”’. [64]

In association with *folklore*, I have also used the term *orature* to refer, more specifically, to proverbs, riddles and lyrics. Stories, sayings and so on are also included in

[63] Mary Magoulick, *The History of Folklore* (Folklore Reference Page [n.d]) https://faculty.gcsu.edu/custom-website/mary-magoulick/fldes.htm [accessed 8 December 2016].

[64] Simon J. Bronner, ‘Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice,’ *Cultural Analysis,* 15 (1), (p. 5) (2016) <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/preview/volume15/vol15_bronner.html> [accessed 8 December 2016].

this category. Ngugi also considers all these as orature. In fact, he makes no distinction between the words *orature* and *oral literature*, the former being used as a short form of the latter. He attributes the same importance to orature as to written literature: 'Written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries'.[65]

Furthermore, Ngugi sees the written tradition as being derived from the oral tradition, calling the novel for example, 'an outgrowth from the earlier traditions of oral tales'.[66] Thus, excluding African oral literature from the African school syllabus under colonial rule was, to Ngugi, equivalent to taking the African away from himself and propelling him into an alien world through the imposition of an alien literary tradition. As part of the decolonization process, he describes what he designates his 'boldest call', as the placing of oral literature at the centre of the school syllabus.[67]

Other scholars, namely Amadou Hampâté Ba and Marcel Jousse, share Ngugi's belief in the central role of orature in a person's sense of self and culture. Hampâté Ba, a Malian scholar, wrote that 'since speech is the externalization of the vibrations of forces, every manifestation of a force in any form whatever is to be regarded as its speech. That is why everything in the universe speaks: everything is speech that has taken on body and shape' (1981). In this context, orature is linked with all forms of thought and expression, inclusive of the practice of culture, which is particular to each society. For example, Hampâté Ba refers to the esoteric knowledge associated with artisanal function in

[65] Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986), p. 15.
[66] Ngugi, p. 69
[67] Ngugi, p. 94

traditional African society, which is seen as an imitation or replication of the Creator's process, as in the incantations and actions of the weaver or the blacksmith in Bambara culture.[68] Significantly, Marcel Jousse, a French scholar, had preceded Hampâté Ba in this approach. His groundbreaking work, *Le Style oral rythmique et mnémotechnique chez les verbo-moteurs* (1924), provided the basis for a new approach to the study of oral literature. Jousse, like Hampâté Ba, 'believed that the human mind and body are linked, forming a single, composite being, and that the universe in which the individual exists is a place of continuous interaction.' Just as the Bambara weaver or blacksmith imitates their Creator in their acts of creation, so does every human being imitate their surroundings through gestures, the most significant being the mimicry of sound, which becomes speech. According to Jousse, when people mimic sound, 'the oral language they utter is of an ethnic and particularized nature.' It is through this basis of 'abstraction of verbal combinations,' and 'the process of stereotyping of gestures, that language, mentalities and cultures are developed'.[69] This is where identity links up with folklore, oral traditions and orature.

Going back to Dan Ben-Amos' definition of folklore as 'artistic communication in small groups,' and linking it up with Hampâté Ba and Jousse's theories on the central role of speech in the expression and practice of culture, it becomes clear that *identity*, as used in this study, is intricately linked to folklore and tradition within specific societies. Identity, here, is understood as the concept people have of themselves which is reflected in their

---

[68] Amadou Hampâté Ba, *Africa: The Power of Speech in Intercultural Communication: A Global Reader*, ed. by Fred E. Jandt (London: Sage Publications, 2004), <https://books.google.sc/books?id=W5ClSo-rjoUC&pg=PA108&lpg=PA108&dq=Amadou+Hampate+Ba,+Africa> [accessed 13 December 2016], p.109.

[69] The UNESCO Courrier, *Rhythm, Gesture and the Sacred* (1993), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000950/095092eo.pdf > [accessed 8 December 2016].

beliefs, practices, expressions and ideas, and which they have inherited from an original source or have developed over time in a specific environment. This sense of identity is re-enacted in the performance or practice of oral literature, or is expressed in written literature, which in its turn may reveal multi-layered levels of identity even within single groups inhabiting the same space, as S.R. Cudjoe illustrates:

> In speaking of identity and the Anglophone Caribbean literary experience, it is necessary to emphasize that all such discussions/analyses should include the experiences of all of the groups and the unique ways in which they experienced the Caribbean.[70]

The meaning of this statement is illustrated in Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant's discussion of identity in *In Praise of Creoleness*. They proclaim a double sense of identity as Caribbean Creoles in that they affiliate themselves with other Caribbean peoples, from a geopolitical standpoint, and with other Creole peoples in the Indian Ocean, for example, from an anthropological standpoint.[71] To this, I will add that within each Creole society, there are still subtle layers of identity affiliations, depending on ethnic and social considerations. This is as aptly illustrated in the concluding chapter of *The Empire Writes Back*:

---

[70] Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Identity and Caribbean Literature* (Trinicenter.com, 2001) <http://www.trinicenter.com/Cudjoe/2001/June/24062001b.htm> [accessed 8 December 2016], p.2.

[71] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseaux and Raphaël Confiant, *In Praise of Creoleness,* trans. by Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (4) (1990) pp.886-909 (p.894). *The Johns Hopkins University Press,* <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931390> [accessed 5 April 2014].

> Postcolonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity.[72]

Essentially, what these authors are discussing here is the creolization phenomenon that resulted from European imperialism and the Triangular Trade between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is also applicable to the continued hybridization of societies, caused by globalization. Our primary concern, however, is the creolization phenomenon in the ex-colonies, especially in island communities.

Within creolized societies that are also ex-slave societies, two concepts of identity are often in conflict: *Creoleness* and *Africanness.* The written tradition of these societies might be said to be testimony to this conflict. Some of the most prominent theories and literary works in this domain will be analysed in this section, as to the nature and source of this conflict. First, it is important to establish the context of these terms, as used in this study. Thus, *Creoleness* refers to an identity arising from a mixture or 'metissage' of mainly African and European, and to a lesser extent, Asian (Chinese and Indian) and other aboriginal or transient populations in the Caribbean, Latin America and the Indian Ocean. This mixing was in each case a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and colonialism. The best description of Creoleness in this sense is given by the creolists: 'Creoleness is the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history'.[73] In the Indian

---

[72] *The Empire Writes Back*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), Conclusion, pp. 220-222 (p.220) <www.mohamedrabeea.com/books/book1_3985.pdf> [accessed 7 December 2016].

[73] Bernabé, Confiant, Chamoiseau, *In Praise,* p.891.

Ocean, these aggregates would include African, European and Asian, there having been no evidence established that there were any aboriginal populations prior to colonization.

Apart from the 'metissage' implied by the creolists' definition, 'Creole' has also come to be associated with *Africanness* in the ex-colonies, and with that comes the stereotyped negativity inherited from the stigma of slavery. Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask*, says that 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'.[74] Therein lies the negativity that is indelibly attached to Africanness as a result of slavery; every aspect of the black man is compared unfavourably to the white man; skin colour, hair, customs, and so on, and this is the primary context in which the term has been used in this study.

In the Creole world, the issue of hybridity makes the relation between colour and culture even more complicated. Boswell says that the Creoles of Mauritius 'are primarily the descendants of African and Malagasy slaves,' and are identified in that respect as a '*kominoté*', which in Mauritius means an ethnic group. However, the boundaries of this group are 'porous', since Creoles are also categorized as hybrids. Because both the black identity and the hybrid identity have negative connotations in Mauritius, Creole identity in this context is caught in a vicious circle of negativity.[75] In the Seychellois context, the African genetic component also brings in an element of negativity, as Scarr points out, in exploding the myth, 'much propagated locally,' as he puts it, that 'Seychelles never had a colour question.' He establishes the fact that since 1766, Paris had decreed that 'all blacks were slaves, and their progeny indelibly tainted and barred from entering the ruling white

---

[74] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 3rd edn. (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 82-83.
[75] Boswell, pp.2-6.

class.' Since this applied to all French colonies, 'proponents of the view that Seychelles uniquely differed would have had to explain how the white people of the Mascareigne Islands came to identify themselves as '*Seychellois*' and call blacks '*Creoles*' […].[76] (Note that Scarr is including Seychelles among the Mascarenes when usually this refers only to Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues). The various moves to recreate the Creole identity in a positive light by Creole intellectuals (as in *In Praise of Creoleness*) and politicians (as in the Seychellois promotion of creole identity) in large part stems from an underlying consciousness of lingering stigmas from colonial times.

Finally, it is necessary to define the term 'trauma' in the context of Creole societies that have suffered colonialism and slavery. In this study, trauma refers to the feelings of distress, dispossession and identity conflicts among people from ex-colonies, especially ex-slave societies, which have lingered on in the postcolonial era. The pathological aspect of trauma is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a wound, or external bodily injury in general, and also the condition caused by this.' The psychoanalytical and psychiatric aspect is defined as 'a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock, the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed. It also refers to an internal injury to the brain, which may result in behavioural disorder (of organic origin). Apply these definitions to a psychological injury imposed by such a traumatic experience as slavery, and you have the unhealed repressions and behavioural disorders of the postcolonial, post-slavery society, as described by Fanon and other postcolonial, theorists, and writers.

[76] Scarr, pp.4-5.

The inability to see the ills of the postcolonial world (e.g. racism) in this light lies at the centre of the First World/Third World conflict. Sonya Andermahr illustrates this through Stef Craps' *Postcolonial Witnessing,* which criticizes the Eurocentric bias of trauma theory, which he says, 'continues to adhere to the traditional event-based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event.'[77] Another frequently used description of trauma that Andermahr points out in Craps' work is 'a frightening event outside of ordinary experience'.[78] This is in line with the Oxford English Dictionary definition of a psychic injury, but it is also just the type of definition that Craps says does not work for non-Western or minority groups, particularly with respect to racism, which does not relate to a specific event, though it is historically specific. He specifies that 'To understand racism as a historical trauma, which can be worked through, would be to obscure the fact that it continues to cause damage in the present'.[79] This is what I find particularly significant: that the traumatic consequences of racism, stemming from the effects of slavery, is still a pervading characteristic in our globalized, postcolonial world, but is not readily recognized or addressed as such. So I totally agree with Andermahr's summary of Stef Crap's argument on the issue:

> Therefore, racially based forms of trauma historically rooted in the global systems of slavery and colonialism pose a significant challenge to the Eurocentric model of trauma as a single overwhelming event.[80]

---

[77] Sonya Andermahr, 'Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism'- Introduction, *Humanities*, 4 (2015), pp.500-505 <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special_issues/TraumaPostcolonialism> [accessed 7 December 2016].
[78] Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 172
[79] Craps, p. 32.
[80] Andermahr, p.2.

To illustrate these racially based forms of trauma in the postcolonial world, and to go back to my original proposal for a definition of trauma in ex-slave and colonial societies, I would like to bring in one final term, which describes the experiences I deal with in the findings of this study: *malaise*. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is a good illustration of the postcolonial malaise, which might best be described as the contempt and mistrust of the West towards the tropics they had once colonized. This has often been expressed as a kind of lethargy or exposure to contamination in Western writing, against which postcolonial theorists such as Said have reacted. Fanon puts it all concisely when he says in reference to French fears of Algerian contamination of the Republic, that 'Values are, in fact, irreversibly poisoned and infected as soon as they come into contact with the colonized.' He goes further to say that the customs and traditions of the colonized are seen as 'the very mark of this indigence and innate depravity.' The colonizers consequently refer to them in zoological terms: 'the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the "native" quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations'.[81] The descendants of the colonized have to live with this imposition of their otherness. The case of the black man and his descendants is even worse. Ade Ajayi, in his paper on the consequences of slavery and colonialism on postcolonial Africa, ascribes the resulting malaise among black people to the sheer scale of the transatlantic slave trade inflicted on black Africans, so that by the end of the eighteenth century, 'slave was synonymous with black, and black with slavery.' Furthermore, he argues that Abolition did not in fact emancipate blacks but rather ransomed them, seeing as slave owners were the ones compensated financially, after which the so-called freed slaves had to compete in the

---

[81] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. by R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), <http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/CSHS503/FrantzFanon.pdf> [accessed 04 July 2017], p.7.

same marketplace as their past owners.[82] This is the legacy of disadvantage inherited by slave descendants in Creole societies. In the Mauritian case, Boswell identifies this malaise as the political, economic and social marginalization of African slave descendants.[83] Though the Seychellois revolution might be said to have attempted a levelling of the economic field for slave descendants, the psychological scars of past sulbalternizations has created our own particular brand of the postcolonial Creole malaise, which is reflected in our orature.

2.3 Orature as palimpsests of the Creole experience

Creole orature is like an onion. That is, it consists of layers of expression and cultural practices that have been inherited from the Old World and recreated or adapted to suit new situations and environments in the New World. For example, the Seychellois *kontredans* is an adaptation of the French quadrille and other European 'court dances' brought in by European settlers.[84] This adaptation represents a transformation that has taken place over the course of the population's history and experience in that it is now danced by descendants of slaves, white settlers and other ethnicities, not only because of dissolved social barriers, but also because of the genetic and cultural mixing that has formed the population. The instructions in the songs for example, have remained in French – 'en avant

[82] J.F. Ade Ajayi, *Unfinished Business: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism in Africa*, (Amsterdam/India: South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) & Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC), 2002). <http://www.cssscal.org/pdf/publication/ade_ajayi.pdf> [accessed 2 July 17], pp.6-7.

[83] Boswell, p.2.

[84] Keven Valentin, *Annou Aprann Dans Kanmtole* (Country Dance manual), (Seychelles: Creole Institute, 2004) pp. 1-2.

les deux cavaliers!', or 'dos a dos, pas a pas' – but they have been embellished by witty Creole inserts: '*pardon manman, zanmen mon a fer ankor zot!*' (Forgive me Mother; never will I do it again). These inserts are thrown in during lulls when the dancers are following a specific instruction, for example during 'la chaine des dames' when the ladies weave their way around their male partners.[85]

Similarly, the stories of the Seychellois trickster hero, *Soungoula,* are of two types. There are those closest to the original African versions, for example the story of the Hare who bathed in the King's pool.[86] There are also those invented in Seychelles that show distinct aspects of Seychellois society, for example, the story of *Soungoula* and the Indian shopkeeper, where *Soungoula* convinces the shopkeeper that he is guilty of killing his mother.[87] In adapting the African trickster hero to the small rural community setting of Praslin, (the second largest island of the archipelago) and in exposing relations and interactions between people of different origins, the latter story-type reveals the creolization process that has taken place over time.

This kind of adaptation is also found in other Creole societies. For example, there are links between what Braithwaite calls 'this belly/ drum centred performance' in the Caribbean Anansi narrations and the Anansi of the Akan and of the Ashanti.[88] As such, orature in Creole societies might be compared to an archaeological site; the etymologies of words, the contexts in which they are used, the people to whom they refer, and interactions

[85] Valentin, p.8.
[86] Choppy & Salomon, pp. 25-31.
[87] National Heritage Research Section Library, *Soungoula* Collection, Stories [1982].
[88] Braithwaite, p.75.

they describe, reveal different layers of historical experience and significance, placed on top of one another like a palimpsest.

It is for this reason that I disagree with some Caribbean theories that Creole orature has been cut off from its roots because of slavery. Confiant, in his dictionary of Creole riddles and conundrums claims that the solid foundation of mythology preceding history is lacking in the Creole cultures of the New World, both in the Americas and the Indian Ocean.[89] By this, he means that Creole cultures lack the specific rituals and practices that Ngugi as an African writer for example, identifies as grounding his own culture.[90] Raymond Relouzat also points out the difficulty of grounding Creole orature in a mythical foundation, though he does see mythology as playing a crucial role in the construction of origins and genealogies. Relouzat, however, finds in the figures of Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe of the Haitian revolution, the possibility of mythologizing heroic genealogies in Negro consciousness.[91]

The sad fact, however, is that in many cases, Creole slave descendants have come to alienate themselves from these mythical heroes because in their psyche, the slave has replaced the hero. This does not mean however that the slave has not tapped into the original source of his mythical and cultural past. The Seychellois *Soungoula*, for example, originates from the Swahili *Sungura,* which means 'Hare'.[92] In fact, Haring claims that at least forty-five folk tales recorded in Seychelles are of African origins.[93] These include creation stories, as I found out when I did my own research on this genre in 2004, in the

---

[89] Confiant, p.13.
[90] Ngugi, *Decolonizing,* pp.10-11.
[91] Raymond Relouzat, *Tradition Orale et Imaginaire Créole* (Martinique : Ibis Rouge Editions, 1998), p.23.
[92] Choppy & Salomon (2004), Haring (2003).
[93] Haring, p.4.

example of how the tortoise got the marks on its shell.[94] Some African or Malagasy words in the Seychelles Creole lexicon also originate from a mythical source. The D'Offay/Lionnet dictionary for example, defines *Boya* as a traditional dance for raising the dead. Thus, the slave has not only conquered the language of the master, but has transformed it in his own recreation of myths and customs from his original culture, giving it a local flavour. In short, in the creolization process, the Creole has reshaped his identity, and imbued it with all of his experience and knowledge, past and present.

The different forms of orature that survived the cultural alienation and erosion of slavery and colonization might be casually dismissed today as irrelevant by modern Creoles, but they had been attached to specific traditions and rituals in their past that had given them significance. People were regaled with proverbs, riddles and folktales at traditional wakes. The older generation also taught the younger generation traditional values through these art forms.[95] All of these art forms probably had a specific function in their original environment. Ngugi, for example, describes African drama as 'having its origins in the human struggle with nature and others'. He mentions rites performed during harvests, at births, deaths, during the struggle against natural disasters and human invasions as well as internal enemies such as idlers, evil doers, and notes that the medium by which they were acted out included oral forms such as songs, mimes, poetry, and stories.[96] Ngugi also emphasizes the important role of orature in language development: 'Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but

[94] Choppy & Salomon, pp.41-42.
[95] Carpooran (2013), Confiant (1998).
[96] Ngugi, pp.36-37.

musically arranged words'.[97] Thus, from Ngugi's viewpoint, language is the essence of culture, and orature, which nourishes language, might be seen as the manure that feeds cultures and situates them firmly with roots in a particular tradition, as is illustrated in the example given by Braithwaite of the Ashanti's creation stories involving Anansi the Spider Man.[98]

In spite of being firm believers in the Creole's ability to create his own myths (after having had his original myths amputated by slavery and French cultural domination), the creolists do acknowledge the role of the orature buried deep within the slaves' memories, in the birth of what they call a truly Caribbean literature:

> This situation is not imputable to the mere political domination; it can also be explained by the fact that our truth found itself behind bars, in the deep bottom of ourselves, unknown to our consciousness and to the artistically free reading of the world in which we live.[99]

This buried reserve is described as 'wicks capable of bringing sparks to our obscurities,' an example of which is Gilbert Gratiant's *Fab Compè Zicaque*.[100] Gratiant is praised along with other writers of his era as the 'precious keepers' of 'the disarranged pieces of pottery, of the lost drawings, of the distorted shapes: of this ruined city which is our foundation.' There is a clear indication here that folklore has been wilfully marginalized by what the Creolists call the zombies of early Caribbean literature, for example, the *doudouists* who 'saw of their being, what France saw through its preacher-travellers, its chroniclers'.[101]

---

[97] Ngugi, p.11.
[98] Braithwaite, p.75
[99] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, p.886.
[100] Gilbert Gratiant, *Fab Compè Zicaque* (Martinique: Editions Horizons CaraYbes, 1958).
[101] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, pp.886-888.

They instead favoured metropolitan and canonized literary forms, and in so doing, lost the essence of being Creole.

Braithwaite also feels that the folk tradition inherited from Africa or created locally is marginalized in the Caribbean because of the valorisation of Euro-American cultural forms. He sees this attitude as difficult to counter or erase: 'The resistance to the calypso and related West Indian indigenous forms by West Indians is and continues to be, it seems to me, a very real and pervasive thing'.[102] Calypso is obviously an indigenous West Indian form, but with strong African influences. Other related indigenous oral forms would face the same marginalization not only because of stigmatization but because they are not Western. Braithwaite cites the criticism against the growing popularity of the calypso in the 1950s, which dismissed such traditions as 'debased', 'hybrid', or peripheral, 'formless' forms.[103] What seems to most concern him is the reason given for the objection to oral forms seen as 'belly-centred bawdy': the fear of attack on the *moral standards* of the middle class (citing O.J. Seymour).[104] He feels that Walcott's declaration, that 'we must teach our philosophy to reach above the navel,' (cited by G. Odlum) represents just such a middle class fear.[105] Yet, Braithwaite says, it is this very 'belly-centred bawdy' of Caribbean folklore and cultural practices that gives well-known Caribbean writers and performers like Miss Lou and Sparrow the calypsonian their vitality and creativity. It is for this reason that Braithwaite proposes indigenous African and Caribbean folklore as an alternative to the English Romantic/Victorian traditions.[106]

---

[102] Braithwaite, p.74.
[103] Braithwaite, p.73.
[104] O. J. Seymour, 'Correspondence on the Calypso,' *Kyk-over-al*, 3 (13), (1951), p. 197.
[105] Braithwaite, p. 74.
[106] Braithwaite, pp. 72-73.

The injunction to 'teach our philosophy to reach above the navel', articulated by an influential writer like Walcott seems to confirm the stereotyping of the black man as being active below the waist and the white man, above the waist. Condemning folk art as debased, peripheral and formless brings to the fore the common inheritance of debasement and marginalization in Creole communities in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. Estrale describes the *moutya* genre as 'overpoweringly vulgar', *epouvantab*.[107] This is part of the legacy of slavery: the kaleidoscope that forms the palimpsest of the Creole experience from the Slave Trade to the 21st Century. Yet oral traditions still play a fundamental role in the everyday lives of Creole societies. They are there in the jubilance of jazz, the music of the freed Negro, as Braithwaite says.[108] They are there in the lamentations and jubilations of the *moutya*, in the rhythm of Creole poetry, in the rhetoric of politicians.

This Creole tradition is one that has developed in parallel to mainland African orature, as confirmed by Furniss and Gunner's book on African orature.[109] The introduction outlines the ongoing importance and relevance of orality to the African nation, in the appropriation of oral forms by the state, corporate organizations or social groups for specific purposes to suit their own agenda. However, the power of orature is such that in the exercise and maintenance of control, the double-edged sword of praise-song, for example, may be 'in an instant, transformed into innuendo or vilification,' so that the subject, who is usually acted upon or is the receptor, becomes the wielder of power.[110] Even the less exalted forms of African orature imbue their performers with power. Furniss

---

[107] Estrale, p.8.
[108] Braithwaite, p.55.
[109] *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, ed. by Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner, 2nd edn. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), <www.cambridge.org/9780521480611> [accessed 16 October 2016].
[110] Furniss & Gunner, Introduction, 1-19 (p.6).

and Gunner refer to John Johnson's discussion of Somali work songs, which they say are supposed to help only in doing work, but at an importunate moment, such a song was played on the radio during parliamentary votes, influencing the mood of the MPs and leading to a change of Prime Minister.[111] The Caribbean calypso may wield a power of this kind. Likewise, opposition politicians gave the ruling party in Seychelles a warning after the introduction of multi-party democracy in 1993 by using a *moutya* song as propaganda: *Sa ki anler i kapab desann, sa ki anba i kapab monte*, (Those who are on top can come down, those who are at the bottom can go up).

This is not to say, however, that African orature does not face its own conflicts in relation to identity problems resulting from colonialism. Furniss and Gunner also point out that 'oral texts are often regarded within national cultures as texts of the "other" and thus marginalized'.[112] They include intellectuals in this criticism, mentioning Benedict Anderson (1983), whom they say 'overplays the part of print and underestimates the role of oral forms in constructing the nation'.[113] Thus, the influence of folklore and orature on the written tradition of postcolonial societies is often dismissed, which I maintain is a result of the imposition of Western canons on these societies and the effective indoctrination of the Third World as to the superiority of these canons. In their analysis of local attitudes amongst Caribbean writers and critics from the 1950s to the 1980s, both Braithwaite's *Roots* and the creolists' *In Praise of Creoleness* suggest that European ideals and literary canons have influenced expectations of literary norms, causing non-European forms to be

[111] Furniss & Gunner, Introduction, 1-19 (p.11).
[112] Furniss & Gunner, Introduction, 1-19 (p.5).
[113] Furniss & Gunner, Introduction, 1-19 (p.6).

marginalized[114],[115]. And yet, in parallel to the exploitation of the latent power of language in the written tradition, orature is just as exploited in its diverse forms, as Furniss points out, 'in political language, ethical language and, most particularly, didactism, all of which involve an attempt to make the listener think or act in a certain way'.[116] Thus besides the power that it wields in its own right, orature is also part of the power that is wielded by the written tradition because it often serves as a source for the latter. As for the theory that orality is dissociated from modernity, Herbert Chimhundu quotes several sources that seem to explode that myth:

> Proverb coining by singers may also be compared with what happens in slang when young people substitute lexical items in older proverbs with new ones to incorporate new imagery reflecting a new environment and changed circumstances [...]. In this way, a symbiosis is established between lexis and ecology.[117]

This use of oral sources to enrich new compositions is a reality of Seychellois society as well. Older musicians often complain that the youth is killing our culture with their imitation of rap, raga and other imported forms of music. I, on the other hand, am much intrigued by the way young composers are engaging their own generation through their adaptation of modern black music forms to Seychellois contexts in the use of old proverbs. For example, rapper Jarimba used several proverbs in his song *Tou lekontrer* (All the contrary) on his new album *Douler Lo Zot'* (Tough on Them) which was released in

---

[114] Braithwaite, pp.72-75.
[115] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, pp.886-888.
[116] Graham Furniss, 'The power of words and the relation between Hausa genres', in *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, Chapter 10, 130-144 (p. 132).
[117] Herbert Chimhundu, 'Sexuality and Socialisation in Shona praises and lyrics', *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, Chapter 11, 147-161 (p. 153).

December 2016.[118] *Pa tou bon lezo ki tonm dan lagel en bon lisyen* (Not every good dog gets a good bone) and *Si ou kras dan lezer i a tonm lo ou menm* (If you spit up, it will fall back on you) are two such proverbs used in this song. Both are well-known Seychellois proverbs though they were not commonly used among the Youth until Jarimba renewed their popularity. As is the tradition among many rappers, Jarimba was using these proverbs to pass on a message to fellow youths in his circle, as well as people perceived as power-wielders in society. In an interview with Seychelles News Agency (SNA), he also says that he taps from Seychelles Creole because it is his identity and it is what makes his songs unique, and he advises younger artists that this is how they can be original and be themselves.[119] Similarly, popular rapper, Elijah, also created a jingle out of an old proverb, *Delo lo fey sonz* ('Water on a taro leaf' – being equivalent to 'water off a duck's back' in English), to pass on a message to a perceived rival.[120] Both artists participate in a developing tradition of renewing older forms of Creole in a medium, that is, popular music, that will help the survival of the language and culture rather than killing it. I believe that without music, Creole would lose much of its relevance to a good part of the younger generation. With the heavy influence of English in modern popular culture, youth music is a medium by which young people relate to each other in Creole. Thus, 'oral literature is not at all that traditional and static but living and changing all the time', Chimhundu says, quoting A. Kriel (1971).[121] Though this was in reference to the Shona language and culture,

---

[118] Jarimba, *Douler Lo Zot,* (Extra Big Studio, Seychelles, 2016).

[119] Betymie Bonnelame, 'Up close with best male artist from the Seychelles' Cable tune Awards,' (Victoria, Seychelles: Seychelles News Agency, May 29, 2017) <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/7289/Up+close+with+best+male+artist+from+the+Seychelles+Cable+Tune+Award> [accessed 11 July 2017].

[120] Elijah, *Delo lo Fey Sonz*, (*Parti Lepep* political rallies, Parliamentary elections, Seychelles, 2016).

[121] Chimhundu, 'Sexuality and Socialisation…', *Power, Marginality and African oral Literature*, Chapter 11, 147-161 (p. 154).

it is applicable anywhere. In that respect, one might say that if orature may be considered as revealing layers of the postcolonial experience like a palimpsest, in borrowing from the oral tradition that is more ancient, modern culture in postcolonial societies, inclusive of the written tradition, is also a palimpsest.

2.4 Creoleness and material boundaries

As discussed in the interpretation of trauma earlier, slave descendants in the postcolonial world still suffer today from the economic impact that slavery and colonialism have had on their particular societies and their own places in these societies. Neil Lazarus links the historical process of colonialism to what he calls, 'the capitalisation of hitherto "uncapitalised" societies'.[122] By this, he means that Third World countries, which are mostly the ex-colonies, are subjected to the capitalist world system. In fact, Lazarus sees the economic policies that followed the post-war period in Europe and the U.S.A. as a deliberate strategy to create and maintain a ready market in the Third World for First World goods, and a cheap source of raw materials: 'What was labelled "globalisation" […] was on the contrary, a consciously framed political project or strategy'.[123] With reference to Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden* (1992), Lazarus discusses this capitalist strategy as being aided and abetted by postcolonial governments themselves, which, for the most part, failed to economically emancipate their people, just as Abolition had failed to truly emancipate freed slaves in the seventeenth century. Instead, they used the resources of the

[122] Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 37.
[123] Lazarus, p.7.

state to enrich the political elite by maintaining the same economic systems put in place by the colonizers, now turned super economic powers.[124] This playing into the imperialists' hands is largely what kept the slave descendants landless, penniless and dependent, thus no less subalterns than their slave ancestors. My main concern here is to understand the trauma still affecting the lives of Creole peoples as resulting in part from material lack, directly inherited from slavery and colonialism.

Boswell describes the Mauritian slave descendants, also known as the Creoles, as 'a people of no identity and value.' She says that the consequences of this state of being have been termed *le malaise Créole* by the Mauritians themselves. She further dissects the symptoms of this malaise and traces it back to slavery:

> Under slavery Creoles experienced dispossession and both physical and psychological violence. Centuries later, the persistence of poverty, social problems and political marginalisation among Creoles is attributed to *le malaise Créole* and is discussed as a primordial element of Creole personality.[125]

I would say that this assessment does not apply only to Mauritian Creoles but to Creole slave descendants even when they are a majority of the population as in the case of Seychelles. This lingering poverty with its associated social and psychological problems is related to the physical boundaries of the Creole's existence, that is, his/her homeland, where slavery and/or colonialism have taken place. However much the economic conditions of different Creole societies have changed since their countries have either attained self-determination or been incorporated into their ex-colonial governments, this

---

[124] Lazarus, pp.4-5.
[125] Boswell, pp. 1-2.

longstanding social and economic disadvantage has had a lasting impact on the psyche of the Creoles, whether it be in the perceptions of others or of themselves. This section deals with material constraints that have bound, and continue to bind, Creoles to their past fate, resulting in a desire to escape. This is often reflected in both the oral and written traditions of Creole societies.

Poverty is one of the conditions that limits the Creole to his/her physical boundaries and defines his/her disadvantaged identity. As Marion Benedict found out during her forays into the 1970s terrain, the general perception of the Seychellois about themselves was '*La misère, la misère*,' (Poverty, poverty).[126] This is one of the most enduring and stigmatizing symptoms of the Creole malaise. Let us take Boswell's association of the Creoles' poverty with landlessness for example.[127] This is a typical result of having been slaves with no ownership of land and no accumulated income with which to buy land. De Commarmond and Gillieaux corroborate what Creole singers have lamented about in their songs in this respect. About home ownership, informant Léon Desir, says, 'In the time of slavery, in our time of misery, we had no land, no property, no houses.' Mr Desir goes on to say that it was the *Gran Blan*, the white landowners and their descendants, who had the land and the houses, which they rented to the black descendants of the slaves. They worked on this land for such a pittance that they were guaranteed never to be able to afford their own homes.[128] Furthermore, everything on the land on which they worked and lived belonged to the landowners, even the coconut trees in the forests and the mango trees behind their rented houses. These were checked regularly in case of pilfering and the perpetrators often sent to

[126] Marion and Burton Benedict, *Men, Women and Money,* p. 25.
[127] Boswell, p. 98.
[128] De Commarmond & Gillieaux, pp. 71-73.

prison for stealing as little as one coconut, as the testimony of another informant, Amelina Mondon illustrates:

> So my mother went to prison because she stole a coconut from Mr X's land... She had prepared fish the night before, but the next day there was no oil to cook it, so she took one coconut... She was fined, but she did not have the money, so they came and took her away to prison. She was sentenced for three months in Union Vale Prison.

She also talks about her sister who spent one month in prison for taking one breadfruit to cook. Her brother was also sent to prison for stealing one coconut. 'In those days, everything was prison!' she remarks bitterly.[129] Of course, being known as jailbirds carried its own stigma. Thus, poor people were stigmatized because they were poor, and those who stigmatized them were responsible for their condition. Though modernisation has now put paid to such poverty in many Creole societies, as in the case of Seychelles, it has not completely eroded the stigma attached to people of colour. With poverty comes many other social stigmas relating to status, education, beliefs and cultural practices, all of which serves to define slave descendants as the needy, the dependent, the disadvantaged, the abnormal, in short, the 'other'.

In Walcott's *What the Twilight Says*, poverty seems to be part of the scenery and consciousness. He describes the allotments of the poor as 'ramshackle hoardings of wood and rusting iron,' and the buildings as 'more stain than air'.[130] As a poet, Walcott openly admits his feelings of constriction in this physical space that seems so far removed from the creative space of his imagination:

---

[129] De Commarmond & Gillieaux, pp. 9.13
[130] Walcott, p. 3.

> At nineteen, an elate, exuberant poet madly in love with English, but in the dialect-loud dusk of water buckets and fish sellers, conscious of the naked, voluble poverty around me, I felt a fear of that darkness which had swallowed up all fathers.[131]

The darkness 'which had swallowed up all fathers' is linked to the kind of rage that had fuelled the early heroes of Haitian history, Christophe and Dessalines, and which Walcott, himself a half-caste, fears might consume him, being in conflict with his English ancestry and cultural aspirations.

In discussing his own concept of the poverty in the Caribbean Creole space that so distresses Walcott, Braithwaite describes Walcott's poetry as expressing a 'sadness, beauty and terror,' resulting from the hopelessness of having conflicting identities and of the physical poverty that constantly reminds the writer that this is what his identity amounts to in this physical space.[132] Walcott himself explores the conflict between the concept of the Creole world as a paradisiacal space for foreigners, and its experience as a constricting and hellish space by the Creoles themselves. His description of poverty is permeated with adjectives like 'gilded', 'iridescent' and 'art,' turning the scene of destitution and hopelessness into a theatre of the absurd where people are resigned to their fates, and outsiders see an exotic colourfulness and liveliness which is nothing but a surface decoration effected by the bounty of the tropical scenery.[133]

---

[131] Walcott, p. 10.
[132] Braithwaite, p.12.
[133] Walcott, pp. 3-4.

2.5 Emigration as a means of escape

One of the most common effects of the Creole's sense of malaise due to the poverty of his/her physical environment is the desire to escape by emigrating. Braithwaite explores this phenomenon extensively in *Roots*: 'I want to submit that the desire (even the need) to migrate is at the heart of West Indian sensibility, whether that migration is in fact or by metaphor'.[134] Thus, as the potato famine in Northern Europe caused entire generations to flock to the New World in the 1840s, what Braithwaite calls 'a famine in the soul' caused the West Indian exodus back to the Old World, to the metropolis.[135] He refers to several well-known Caribbean works such as Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953), whose ending is a farewell to the land of the narrator's birthplace, and Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* (1952), which expresses the Caribbean's dissatisfaction with the 'sameness' of everyday life in his environment, where 'Plenty things happened, but nothing new'.[136] To the Creole then, the Western World was a beacon of hope where their own tiny islands had become a prison of smallness and nothingness. As Louise Bennett puts it in her poem, 'Colonization in Reverse', 'What a joyful news, Miss Mattie; [...] | Jamaica people colonizin | Englan in reverse.' The exodus is illustrated in the second stanza of the poem:

> By de hundred, by de tousan,
> From country an from town,
> By the ship-load, by the plane-load,
> Jamaica is Englan boun.

[134] Braithwaite, p. 7.
[135] Braithwaite, p. 9.
[136] Braithwaite, p. 10.

What they are going to do there is another matter; all they know is that 'Everybody future plan | is fi get a big time job' with the aim of course of comfortably 'settling' in the motherland.[137] But the reality is that most of them will be going on the dole, which as Miss Lou points out in the ninth and tenth stanzas, is not a problem for the laid back Creole to whom two pounds a week is good enough to give them time to seek a job that 'suits their dignity'.

Beneath the comically satirical rendition of the Creole's indolent life in the land of plenty, the 'motherland', Miss Lou reveals the underlying conflict of identity and socio-cultural unrest that plagues the citizens of every ex-colonial society who find themselves in the First World. How far do the Jamaicans and the Trinidadians, and indeed the Seychellois who have emigrated to England and France and Northern America really belong to their adopted countries? How far are they accepted by the First World? In Miss Lou's words, 'how dem gwine stan | Colonizin in reverse'? By comparing the onslaught of immigrants from the colonies to war and worse things, Miss Lou makes it clear that this is not necessarily a desirable experience for the native British and that their negative reaction to it could possibly have a bearing on their relationship with their new brethren. The immigrants themselves don't seem to adapt to the 'reverse colonization' very well as Miss Lou goes on to illustrate in 'Home Sickness', in the sudden longings 'fi drink some coaknut water, or 'Fi a plate a rice an peas'. The poignancy of the situation comes to a climax in the last stanza where the homesick immigrant dreams nostalgically of going back 'home' (to Jamaica) to savour all the tastes and sights of his/her fantasies but suddenly remembers

---

[137] Louise Bennett, 'Colonization in Reverse,' *Selected Poems*, ed. by Mervyn Morris (Kingston: Sangsters Book Stores Ltd. 1982), pp. 106-107.

that he/she can't go back to visit family because 'Lawd-amassi, me figat - | all a me fambly over yah!'[138] These nostalgias and feelings of being unsettled arise because, even in the land of plenty, the Creole feels restricted by material limits that are as constricting as the physical boundaries of their island homes.

2.6 Creoleness and psychological boundaries

Parallel to, or as a direct result of the physical boundaries that poverty and lack of significant property imposes on the Creole, there are the psychological boundaries that cause him/her to reject his/her identity. This anxiety about identity is also reflected in the postcolonial oral and written tradition. I turn once again to Louise Bennett's *Selected Poems* (1982). 'Problem' is a good illustration of the Creole's complex about pigmentation:

> Is no use, when stranger come
> Fi sen yun black gramma go hide,
> An show-off all yuh white granpuppa
> Photograph wid pride!
>
> For de ole oman cyan hide weh;
> An, no matter what yuh do,
> Dem woan see her eena parlour
> But dem see her eena yuh![139]

In her usual sassy and candid style, Miss Lou brings to the fore the question of colour in Creole identity, and with the question of colour comes essentially, the question of

---

[138] Bennett, 'Home Sickness', *Selected Poems*, pp. 107-108.
[139] Bennett, 'Problem', *Selected Poems*, pp. 93-94.

Africanness. This time I turn to Fanon for illustration, who in *Black Skin, White Masks*, recounts an encounter with a Martinican female student who spoke quite vehemently against Césaire's Negritude revolution:

> If Césaire makes so much display about accepting his race, it is because he really feels it as a curse. Do the whites boast like that about theirs? Every one of us has a white potential, but some try to ignore it and others simply reverse it. As far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't marry a negro for anything in the world.[140]

If this was the typical Martinican reaction to the question of Negritude in Fanon's time, it is not surprising that some three decades later, the creolists, though they hail Césairian Negritude as 'the primal act of our restored dignity', also reject it as another form of exteriority originating from a place that has become 'mythical' and unreachable, with time. More significantly, they see the Negritude movement as having tried to embed their Creole identity in 'a denied, repudiated and renounced culture'.[141] Their argument takes the Creole complex further than just pigmentation, focusing more on the need to move away from the African stereotype of the slave and the savage, and more on the creativity and resilience of the survivors, that is, the Creoles.

The creolists' stance about embracing 'Mother Africa' is replicated in Walcott's *What the Twilight Says*. His Caribbean is a twilight zone full of deprivation, oppression, anger, schizophrenia, alienation, and most importantly, a fear of the past. Of the Creole artists who have accepted this twilight zone, and with it, their Africanness, he says:

> If I see these as heroes it is because they have kept the sacred urge of actors everywhere: to record the anguish of the race. To do this, they must return through

---

[140] Fanon, *Black Skin,* p. 33.
[141] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, pp. 888-889.

> a darkness whose terminus is amnesia. The darkness which yawns before them is terrifying. It is the journey back from man to ape.[142]

Walcott may well be referring to the exposure of the Creole's psyche down to what he calls, 'bare, and "unaccommodated man."' The 'journey back from man to ape' may well refer to the inward journey that everyone must make, to the deepest recesses of one's consciousness in order to 'articulate' one's origins. However, one cannot help reading a link to primitivism associated with Africa in his use of such images as 'ancestral storytellers' feeding twigs to the fire, 'tribal fire,' 'darkness,' and 'cult of nakedness'.[143] Though there is a clear condemnation of those responsible for 'the genocides of civilizations,' wars and concentration camps, though he empathizes with the slaves in intimating that had the god which had been imposed upon them been a living god, he might have changed his Chosen People, the horror he feels at the debasement of his African ancestors is pervasive. So is his disillusionment in thinking that he could somehow erase this horror in attempting to create a new identity.[144] This is where he diverges from the creolists. They believe in rebuilding a new identity at home whereas Walcott's stance is to admire those who have chosen to stay behind, though his own instinct is to flee.

The pervasive horror of the African slave's past is what propels Fanon's dissection of the black man's identity complex, which is still relevant in Lazarus' analysis of the postcolonial situation more than half a century later.[145] In quoting David Macey's biography of Fanon, Lazarus also links the subaltern status of the ex-colonial subjects to their debasement during the colonial period. With reference to Fanon's experience as a

[142] Walcott, p. 5.
[143] Walcott, pp. 5-6.
[144] Walcott, pp. 6-7.
[145] Lazarus, p. 170.

doctor in Algeria, Macey explains that French doctors, 'regarded their patients as little better than animals, and described themselves as practicing veterinary medicine'.[146] Thus the black and coloured man finds himself unable to escape the stigma of his colour in association with his race's experience during the colonial period, resulting in a horror and self-loathing that is passed on to the next generation. Being black thus becomes a point of controversy and is literally a minefield of 'faux-pas' in inter-racial behaviour as illustrated by Fanon himself, in his contemplation of the black/white interaction: 'Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my colour'.[147] It is this obvious evidence of origins in the African slave descendants that is a principal source of the creole malaise, alongside other aspects of social status defined by their economic conditions. The vicious circle is completed by other psychological ailments, anger and bitterness, for example, which are manifested in postcolonial discourse.

2.7 Anger and bitterness as manifestations of the creole malaise

Postcolonial literature as written by the ex-colonized is often a testimony of the anger and bitterness arising from trauma. Fanon's anger at the black man's condition may be attributed to the fact that he is overly conscious of the stereotype of the Negro. He considers that the negative stereotyping of the black man has made him shy away from that perception of himself; the result of which is self-disgust and alienation. One is careful of one's actions in case that stereotype emerges, because one is conscious that one's colour

---

[146] David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Life*, (London: Granta, 2000) pp. 217-218.
[147] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p. 88.

elicits judgement. In this, Fanon sees the black or coloured man as having the burden of proving that he is normal and human; in other words, white, since whiteness is equated with what is normal and human.[148] This same kind of anger is expressed in Grace Nichols' *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, the ruminations of an immigrant woman who knows she is the opposite of the norm in her adopted society, but who is determined to assert her right to be who she is. The author recalls memories of her stereotyped fat black mama, 'and them days of playing | the Jovial Jemima.' She builds up this imagery of her mother going about her usual business of tossing pancakes to heaven in a busy and happy kitchen, and then suddenly veers into a paradox that gives new meaning to the smoke and the laughter:

> tossing pancakes
> to heaven
> in smokes of happy hearty
> murderous blue laughter

The murderous feelings that lie behind Jovial Jemima's forced laughter relates to her obligations towards her little white charges, and having to ensure that the whole family is fed and happy, whilst she has to feed her own children on 'Satanic bread.' Food that brings no sustenance and that instead fills the stomach with bile, creating the opposite effect of Jemima's 'happy' workplace.[149]

Aimé Césaire goes further and recalls his slave ancestors' experience, evoking a horrific imagery of a holocaust that he can never erase from his memory:

---

[148] Fanon, *Black Skin*, pp. 85-86.

[149] Grace Nichols, 'The Fat Black Woman Remembers', *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1984), p.9.

> Que de sang dans ma mémoire! Dans ma mémoire sont des lagunes. Elles sont couvertes de têtes de morts... Ma mémoire est entourée de sang. Ma mémoire a sa ceinture de cadavres![150]

It is the depiction of a holocaust that spreads a pall of horror in the survivors' minds. Césaire might have intended to raise a memorial to his martyred ancestors, and express the mental scars that slavery has left on his sense of identity, but in so doing, he has also revealed the 'incumbent monster' that the creolists want to purge from their memories; the same monster that shadows Walcott's consciousness.

2.8 Folklore as a source of identity reconstruction

It is evident from the material we have dealt with in the sections regarding the physical and psychological boundaries binding the Creole persona to his/her burden of trauma, that the recreation of a new identity is essential to the survival and mental emancipation of the slave descendant. The creolists rightly identified folklore and orality as the source of this renewal, this recreation of identity, based on an amalgamation of indigenous knowledge from the different strands of their hybrid identity:

> A real galaxy with the Creole language as its core, Creoleness, has, still today, its privileged mode: orality. Provider of tales, proverbs, 'titim,' nursery rhymes, songs, etc, orality is our intelligence; it is our reading of this world, the experimentation, still blind, of our complexity. Creole orality, even repressed in its aesthetic

[150] Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Edition Présence Africaine, 1983), p.35.

> expression, contains a whole system of countervalues, a counterculture; it witnesses ordinary genius applied to resistance, devoted to survival.[151]

This recreation of identity is based on the Creole's experience in the New World; whatever came from previous homelands in the Old World were attributes, and could only be accepted as part of the creole identity in terms of their hybridized forms that had been born on Caribbean soil. This is therefore the essence of the creolists' rejection of Césaire's brand of Creole identity – Negritude: 'With Edouard Glissant we refused the trap of Negritude, and spelled out Caribbeanness'.[152] They equally reject the French identity imposed on them by their colonizers: 'It is a terrible condition to perceive one's interior architecture, one's world, the instants of one's days, one's own values, with the eyes of the other.' Essentially, what they are saying here is that Creoles, that is, the Martinicans, are not the same as their overlords, in spite of having the same nationality. The Creole has his own experience, derived from cultural practices and memories handed down from other sources than the French one, which in this case becomes alien. The 'terrible condition' they speak of also encompasses their cultural, political and economic dependence, which in their eyes make them a non-people.[153]

The move to recreate new identities by Creoles was a typical feature of the decolonization period. On the African continent, this was manifested by a revalorization of pre-colonization culture mainly expressed in orature. Pennina Mlama discusses the attempts made by African governments in the post-independence era to propagate cultural identity, which included the setting up of national artistic troupes and the introduction of

---

[151] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, p.895.
[152] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, p.889.
[153] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, p.886.

the local languages in the school curricula in the 1950s and 1960s.[154] This involved principally oral traditions, which were taboo or had lost their prestige during the oppressive reign of colonialism. Furniss and Gunner's statement that 'Song, poetry, popular representations of many kinds, are an integral part of the way in which people in Africa today are commenting upon what is happening to their societies,' suggest that the identity revolution of the decolonization period has had a measure of success.[155] This 'bringing in from the cold' of particular genres, according to Furniss, is part of a general move in Africa's ex-colonies, to strengthen indigenous languages and cultures which face a serious challenge from the advance of Western languages and cultures, and, more specifically, from the spread of English.[156]

Going back to the use of folklore and orature in Creole societies to recreate more positive identities than what has otherwise been imposed on them by slavery and colonialism, I would say that, in fact, Creole orature from the Caribbean and the Americas has transformed the entertainment industry on a global scale. This is especially the case in the music industry with legends like Bob Marley and the jazz kings of the American South. It is quite ironic that Blues music, with its origins in the tortured existence of African slaves, should have had such an impact on the general American Cultural Revolution. However, it is jazz music that is more representative of this positive recreation of identity, as opposed to the blues that bemoan the slaves' fate. Jazz, on the other hand, says Braithwaite is not slave music at all, but rather the emancipated Negro's music, 'hence its brash brass

[154] Pennina Mlama, 'Oral art and contemporary cultural nationalism,' *Power, Marginality and African oral Literature*, Chapter 2, 23-34 (p. 23).
[155] Furniss & Gunner, in *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature,* Introduction, 1-19 (p. 5).
[156] Furniss, 'The power of words…', *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, Chapter 10, 130-144 (p. 144).

colouring, the bravado, its parade of syncopation, its emphasis on improvisation, its *swing*'.[157] In the improvised nature of jazz – within the dynamics of the relationships between the players, which allow them to improvise in harmony – Braithwaite sees a return to folk culture. He speaks of a modern movement back to folk art, in music, painting and poetry for example.[158] He extends this influence of the Negro folk art to the written tradition as well, likening the West Indian novel to jazz in evoking the rhythmic quality of its writing. He argues that a Negro environment has influenced authors like Faulkner and Paton.[159] Braithwaite then is very much an advocate of the use of the natural rhythm of Creole speech in literature, unlike Walcott, who seems to take the stance that Creole, or dialect, as he calls it, has too many limitations:

> We continue to fiddle with the obvious limitations of dialect because of chauvinism, but the great poem of Césaire's could not be written in a French Creole dialect because there are no words for some of its concepts […] even if these were suddenly found, they could not be visually expressed without the effort of an insane philologist.[160]

His irritation with this aspect of Caribbean creole culture extends to the folk forms of which he says that belief would require that 'the state would not only have to hallow its mythology but re-believe in dead gods.' However, because the unique god fed to the slaves and their descendants has been declared dead, he says, literary or artistic attempts to re-enact other gods from a lost past are reduced to blasphemy, since these gods are unreal. He seems to disapprove of what he calls, derisively, 'the African phase' in creole artistic expression,

[157] Braithwaite, p. 55.
[158] Braithwaite, p. 57.
[159] Braithwaite, p. 65.
[160] Walcott, p. 51.

because he sees the use of African masks, costumes, and so on, outside their proper contexts of religious ritual or cultural practice, as blasphemy without the necessary fear, which thus turns them into meaningless trinkets and empty shows for tourists.[161] On one level, the creolists join Walcott in this view of African revival or Negritude, for to them too, Africa is a distant memory, disconnected from the Caribbean Creole's reality. On another level, the creolists' faith in the creative ability of the Creole language and culture to nurture a new positive identity is not matched in Walcott's essay, which dismisses Creole as lacking the complexities necessary for so-called 'high art.'

It is clear that many parallels can be drawn between the Seychellois Creole identity question and Creole identity in the Caribbean in relation to folklore and orature. Seen as both inspiration and liability due to its link to slave identity, creoleness is the site of trauma resulting from the past of Creole societies as slave societies. The attitudes to identity and evidence of trauma are replicated in the same way and for mostly the same reasons in the corpus of Seychellois orature chosen for analysis. As for the question of recreating identities, exploring the different approaches, from the Martinican example in the Caribbean to the Mauritian example in the Indian Ocean, it becomes clear that this is an important step in the long trek away from the stigma of slavery. It becomes even more necessary when, as Lazarus points out, world events make it apparent that the balance of power has not changed from the time that Creole societies were being created in the New World. Economics is still at the centre of world politics today as it was during the Transatlantic Slave Trade.[162] The world is still structured and marred by combined and

---

[161] Walcott, pp. 7-8.
[162] Lazarus, pp. 8-9.

uneven development, ensuring that power and wealth reside in the metropolitan centres. This makes it all the more important for the Seychellois to be able to draw parallels between their society and other similar societies in their historical and geographical contexts, and thus become better able to understand their complex identity.

CHAPTER 3: Findings – Creole Proverbs and Riddles

3.1 Orature in daily life

Folklore, as expressed in oral literature, is intricately woven into the everyday language and cultural practices of a particular society.[163] As such, folklore can be equated to a mirror that reveals the psyche, beliefs and attitudes of each particular society, influenced by their historical and social experiences. In this chapter, I discuss the forms of orature in Seychelles Creole that are closer to everyday language, or are woven into ordinary speech, as opposed to more elaborate forms of orature like dance or story telling that are found mostly in folkloric performance. The forms I focus on include proverbs, woven into conversations to enrich them, as well as riddles and conundrums, which may be classed as types of coded language.

My research into the local corpus of these forms of orature uncovered an extensive variety pertaining to all aspects of Seychellois life. The examples of proverbs and riddles included in this study focus on the creolization process of Seychellois society as an ex-slave and colonial society, and the impact of this historical process on the Seychellois psyche. As such, they point to beliefs and practices embedded in the local culture that expose the Seychellois's linguistic and cultural creativity in the adversity of their historical experience. The bulk of the examples used relate directly to the question of attitudes to race and evidence of trauma resulting from slavery and colonialism.

[163] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes*, p. 12.

If, as Arnaud Carpooran says in his book of Mauritian proverbs and riddles, these forms of orality among the Creole community may be considered as an African heritage resulting from slavery, one needs to consider their roles in African society and to ponder the question of whether they have retained these roles in the Diaspora.[164] Consider for example, the use of oral forms in African society according to Liz Gunner:

> Orality needs to be seen in the African context as the means by which societies of varying complexity regulated themselves, organized their present and their pasts, made formal spaces for philosophical reflection, pronounced on power, questioned and in some cases contested power and generally paid homage to 'the word,' language as the means by which humanity was made and constantly refashioned.[165]

Orality in this context thus seems to play a central role in African society. The profusion and variety of African riddles, judging from the huge corpus available, suggests that this genre may be seen, alongside the proverb, as a measure of wit, creativity and logic in the use of language. For example, Maureen Warner-Lewis declares that 'In African speech culture, appropriate use of proverbs and riddling idioms is a hallmark of high rhetoric.' However, she goes on to point out that the importance of the genre has been lost in the African Diaspora because of the centrality of European languages. Proverbs and riddles are no longer as much a feature of formal address, nor do they play any role in legal arguments the way they do in African indigenous courts.[166]

---

[164] Arnaud Carpooran, *Proverb ek Sirandann Repiblik Moris*, (Mauritius: Ministry of Arts and Culture, 2013), p.46.

[165] Liz Gunner, 'Africa and Orality,' in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Vol.1, ed. F. Abiola Irele & Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Chapter 1, 1-18 (p.1).

[166] Maureen Warner-Lewis, 'The oral tradition in the African Diaspora', in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Chapter 7, 117-136 (p. 124).

On the other hand, in spite of having lost its place in formal or legal situations in Creole societies and the Diaspora in general, it does seem that some of the practical as well as the aesthetic uses to which orature was put in Africa might have lingered on in the Diaspora, in informal situations. I would certainly say so about the contexts of proverb and riddle use in Seychelles. This is especially so in terms of power, race and politics. The Seychellois use proverbs and riddles to criticize their leaders, to taunt their opponents, and to philosophize about their lot in life. Specific examples of each use will be explored in detail in the sections dedicated to these particular forms.

In the Mauritian context, Carpooran sees orature as defining origins, culture, and playing an important role in the transmission of messages among the slave population, especially after Abolition. This local function as well as the original functions of orature in Africa explain why the Mauritian slaves and their descendants used these kinds of forms extensively and were prolific in their composition.[167] In the Caribbean context, Confiant seems to support the theory that the proverb and riddle genres have retained some of their original pre-slavery functions in the Diaspora. He cites two main instances where riddles and other aspects of oral traditions came into play: a public situation such as a traditional wake and a private situation such as a grandmother entertaining her grandchildren in the evening and at the same time educating them on cultural and moral values.[168]

In all functions, however, folklore and oral traditions in Creole societies, I reiterate, have their greatest impact on people's use of language in everyday life, enriching vocabulary and expression, and at the same time revealing layers of historical experience,

[167] Carpooran, p. 46
[168] Confiant, *Dictionnaire des Titim,* pp. 10-11.

which are deeply embedded in folklore and oral traditions, including those forms that are interwoven with everyday language. For example, Seychellois proverbs and riddles often consist of racist vocabulary or expressions that reflect the effects of slavery on our society. A look at some of the most well-known riddles and proverbs shows just how colour prejudices can be perpetuated by slipping imperceptibly into everyday use.

3. 2 Creole proverbs and their common roots

In terms of definition of the proverb, I find Arnaud Carpooran's summary of it as being 'a sentence or maxim that makes economic use of words, often in metaphorical language, and is in popular use more often by lay people in a particular society,' quite appropriate. The sources he cites are the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, *Le Petit Robert* and an online source, *The Free Dictionary*.[169] The chief characteristics of the proverb thus seem to be the concision of expression and the semantic density of the final product. Confiant's discussion of definitions supports this approach and he places particular emphasis on context and meaning. Context here refers to the conversation in which the proverb is used. There are no specific situations or conditions for proverb use, Confiant points out, unlike other forms of orature.[170] For example, storytelling occurs at bedtime or at wakes and often have a specific way of starting. Proverbs, on the other hand, are inserted within normal conversations, usually to illustrate or punctuate a point.

As in other Creole societies, the proverb genre in Seychelles Creole has shown a tendency to survive the general upheaval of slavery, colonialism and even the drive towards

---

[169] Carpooran, pp. 40-41.
[170] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes,* p. 12.

Westernization. More importantly, it has survived the linguistic erosion of African characteristics in Creole languages. Confiant pays homage to the resilience of this genre:

> Ainsi lorsque la langue aura disparu, quand elle aura été efface par d'autres terreaux linguistiques à cause des incessant bouleversements de l'histoire, le proverbe, lui, continuera à briller de son obscure éclat.[171]

Confiant illustrates this by citing some Creole societies where the original French Creole was more or less obliterated by the advent of English, namely, Trinidad, Grenada and Louisiana, except for some proverbs and idiomatic sayings that still remain.[172] In Seychelles, however, though the French Creole clung on stubbornly to its position as the mother tongue of a majority of the population, the original African languages and cultures from which we inherited some aspects of our oral traditions have more or less disappeared except for an insignificant number of words in our vocabulary. For example, *bib* (spider) from the Malagasy language and *maloumbo* (drum rhythm) from Swahili.[173]

Confiant acknowledges the contribution of the white colonists to the rich repertoire of creole proverbs in French-based creoles, particularly, Frenchmen from the North-West region of France, who were for the most part illiterate peasants but who were also vectors of a rich oral culture comprising songs, tales, proverbs, and so on.[174] This, he says, explains the fact that some French proverbs have entered the Creole language with very few changes except orthographical ones. For example, 'Cent ans pour le voleur, un jour pour le maître'. In Martinican Creole, one says, *San tan pou volè, an jou pou met-la* (A hundred days for

---

[171] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.7.
[172] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.7.
[173] Danielle de St. Jorre and Guy Lionnet, *Diksyonner kreol – franse* (Bamberg : Imprimerie Difo-Druck, 1999), p. 40 & p. 197.
[174] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.11.

the thief, one day for the owner).[175] In SC, it is *San-t-an pour le voler, en zour pour le met*.[176] In this case, it has even retained its original syntax. Confiant however emphasizes the role of the servant classes among the African slaves in the development of Creole proverbs, claiming that most of them have transferred directly from an original African language, which in the case of the Caribbean, include West African languages such as Ibo, Ewe or Wolof.[177] In the case of the Indian Ocean, this would include mainly East African languages. This seems to bear out in the Seychellois Creole repertoire. For example, the Swahili proverb, 'A monkey does not notice its haunch' has transferred quite easily into Creole as a criticism of people who notice other people's flaws and not their own.[178] Thus we say, '*Zako i war lake son kanmarad, i pa war sa ki pour li*,' (A monkey sees its neighbour's tail and not its own). This is a common criticism used among peers in the workplace, in the political arena or within the family circle.

Warner-Lewis' argument that West Atlantic proverbs have multiple African sources because of ethnic mingling even before the transatlantic crossing supports Confiant's theory. She offers several examples of parallels between Caribbean and Nigerian proverbs, as in the common tradition in Caribbean and Yoruba culture of advising against the substitution of a serviceable item for one that seems deceptively similar: 'Don't swop black dog for monkey'.[179] Other such proverbs are also identified by their references to animals that do not exist either in the Caribbean or in Europe, for example, the elephant.

---

[175] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.11.
[176] Meriton, p. 5.
[177] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.11.
[178] Prof. M.M. Mulokozi, *Study Report on the Common Oral Traditions of Southern Africa: A Survey of Tanzanian Oral Traditions* (Dar Es Salaam: IKR, University of Dar Es Salaam, 1999), p.8. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139564eo.pdf> [accessed 16 October 2016].
[179] Warner-Lewis, *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Chapter 7, 117-136 (p. 125).

As another point of comparison, in SC there is a common saying that when two elephants are fighting, no one should get in between. Though the origins of such a saying might most logically be attributed to tribes off the East coast of Africa in the case of Indian Ocean Creoles, it is important to note that the nature of slavery meant cross-cultural mixing. One instance of mixing would have occurred from the slaves themselves being moved across different regions by their masters, by being sold or by running away, and the other would have occurred prior to capture through trade and mingling in their native regions.[180]

The cross-pollination applies to English as well as French-based Creoles in both the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, and probably also to Spanish and Portuguese Creoles. In the table below, I have illustrated the similarity between a Nigerian and West Atlantic proverb given by Warner-Lewis, and a Seychellois proverb.

Language	**Proverb**
Ibo (Nigeria) (West Africa)	He who will swallow *udala* seeds must consider the size of his anus.
Jamaican Creole (English Creole, West Atlantic)	Cow must know 'ow 'im bottom stay before 'im swallow *abbe* seed. (*Abbe* seed is Twi for oil palm). The cow must know what his anus is like before he swallows the oil palm seed (my translation).
Seychelles Creole (French Creole, Indian Ocean)	*Ou pa kapab kaka pli gro ki ou trou deryer.* You cannot shit bigger than your arsehole (my translation).

[180] Warner-Lewis, p. 125.

The differences are interesting in that the Jamaican version, which is closer to the content of the original Ibo version, shows an adaptation to a new environment with the human subject replaced by a cow and the *udala* seed replaced by the *abbe* seed. The Seychellois version on the other hand has retained the human subject but does not mention the object that can block the anus, that is, the seed. The result though is the same in all three samples: they all advise against taking on something that is not in your capacity, or in proverbial terms, having eyes that are bigger than your stomach.

Confiant sees the proverb form in the creole world as being divided into two main groupings: those that have been transmitted directly from an African or European language, which can more or less be categorized as universal wisdoms, and those that portray a world characterized by slavery, which he says is the larger corpus.[181] In discussing the Seychellois corpus, I intend to explore both groupings, thus showing proverbs with universal traits, inherited directly from other languages, and proverbs that typically reflect the experience of slavery, which Confiant says express values generally considered as negative, and which reflects the Negro's universe of despair and subalternizm during slavery. I also intend to discuss proverbs that reveal the creolization process in that they are specific to the Seychellois environment and culture.

3.3 Seychellois proverbs with universal traits

Seychellois proverbs with universal traits occur both as direct inheritances from the original languages of the early inhabitants and as local compositions firmly rooted in the

[181] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre*, p.12.

Creole environment and culture. An example in the latter case is *Dibri lanmer pa anpes pti pwason dormi* (The noise of the sea does not stop the fish from sleeping). Confiant interprets this proverb as referring to the ability of living beings to adapt to their natural environment.[182] This is a universalism in that it might apply to any living being or society anywhere in the world. Yet it is so typical of the Seychellois wit and reflects the fact that we are a people surrounded by the sea and are dependent on it for survival. In the case of direct inheritances from original languages, an example from French is, *Lonm propoz, Dye dispoz*, which means that Man may have his intentions but it is God who decides whether these will be realized or not. This is a simple transposition of *'L'homme propose, Dieu dispose'*, which is still in use today in the French language.[183] The original meaning would perhaps refer to man's attempts to master his environment and consequently his fate, especially in those turbulent times of fortune-seeking in far climates in the case of the colonists. It also reflects the Christian influence on the philosophy of Creole culture.

An example of a Creole universalism inherited from English is *Boulwar pa kapab dir marmit i nwanr* (The kettle cannot call the pot black). Evidently, the universal message is that one should not point a finger at others when one has the same flaw. However, in a Creole society where the question of colour is primordial vis-a-vis identity, this has come to be taken almost literally. Calling a person black may be considered an insult as has been discussed in the introduction, and in Seychelles, this would be a typical response from someone who considers that another person of black descent has insulted them. It is important to note though that a local version of the English 'The kettle cannot call the pot

---

[182] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre*, p.18.
[183] Pierre Ripert, *Dictionnaire des maximes, dictons, et proverbes français,* 6ême ed. (France: Maury-Eurolivres, 2000), p.109.

black' with its connotation of finger pointing and its 'you are the same as me' attitude also exists, depicting more local features: *Labou pa kapab riy lanmar*, (Mud cannot laugh at the marsh).

Another type of proverb in this category is that which is universal in its message, but which is specific to the Seychellois Creole culture in its imagery. The distinctive feature of this type of proverb is that it is most likely to have originated locally and uses local imagery within the local context. An example is *Gard lalang pour manz diri* (Keep the tongue to eat rice with). The significance of rice here is that it is the staple food of the Seychellois people, thus symbolic of basic survival. As a universal message, this proverb addresses people who are unable to keep a secret or who tend to spread rumours. Even if one of the tongue's purposes is to enable speech, talking in this context is not considered wise, so it is best to keep silent and use the tongue to assist in the intake of food, which is more basic to the survival of the individual. The slaves, to whom it would have seemed wise to 'bite their tongues' and live to eat another meal possibly coined the proverb. This possibility is supported by the fact that Meriton's list of proverbs, from which this one was taken, offers a variant in which breadfruit replaces rice – breadfruit being a staple of the slaves in colonial times.[184] However, it is important to note that Seychellois proverbs, as in other societies, are very often used in different contexts, and in a modern day situation, this proverb would most likely be used to swear somebody to secrecy or to ask for discretion.

---

[184] Meriton, p.3.

Another example of a universal message expressed in local terms is *Kaka anmontan, kraz andesandan* (Shitting on the way up, stepping in it on the way down).[185] In a universal context, this proverb's intent is to warn against undesirable acts that might be revisited upon you. In a local context however, if taken literally, in the days when small footpaths in the jungle were most people's means of going from one place to another, if you passed stool in the bushes, you were likely to step in it on your way back since you would normally take the same path. Thus, the proverb teaches people to respect common property or facilities but also refers to more abstract situations; for example, people who harm others to get ahead and then have to face these same people when they are in a vulnerable situation. A comparable proverb in this context is *Sa ki ou zet ek lipye, ou anmas ek lalang* (what you discard with your foot, you retrieve with your tongue).[186]

3.4 Proverbs specific to the Seychellois environment

Seychellois proverb types that may be considered as very specific and local include those that reflect the local natural environment. Natural elements in these proverbs include the flora and fauna, the weather, the sea, geological features, and so on. In the following example, a very frequent occurrence involving specific species of the local flora and fauna is used to refer to human behaviour: *Golan pa fer serman pye bodanmyen* (the fairy tern never forsakes the Indian almond tree).[187] The fairy terns abandon the Indian almond tree seasonally when it sheds its leaves. However, as soon as it has sprouted new green leaves,

---

[185] *Proverb ek Zedmo Seselwa,* (Unpublished: Creole Institute, (n.d.)), p. 9.
[186] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 4.
[187] Meriton, p. 3.

they return to their nesting places. This proverb is used as a metaphor for different situations in Seychellois society: an erring husband who always comes back to his wife, friends who cannot forsake each other in spite of difficulties that may arise in their relationship, or members of the same family who return to the family fold in spite of differences. In a more interesting example, this proverb was the chosen slogan of SPPF, the ruling political party in Seychelles, during its 2001 presidential election campaign. This was meant to counter the opposition's suggestion that SPPF was losing its followers to them, and indeed, in spite of the opposition's conviction that they would win the election, SPPF won by 54.2%.[188] This gave SPPF leaders more reason to use the proverb in the post-election rallies. In fact, the party leader, President France Albert René referred to his party as the Indian Almond tree, and to this day, the party's paper, *The People*, sports a gossip corner entitled, *Pye Bodanmyen* (Indian Almond tree). The opposition countered by calling themselves *Karya* (termites), obviously intimating that they were eating away inside the tree and would eventually bring it down.[189]

Another example of proverbs with a very local flavour using metaphors of nature to describe human behaviour or characteristics is *Zwazo menm nik, kakatwa menm bar*, (Birds of the same nest, angelfish of the same reef).[190] Certainly one may consider that the English proverb, 'Birds of a feather flock together' is an equivalent, but in its use of imagery, the Creole version is very typical of the Seychellois rhetoric. Contextually, this proverb may be used to warn against as keeping bad company. Whilst it may be used positively as advice, it may just as likely be used negatively to suggest that someone is just

[188] *Parti Lepep* Documentation Centre, Digital Election Data base (2001).
[189] With progressively closing margins after each election in the support base of the two main parties, this seems to be proving prophetic.
[190] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 3.

as bad as the people with whom he/she keeps company. A less popular variant is *Zwazo menm nik i kouv menm dizef*, (Birds of the same nest lay the same eggs).[191] When compared to the English equivalent, we can clearly see the creolization process at work whereby the local population has developed its local sayings in the context of the local environment. Whereas birds universally have nests, only in the Creole region of the Indian Ocean are angelfish called *kakatwa* (written 'cacatois' in French) and the reef known as *bar*. Its message is very much put to proverbial use by the older generation when talking about the younger generation, which is prone to peer pressure. It has an equivalent in *Si ou frekant lisyen, ou bezwen ganny pis*, (When you keep company with dogs, you can expect to catch fleas) and is reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: 'If you bring ant-infested faggots to your yard, you can expect the visit of lizards' (1958).

All the proverbs discussed in this section so far, whether they are inherited universalisms or locally created wisdoms with universal aspects, may be categorized as truisms that reflect the society they represent. They may also generally be said to express society's censure of behaviour that deviates from what is normally acceptable. In the following section, the focus will move to proverbs that are more specifically related to slavery and race in the context of Seychellois perspectives of their Creole identity.

3.5 Seychellois proverbs and the heritage of misery.

In categorizing the collection of proverbs and idioms from my research, I have found that a significant number seem to focus on the heritage of misery inflicted by slavery. These

[191] Meriton, p. 6.

range from expressions depicting the harsh life of the slaves on the plantations, the poverty of the landless slave descendants and the general sense of helplessness of the slaves and their descendants. These proverbs and idioms are very much specific to Seychellois society, but their depiction of a society evolved from colonialism and slavery is very much characteristic of the Creole world, steeped in the schizophrenia of divided identities and unspeakable poverty. Amelina Mondon relates misery in this context to the lack of basic needs: clothing, housing, and especially food as illustrated in the following testimony in the de Commarmond and Gillieaux document:

> There was nowhere for people to grow food. We had to farm on the land of the whites. As soon as it was ready, you had to share it. You had no share in the whites' land, so where would you raise chickens, since he was already telling you to get out of his house?[192]

One cannot find a better proverb to illustrate this level of misery than *Mizer pa en vis, me i en klou ki'n byen rive* (Poverty is not a vice, but it is a well-driven nail).[193] There is a pun on the word *vis* (vice) but which also means 'screw' in Creole, and the word *klou* (nail), thus creating an imagery of people being in the vice-like grip of poverty even though it is not condemnable to be poor. (It is interesting that in English, 'vice' also has this double connotation). Indeed, the explanation given for this proverb in the Creole Institute document is that you did not ask for your poverty; God created it. This also reflects the slaves' conditioning into believing that poverty was their God-given state of being.

---

[192] De Commarmond & Gillieaux, p.14.

[193] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p.8.

An idiomatic expression that illustrates this vicious circle is *manz mayok/margoz anmer*, in SC literally, 'to eat bitter cassava' or 'bitter melons'.[194] Both the Seychellois and the Mauritians refer to the period of slavery as *tan margoz*.[195] In Seychellois culture however, eating bitter melons has also come to mean being unhappy in your marriage or relationship, inclusive of mental and physical abuse, but the link to poverty leading back to the conditions of slavery is still there. It is the same vicious circle expressed by Amelina Mondon's testimony and corroborated by this proverb: *Pli en lisyen i meg, pli pis i antour li*, (the thinner a dog is, the more it is flea-infested).[196] Your very condition makes you more liable to exploitation. The proverb may also be interpreted as either an expression of bitterness against the origins of poverty or stoic acceptance of this condition. An example of an expression of bitterness against the origins of poverty may be found in such proverbs as *larivyer i sivre kolin*, (the river follows the valley).[197] This proverb comments on the ability of the wealthy to accumulate more wealth because they have the means and the facilities, inclusive of the labour force. The wealthy, in this case, the slave owners and their descendants, seem invincible and the poor remain unable to reach the life-giving river of wealth. The poor can be as bitter as they want because this is the order of things, as expressed in the proverb, *malediksyon bef pa pran lo bouse*, (It is useless for the cow to curse the butcher).[198] Even though the Second Republic's reform programme did aim at levelling the field economically and socially, there is no doubt that old money built upon

[194] Alexis, p.19.
[195] *Parol ek memwar, Récits de vie des Seychelles*, ed. by Annegret Bollée and Marcel Rosalie, 2nd ed. (Bamberg: Kreolische Bibliothek, 2014), p.240.
[196] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 2.
[197] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p.10.
[198] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p.5.

from the slavery period is still significantly influential in movements up the economic and social ladder.[199]

Finally, there emerges some kind of pathos, a self-pity that seems to harbour a wish for a reversal of fortunes, as in, *Lakord ki anmar bef nwanr i anmar bef rouz*, (The rope that ties the black cow also ties the red cow).[200] On the other hand, *Torti i mor pour son lakok,* (The turtle dies because of its shell) suggests a certain acceptance of the fact that living beings can be exploited because of what they are.[201] The shell of the hawksbill turtle was once a very valuable commodity because it was used to make curios for tourists. Even though turtles are now protected by law, the proverb has remained in popular usage and is applied to a variety of contexts, the most obvious being the exploitation of a particular species because of the value it represents, financially or otherwise. This seems to me to apply very well to slavery.

3.6 Proverbs as a social commentary on the slave mentality

Fanon discusses extensively 'the so-called dependency complex of colonized peoples', fabricated by white anthropologists'.[202] Some of the traits described by Fanon are sometimes accepted as part of the slave-mentality in ex-slave societies by slave descendants themselves, and are seen as factors behind either their inability to rule themselves or their pervasive inferiority complex. Confiant identifies specific negative characteristics of this mentality, namely 'egoism, individualism and the mentality of "sauve

[199] Scarr, pp. 202-203.
[200] Meriton, p.3.
[201] Penda Choppy, personal collection of proverbs (n.d).
[202] Fanon, *Black Skin,* pp.61-81.

qui peut", fear of one's neighbour, sexism, treachery,' and so on. He attributes this mentality to the fact that the Negro lived in a world devoid of hope to one day be free, let alone be considered the equal of the white man.[203] One can imagine that such a situation would nurture the tendency to live for the moment and for oneself as Confiant illustrates in the Martinican proverb, *Chak bet-a-fé ka klere pou nanm-yo*, (Each firefly shines for the spirit of the dead it represents).[204] The equivalent in SC is *Bef dan disab, sakenn vey son lizye* (When the cows are in the sand, each should watch out for his own eyes).[205] It is easy for the slave descendant to lumber himself with this negative trait since he has been taught to think of himself negatively, but such a proverb is equally applicable to the capitalist egoism of the landowners' descendants who are now also big business owners, and people from other classes who aspire to be like them. It is significant that the French version of this proverb has remained intact alongside the Creole version: 'Dieu pour tous, chacun pour soi,' which in Ripert is 'Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous'.[206] In such a small population, it is easy for such a mentality to spread. I have known a particular instance in which one sibling used this proverb to another upon the death of their last remaining parent, to indicate a bid for the family home. With the parents no longer there to impose family solidarity, it was each man for himself. Adherence to this type of mentality is certainly not limited to slave descendants, but Confiant is certainly right in ascribing it to the Creole mentality because of the cynicism imposed by slavery.

This egotistical streak seems to be complemented by another negative trait specified by Confiant: fear or mistrust of one's neighbour. When a mother with her own family to

[203] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes*, pp.12-13.
[204] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre,* p.13
[205] Creole Institute Collection, p.1.
[206] Ripert, p. 108.

feed says to the neighbour who comes in the hope of sharing what little fish she has, *Dan en sren ki annan pour sale?* (What is there to salt in a robin?), is she being egotistical or practical?[207] It is important to note also, that the Seychellois are generally known for their generosity and hospitality. Thus, to counter 'What is there to salt in a robin?' there is the idiomatic saying, *Sa ki nou annan nou a manz ansanm*, (What we have, we shall eat together) which is evocative of the Madagascan proverb, 'However little food we have, we'll share it even if it's only one locust'.[208] I would say that there are as many positive traits as negative ones in Seychellois proverbs, inherited from previous cultures, depending on the angle of study. However, in this study, we are focused on the impact of slavery on the Seychellois psyche.

Thus, the poverb, *Kourpa i annan zorey!* (Snails have ears!) applies when one is afraid of the neighbours hearing about good prospects not yet realized.[209] Even the least menacing and slowest looking person may pose a barrier to you if the wrong news gets into their ears. Alongside this is the proverb, *Lizye dimoun pwazon!* (People's eyes are poison!), suggesting a fear of envious eyes.[210] One can easily link these proverbs with the Seychellois tradition of putting a red bracelet on a beautiful baby's wrist so that it will not sicken from people's envious eyes. Finally, one cannot express mistrust more clearly than by saying, *Piti sakenn son manman*, (Each child his mother) meaning that each person has been

[207] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs (n.d).
[208] *Madagascar Sayings, Old Sayings and Proverbial Wisdom* (n.d), <www.historyofpainters.com/Madagascar_proverbs.htm> [accessed 16/10/2016].
[209] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs.
[210] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs.

brought up in a different way, thus the one who doesn't share the same mother or live in the same house is not to be trusted.[211]

There is an underlying mistrust between the sexes in Seychellois society, which as discussed earlier, is often attributed to the long-term effects of the *Code Noir*. When a Seychellois says *Aswar sat i manz son piti*, (in the dark, cats eat their young), there is often a sexual connotation to it.[212] It suggests the perpetration of illicit or secret love affairs. For example, if someone is complimented on the fidelity of his or her partner, he/she may use this proverb jokingly, but the clear message is that what happens in his/her absence cannot be guaranteed. This attitude is probably a long-term effect of the plantation master exercising his 'droit du seigneur' upon the women of the plantation, something which no doubt created a sense of mistrust between couples in both the plantation master's and the workers' ménage. It is a condition of connubial life that has persisted in Seychelles.[213] This will be explored in detail in the chapter about the *moutya*.

This mistrust between the sexes has meant that sexism has become a common trait of Creole society. The following proverb expresses the creole man's scepticism about his paternity: *Dizef kok pa eklo* (The cockerel's egg does not hatch).[214] This suggests that since he does not give birth to the child, he cannot be certain that it is actually his. This type of irony is a common characteristic of what is seen as creole wit and humour, but it is also symbolic of the creole man's casual attitude to paternity, resulting in a string of casual relationships and a brood of children with different women who become single parents.

[211] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs.
[212] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs.
[213] Chang-Him, pp.41-42.
[214] Choppy, personal collection, proverbs.

Christine Borilot's thesis for example, discusses the absence of the male figure in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean Creole family structure, something she attributes to the imposition of the *Code Noir* in the sixteenth century. The literature of the Creole world, Borilot says, is testimony to this fact, quoting another PhD thesis by Stephanie Mulot, which mentions Césaire and Fanon's work among others.[215]

If the Creole male thus expresses his distrust of the family situation by being an absent father, the Creole female seems to celebrate her sexuality through the following proverb: *I annan vye per, napa vye legliz*, (There are old priests, but there are no old churches).[216] In SC, the priest in this proverb is a figurative for the male and the church the female. When people use it, especially women, they mean that men's sexuality can wane with age, but not women's. This emphasis on the Creole woman's sexuality is a result of the slavery mentality because women were judged mainly by their ability to procreate and produce more slaves, but also because their sexuality was an added value to their masters. Consequently, this set the norm for relationships between men and women, as Borilot illustrates from the literature she examines:

> Les rapports sexuels tels qu'ils sont décrits dans les textes relèvent du viol, de la violence sexuelle ou d'une sexualité débridée de compensation.[217]

This violent and decadent sexual past in ex-slave societies has thus had a long-lasting impact, reflected in the sexes' mistrust of each other and the casual dismissal of paternity. This is compounded by the fact that children in Creole families may come out in a variety

---

[215] Vanessa Christine Borilot, 'En mal de mots : représentations de la figure paternelle dans les littératures de la Caraïbe et des Mascareignes (PhD thesis, The University of Iowa, Iowa Research Online, 2014) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139564eo.pdf> [accessed 02 September 2014].

[216] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 4.

[217] Borilot, p.61.

of shades. Thus, light mothers giving birth to dark babies may cause the man's family to say that in the dark, cats swallow their young or that the cockerel's eggs do not hatch.

Thus, sexism, gender dynamics, and consequently, inter-family relationships in the Seychelles creole family may quite easily be examined through proverbs used by different members of the family in relation to specific situations. This applies to other situations that may prompt the use of a different set of proverbs altogether, involving different segments of the community. What they all do is reveal that the Seychellois creole environment has been shaped by its history of slavery, colonialism and amalgamation of cultures, but retains universal traits common to humanity.

3.7 Seychellois riddles in the context of Creole Civilization

In both the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, there are two types of verbal enigmas: the riddle, which is a guessing game; and the conundrum, which is a play of words, often including tongue twisters. Lyndon Harries suggests that defining the riddle can only be a tentative exercise and he quotes Georges and Dundes' definition of 1963: 'a traditional verbal expression which contains one or more elements, a pair of which may be in opposition: the referent of the elements is to be guessed'.[218] In the Caribbean, the riddle is known as the *titim*, (origins unknown according to Confiant) and in the Indian Ocean, the *zedmo* (jeu des mots) or *sirandannes*.[219] It is to be noted however that Confiant identifies the conundrum as the *jedimo* (jeu des mots) in Martinique whereas, in Seychelles, both

[218] Lyndon Harries, 'The Riddle in Africa,' *Journal of American Folklore*, 84 (334), (1971), 377-393 (p.385).
[219] Confiant, *Dictionnaire des Titim,* p.9.

categories are known as *zedmo*, and he in fact admits that sometimes the two are indistinguishable. As for the word *sirandanne*, according to Carpooran, it originates from *cirandani*, meaning wordplay in the language of the Makua tribe in Mozambique. *Sirandanne* is the word used in Mauritius and Rodrigues for riddle. *Cirandani* is always accompanied by the word *sanpek* in these two societies, which also originates from a Makua word, *tcampeteke*, and means an agreement to participate in a riddle session, thus making of *cirandani* also a proposal (Carpooran does point out that Mauritius's earliest collector of folklore, Baissac, proposes Madagascar as the original source of both words).[220] In Seychelles, *cirandani* has become *sirondann*, and *tcampeteke* has become *zanbaget*, and they are used as precursors to telling a story rather than a riddle session.[221]

Like the poverb genre, the similarities shared by riddles in French based Creoles from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean are remarkable. Both Carpooran and Confiant use the sugarcane example to illustrate this. Consider the following table:

Language	**Riddle**	**Answer**
English	Standing water?	Sugarcane
French	L'eau debout?	La cane a sucre
Seychelles Creole	Delo debout?	Kann
Mauritian Creole	Dilo dibout?	Kann
Reunionais Creole	Dolo dobout?	Kann
Martinican Creole	Dlo doubout?	Kann
St. Lucian Creole	Glo doubout?	Kann a sik

[220] Carpooran, pp. 47-48.
[221] Harries confirms the origins of *cirandani* as Makua and it being a precursor to riddling, but says that *tcampeteke* is a Yao word of unknown meaning (p. 382).

This illustrates what Confiant calls the 'Creole civilisation', especially in the case of French Creoles from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean, due to the cross-pollination of languages and cultures during the slave trade era, resulting in cultural similarities among creole societies as discussed in the section on proverbs. The similarities were compounded by the fact that a European language and culture was at the centre of the creolization process. If French acted as a pivot around which the myriads of African cultures revolved and mixed into a creole culture in the French Caribbean, it did the same in the Indian Ocean.

3.8 The Creole environment in riddle structures and types in Seychelles

The riddle in Seychelles is composed of two parts, the question and the answer. Harries calls this the binary construction of the Precedent, that is, the part that comes first, and the Sequent, the part that follows. He adopts this formula from German scholar Robert Petsch and so avoids defining the riddle structure simply as a question and answer formula.[222] The Seychellois repertoire includes a type of riddle which consists of a descriptive element, which occurs as the Precedent as per Harries' characterization. An example is *Tik tik dan kwen?* (Tic tic in the corner?).[223] It is difficult to establish the origins of the word *tik tik* and nothing about its use in this riddle suggests that it has anything to do with the word 'tic' in French or English, or the word *tik tike* in Creole, which means to tickle. In the Seychellois context however, it might suggest something that is small and insignificant when evaluated in the light of its Sequent, which is the broom. The traditional

---

[222] Harries, p. 379.
[223] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p.13.

Seychellois broom, of whichever type, is always kept hidden in a corner. 'Tic tic in the corner' is thus the description of the broom hidden in a corner.

Most riddles make use of metaphors. That is the case in Seychelles as well. For example, 'Tic tic in a corner' is the first in a series of about six riddles which rely on metaphors to do with the human body or other living things and different aspects of daily life in the tropics. Here is an example: *Poul ponn dan pikan?* → *Lalang*. (The chicken lays its eggs in a bed of thorns? → The tongue). The interesting thing about this series is that it precedes a story, as already mentioned, and often comes after the call, *Sirondann!* to which the audience answers *Zanbaget!* The second riddle in the sequence, which is the above one, makes use of a pun on the word *lalang*, which in SC means the tongue and also the verb 'to lie', to forfeit the story. Thus, the riddler tricks the audience into forfeiting the story by obliging them to give the answer to the riddle, upon which he/she will cry out, 'If I'm a liar, then I won't tell you the story!' This is of course based on the creole tradition of storytellers expecting their audience to presume that their stories are based on truth. The next riddle in the sequence is a second metaphor figuring the human body: *Sekoup lo glasi?* → *Tete manmzel*. (Saucers on a boulder? → A young girl's breasts).[224] In order to appreciate the imagery used in this riddle, one must presume that the saucer, representing the young girl's breasts, must have been turned upside-down on a table. It is important to note that *glasi* in SC is a granite boulder with a more or less flat surface. A young girl's breasts would also normally be softly rounded peaks. Here, the creole imagination has

[224] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 13.

combined a man-made element (the saucer) with a natural element (a granite boulder that is a very common feature of the Seychelles landscape) to describe a human feature.

In the following example, a natural element that is also the product of a living being is described in terms of a fabricated product: *Barik diven de kouler? → Dizef* (A barrel with two coloured wines? → An egg). The significant thing about this description is that it makes use of an impossible paradoxical concept, although the answer belies the impossibility. There cannot be two coloured wines in one single barrel, unless it is partitioned from inside, but when it is understood that the reference is to an egg which is in the general shape of a barrel and has a liquid (more or less) of two colours inside, it seems to make sense. This is very typical of the Creole humour in what might be called 'the truth of the moment', for example references to the 'shit bladder' in traditional folktales alongside the urine bladder.[225]

One common aspect of the Creole riddle are metaphors figuring aspects of nature, for example, fruits or vegetables. The sugarcane riddle is part of a series figuring metaphors of water in various forms:

Delo debout? → Kann (Standing water? → The sugarcane)

Delo dormi? → Melon (Sleeping water? → The watermelon)

Delo pandan? → Koko (Hanging water? → The coconut).[226]

Some examples of riddles figuring animals include: *Brans lo delo? → Zourit* (Branches on water? → The octopus); and *Latab lo delo? → Lare* (A table on water? → The manta

---

[225] Choppy & Salomon, pp. 14-15.
[226] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 13.

ray).[227] Both marine animals are described through comparison of their physical characteristics to items not normally found in the marine world, that is, the tree branch or the table. Incidentally, both animals are important ingredients of Seychellois Creole cuisine.

The repertoire of Creole metaphors in the riddle genre would not be complete without its sexual innuendos, as in the following example, *Baton Tonton Zan dan trou Tantin Zann? → Pilon ek mortye* (Uncle John's stick in Aunt Jane's hole? → The pestle and the mortar). The pestle is thus conceived as a phallic symbol and the mortar as the female genitals. Another household item which is figured in terms of the sexual act is *Aswar mon red dan trou, lizour mon mou anpandan? → Krose* (At night I am stiff in the hole, during the day I hang down and I am soft).[228] The answer is the traditional metal crochet with which the wooden doors of traditional Creole houses are fastened. It is stiff at night, because once hooked in its metal ring (the hole) fastened to the doorframe, it cannot budge unless unhooked. During the day it hangs down, and can be swung back and forth, which children often do, thus the reference to softness, though in fact the actual hook itself is made of hard metal. These are just some of the most well-known examples of Seychellois riddles reflecting our creolized environment. Riddles that reflect our past of slavery are also part of this creole heritage.

[227] Diallo & others, *Zedmo Sesel*, p. 31.
[228] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 13.

3.9 Paradoxes of colour, class and race in creole riddles

Riddles focusing on issues of race, class and slavery in the Creole world tend to be formulated as paradoxes. The riddler describes an object or aspect of a living being that has something in common with something else, though these are in fact quite different in terms of their functions or society's perceptions of them. The paradox lies in this difference. Confiant quotes E. K. Maranda in describing this type of riddle as *'l'intersection de deux emsembles*.' For example, *Mon port en kouronn, me mon pa en lerwa ? → Zannannan* (I wear a crown, but I am not a king? → The pineapple).[229] The pineapple is a very traditional aspect of Seychellois social gatherings. It is used to brew homemade alcohol and features as a snack in cocktails. In this riddle, it is referred to in a feudal and quite exotic concept, that is, a royal personage who wears a crown. Here, some of the paradox has to do with the fact that this ordinary fruit that anybody can have in their backyard has something in common with the exalted position of a royal. Thus, the riddle points to the tension between the slave descendant's world, represented by the ordinary pineapple, and the world of the nobility, which in Seychelles was represented by the white upper classes, and which in this riddle is represented by the crown. If anything, the riddle emphasises the distance between these two worlds.

Colour prejudice also comes out as a paradox in creole riddles. A look at some of the most well-known riddles also reveals how colour prejudices can be perpetuated by slipping imperceptibly into everyday use. Here is an example: *Mon pti, mon nwanr, me mon touzour dan gran konpani? → Mous*.[230] (I am small, I am black, but I am always in

---

[229] Confiant, *Dictionnaire des Titim,* p. 33.
[230] Diallo & others, *Zedmo Sesel*, p. 46.

high society? → The fly.) On the surface, this is a rather humorous riddle referring to the annoying habit flies have of being where they are least wanted, that is, among your distinguished guests trying to get at your impressive display of food. However, when one considers the fact that this riddle is of the paradoxical type, it is clear that what is small and black should not be seen in high society. It is equally clear this fact was an accepted norm by its users. The smallness and blackness of the fly is in contradiction to the company it is in and this is highlighted by the use of the conjunction, 'but' (in SC, *me*). If we go by Lakoff and Johnsen's theory of the metaphor, this riddle might be taken as a reflection of its society's value system: 'metaphors and metonymies are not random but instead form coherent systems in terms of which we conceptualize our experience'.[231] Smallness is associated with insignificance and alongside it, blackness and undesirability. For example, though mixed unions have never been alien to Seychellois society, somebody somewhere would still use the expression, *mous dan dile* (a fly in the milk) to describe it. Again, the metaphor of the fly, which might be associated with insignificance, blackness and impurity, is used for the black individual. The irony is that even the descendants of the slaves themselves use this expression against their own kind simply because a part of their psyche is conscious that this mix has not been socially acceptable for a long time. 'A fly in the milk' to me echoes Iago's horror-stricken diatribe to Desdemona's father in Shakespeare's *Othello*:

> Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
> Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!
> Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,

[231] George Lakoff and Mark Johnsen, *Metaphors we live by* (London: The university of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 42.

> Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
> Arise, I say![232]
>
> (*Othello*, 1.1.88-91)

With all its connotations of dirt and contrast, the fly is portrayed as having contaminated the purity and goodness of the milk. Yet this expression is used casually and humorously.

The degradation and negativity associated with black is repeated in the riddle, *Blan ki mon blan, ler mon mor mon nwanr? → Golan* (As white as I am, when I die I turn black? → The Fairy Tern).[233] Ostensibly, this is a descriptive riddle about the characteristics of a bird whose skin turns dark at death. One could also read it as a cryptic message from the slave to the master; you might be white but essentially you are the same as me and you will die just like me. This, ironically, would have been reinforced by the Christian religion imposed on the slaves by the white colonizers. However, there remains in the content of the riddle, the assumption that in turning black, something unexpected and unwanted has happened, and some kind of degradation has occurred. In short, we find here also an aspect of the Seychellois' use of language that reveals the haunting of past humiliations.

Apart from the association of blackness with impurity and undesirability, colour segregation appears in Seychellois riddles as a matter of fact. For example: *I have my house. When I paint it green, only white people live in it. When I paint it yellow, only black people live in it? → The papaya*'.[234] This is a descriptive riddle; as such, the information seems matter of fact, and there is nothing paradoxical about it. Had there been both black

[232] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. M.R. Ridley, (London: The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1958).
[233] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 13.
[234] Diallo & others, *Zedmo Sesel,* p. 52.

and white seeds in the papaya, however, it would no doubt have been presented as a paradox. The relationship between social status and colour is also apparent in the next example: ‘Grandmother gives a ball, the white people dance, the black people watch? → Rice boiling in a cauldron.’[235] Early users of this riddle would have coined this metaphor as a reflection of the norm in real life where white people were supposed to enjoy or live life whilst black people were supposed to watch or endure. In the next example, the black man comes out as the beast of burden: ‘Three old black men are carrying a tall Indian man? → The cauldron sitting on the fire-pit.’[236] In Seychelles, the traditional fire-pit consists of three rocks positioned so that the pot or cauldron can sit on it. The three old black men (the term ‘mazanbik’ is used in the original Creole version) represent the three rocks, which have obviously become black through contact with the fire. Interestingly, the cauldron, which is also black, is not referred to as another *mazanbik* but rather a *malbar*, that is, an Indian man. The connotation is that even if the malbar is black, he is still socially higher than the mazanbik, which explains the relegation of the latter to beasts of burden.

3.10 Crystalizing prejudice into acceptability: The use of *maron* and *grannwanr* in Seychellois creole riddles.

Some concepts of slavery and degradation are present in the vocabulary of riddles in an imperceptible way because people nowadays do not read the same significance in them as they would have a century ago. This is also possible because some of the terminology associated with slavery or the prejudice of colonial times have hybridized into local

[235] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 13.
[236] *Proverb ek Zedmo* (Creole Institute), p. 15.

concepts that have lost their original connotations. The creolization process has thus crystalized the use of such terms into the fabric of the everyday local language and concepts. The terms *maron* and *grannwanr* are two such examples, and their use in the local riddles reveal this metamorphosis of meaning.

The word *maron* (maroon) has two connotations: one that is somewhat still associated with its original concept of the escaped slave, and one that has become an accepted part of our creolized society. I shall use two riddles to illustrate this. In the first example, we have the following riddle, which is also considered a joke:

> A captain orders his crew to get rid of the two *maron* who are stowaways on his ship. The crew set about looking everywhere without seeing anything. Who are the two *maron*? **Answer:** the two round masts on the ship.[237]

In SC, mast is *ma* and round is *ron*, thus there is a pun on the two words that have been merged, [*ma*] [*ron*]. The important thing to note however is that the two maroons are obviously illegal and thus not acceptable in society, symbolized by the captain's order to have them removed in accordance with both social and legal expectations. The use of this notion in an aspect of folklore makes it an object of laughter and ridicule because of the very fact of its unacceptability. The unacceptability of this concept of *maron* in normal society lies in the definitions attached to it, which help our understanding of its use in the riddle. The d'Offay/Lionnet dictionary categorizes this word as both a noun and an adjective. Interestingly, it is defined as (i) savage (ii) illegal. In both contexts, it is closely related to the word *marronage*, as in escaped slaves (maroons) and wildness or living in

---

[237] Diallo & others, *Zedmo Sesel*, p. 89.

the wild, (this is where the connotation of the illegal comes in) and 'marauder'.[238] Thus, anything that grows or survives in the wild is named *maron*, for example, *sat maron* (wildcat), *poul maron* (wild chicken), brenzel maron (wild eggplant). In colloquial language in SC, running away is still termed, *sov maron* (escape to the wilds) or *i'n maron* (He/she has gone to the wilds or he/she has run away or disappeared). Nothing about the escaped slaves could be considered good or civilized since they had rebelled against everything the so-called civilized society stood for and had instead opted for their original way of life, which necessarily had to be considered savage. The fact that the use of the term *maron* in the above-mentioned riddle can cause so much hilarity because of its association with a black or wild person who is not wanted or undesirable to polite society is another aspect of slavery that has lingered on in present Seychellois society.

In the second example, however, the concept of *maron* as being associated with the wild is extended to simply being the opposite of the domesticated, as illustrated by the following enigma:

Mon premye i sant kat-r-er bomaten (kok)
Mon dezyenm i esansyel pour en vwalye (ma)
Mon trwazyenm i fer letour parey lalyans (ron)
*Mon tou i pa en poulayer. Lekel mwan? (**Kokmaron**)*[239]

My first sings at four o'clock in the morning (The cockerel)
My second is essential for the sailing ship (The mast)
My third goes round like the wedding ring (A round shape)

---

[238] Danielle d'Offay and Guy Lionnet, *Diksyonner kreol-franse*, (Bamberg: Kreolisch Bibliotek, 1982), p. 259.
[239] Creole Quiz Repertoire, Language Unit, (Creole Institute) (n.d).

My all is not a family man. Who am I? (A bachelor/playboy [in SC, wild cockerel])

In English, of course this riddle does not make much sense, because it relies on a phonetic and semantic play on words in the Creole language. The answer to the first part of the enigma is the cockerel (*kok*), with the question establishing a well-known phenomenon of the creole world, that is the cockerel that sings at four o'clock in the morning, waking up fishermen and labourers who need an early start on the day. The second part is the mast (*ma*), without which a sailboat cannot move. The third part is the shape of the wedding ring, which is round (*ron*). Ironically, this part of the question also alludes to the final answer because *fer letour* also connotes infidelity or going around (contrary to the symbolism of fidelity in the closed ring), the opposite of what should happen when one is wearing a wedding ring. The answer to the enigma is in the amalgamation of all three syllables in the order in which they have been given, and a final clue is offered by giving the opposite concept of the answer, which in this case is *poulayer* (the domesticated cockerel or family man). The answer thus is the bachelor or playboy, which in traditional creole terms is the wild cockerel (*kok maron*). In SC, a *poulayer* is a cockerel that stays in the *poulaye* (chicken coop) and does not go wandering around like the wild cockerel. Everything about this enigma reveals the creolization process during the plantation or homestead era when concepts about everyday life were being established. Thus, there were the domesticated aspects of the homestead, as in the animals and plants, and their opposites in the wild. Creole wit being what it is, these local concepts were soon borrowed to refer to human beings and their behaviour. The most common use of *poulayer* and *kokmaron* was on the outer islands in the pre-independence era when the men who had wives were

known as *poulayer* and those who didn't and thus sought sexual release from house to house, were coined, *kokmaron*. Thus, the existence of the *kokmaron* has become an accepted part of everyday life in our creole society, without retaining the original connotation of maroons in a slave society, in the root word, *maron*.[240]

The use of the term *grannwanr* in riddles is an even better illustration of how racialized terms have been appropriated in normal day-to-day language in SC. The racist connotations attached to its root word, *nwanr* (black), has already been discussed earlier in this section. *Grannwanr*, however, has no racist connotations whatsoever, and literally means the big/tall/great black. Both editions of the Lionnet/de St. Jorre dictionary (1982, 1999) have only one definition for *grannwar*: male adult. The following riddle illustrates this context: *Pti ki mon pti, mon fer taye grannwanr? → Mous zonn*.[241] (As small as I am, I can scatter big men? → The hornet). The contextual meaning is clear: the little hornet can scare grown men. The paradox of size emphasizes the fact that the subject being acted upon, that is, the *grannwanr,* is an able-bodied man, or an adult who should normally be capable of coping with fear or pain. This meaning applies to every male adult, irrelevant of colour, class or race and it is the first important difference in the scope of meaning between *gran nwar* and *gran blan*. *Gran blan* is limited to the white propertied upper class, preferably with direct unsullied links to France (de Commarmond and Gillieaux, 2004: 10).[242] However, *gran nwar* is hardly used in its literal context, and it has eventually come to mean all male adults.

---

[240] The agglutinated word in the Creole Institute dictionary is defined as the bachelor or playboy, whilst the compound noun written in two words is defined as the wild cockerel.
[241] Diallo & others, *Zedmo Sesel*, p.16.
[242] De Commarmond & Gillieaux, p. 10.

Grannwanr has also come to connote an old sage or a man of wisdom. This is in fact the first listed meaning in the Creole Institute monolingual dictionary: ***grannwanr*** 1 *n* (*i*) a man of wisdom and knowledge.[243] For example, well-known herbalist, Mr. Charles Zialor, is known as a *grannwanr* even today, decades after his decease because of his knowledge of herbal medicine.[244] As the first definition of the monolingual SC dictionary, this represents the link to the idea of greatness or influence as found in *gran blan*. It connotes a sense of respect for an individual. It probably emerged as a term of respect for older black males who showed a certain amount of wisdom, but has gradually come to apply to all men of wisdom, irrespective of race. It is probably the consciousness of this meaning of *grannwanr* that influenced the Creole Institute's coining of the following riddle for its annual Creole quiz repertoire:

Mon premye i azout ek sif pour dir ler (er)
Mon dezyenm pa o (ba)
Mon trwazyenm i en fler (lis)
Mon tou i en grannwanr ki sonny dimoun
*Lekel mwan? (**erbalis**).*[245]

My first is added to a number to tell the time (hour)
My second is not high (low)
My third is a flower (lily)
My all is an old sage who heals people. What am I? (Herbalist).

243 Creole Monolingual Dictionary Database (unpublished, Creole Institute).
244 Wilks, Ivor, 'An Asante Pharmacopeia,' *Ghana Studies Council, Newsletter,* No. 11, (1998) <http://www.ghanastudies.com/gsa/gsc98wilks.html> [accessed 14 August 2017].

245 Creole Quiz Repertoire (Creole Institute) (n.d).

Thus the answer to the first part of the riddle is *er* (hour), or more specifically, it is the equivalent of o'clock when telling the time, for example, *enn er, senk er* (one o'clock, five o'clock). The second part represents the opposite of high, which in SC is *ba* (low). The third part refers to the most well-known flower of the French empire, the lily (in SC, *lis*). The three together form the syllables of the herbalist in SC, *erbalis*. However, in this study, the most significant aspect of this riddle is its description of the herbalist as a *grannwanr* (old sage) *ki sonny dimoun* (who heals people). The use of the term *grannwanr* defines the riddle and grounds it firmly in the Seychellois cultural context, further compounded by the context of its use, that is, in a riddle that enhances the Seychellois traditional folklore.

A man who is considered powerful or invincible is also called a *grannwanr*. A successful politician for example, qualifies as a *grannwanr*, and again, irrespective of race and colour. France Albert René, who led the 1977 coup d'état and consequently led the country until 2004 is considered a *grannwanr* in this context. This was actually articulated during the 2001 presidential election campaign when his supporters challenged their opponents with the following riddle: *Kaka grannwar mous pa apoze lo la? → dife*. (The fly does not land on the '*Grannwanr*'s shit? → Fire). Below is a picture showing this proverb inscribed on a placard. The placard is in the right hand corner showing a supporter at a rally, which was held on 5th June 2001 at Freedom Square, Victoria. Although the picture is not very clear, it is possible to make out: *'UO, KAKA GRANNWANR MOUS PA ANPOZ LO LA'*. Note that the verb 'to land,' in Creole, *apoze*, has been written in the short form (most SC verbs have a short form and a long form) and the nasalization phenomenon has been marked (*anpoz* instead of *apoz*). The message is clearly addressed to the United Opposition (UO), who were being warned that they had picked the wrong fight.

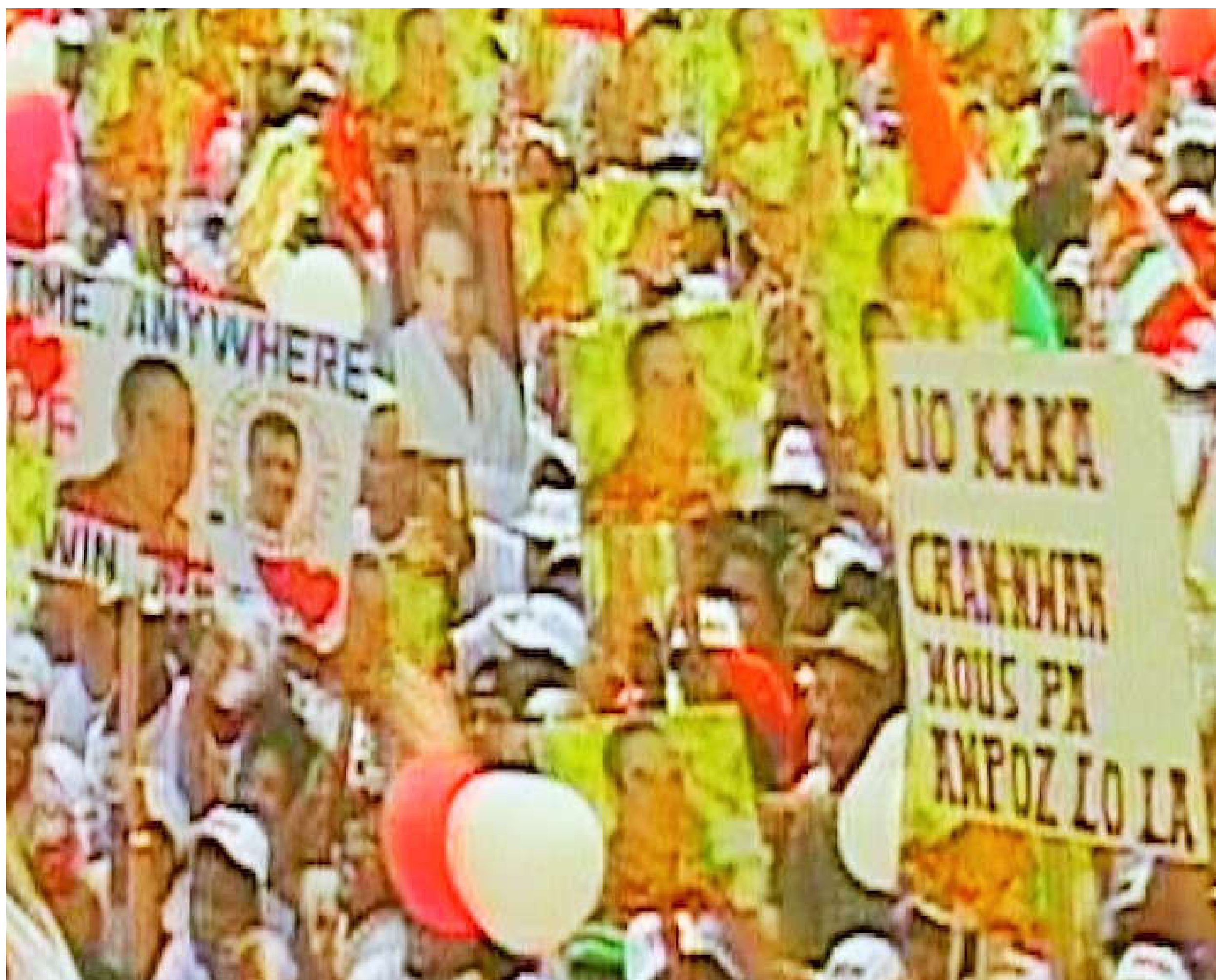

Fig.1. SPPF supporters at a rally during the 2001 presidential election campaign.
Courtesy of Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation, (SBC).

The riddle genre, thus, like the proverb, is representative of Seychellois value systems and its linguistic evolution is based on that value system, as for example, in the transformation of meaning in the concept of the *grannwanr* in the above riddle. It shows both its origins in slavery in the appellation of people by their colour, and its creolization in the paradox of its application to a white man in the twenty-first century. Thus, France Albert René,

though not a *gran blan*, but of white origins, and Charles Zialor, of black origins, are both considered *grannwanr* in the Seychellois socio-cultural context.

The use of the above-mentioned riddles and proverbs reveal both genre's application in the social and political lives of Seychellois society. However, the younger generation is having less and less contact with this folkloric use of language. Riddling is no longer a common practice. The contexts in which they were used are no longer relevant to Seychellois modern life. There are no traditional wakes where people tell each other stories and riddles to pass the time. Children are too busy playing on their iPod and iPad to consider it a pastime, and favourite television programs have replaced story telling before bedtime. However, proverbs are still holding on through their unconscious use by the general population in everyday language; I say holding on because the Creole Institute's annual quiz program with secondary school students reveals a decreasing knowledge and understanding of this genre every year.

CHAPTER 4: **Findings - The Seychelles *Moutya***

4.1 The moutya and its common origins in the Indian Ocean

The moutya is the most popular form of Seychellois song and dance originating from Africa, a legacy of the slaves who were brought to work on the plantations during the early settlement and colonization of the island.[246] Bollée's etymological dictionary of Indian Ocean creoles categorizes the word *mutya* as of Bantu origins, and relates it specifically to a dance of the Makua ethnic group.[247] In fact, the moutya is a genre of music and dance that the Creole population of Seychelles shares with neighbouring islands, though it is called the *sega* in Mauritius and the *maloya* in La Réunion (in the latter two countries, its origins are also attributed to Madagascar). Historian Sudel Fuma, though asserting that plantation slaves created the maloya dance in Reunion, acknowledges that the term itself originally came from Madagascar, where it meant the expression of melancholy and sadness.[248] As for the Mauritian *sega*, though Boswell regards its origins as being hazy, she does refer to a research by Arago (1822: Vol. I, 223-24 in Alpers and Teelock) that describes similar dances in Mozambique and Brazil, and the work of Gäetan Benoit who suggests that the *sega* was brought to Mauritius by the Malagasy (Benoit, 1985). The fact that all three Indian Ocean Creole societies have had more or less the same population mix and origins supports the idea that the *sega*, *moutya* and *maloya* are varieties of the same

---

[246] D'Offay and Lionnet, p. 273.

[247] Annegret Bollée, *Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles français de l'Océan Indien* (Bamberg : Buske Verlag, 1993), p. 333.

[248] 'Naissance du Maloya,' *Album de La Réunion* (2012), <https://lemaloyapacetelecomparistech.wordpress.com/definition-et-naissance-du-maloya/naissance-du-maloya > [accessed 16 October 2014].

dance that evolved separately within the same kind of socio-historical environment, something that is corroborated by Boswell.[249]

In this chapter, the different aspects of the moutya genre will be explored, beginning with its description in terms of history, composition, form, themes and performance. This description also gives a general idea of the creolization process of Seychellois culture through the analysis of the *moutya* form and lyrics. The second part of the chapter explores the expression of trauma and lingering prejudices and mentalities, left over from the slavery period.

4.2 Dating the *moutya*.

Estrale proposes that the Seychelles *moutya* dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century when the colonies heard about Mauritian Governor Farquhar's publication of the Abolition Act, which, was passed in the British Parliament in 1813. This, she suggests, would have encouraged slaves to complain about their miseries when previously the strict conditions would have prevented this. News of the Haitian revolution in 1791 would have also contributed to slaves' aspirations in the Indian Ocean, to have their own freedom.[250] However, the fact that the *moutya* has survived so long can only mean that it was secretly practiced, whether before or after abolition. The slaves would have had to pass down at least some of the lyrics, the rhythm certainly, and the skill of composition. Estrale's theory that the practice of the *moutya* would not have been possible during the actual slavery period rests on the edicts of the *Code Noir*, which would have made it difficult for them to

[249] Boswell, pp. 61-62.
[250] Estrale, pp. 2-3.

dance it openly. Article 12 of the Code decreed that slaves were not allowed to gather in groups. The punishment for this included the whip, branding with the *fleur de lys* and even death. Estrale does acknowledge the possibility that the genre developed earlier in the slavery period but maintains that the period after slavery was the time when the *moutya* was most likely to have become more popular among the ex-slaves.[251] This makes sense, although it remained an underground activity throughout colonialism and was only recognized as a cultural heritage after the establishment of the Second Republic in 1977. The *moutya* endured because it became one of the modes of expression of the working class.

4.3 Similarities between the *moutya* and the calypso.

The *moutya* has not reached the heights of the Caribbean Calypso in terms of international impact and diversity of cultural mixture, but there are some similarities, in terms of the role that both forms have played in the historical evolution of their respective societies. In his description of the Calypso, Gordon Rohler calls it 'a living example of Afro-Caribbean oral tradition adapting itself to a process of continuous change'.[252] Though Rohler's comment is about the multi-ethnic nature of the Calypso in its evolution, I maintain that the Seychelles *moutya* has adapted to change in a similar way, though no studies have been conducted to establish its evolutionary processes. This is for several reasons. First, *moutya* lyrics indicate a diversity of functions, ranging from its earliest

[251] Estrale, p. 3

[252] Gordon Rohler, 'Calypso Reinvents Itself,' *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures*, ed. R. Cohen & P. Toninato, Chapter 12, 170-184 (p.170), (London: Routledge, 2010).

purpose as a form of slave lamentations, to its use as a vehicle for the exuberant expression of freedom that came with Abolition and the decolonization period. Second, the songs describe hardships faced by the labourers in both the pre- and post-slavery periods, but they also reveal: the social intrigues of the labouring class; dynamics of male/female relationships; politics in the plantations; historical occurrences from the slavery period to the post-independence era, and so on. All these were relayed in the *moutya* performance in a very rhythmic role-play that could either be serious or bantering in nature, adapting and responding to situations as per the needs of the people, in much the same way as with the Calypso, which Rohler calls 'the emblem of Anansi, trickster, shape-shifter, and survivor'.[253]

4.4 A History of oppression

The *moutya* also has a shared history of oppression with the Calypso because of its African and slave origins. In fact, both Diallo (1981) and Estrale (2007) describe it as a prohibited and oppressed form of culture. Rohler refers to the defiance of Calypso performers despite the prohibitive measures of the slavery and post-slavery periods in weekend 'dance assemblies' of what he calls, the African 'nations,' that is regional groupings of African slaves who had recreated their own sense of nationhood.[254] Similarly, when the enforcement of the *Code Noir* was no longer practicable, with the slaves' descendants becoming increasingly detached from the moral codes of their forebears, it would have become necessary to enforce some sort of law against the practice of such a

[253] Rohler, p. 173.
[254] Rohler, p. 170.

defiant form of cultural expression as the *moutya*, which was also considered morally degenerate.[255] It was formally banned in Seychelles around town areas and other government or public facilities such as churches and police stations in 1935 (with a further amendment in 1937, which increased the number of prohibited areas) under the authority of Section 2 of the Seychelles Penal Code.[256] However, the ordinary masses continued to perform it in prearranged weekend meetings after dark as a form of release from the drudgery and oppression of their everyday lives.[257]

4.5 The *moutya* as political tool.

By its nature as a defiant form of cultural expression, the *moutya* naturally developed into a political tool, especially during the decolonization period of the freedom movements of the 1960s. Again, the Calypso and the medium through which it is expressed, the carnival, share this characteristic. In fact, Abner Cohen in his discussion on carnival and politics sees this manifestation as 'such a powerful experience and passion for people that it is always and everywhere seized upon and manipulated by political interests.' With particular reference to the Notting Hill Carnival, he points out that it has become 'an all-West Indian corporate politico-cultural mobilisation' that has come to symbolise, enhance and demonstrate the West Indian corporateness and cohesion, but also encompass West Indian identity and their issues with the British government.[258] Diallo similarly remarks on the popularity of the *moutya* in large public manifestations such as festivals

---

[255] Estrale, pp. 7-8.
[256] Regulation No. 115 of 1935 and No. 40 of 1937, Section 2, Seychelles Penal Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 1933 (No. 10 of 1933).
[257] Estrale, p. 4.
[258] Abner Cohen, 'Masquerade Politics,' *The Creolization Reader,* Chapter 17, 235-242 (p.237).

after the establishment of the Second Republic.[259] The SPUP used the *moutya* as a forum for gathering the masses against the colonial government and even went as far as to declare the *moutya* singer 'the new politician of the day' in one of their early publications.[260] The *moutya* was ideal for gathering the masses not only because it represented a suppressed genre that belonged to the oppressed masses, but also because from its earliest known use, it expressed resistance to slavery. The *moutya* then was at the forefront of the Seychellois cultural and political revolution promoted by the government of the Second Republic, together with the language of its expression, Kreol.

Fig. 2. Picture showing a *moutya* dance during an SPUP political manifestation in [1978?].

Courtesy of the *Parti Lepep* Documentation Centre.

[259] Diallo & others, *Sanson Moutya*, Introduction.
[260] *Portrait of a Struggle* (Seychelles), p.23.

4.6 The *moutya* as theatrical performance

The Seychelles *moutya* is also essentially a theatrical performance. In her study of women and the development of theatre in the Seychelles, Marie-Therese Choppy classifies the Moutya as the Seychellois proto-theatre.[261] Choppy sees in the genre, the beginnings of re-enactment of everyday occurrences, since as she points out, every moutya song tells a story. However, Tejumola Olaniyan criticizes the prefix 'proto' in reference to African drama, seeing it as another Eurocentric approach that suggests Africa had no dramatic traditions of their own and that the forms that existed were only 'proto-dramatic' or 'quasi-dramatic'. Olaniyan refers to the influential work of Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), which tends to assess the African situation through European concepts, and thus misses the point altogether since indigenous African concepts of drama can be quite different from European concepts. Older African traditions, Olaniyan points out, are 'mostly nonscripted, improvisatory, and performed in indigenous African languages,' and their concept of theatre space is 'fluid' with flexible relationships between the audience and performers.[262] This description is comparable to Ngugi's concept of drama as being inseparable from rituals and ceremonies of everyday indigenous traditional life in Africa in the community's negotiations with their gods and Providence, and in the enactment of life itself.[263] It also recalls Rohler's description of the Calypso and the Trinidadian Carnival as 'both theatres in and metaphors through which the drama of Trinidad's social history is encoded and enacted.' The theatre of the calypso is played out in the 'call and response

---

[261] Marie-Thérèse Choppy, 'Women in theatre in Seychelles', *Southern African Theatre Initiative (S.A.T.I) workshop* (Addis Ababa, 2004).
[262] Tejumola Olaniyan, 'Festivals, ritual, and drama in Africa,' *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature, vol 1*, Chapter 3, 35-48 (pp.35-37).
[263] Ngugi, p. 36.

structure' of the lyrics.[264] To me, Olaniyan's, Ngugi's and Rohler's descriptions all conform to my own concept of the *moutya* as a performance in its own right, with all the attributes of theatre in the indigenous African sense of drama, but also in the European sense of theatre. Its call and response structure and its re-enactments of everyday life turns it into a play. The players include the male chorus, the female chorus, the drummer, the male and female dancers and the spectators without whom the *moutya* would have no excitement.[265]

It is in the performance of the *moutya* that its theatrical aspects are most clearly revealed. The performance starts with the drummers warming their drums near a campfire. There are normally three drums made out of scraped and dried goatskins, stretched over a hollow wooden hoop. The Mauritians and Reunionese call this a *ravane*.[266] The three drummers each play a different beat but they synchronize perfectly. The central role of the drummers is revealed by the discourse of the two choruses.

Deboury debourye tanbourye (3 x)	Come on, drummer
Tap ou lanmen lo la pa large.	Put your hands on it and do not let go.

The drummers must excite the singers to the point of composing. If the composers feel that the drummers are not performing well, they will sing their dissatisfaction.

Tanbourye, ki kote ou ete? (3 x)	Where are you, drummer?
Tanbourye ou a tap sa tanbour. [267]	Beat this drum, drummer

[264] Rohler, p. 170.
[265] Penda Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya as a theatre prototype and historical record* (Unpublished: Creole Institute, 2006).
[266] Boswell, p. 63.
[267] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, pp. 2-3.

Fig. 3. ‘Young Pioneers’ of the Second Republic being taught to play the *moutya* drums [1985?].
Courtesy of the *Parti Lepep* Documentation Centre.

This dissatisfaction can also be expressed by telling the drummers not to beat the drum as if it was their mothers’ skin on it. The choruses and dancers are also similarly encouraged or told off, depending on their performance and the general mood, as in the example below:

Reponn mon lavwa bann madanm	Answer my voice, you ladies
Reponn mon lavwa si ou a oule (x 2)	Answer my voice if you will

Mon a degout moutya mon ava ale [268]	Or I'll get fed up of this *moutya* and leave

It was not only poor performance that could cause people to leave a *moutya* session but also an insufficient supply of the local brew, *baka*, especially in the case of the singers who needed the intoxication to keep composing and to slake their thirst:

Pa bezwen tarde pour aroz mwan	Don't take too long to water me
Sansan mon laraz vera i a monte! [269]	Else my bovine rage will rise.

Of course, this kind of repartee excites a lot of laughter and ribaldry and adds to the excitement. The preliminaries over, the men call out their songs and are answered by the women until a ululation of *olae olae* indicates that the song is over and someone will start another. If the drums remain hot, the choruses can go into a long medley. At the peak of the *moutya*, the women may raise their skirts as high as their heads, and the most daring of the men will attempt to dance beneath their underskirts.[270] This and the often-lascivious content of the songs was the reason why the *moutya* was strictly restricted to adults in the past. Given all the different stages of its performance and the diversity of topics it covers, the *moutya* is indeed an enactment of the life and history of the labouring class.

---

[268] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 3.
[269] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 4.
[270] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 3.

4.7 The structure of the *moutya* lyric.

In terms of structure, a *moutya* lyric usually comprises of four to six stanzas of four lines. In each stanza, the first line is repeated three times and the last line acts as a kind of punch line, which then serves as the first line of the following stanza. The following extract is an example:

Pa ase kanze mon palto (3 x)		My jacket is not starched enough
Pour al get sega dan Manae	2	To go watch the sega in Manae
Pour al get sega dan Manae (x 3)		To go watch the sega in Manae
Zenn fiy Manae in ansor mwan[271]	4	The girls of Manae bewitched me

This particular lyric has about three more stanzas and they all follow this pattern. However, though this is the standard form, there are some deviations. For example, there are also narrative quatrains:

Dan mon dou-z-an katorz an		When I was twelve, fourteen years'
Piti mon manman dan lakour	2	Still my mother's child at home
Mon al plis koko lil Alfons		I dehusked coconuts on Alphonse
Mon al tir gwano Lasonmsyon[272]	4	I extracted guano on Assumption

or the repetitive couplet:

Madanm Zan anmas Lorennza	}	Mrs. Jean, put a stop to Lorennza
Lorennza pe fer nou onte.	} x2	Lorennza is shaming us

[271] Estrale, p. 23.
[272] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 5.

Simityer ti fer pour lemor *Pa ti fer lakaz Lorennza.*[273]	} x2	The cemetery is meant for the dead And not Lorennza's house

In this format, the male chorus sings out the couplet, which is repeated by the female chorus. This is also the case in the standard form where the first line is sung twice by the male chorus and repeated once by the female chorus, followed by the punch line. The number of rhythmic patterns in the *moutya* song is limited. Thus even in new compositions, the patterns tend to follow already well-known patterns. In this, the *moutya* is more restrictive than the Seychelles *sega*, since the latter genre allows a wider variety of rhythms.

4.8 Themes: evidence of creolization.

In terms of themes covered by the *moutya* genre, Diallo describes them as being mainly sentimental, concerning joy, sadness and the folly of love, betrayal or separation.[274] Many *moutya* lyrics suggest that plantation workers on the outer islands composed them during the pre-independence years, since they are largely about their homesickness and longing for their families back on Mahé, and the licentiousness that developed due to the shortage of women on the islands. The following are some samples of the different themes. The first example is about the challenges of modern transportation.

Anmontan Bel Air (3 x)		Up the Bel Air Hill
Kanmiyon fin dereye lao laba	2	The truck is stuck

[273] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p.7.
[274] Diallo & others, *Sanson Moutya,* Introduction.

Mon oule sey monte, mon pa kapab		I want to go up but cannot
Mon oule sey desann mon pa kapab [275]	4	I want to go down but cannot

In the early days of land transport, the narrow hilly roads must have been quite challenging to vehicles that had been made for straight, flat roads.

Intrigues of social life are also very common topics of the moutya. Personal disputes were often aired during a performance:

Ou dir mwan ou mari zouvriye	(3 x)	You say your husband is a craftsman
Zouvriye dan koko Délorié! [276]	2	Craftsman in Délorié's coconut!

The composer here pours sarcasm on a woman's claim that her husband is a skilled artisan by pointing out that he actually picks coconuts. This is a reflection on the higher status ascribed to skilled artisans as opposed to plain labourers during the plantation era. Equally sarcastic is this song about a woman who is so busy cheating on her deceased husband's memory that she does not hear when the monthly boat sails into port:

La Waneta i mouye	(x 3)	The 'Waneta' has berthed
Madanm marye dan lakaz pa tande	2	The married woman at home can't hear
Madanm marye i ape tronp lalyans	(x 3)	The married woman is cheating on her ring
Pour li met dey lanmor son mari	4	To wear mourning for her dead husband
Son mari fek mor yer menm	(x 3)	Her husband died only yesterday

[275] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 6.
[276] Choppy, *The Seychelles Moutya*, p. 10.

Son galan lanmenm dan kwen laport.[277] 6 Her lover was right there behind the door

The lyrics suggest that this incident took place on one of the outer islands where a boat from the mainland would call on a monthly basis. The song expresses the community's disapproval of the subject's behaviour. Society would often condemn immoral acts through the *moutya*. It could become an open court where people were judged, very often for misdeeds that they thought nobody knew about.

The next song, *Ma Sizani Malpesya,* which seems to explore the theme of rumour mongering, is an illustration of the *moutya* genre as a palimpsest of the creolization process in Seychelles.

Ma Sizani Malpesya leo, Ma Sizani Malpesya
Zenn zan leo roul mon parol dekote
Roul mon parol dekote mon ser
Roul mon parol danzar kandyelo i move.[278]

Ma Sizani Malpesya of the highlands
The young men of the highlands roll my words aside
Roll my words aside my sister
Roll my words like *kandyelo* is bad

Ma Sizani is possibly a deformed version of the Creole word, *lasizani*, originating from French, *zizanie*, meaning discord. In itself, *Ma Sizani Malpesya* has no meaning in Creole, nor has the word *kandyelo* in the fourth line. Possibly, they could be referring to specific

---

[277] Estrale, p. 46.
[278] Diallo & others, *Sanson Moutya*, p. 12.

people. The theme suggests that *Ma Sizani Malpesya* is a rumourmonger. I believe that in making a single word of the term *dekote*, the transcribers changed its meaning. In one word, it means aside, but in two words, *de kote*, it means two sides or opposing sides. Thus the phrase would read, 'roll my words two sides,' which is more in keeping with the theme of rumour mongering. It would not be surprising in Seychellois culture for a person to be named after his/her actions in a *moutya* song, in this case, a woman, since *Ma* is also a term for an old woman.[279]

This song also seems to be one of earlier examples of the genre. In comparing the two main collections I have referred to, it also seems that the older songs have a less developed narrative. This one comprises of four lines, which are repeated with slight variations. The only variation is the replacement of *kandyelo* by 'Mauritian'. This song and several others appear only in the older collection by Diallo and others, and not in Estrale's 2007 collection or in other known transcripts. All the others reappear, and they all have fairly well developed narratives in comparison.

4.9 Lamentation genre of the Indian Ocean

Boswell refers to the Mauritian *sega* as 'an important form of lamentation'.[280] The word 'lamentation' is very significant in the history of slave discourse, as an expression of their conditions of existence. The *maloya* of La Réunion is described in the same way:

[279] D'Offay & Lionnet, p. 249.
[280] Boswell. p. 61.

> Le Maloya, qui est la musique traditionnelle de La Réunion, est une pratique héritée des esclaves africains et malgaches qui gueulaient ce blues dans les champs de cannes à sucre.[281]

Thus Reunionese people of African and Malagasy origins '*gueulaient ce blues'* (wailed/lamented these blues) in the sugarcane fields as slaves and, later, as landless labourers with few other choices of employment, but the *maloya* is still closely associated today with their identity as an oppressed group.[282] In Seychelles as well, the original form of the *moutya* was a lamentation against slavery. Estrale's commentary on the genre suggests that there are two types of *moutya* lyrics: the ancient and the modern *moutya.* In spite of her doubts about the genre originating from the slavery period, she classifies the more ancient type of lyrics as those that depict the suffering of slaves during that period.[283]

The following song, which the transcribers have entitled, '*Mon Lans Deger*' (My War Spear), seems to be a slave's lamentation regarding his memories of Africa as opposed to his present condition of slave. This suggests that the *moutya* genre originated early in the slavery period:

Aswar mon napa doumi	I cannot sleep at night
Zot aswar mon napa doumi	Oh I cannot sleep at night
Kan mon mazin mon lans deger	When I think of my war spear
Nek delo i vin dan mon lizye.[284]	Tears come to my eyes

[281] R. Vergès, 'La Réunion : Zénès Maloya', Culture et Identité, *Témoignages,* (2009), <http://www.temoignages.re/culture/culture-et-identite/la-reunion-zenes-maloya,35783.html> [accessed 09 April 2016].
[282] Robin Denselow, 'Maloya: The protest music banned as threat to France', *BBC News, Magazine*, (2013), <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24300017> [accessed 21 March 2017].
[283] Estrale, p. 5.
[284] Diallo & others, *Sanson Moutya*, p. 2.

This song was recorded and compiled in 1981 and was transcribed and published in a booklet in 1982.[285] The most important consideration here is the topic of the song, the war spear. There are no known records of the war spear having been a weapon or tool in Seychellois culture. The lamentation in this song about a war spear can only have originated from the memory of a first generation slave. I use the word lamentation because the song evokes something that is no longer available to the singer: 'I cannot sleep at night | When I think of my war spear'. An obvious interpretation of this lamentation is a slave who had once been a warrior who longed for his life back on the African mainland where he had been respected. While he would once have fought against his oppressors with his spear, he is now a 'spearless' man. Therefore, he laments what he has lost: 'When I think of my war spear | Tears come to my eyes'.

The use of the archaic form of the word sleep, '*doumi*' (the contemporary form is '*dormi*' though old songs and very elderly people sometimes use the archaic form) also suggests that the song was composed in the early days of the linguistic formation of SC or had been transferred from an early version of an Indian Ocean Creole. The similarity in structure with *Ma Sizani Malpesya* supports this idea, as this song also has a limited narrative. The first stanza is repeated in three other stanzas with only slight variations. It is possible that the song was limited in this way from its inception but it is also possible that part of it got lost through the generations. This could have happened because it had been a forbidden practice to sing the *moutya* openly, thus reinforcing the hypothesis that it had been composed in the slavery period and was passed down through the generations until the Oral Traditions Section recorded what was left in the early 1980s. On the other hand,

[285] Abdourahamane Diallo, Research notes, 1982 (unpublished).

since orality is often the means of preserving cultural practices under strict censorship, it is also possible that this song will have lost some lines in oral transfer simply because it was more personal in nature and related to a limited experience rather than the common experience of the larger slave community. Not all slaves would have been spear-carrying warriors prior to capture.

4.10 Expressions of trauma in the post-slavery to the modern era.

Considerably more lamentation lyrics seem to have been composed in the era after abolition when a plantation system had been established with the ex-slaves being allowed to cultivate little corners on their masters' plantation for their families' subsistence.[286] The following song is one that was popularly performed during the early days of the Second Republic, probably as part of the propaganda against colonialism:

Gran blan, Msye mon bourzwa		Big white man, my master
Gran Msye, donn nou nou lavi	2	Great sir, give us our livelihood
Soley leve mon dan plantasyon		At sunrise I'm in the plantation
Soley kouse mon ankor ladan menm	4	At sunset I'm still there
Lot fwa mon ti mank noye,		The other day I almost drowned,
Gran Msye, ti ape rod ou bouyon	6	Sir, I was trying to catch fish for you
Tanto ler mon ariv se mwan		When I get home in the evening
Mon piti pe manz manze sek	8	My children make do without fish

[286] Estrale, p. 4.

Gran Blan Msye mon bourzwa		Big white man, my master
Gran Msye, retourn mwan mon fanm	10	Great sir, give my woman back to me
Mon pa'n fer sa par mon leker		I did not do this because I wanted to
Mon fer sa pour sov ou lavi.[287]	12	I did it to save your life

This song typically reflects many of the stories told by the older generation of what life was like for landless slave descendants. Since the man, who should have been the head of the family, did not have his own land or boat, he had to work for the white owner, as both labourer and fisherman. This left the woman at home to look after the children. To supplement the family income, she would have worked in the master's house, leaving her prey to his advances, thus adding to her husband's grievances.

As has been suggested previously, most of the existing *moutya* lyrics seem to have been composed by labourers on the outer islands. The exodus during the 1900s to work as labourers is another result of the slave descendants' lack of a livelihood on the mainland. They would commit themselves to a five-year contract, which meant seeing very little of their families and being at the mercy of their employers in isolated conditions. The conditions there were ideal for the development of the *moutya* because the social laws that governed society on the mainland and the inner islands were not applied as vigorously. However, life was hardly rosy, as is attested by the significant number of the lyrics that can be classified as lamentations. One such is the following example.

[287] Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe, Folkloric songs (transcripts), 1986.

> *Msye Langnen mon bourzwa | Ki kote ou anmennn mwan | Lilo Sen Pyer mon pa pou ale... | Beriberi i a touy mwan | Maladi anfle i a touy mwan.*[288]
>
> Mr. Lanier, my master | Where are you taking me? | I do not want to go to St. Pierre... | I will be killed by beriberi | The swelling disease will kill me.

The singer is at the mercy of his master who decides to send him to work on an island that holds certain fears for him. He is scared of dying of beriberi or the swelling disease there. Beriberi occurs from a lack of vitamin B and it causes skin problems and swelling. Most workers on the outer islands in the 1900s had this disease because their diet consisted mainly of rice and salted fish.

Because the salaries were higher on the outer islands, labourers tended to put up with innumerable hardships because they hoped to return to the mainland with good savings. They often had to put up with their employers' cruelty. The *moutya* was often the only outlet for their grievances:

Dan mon dou-z-an katorz an		When I was twelve, fourteen years
Pti mon manman dan lakour		Still my mother's child at home
Mon al plis koko lil Alfons		I dehusked coconuts on Alphonse
Mon al tir gwano Lasonmsyon	4	I extracted guano on Assumption
Kan Zipowa i arive		When the *Zipporah* arrived
Mon debarke lo lasose		I stepped down on the pier
Mon lapo ledo in ize		The skin on my back was worn
Msye Marsel pe riye	8	Mr. Marcel was laughing

[288] Diallo & others, *Sanson Moutya,* p.13.

Mon pa pou peye ozordi		I will not pay today
Vin demen ne-v-er bomaten		Come tomorrow at nine
Vin demen ne-v-er bomaten		Come tomorrow at nine
Ou lapey en boutey diven.[289]	12	Your pay will be a bottle of wine

The emphasis here is on the cruelty of employers towards their often under-age workers, for the singer gives his age as between twelve and fourteen. At the end of his contract Mr. Marcel, his employer, laughs at his expectations and tells him his payment will be a bottle of wine the next morning. An older version of the same song is included in Diallo's compilation, in which the narrator is an old man reminiscing over his youth. Again, the employer's reluctance to pay his workers their due is evident: *Manrmay, manrmay, manrmay, | Mon pa pou peye ozordi* (Children, children, children | I will not pay you today). The old man's lamentation is etched in the last line: *Msye Marcel Lemarsan bizwen mazinen | Mon'n is later Lasonmsyon* (Mr. Marcel Lemarchand, you have to remember | That I pulled the soil on Assumption).[290] 'Pulling the soil' is very likely a euphemism for extracting guano in an older variety of SC. In both versions, the narrators lament about their worn backs and the injustice of not being justly rewarded for their labour. They are instead offered alcohol in compensation, whilst being referred to as children. This is indicative of the way plantation owners and entrepreneurs of the colonial era manipulated their ex-slaves into working for a pittance, and controlling them through alcohol after Abolition. The result is a legacy of poverty and alcoholism among slave descendants that has affected their social status and psyche until today.

[289] Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe.
[290] Diallo and others, *Sanson Moutya,* p. 21.

The next extract is from a song entitled *Zil Mon Bourzwa* (Jules my Master) and it exposes some of the punishments meted out to dissidents on the outer islands. It might also be classified as a response to an actual remembered event:

Zil mon bourzwa pa kapab koze | Si ou a koze ou a ganny dan kaso
En kote ti kalorifer | En kote ti vin en kaso
Ler mon kriye mon dir mon ganny so | I anvoy son makro koup mon seve
Mon ti krwar mon a ganny lafreser | Sa ler la mon ganny plis lasaler.[291]

Jules my master would not let you talk
If you talked, you were thrown in jail
One side was a kiln
The other side was the jail
When I shouted that I was hot
He sent his '*makro*' to cut my hair
I thought I would feel the heat less
On the contrary, I felt it more

Being locked in the hot kiln was one of the most common forms of punishment for dissident workers, whether on the plantations or on the outer islands. Copra production was one of the most important commercial activities on the islands and a kiln for drying coconuts was part of the landscape. The person punished in this song is especially courageous in his defiance, because even when incarcerated, he still protests. The fact that all these sufferings were lamented in the *moutya* songs and that they are still sung in cultural activities suggests that the genre represents a significant aspect of the Seychellois identity and culture.

[291] Estrale, p. 70.

4.11 The concept of the *makro*.

In Seychellois society, there is a general contempt for people who play up to the boss, or who tries to impress by working harder than others. Such a person is called a *makro*. The first definition for the word *makro* is a fish, the mackerel. The second definition is an employee who tries to curry favour with his employer.[292] The *makro* features often in *moutya* lyrics, perhaps as a vestige of the slavery and plantation era when procrastinating on the job would be a matter of self-preservation or retaliation. Anybody who went against the unwritten code of resistance by procrastination was deemed a *makro*. However, the most despicable type of *makro* was the one who snitched on his fellow workers for the boss's favours. Even worse would be the one who acted as the master's henchman. This is the kind of *makro* referenced to in *Zil Mon Bourzwa,* where he is sent to cut the dissident's hair in the copra kiln jail.

The following extract from the same song expresses all the disgust and anger that the character of the *makro* evokes in his fellow workers:

Ala gro makro in ariv ankor	Here comes the big 'makro' again
Ek son bel mole konman pye palmis	His thighs as big as palm trunks
Si ou tann mon lanmor mon dada	If you hear of my death, my 'dada'
Anter mwan dan laroul balye	Bury me in the sweeping waves
Anter mwan dan laroul balye	Bury me in the sweeping waves
Kot tou le makro pa pase.[293]	Where the mackerels do not swim

[292] D'Offay and Lionnet, p. 251.
[293] Estrale, p. 70.

There is a certain trepidation in the announcement that the *makro* is coming back. Obviously, his presence signals more suffering for his fellow workers and the reference to his big thighs suggest that he might be physically imposing. The fear is inherent in the following lines: 'If you hear of my death, my *dada* | Bury me among the sweeping waves.' The *makro* seems to have the power of life and death over the singer – or the singer is convinced that his confrontation with him could possibly end in his death. He prepares for this by telling a colleague he calls his *dada*, to bury him at sea if he/she learns of his death. In contemporary SC, *dada* usually refers to a female elder.[294] In this context though, it could also be a replacement for 'darling'. Thus, another interpretation of the reference to burial at sea could be that the singer tries to escape his miseries on land by suicide. The verse preceding this one speaks of being waist deep in seawater, but there is no mention of a boat: 'Follow me, my *dada* | We shall go even with the water up to our waists.' This seems to be a clear invitation to his friend to join him in suicide or escape. The friend though, seems to have been afraid because he/she points out the obvious obstacle, the sea: 'I want to follow you my *dada* | It is a pity the sea wall bars my way.' This 'suicide narrative' might be linked to the belief of early African slaves that death meant a return of their souls to Africa.[295] At any rate, in the face of the miseries of slavery and its aftermath, suicide would occasionally have seemed like the only option.

---

[294] Creole Institute Monolingual Dictionary Database (unpublished).
[295] Linda Kay Kneeland, *African American Suffering and Suicide under Slavery*, M.A thesis, p. 54. (Montana: Montana State University, 2006), <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.628.9314&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [accessed 6 January 2017].

4.12 Sexual decadence

A third definition of the *makro* is a man who pimps for his wife or ignores her infidelities.[296] This literally means a man who allows his wife to prostitute herself. We have seen already in an earlier song that one of the miseries a man had to endure as a slave was the fact that he had to share his wife or partner with his master. Chang-Him suggests that this was a vestige of the practice of the 'droit du seigneur', in feudal France, transposed in colonial plantation life, and the 'droit de cuissage', defined as the right to be the first to go through the thighs.[297] It was thus an established fact that the woman slept with a man other than her partner or husband. In the pre-independence period when working class people were very poor, this came to be termed *debrouye*, meaning, 'taking care of things'. It meant that the males were forced to become a *makro* as a means of survival. The other extreme is that the man would want to imitate his master and try to have as many women as possible. In such a society, sex becomes frivolous and partners become complicit in infidelity. The following song is an illustration of this attitude.

Mon papa ti annan son baton	1	My father had his stick
Ti apel pa pase dan lakour		It was called, 'don't come near my home'
Mwan son piti ki ti erit son baton	3	It is I, his child who inherited his stick
Ti apel si ou dormi mon a seye		It was called 'If you lie down, I'll have a go'
Tou keksoz mon ava donnen	5	I can give away everything I have
Me mon baton verni mon a garde		But my lacquered stick, I'll keep

[296] D'Offay and Lionnet, p. 251.
[297] Chang-Him, p. 41.

Mon baton verni mon a garde	7	My lacquered stick, I'll keep
Pour mwan anter li anba later		So I can bury it underground
Pour mwan anter li anba later	9	So I can bury it underground
Mon rezerve pour tou le bordel		I will reserve it for all the whores
Les ale tou makro	11	Let all the *makro* go
A les lavant bonbon i marse.[298]		Oh, let the selling of sweets go on

The sexual innuendo in this song is typical of many *moutya* songs: except for the mention of whores (line 10), there is no overtly sexualised vocabulary. However, a person who is well versed in the wordplay of the *moutya* will know that the 'stick' mentioned in the song is a euphemism for the male organ and the 'sweet' (*bonbon*), the female organ. Burying his stick underground can also be interpreted as a metaphor for male penetration during the sexual act. The next line (line 10) seems to confirm this since the singer says he will reserve his stick for the whores. 'Letting all the *makro* go' so that the selling of 'bonbons' can go on is thus a metaphor for prostitution or promiscuity. Note that the singer says he inherited his stick from his father, who seemed to have been notorious: 'My father had his stick | It was called, "don't come near my home"'. The inference here is if you went anywhere near his home, you were sure to have an encounter with his stick. There is a pun on the word 'stick,' in that it could be the tool he protects his home with, but also the tool of his sexual prowess, which the son boasts he inherited. If the sexual innuendo is subtle in the choice of name for the father's stick, the son's choice of name is more sexually loaded: 'If you lie

[298] Estrale, p. 44.

down, I'll have a go'. The son can thus be said to have inherited his frivolous attitude towards sex from his father. He seems to prize this inheritance above everything else and feels that nothing should stand in the way of sexual pleasure and its commerce: 'Let all the *makro* go | Oh, let the selling of sweets go on!' Basically the two last lines declare that all the *makro*, that is, the partners of the women who are willing to 'sell' their 'bonbons', should quietly disappear and let the game go on.

This attitude seems to prove Borilot's theory of the *Code Noir* mentality that still afflicts post-colonial and post-slavery societies. It is important to remember that the *Code Noir* also put emphasis on the Catholic instruction of the slaves, so adultery and fornication would also have been frowned upon in early Seychellois society, even among the slaves and their descendants. Of course, not all women were part-time prostitutes or sexual slaves. However, for those who were, whether they were obliged to or not, their male partners became victims of the legacy of slavery, turned into the *makro* whom the rest of society despised and who would certainly have despised himself. Though the circumstances we live in today no longer necessitate the prostitution of women, the historical situation that gave birth to the *makro* has left its scars on our society. One wonders, for example, to what extent the sexual exploitation of the slavery and plantation periods have contributed to the kind of psyche in our society, which has resulted in gender inequalities. Another aspect is the present condition of male irresponsibility in Seychelles, especially concerning child and family support, which Chang-Him links to the practice of using males as studs during slavery.[299]

[299] Chang-Him, p. 123.

4.13 Race and hair

Moutya lyrics, like riddles and proverbs, are also testimonies of racial prejudice as illustrated by the following song entitled *Siboudou*:

Depi ler mon'n arive		All this time I've been here
Mon bat lanmen danm pa leve	2	I clap my hands, the ladies won't stand
Me Siboudou i annan long seve		But Siboudou has long hair
I bat lanmen danm li leve	4	He claps his hands and the ladies stand up
Me Siboudou i fek arive		Siboudou has just arrived
Ou bat lanmen danm i leve	6	He claps and the ladies stand
Me mwan mon seve lanmson		But I have fish-hook hair
Mon bat lanmen danm pa lanse	8	I clap my hands and the ladies won't stand
Siboudou son seve malbar		Siboudou has Indian hair
I bat lanmen danm i leve.[300]	10	He claps and the ladies stand up

In her chapter about biological origins and social stereotypes, Boswell states that sometimes, coloured people were distinguished from slaves by their free status or their lighter colour. She specifies that in French, the interpretation of the term *gens de couleur* (people of colour) 'places these lighter-skinned individuals higher up in the pigmentocracy of Mauritius'. The descendants of these lighter skinned people, who, as Boswell points out,

[300] Estrale, p. 34.

'are closer to Europeans in phenotypical and social terms, have systematically dissociated themselves from those who appeared to be African,' and tend to refer to them as '*Mazanbik*' (Mozambicans) or *noirs chiolos*, meaning black vagabonds.[301] In Seychelles, people of darker skin and Negroid features are also called *Mazanbik*.[302] A common feature of a person of African descent apart from skin colour is the texture of the hair. This distinction is important because often, Creole societies of the plantation type also had a significant number of South Asians in the population cross-section, with very dark skin. Though they were often treated as badly as the Africans in the slavery and post-slavery periods, the Africans were still considered lower than them in social hierarchy.[303] Thus, the texture of the hair became very important in social distinction. As Boswell points out, hair matters, and in Mauritius, Negroid hair is referred to as *'Ti seve'*, meaning small hair: people with dark skin and 'small hair' are more likely to face prejudicial treatment and abuse in public.[304]

It is clear that the man in the above song is black and has Negroid features because he says that his hair is like fishhooks, meaning they are rough and scratchy, as opposed to straight, long and soft, like his rival, Siboudou. In consequence, the women will not stand up for him at the dance, but they do so for Siboudou. The singer complains of the women's prejudiced behaviour; politeness decrees that he should be accepted for a dance by the simple fact that he was there first. However, they reject him because he is black and not considered as desirable as Siboudou. It is quite possible that Siboudou could be a Creole himself. He might be a half-caste, he might even be black-skinned, but the difference is

[301] Boswell, p. 56.
[302] De Commarmond and Gillieaux, p. 25.
[303] Boswell, p. 43.
[304] Boswell, p. 57.

that he has Indian hair (line 9) and is thus desirable in the consideration for breeding children with better hair, especially if the potential mother already has the undesirable Negroid hair herself. This is one aspect of the constant search of the black Creole to whiten or soften his/her physiognomy in order to be better accepted by society as discussed by Fanon.[305]

The following song, entitled *Fler zerison* emphasizes the importance of hair texture, thus reinforcing Boswell's theory that in creole societies, hair does indeed matter.

Fler zerison Mon pa oule		I do not want the '*zerison*' flower
Pangar i a pik mon lanmen	2	It might scratch my hands
Sa fler zerison dan mon latet		These '*zerison*' flowers upon my head
Sanmenm maler zenn fanm	4	Are the undoing of young ladies
E ou la akoz ou koumsa		Hey you, why are you like this?
Akoz ou en zonm atoufer.[306]	6	Why are you such an unscrupulous man?

This song is a very recent composition, which means that the racial prejudice that existed at the time of the composition of the *Siboudou* song still features in the twenty-first century. The women reject the male singer because of his extremely Negroid hair, which they refer to as *zerison* flowers. The *zerison* plant has seed-like flowers with sharp, tiny little prickles.

---

[305] Fanon, *Black Skin,* p. 33.
[306] Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe, *Fler Zerison* (transcript) (Creole Festival Seychelles, 2003).

Its name probably originates from the French word *hérison*, meaning porcupine, because of the prickly nature of the plant. This is only one of the many derogatory terms given to Negroid hair in SC. The imagery in this description is however very detailed, giving an exact description of a particular type of African hair that is very sparse in concentration and grows in little tufts or balls that feels rather scratchy to the touch. However, to suggest that it might actually scratch one's hand is the kind of exaggeration that is very common in the stereotyping of Africans in creole societies.

A look at the dynamics between the male and the female in the lyrics also suggests that the male singer is sensitive to rejection because of his Negroid features. In consequence, he provokes the women with these very features that they say they detest; he professes that in private, they like it more than they will admit in public: 'These *zerison* flowers upon my head / Are the undoing of young ladies.' The women step back in horror and declare him an unscrupulous man. In essence, this is quite playful in nature and suggests a more intimate relationship between the male and female singers than is at first evident. As a reflection of the society from whence it came, this *moutya* song illustrates how Creoles in post-slavery societies live with conflicting notions of their identity and how they prey on each other's insecurities in a manner that replicates the relationship between colonized and colonizer. Our colonizers need not be present to colonize us because we have absorbed the colonial mentality enough to colonize ourselves, a situation Ngugi calls 'the final triumph of a system of domination.[307]

[307] Ngugi, p. 20.

4.14 Conflicting values.

Some *moutya* songs still performed today are palimpsests of our traumatic past because the abominations committed against our forebears are encoded in them beneath other layers. In contemporary performances, *moutya* songs celebrate our culture and identity, but at the same time, they reveal the trauma of the slavery system. Yet this revelation is only possible if one knows the stories behind the lyrics. Thus, the *moutya* becomes a medium for encoding taboo subjects, and because it is performed and passed down through the generations, also acts as an oral archive. The song, *Navir Soubwannan* is such an example:

Bomaten mon leve		I woke up in the morning
Mon lev mon lizye mon get opor		I looked out to the port
Mon lev mon lizye mon get opor		I looked out to the port
Navir Soubwannan i antre	4	The *Soubwannan* had berthed
Navir Soubwannan i antre (3 x)		The *Soubwannan* had berthed (3 x)
Ki marsandiz ti anmennen	8	What merchandise did it carry?
Ki marsandiz ti anmennen (3 x)		What merchandise did it carry? (3 x)
Ma Leoni ek Pa Zafa	12	Ma Leonie and Pa Japha
Ma Leoni ek Pa Zafa (3 x)		Ma Leonie and Pa Japha (3 x)
Tou le de frer ek ser	16	The two of them brother and sister
Ki mannyer ti fer pour konnen (3 x)		How did it come to be known? (3 x)
Lasezon karang dan bazar.[308]	20	It was 'karang' season in the market

[308] Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe (1986).

The song recalls the story of a ship that came into Port Victoria (date unknown), bearing merchandise that included slaves, among them, a pair who came to be known as 'Ma Leonie' and 'Pa Japha'. The song hints that there was something sinister about them; something so sinister as to be unmentionable: 'How did it come to be known? | It was the *karang* season at the market.'[309] The local story is that the pair were encouraged to mate because they were very stocky and strong in appearance, but then found out that they were brother and sister. This is reminiscent of 'Mandingo' (Onstott, 1957) where slaves were bred like animals to get the best stock possible. However, by Christian standards, and probably by pre-Christian African standards as well, it is an abomination to mate with your own sibling, or your mother and father.

The conflicting values of the Catholic moral code under which the slaves were supposed to be instructed and the lack of respect by the ruling class for their stature as Christians and human beings are at the origins of the conflicting moral values in creole societies. In Seychelles, for example, the Catholic moral code remains the established system of social norms and values held in esteem among the general population and considered as the foundation of our culture. Christianity professes that all humans are equal because they are all children of God, and yet at no time were slaves considered equal to their masters, and neither were their progeny. The *Code Noir* itself professed to protect the slaves as much as to instil the Catholic code of discipline among the French colonies. Yet slaves were not allowed to be married into the white class (Article 5), were to be considered

[309] *Karang* is the Creole name for the jackfish.

as part of the moveable property of their masters (Article 29) and as such were to undergo the same regulations as other *things* or movable property in cases of their masters' bankruptcy or seizure of property (Article 31).[310] These are only a few of the atrocious laws that governed the lives of slaves and which belied their human status. The ethics of Christianity and the practice of slavery and its commerce were thus contradictions, which in the end, affected the psyche of the slaves and their descendants. For example, forcing siblings to mate resulted in an abomination that could only be talked about in code as in the above song. The song also represents the taint that has been passed down not only in specific family groups but also on all slave descendants. It forms part of the inherited self-disgust that many modern Creoles do not even suspect they carry with them.

4.15 Palimpsest of trauma and signifier of emancipation.

In conclusion to this chapter, I would say that the *moutya* represents two major symbols of the Seychellois psyche. The genre is one of the strongest and most distinctive African cultural inheritances in Seychellois oral traditions, in spite of and because of its history of oppression dating from the slavery period. Its songs continue to inspire artists, poets and politicians alike and are thus part of the Seychellois psyche. It has been part of the Seychellois political and cultural emancipation: its banning was denounced as 'the war on our culture' by the liberation movement that fought for the country's independence.[311] In the arts, Veteran singer Patrick Victor is well known for his political statements about the *moutya* and its place in Seychellois culture. His song, *Zwe sa lanmizik* (Let the music play)

---

[310] *Le Code Noir*, ed. Luçay Permalnaick (La Réunion : Surya Éditions, 2011).
[311] *Portrait of A Struggle*, p. 23.

refers to the Seychellois as an oppressed people who tried to speak through their *moutya*, and to the laws that stopped this.[312] In the same compilation, Victor celebrates the *moutya* as a medium of the Seychellois' expression of their cultural liberation, for example, *Tanbour moutya* (The *moutya* drum), and *Dans nou moutya* (Let us dance our *moutya*).[313] Other popular folk singers such as Jean-Marc Volcy and Jany de Letourdie have also found the *moutya* to be a source of inspiration, as have local literary award winners, poets Reuban Lespoir and Ruth Marie.

As a living cultural practice and oral record of the Seychellois people's history, the *moutya* also testifies to the trauma of the past. Take for example the song *fler zerison*, which was only composed in 2003 as part of a Creole Festival competition; evidently, this one was not created spontaneously unlike the genuine *moutya* composition. The choice of topic is therefore interesting: nothing less than the rejection of a man because he has Afro hair. Though probably nobody took the lyrics seriously at the time, it reveals that Africanness can still be subjected to debasement and ridicule. Similarly, is the popularity of the lamentations of hard times in older *moutya* lyrics not a marker of old grievances lying dormant? Since the same persons can sing *moutya* lyrics that both ridicule and sympathise with their slave ancestors in a single *moutya* session, does that not suggest that the Seychellois people suffer a kind of schizophrenia? Concurrently, the most popular symbol of the Seychellois letting go of their inhibitions and celebrating their culture is the *moutya*. Thus, for the Seychellois, the *moutya* is a signifier of both enslavement and liberation.

---

[312] Patrick Victor, *Griyo Lepep*, ed. Penda Choppy (Mahé: Creole Institute, 2007), pp. 71-72.
[313] Victor, pp. 56-57.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

5.1 Hypothesis evaluation

In the previous chapters of this study, I set out to analyse identity perceptions of the Seychellois people with specific reference to Seychelles as an ex-slave society and as part of the postcolonial nation. Using some corpus of local traditional folklore, I investigated the ways in which slavery and colonialism have influenced people's perceptions of themselves and others around them as revealed by their attitudes towards the issues of race and slavery. By making explicit the link between negative stereotyping and inhumane treatment of black Africans during the slavery period and the subalternism and racism contained within Creole identity today, I hope to have demonstrated that the African element of the Seychellois' genetic and historical makeup has caused him/her to feel uneasy about his/her Creole identity. This hypothesis was tested by addressing the following research questions: How apparent is the trauma caused by slavery and colonialism in Seychellois society. How far do the oral traditions of Seychelles reveal this trauma? In what ways have the Seychellois tried to recreate or reimagine their own identity and to what effect?

The findings of this study show that the trauma of slavery in Seychelles is reflected in people's ideas of themselves and others in relation to events which occurred in the past, or which are still part of their present. This is apparent in the orature, which is indeed a

palimpsest of trauma from the slavery period to the present day, exposed in attitudes towards the notion of race and the idea of slavery itself. Simultaneously, orature is also the 'wick', as the creolists put it, which triggers the flame of pride in indigenous culture, through its expression in the indigenous language, which is Creole.

My analysis of proverbs has revealed the lasting effects of poverty among slave descendants stemming from their forebears' landless conditions and lack of resources. The proverbs also reflect their stoicism and cynicism in the face of poverty and the stigma attached to it, suggesting that people carry around feelings of inferiority and of not being accommodated, resulting in anxiety. In the case of Seychelles, even the Second Republic's attempts to raise the slave descendants' economic status has not completely erased this inherited anxiety. This is the creole malaise that Boswell describes, which I believe is the traumatic inheritance of all creole slave descendants and the societies they live in. The analysis of the *moutya* genre adds weight to the theory that slave descendants have been affected by a sense of economic helplessness, which has rendered them unable to be the masters of their own fates. In other words, these are the material barriers that have limited the slave descendants' economic progress in the past, and to some extent, still do today for specific categories of people.

The exploration of the lamentation sub-genre of the *moutya* exposes the physical and moral hardships that the slaves and their descendants have experienced either through hard labour or through their masters' mistreatment of them. Mistreatments include not only overwork, poor rewards and harsh punishments, but also sexual exploitation and abuse. This of course has added to the slave descendants' feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. The possibility of suicide as an escape from such hardship is explored as a

marker of trauma. These are some of the psychological barriers that people in creole societies have faced, which may still have an impact on their mind-sets. The fact that some of the lamentation songs have played an important role in the political confrontation between slave descendants and the landowning class in Seychelles indicates a lingering sense of trauma due to injustice and exploitation.

In terms of mind-sets, some negative values associated with the creole mentality are proved to exist in Seychellois society through analysis of the proverb genre. This is the negative mentality that Confiant argues is a legacy of the hopelessness of the slaves' cynical society.[314] For example, there is the proverb that turns the neighbour's gaze into the evil eye, simply because the slave descendant is not used to good fortune coming his/her way. Another negative trait of the slave mentality explored is the traitor complex, related to the *makro* in the *moutya* genre. Treachery extends from those who betray their own kind among the labouring classes to those who betray their own principles or dignity, for example by closing their eyes to their wives' exploitation by the plantation masters. The resulting trauma is inherited as a sense of mistrust of one's own kind and again, a sense of self-disgust, which are expressed in both the proverb and riddle genres, and the *moutya*.

Self-disgust is also at the centre of identity conflicts caused by opposing principles of life as represented by the binary oppositions of the Catholic code versus the code of slavery. For example, slave descendants sometimes have to live with the knowledge that their past is blighted by incest through the practice of mating slaves, irrespective of whether they were siblings. Thus, slaves were instructed in the Christian tradition but were expected to

[314] Confiant, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes*, pp.12-13.

commit incest because it was economically profitable for their masters. As a historical happening, the song examined also represents a long-lasting stain on the character of the community where this occurred, as it has become a taboo subject, and is thus still a traumatic memory.

Analysis of the riddle genre show that in spite of the mixed nature of Seychellois society, colour segregation and racial prejudice was a norm by which people lived in the past. Because both the riddle and proverb genres are still used in everyday language, especially proverbs, this reveals that people's attitudes to colour are still influenced by the prejudices of the past. Some songs in the *moutya* section also reveal the local racial prejudice in terms of physical features. From hair, to colour and ethnicity, it becomes clear that people of African descent have had to face racial prejudice in the past, and to some extent, still do.

Trauma thus is a pervasive aspect of Seychellois society because of its experience of slavery and its aftermath, through the values established by that inhumane system, and through the traumatic experiences of individuals, more precisely, of slaves and their descendants, over a period that spanned centuries. People who experience or practice different forms of racism today in Seychellois society are still living this trauma. This also applies to people whose tendencies are to dissociate from their own culture or nationality. An abhorrence of the creole language is a manifestation of these tendencies. Even more symbolic of this trauma is the tendency in some people, especially people of obvious African origins, to dissociate themselves from anything African or to view the African continent in a negative light. These manifestations of trauma are shared by all creole societies that have experienced slavery, as discussed in the chapter on *créolité* and folklore.

In light of the above conclusions, let us go back to the question of the ways in which the Seychellois have tried to recreate or reimagine their own identity. The resilience of the slave population in the face of mental and physical oppression has been remarkable as illustrated by their ability to create a new language and culture by weaving together values and practices from their old world and from their new environment. We have already seen from the proverb and riddle analysis that certain negative qualities became part of the Creole psyche because of the harsh environment of slavery. Nevertheless, wisdoms from the old world were tapped into to guide behaviour and instil encouragement in the face of hardship, as with the proverb *Get ek lizye, fini ek leker,* (look with the eyes, end with the heart), which discourages covetousness and stealing.[315] In SC, when you keep something in your heart, you do not voice it or act on it. The famous Seychellois hospitality comes from this tradition of positivity. Its principles are; that a guest should never feel unsated in your home; should be received in the highest conditions of cleanliness and comfort; should be served in the best crockery; should never hear a word of profanity in your home; and should never leave with empty hands (this usually entails gifts of home-made produce, home-grown fruits, vegetables or even plant seedlings or cuttings). An even more important consideration is that the oppressed population was largely responsible for the continued evolution and adaptation of the new language they were forced to use, Creole. This is evidenced by proverbs and riddles that describe people's behaviour in terms of the local flora and fauna, as well as describing different natural phenomena in an imaginative, metaphorical manner. The ability to transform a negative concept into a positive one is also an admirable quality of this resilient and creative people. For example, the term *grannwanr*,

[315] Choppy, Personal collection, proverbs (n.d).

stemming from the racial segregation and discrimination that necessarily formed part of the slave society, has metamorphosed into various positive concepts, for example, a knowledgeable man, or an adult, responsible male. The beauty of this is that the term has shed its racist implications in being applied to all males, irrespective of colour, as is illustrated by its use in the selected proverbs. This is creolization at its best and its most positive.

On the other hand, not all attempts of the Seychellois to reinvent themselves may be considered positive. The most important aspect of this 'reinvention' is the attitude that slavery and colonialism are no longer relevant to the Seychellois' present, principally because political power is in the hands of the majority, and the majority are the slave descendants themselves. I reiterate that Seychellois society bears the indelible marks of a slave society, as illustrated by the existing orature that show racial and other prejudices. Some of these prejudices have been redefined as the local creole humour, as, for example, in the riddle about the captain who sets the task of finding the maroons on his ship and throwing them off. This is symptomatic of a society that considers slavery such a distant phenomenon that it becomes possible to make of a quest for freedom, as represented by the maroons, an enigmatic joke. The desire in a Creole to convince him/herself that slavery is no longer relevant to his/her life is also a form of trauma. As a progressive society, we are thus far from having thrown off the ill effects of slavery and colonialism.

5.2 Suggestions for further research and recommendations.

As has been outlined in the introduction, though there are considerable collections of Seychellois folklore, there have been very few attempts to analyse this material, especially in the context of the Seychellois population's origins in slavery and colonialism. Yet such an analysis is essential to the Seychellois's understanding of him/herself. In order to come to terms with our painful past, we have to explore that past in all its dimensions. In that respect, it would also be useful to open a serious discussion on the existing components of the history curriculum in education with respect to slavery and its impact on Seychellois society and culture today. This would require research and seminars at university level involving language and social science students. The current problem with the invisible male syndrome (in families, community and pastoral work, and so on) is just one additional aspect of the effects of the past, apart from obvious elements such as racism and prejudice. I propose that healing can only begin through acknowledgement of the source of trauma. Thus, slavery itself should be an open forum of discussion at national level. Organisations that can be involved in such a discussion can include the University of Seychelles, the Ministry of Education, the Department of Culture and local media agencies. The commemoration of the abolition of slavery, which currently does not exist in Seychelles, can be a pivot around which these discussions can take place on an annual basis.

Seychellois folklore is also a very useful pointer to our origins in the pre-colonization era. In order to understand and accept those aspects of our culture and traditions that seem obscure or alien to us, we must explore their links to other cultures on all three continents that contributed to our population. Whilst the traditional history

curriculum and local media programmes have emphasized the French component of our culture and history, little effort has been made to familiarize our people with previously stigmatized elements of our culture, for example the contributions of Mozambican tribes such as the Macua and the Makonde, and of the Madagascan peoples. Some aspects of our folklore such as the *Tinge* and *Sokwe* dances are endangered not only because they are hardly performed but also because we know little of their origins and significance, and have thus neglected them. The Indian and Chinese elements of our culture have been equally neglected because we often claim that their contribution has been negligible (Diallo and others, [1981]: iii).[316] If we are to remain a coherent and functioning creole nation, and understand the nature of our melting pot culture, we have to bring in the different elements of our traditional culture from the cold.

More research and analysis of folklore should also open up a considerable corpus for language development analysis in all three national languages in Seychelles. It is thus recommended that the folklore corpus should not only be made publishable and published for pedagogical use but also translated into French and English, where possible, for the same purpose. This would be in tune with the need for a cultural education model, designed to cope with the culturally alienated attitudes of such a creole culture as the Seychellois society represents.

Finally, more research needs to be undertaken into the different genres of Seychellois folklore for the creation of a literary forum simply because our literary tradition is still consists mostly of our folklore. With the creation of a new research institution for

[316] Diallo & others, *Zistwar Sesel*, Introduction.

the Creole language and culture within the University of Seychelles, it is recommended that folklore should be included in the cultural research agenda, thus boosting the Seychellois people's sense of cultural identity, with all its baggage as an ex-slave and colonial society. This should renew Seychellois writers and researchers' interest in folklore. It will encourage them to use the already existing corpus that has been documented as a source for new inspirations and productions in all sorts of domains, scientific or artistic, and for various purposes such as education and linguistic analysis (especially in the case of proverbs and riddles). In short, our folklore is a possible gateway to understanding our complex creole identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abel, Antoine, *Contes des Seychelles* (Paris: Clé International, 1981).

Abner Cohen, 'Masquerade Politics,' *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures*, ed. by R. Cohen & P. Toninato, Chapter 17, 235-242 (London: Routledge, 2010).

Accouche, Samuel *Ti anan en foi en Soungoula: Creole Stories from the Seychelles,* ed. by Bollée, Annegret (Cologne : University of Cologne, 1976).

Ajayi, Ade, J.F., *Unfinished Business: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism in Africa*, (Amsterdam/India: South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS) & Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC), 2002) <http://www.cssscal.org/pdf/publication/ade_ajayi.pdf > [accessed 2 July 17].

Alexis, Marie-Antoinette, *Proverb Idyonm ek Lekspresyon Kreol Seselwa* (Seychelles: Creole Institute, 2004).

Andermahr, Sonya, 'Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism'- Introduction, *Humanities*, 4 (2015), pp.500-505 <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special_issues/TraumaPostcolonialism> [accessed 7 December 2016].

Anderson, G., *Fundamentals of educational research,* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe, *Fler Zerison* (transcript), (Creole Festival Seychelles, 2003).

Anse Etoile Cultural Troupe, Folkloric songs (transcripts), 1986.

Association Ankrake, Manageo.fr, (La Réunion: 1996), <http://www.manageo.fr/fiche_info/403851736/39/association-ankrake.html> [accessed 9 October 2016].

Association Rasine Kaf, The University of Edinburgh, School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (Arts and Humanities Research Council), <http://www.mmoe.llc.ed.ac.uk/fr/association/association-rasine-kaf> [accessed 9 October 2016].

Benedict, Burton, *People of Seychelles*, (Ministry of Overseas Development, Overseas Research Bulletin No. 14.) (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1966).

Benedict, Marion and Benedict, Burton, *Men, Women and Money in Seychelles*, (Berkeley, L.A and London: University of California Press, 1982).

Bennett, Louise, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Mervyn Morris (Kingston: Sangsters Book Stores Ltd. 1982).

Bernabé, Jean, Chamoiseau, Patrick and Confiant, Raphaël, *In Praise of Creoleness,* trans. by Mohamed B. Taleb Khyar, *Callaloo*, 13 (4), 886-909, (1990), *The Johns Hopkins University Press,* <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931390> [accessed 5 April 2014].

Bollée, Annegret, *Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles français de l'Océan Indien* (Bamberg: Buske Verlag, 1993).

Bonnelame, Betymie, 'Up close with best male artist from the Seychelles' Cable tune Awards,' (Victoria, Seychelles: Seychelles News Agency, May 29, 2017) <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/7289/Up+close+with+best+male+artist+from+the+Seychelles+Cable+Tune+Award> [accessed 11 July 2017].

Borilot, Vanessa Christine, ‘En mal de mots: représentations de la figure paternelle dans les littératures de la Caraïbe et des Mascareignes (PhD thesis, The University of Iowa, Iowa Research Online, 2014) <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5473&context=etd> [accessed 02 September 2014].

Boswell, Rosabelle, *Le Malaise Créole: Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006).

Braithwaite, Kamau, *Roots* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

Bronner, Simon J., ‘Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice,’ *Cultural Analysis,* 15 (1), (2016) <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/preview/volume15/vol15_bronner.html> [accessed 8 December 2016].

Carpooran, Arnaud, *Proverb ek Sirandann Repiblik Moris*, (Mauritius: Ministry of Arts and Culture, 2013).

Césaire, Aimé, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Edition Présence Africaine, 1983).

Chang-Him, French, ‘Cohabitation: A Christian Response to Ménage in Seychelles’ (Unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Wales, 2010).

Chaudenson, Robert, *Des Iles, des hommes, des langues* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992).

Chimhundu, Herbert, ‘Sexuality and Socialisation in Shona praises and lyrics’, *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, Chapter 11, 147-161 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Choppy, Marie-Thérèse, ‘Women in theatre in Seychelles’, *Southern African Theatre Initiative (S.A.T.I) workshop* (Addis Ababa, 2004).

Choppy, Penda and Salomon, Norbert, *Soungoula ek Bann Konper* (Seychelles, Mahé: Creole Institute, 2004).

Choppy, Penda, ‘Les Créoles face aux défis de l’éducation pour tous et de la mondialisation: Les Seychelles’, *XIème Colloque International des études créoles* (Cape Verde, November 2005) (Comité International d’Etudes Créoles, 2005).

Choppy, Penda, personal collection of proverbs (n.d).

Choppy, Penda, *The Seychelles Moutya as a theatre prototype and historical record* (Creole Institute: unpublished, 2006).

Confiant, Raphaël, *Dictionnaire des Titim et Sirandanes* (Martinique: Ibis Rouge Editions, 1998).

Confiant, Raphaël, *Le Grand Livre des Proverbes Créoles* (Paris: Presses du Châtelet, 2004).

Craps, Stef, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Creole Monolingual Dictionary Database (unpublished, Creole Institute).

Creole Quiz Repertoire, Language Unit, (Creole Institute) (n.d).

Creole Speaking Union Act 2010, Proclamation No. 15 of 2013, (Mauritius, April 2013).

Cudjoe, Selwyn R., *Identity and Caribbean Literature* (Trinicenter.com, 2001) <http://www.trinicenter.com/Cudjoe/2001/June/24062001b.htm> [accessed 8 December 2016].

D’Offay, Danielle and Lionnet, Guy, *Diksyonner kreol-franse*, (Bamberg: Kreolisch Bibliotek, 1982).

Davidson, Basil, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1992).

De Commarmond, Odile and Gillieaux, Colette, *Memories of Slavery* (Ministry of Education, Seychelles: unpublished, 2004).

De St. Jorre, Danielle and Lionnet, Guy, *Diksyonner kreol – franse* (Bamberg: Imprimerie Difo-Druck, 1999).

Denselow, Robin, 'Maloya: The protest music banned as threat to France', *BBC News, Magazine*, (2013), <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24300017> [accessed 21 March 2017].

Diallo, Abdourahamane and others, *Zedmo Sesel* (Riddles of Seychelles) (Mahé: National Heritage, 2001).

Diallo, Abdourahamane, and others, *Sanson Moutya* (*Moutya* songs), (Mahé : Culture Division [1982]).

Diallo, Abdourahamane, and others, *Veyez 2* (Mahé: Culture Division, 1982).

Diallo, Abdourahamane, and others, *Zistoire Kreol Seseloi: Veyez* (Mahé: Culture Division, 1981).

Diallo, Abdourahamane, and others, *Zistwar Sesel* (Folk Tales of Seychelles) (Mahé: Oral Traditions Section, Culture Division, [1981]).

Diallo, Abdourahamane, Research notes, 1982 (unpublished).

Digital Election Database, *Parti Lepep* Documentation Centre, (2001).

Dora, Fady, Joel, '*Sanmenm sa bann nwanr kalele*', (Seychelles Daily, 28 June 2017) <https://www.facebook.com/Seychelles-Daily-1803688183191899/> [accessed 5 July 2017].

Dundes, Alan, 'Folklore as a Mirror of Culture', *Elementary English*, 46 (4) (1969), pp. 471-482. *National Council of Teachers of English*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41386525> [accessed 26 June 2017].

Elijah, *Delo lo Fey Sonz*, (*Parti Lepep* political rallies, Parliamentary elections, Seychelles, 2016).

English Oxford Living Dictionaries, < https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/creole> [accessed 15 December 2016].

Estrale, Marvelle, *Tradisyon Oral Dan Kiltir Seselwa: Moutya* (Oral traditions in Seychellois culture: The *Moutya*) (Creole Institute: unpublished, 2007).

Fairclough, Norman, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (April 2015) <https://balticpractice.hse.ru/data/2015/04/13/1094925608/Critical%20discourse%20analysis_THEORY_FAIRCLOUGH.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2017].

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 3rd edn. (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. by R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), <http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/CSHS503/FrantzFanon.pdf> [accessed 04 July 2017].

Furniss, Graham, 'The power of words and the relation between Hausa genres', in *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature*, Chapter 10, 130-144 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Gratiant, Gilbert, *Fab Compè Zicaque* (Martinique: Editions Horizons CaraYbes, 1958).

Gunner. Liz, 'Africa and Orality,' in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Vol.1, 1-18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Hampâté Ba, Amadou, *Africa: The Power of Speech in Intercultural Communication: A Global Reader*, ed. by Fred E. Jandt (London: Sage Publications, 2004), <https://books.google.sc/books?id=W5ClSo-rjoUC&pg=PA108&lpg=PA108&dq=Amadou+Hampate+Ba,+Africa> [accessed 13 December 2016].

Haring, Lee, 'African Tales in Seychelles'*, International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) conference*, (Sweden, August 2003).

Haring, Lee, *Collecting Folklore in Mauritius* (Mauritius: Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1992).

Harries, Lyndon, 'The Riddle in Africa,' *Journal of American Folklore*, 84 (334), (1971), 377-393.

Ile de La Réunion: Culture (St. Denis, 2007) <http://www.reunion.fr/decouvrir/traditions/culture-de-l-ile> [accessed 10 October 2016].

Jarimba, *Douler Lo Zot,* (Extra Big Studio, Seychelles, 2016).

Jousse, Marcel, *Le style oral rythmique et mnémotechnique chez les verbo-moteurs*, (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1925).

Kneeland, Linda Kay, *African American Suffering and Suicide under Slavery*, M.A thesis, p. 54. (Montana: Montana State University, 2006), <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.628.9314&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [accessed 6 January 2017].

Lakoff, George and Johnsen, Mark, *Metaphors we live by* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Lamming, George, *In The Castle Of My Skin*, (London: Micheal Joseph, 1953).

Lazarus, Neil, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Le Code Noir, ed. by Permalnaick, Luçay (La Réunion: Surya Éditions, 2011).

Live, Yu-Sion, 'Recherche et representation d'un culte de possession à La Réunion: le servis zansèt', *International colloquium: 'Creole culture – Creole academy,'* (Seychelles, 28-29 October 2012) (Creole Institute 2012).

Macey, David, *Frantz Fanon: A Life*, (London: Granta, 2000).

Madagascar Sayings, Old Sayings and Proverbial Wisdom (n.d), <www.historyofpainters.com/Madagascar_proverbs.htm> [accessed 16/10/2016].

Magoulick, Mary, *The History of Folklore* (Folklore Reference Page [n.d]) https://faculty.gcsu.edu/custom-website/mary-magoulick/fldes.htm [accessed 8 December 2016].

Mahoune, Jean-Claude Pascal, *Traditional Dances/Games of the republic of Seychelles*, (Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2007) <http://www.pfsr.org/seychelles-traditional-dances-games/traditional-dancesgames-of-the-republic-of-seychelles/> [accessed 9/10/2016].

Mancham, James, *President Michel is becoming more powerful than his party,* (Interviewed by Deepa Bhookun for *Seychelles Today*) (Mahé: Seychelles Today, 14 August 2014).

Meriton, Erenia, *Traditional Proverbs: Seychelles – Dominican Republic* (Seychelles: Inprimerie St. Fidèle, 2003).

Mlama, Pennina, 'Oral art and contemporary cultural nationalism,' *Power, Marginality and African oral Literature*, Chapter 2, 23-34 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Mulokozi, M.M., *Study Report on the Common Oral Traditions of Southern Africa: A Survey of Tanzanian Oral Traditions* (Dar Es Salaam: IKR, University of Dar Es Salaam, 1999), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139564eo.pdf> [accessed 16 October 2016].

Naissance du Maloya, *Album de La Réunion* (2012), <https://lemaloyapacetelecomparistech.wordpress.com/definition-et-naissance-du-maloya/naissance-du-maloya > [accessed 16 October 2014].

National Heritage Research Section Library, *Soungoula* Collection, Stories [1982].

Ngugi, Wa Thiong'O, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986).

Nichols, Grace, 'The Fat Black Woman Remembers', *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (London: Virago Press Ltd, 1984).

Olaniyan, Tejumola, 'Festivals, ritual, and drama in Africa,' *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature, Vol 1*, Chapter 3, 35-48 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Onstott, Kyle, *Mandingo*, ([New York]: Denlinger's, 1957).

Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2017), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/view/Entry/72546?redirectedFrom=folklore#eid> [accessed 23 June 2017].

Parol ek memwar, Récits de vie des Seychelles, ed. Bollée, Annegret and Rosalie, Marcel, 2nd ed. (Bamberg: Kreolische Bibliothek, 2014).

Plats typiques: La cuisine, la réunion des saveurs (n.d) <http://www.reunion.fr/decouvrir/immersion-culturelle/gastronomie/plats-typiques> [accessed 10 August 2017].

Police-Michel, Daniella, 'African Diaspora and Créolité: Convergence and Divergence,' *International colloquium : African Diaspora and Créolité in the Indian Ocean* (Seychelles, 27-28 October 2008) (Creole Institute 2008).

Portrait of a Struggle (Seychelles: Ministry of Education and Information, 1983).

Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature, ed. by Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner, 2nd edn. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), <www.cambridge.org/9780521480611> [accessed 16 October 2016].

Proverb ek Zedmo Seselwa (Proverbs and riddles of Seychelles) (Creole Institute, Seychelles: unpublished, 2002).

Regulation No. 115 of 1935 and No. 40 of 1937, Section 2, Seychelles Penal Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 1933 (No. 10 of 1933).

Relouzat, Raymond, *Tradition Orale et Imaginaire Créole* (Martinique: Ibis Rouge Editions, 1998).

Ripert, Pierre, *Dictionnaire des maximes, dictons, et proverbes français,* 6ême ed. (France: Maury-Eurolivres, 2000).

Rohler, Gordon, 'Calypso Reinvents Itself,' *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures*, ed. by R. Cohen & P. Toninato, Chapter 12, 170-184, (London: Routledge, 2010).

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

Sandri, Sarah, E., 'Performance, Politics and Identity in African Dance Communities in the United States', (Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 2012), https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/12328/Sandri_oregon_0171N_10316.pdf [accessed 17 December 2016].

Scarr, Deryck, *Seychelles since 1770: History of a Slave and Post-Slavery Society* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000).

Selvon, Samuel, *A Brighter sun*, (London: Longman, 1952).

Seychelles Creole Monolingual Dictionary Database (Unpublished: Creole Institute).

Seychelles People's Progressive Front Constitution, 2nd edn. (Seychelles: S.P.P.F, 1980).

Seychelles Tourism Board, *Fet'Afrik* (2016) <http://www.seychelles.travel/en/events/events/event/3-fet-afrik> [accessed 24 July 2017].

Seychelles Tourism Board, *Victoria, the capital of Seychelles is set to be more colourful and vibrant for the 29th Creole Festival* (2016) <http://www.seychelles.travel/en/news/4409-victoria-the-capital-of-the-seychelles-is-set-to-be-more-colourful-and-vibrant-for-the-29th-creole-festival> [accessed 24 July 2017].

Seymour, O. J., 'Correspondence on the Calypso,' *Kyk-over-al*, 3 (13), (1951).

Shakespeare, William, *Othello*, ed. M.R. Ridley, (1.1.88-91) (London: The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1958).

Sparks, Donald, Lee, 'Seychelles, People: Ethnic groups, languages and religions', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2015).
Sullivan, B. 'You have to be almost black to win', (Seychelles Daily, 30 May 2016) <https://www.facebook.com/Seychelles-Daily-1803688183191899/> [accessed 15 June 2016].

The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature, Vol.1, ed. by F. Abiola Irele & Simon Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

The Empire Writes Back, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 220-222 <www.mohamedrabeea.com/books/book1_3985.pdf> [accessed 7 December 2016].

The UNESCO Courrier, *Rhythm, Gesture and the Sacred* (1993), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000950/095092eo.pdf > [accessed 8 December 2016].

Valentin, Keven, *Annou Aprann Dans Kanmtole* (Country Dance manual), (Seychelles: Creole Institute, 2004).

Vergès, R., 'La Réunion : Zénès Maloya', Culture et Identité, *Témoignages,* (2009), <http://www.temoignages.re/culture/culture-et-identite/la-reunion-zenes-maloya,35783.html> [accessed 09 April 2016].

Victor, Patrick, *Griyo Lepep*, ed. by Choppy, Penda, (Mahé: Creole Institute, 2007).

Volcère, Timothe 'Creole language must be put in realistic perspective', *Seychelles Nation (Mahé)*, 11 February 2016.

Walcott, Derek, *What The Twilight Says* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

Warner-Lewis, Maureen, 'The oral tradition in the African Diaspora', in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Vol. 1. Chapter 7, 117-136 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Wilks, Ivor, 'An Asante Pharmacopeia,' *Ghana Studies Council, Newsletter,* No. 11, (1998) <http://www.ghanastudies.com/gsa/gsc98wilks.html> [accessed 14 August 2017].

Zistwar Soungoula, ed. by Choppy, Penda, (Seychelles: National Heritage Research Section, 2013).