A Rock, an Island: Exploring the independence of African Island Nations in the Indian Ocean

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Introduction:

A vast majority of African countries gained their independence in the 1950's and early 1960's, with over 30 countries gaining independence in quick succession in the six year period between 1956 and 1962 alone (Boddy-Evans, 2018). The year 1960 in particular was a significant landmark in the history of decolonisation as, in that year alone, 17 African countries gained independence (Talton, 2011). However, in the vast literature that exists detailing this period of decolonisation, very little is written about the African island nations of Mauritius and The Seychelles. These two nations lie very close together in the Indian Ocean, east of the African mainland, and have similar sizes and population densities, not to mention cultural similarities in their customs, language and ethnic makeup. Despite the fact that these countries are both included in the African Union, they are rarely treated in literature regarding African independence as being part of the decolonisation process at all. This is not, in itself, that surprising given that there is generally little academic literature to be found on states on the periphery like these, and this is particularly true for states on the periphery of the African continent. That being said, it is important that we attempt to curb this (lack of) practice by shifting our attention (and our research) to countries like the Seychelles and Mauritius, that exist largely in the periphery.

In many ways, the two countries' independence processes are also very similar. Both of them had, for instance, at one point been French colonies prior to becoming British colonies up until their respective points of independence. As we have just pointed out, they both fell outside of what is traditionally considered to have been the 'African Independence Movement'. Most of the mainland African countries that were a part of the decolonisation process that took place in the 1950's and early 1960's were in many ways connected to one

another, through for instance a network of political elites, political parties and solidarity conferences. Academics such as Frederick Cooper have made reference to this phenomena and its impact on the independence movement as a whole. At one point, for instance, Cooper points out that the politics of the African independence movement were largely "the politics of connections-regional and imperial" and that "(i)n the late 1930s, the people moving along these circuits moved in a more radical direction" (Cooper, 2002). However, due to their geographical location as well as a larger cultural disconnect, these two island nations did not have access to either a network of bordering countries or a network of Western-Educated African leaders who would aid one another throughout each of their independence struggles. The independence movements in these cultures developed, in many ways, in isolation from the mainland.

However, the same things that separate these two cases from the rest actually bind the two cases to one another as well. In other words, both the cultural and historical similarities between the Seychelles and Mauritius as well as the shared differences they have with 'mainland African independence' would suggest that there is a typology of 'African island independence' that applies to these two cases and not the others. The research question of this thesis is, therefore, the following: In what way is the freedom struggle of African island nations different from the mainland? Furthermore, what are the features peculiar to the independence movements of these two nations? What are the similarities and differences between both between the Seychelles and Mauritius' independence movements and between both of theirs and the independence movements of mainland African nations? The main factors or similarities that the thesis will address include cultural similarities between these two countries (particularly in terms of ethnic makeup and language), their shared distance from the African independence 'community', the particular relationship between

them and the colonial powers and the effect of their geopolitical location on their independence processes.

In order to accurately compare and contrast our two cases of African island independence to mainland African independence, we need to establish what is meant by mainland African independence generally. In order to do so, we turn towards the postcolonial writings of authors such as Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe and Mahmood Mamdani. Fanon, in particular in his book entitled 'The Wretched of the Earth', argues that the African identity during the time of independence was built largely in opposition to colonial powers (Fanon, 1963). While Fanon rejects the attempt to prove the existence of a common African culture for fear of erasing distinct national cultures, he does see the final end point of decolonization in Africa as being the creation of a kind of international consciousness or at least more international solidarity within the continent or otherwise. First and foremost, however, he stresses the importance of the intellectual and "radical condemnation" of colonialism. This is his common factor for defining the 'mainstream, mainland' African independence movement largely: organised and material resistance against an inherently violent and dehumanizing dominant colonial power (Fanon, 1963). Another African postcolonial author, Achille Mbembe, makes a similar distinction, writing that Africa as a whole is defined by the West in relation and in contrast to the West itself, based on the West's own stereotypical perceptions and fears regarding the continent (Mbembe and Hofmeyr, 1996). It is in the context of this relationship that the African independence movement largely found itself positioned. This is again related to in the book 'Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism' by Mahmood Mamdani, wherein it is asserted that, in order to truly gain an understanding of the post-colonial African state generally, one must first understand the all-encompassing nature of colonial

rule on that state prior to independence (Mamdani, 1996). All three of these authors suggest that the core identity of the African independence movement should exist in contrast or in opposition to the colonial power in some way. That is not to say that this opposition in itself is enough to form some kind of continent-wide African independence identity, but it is, according to these authors, a key part of what linked these mainland independence movements together. It also links to the other key aspects that bind these decolonization processes together; namely, the idea of the African natives' original ownership of the land that was subsequently taken away from them by the colonial powers as well as the common defining factor of race. Both of these factors also fed into an oppositional relationship between two specific groups i.e. the colonials and the Africans, which came to largely define African independence, in as much as African independence as a whole can be generalized and defined. These defining aspects of the mainstream African independence identity exist in some contrast to the defining aspects of the independence movements of the Seychelles and Mauritius. These island nations' independence processes are more accurately described through the works of, for example, Khal Torabully, whose poetics on 'coolitude' stress the importance of discourse and interplay between not only peoples of different cultures but also between the emancipated and the indentured (Torabully, 1992). His end goal would be a world (or at least a region) where the complexities of inter and intra-cultural discourses are more openly and fully addressed and where shared narratives and multi-faceted identity construction can be more effectively explored as well. This plays into the idea of creolized identity being distinct from mainland African identity in so much as the things that we have described as being central to the mainland African independence do not exist in these cultures. There is no feeling amongst the Creoles of there being a sense of ownership over the land on which they live since the

islands were uninhabited prior to the arrival of colonial settlers nor is there a sense of unity over race or origin in any sense since the population of these island nations are largely multi-ethnic. Therefore, the population on these islands had to look internally in order to create for themselves an identity that would permeate through their own independence struggles.

It is a shame, therefore, that the construction of this unique identity seems to have gone largely unnoticed in academic literature, with the clear exception being Torabully's incisive and diverse works on the topic of constructed Coolie identity. It seems that it remains difficult to garner a lot of attention academically to cases that exist in the periphery, particularly when it has something to do with Africa. And these cases are nowhere if not in the periphery. This thesis would argue, however, that that is at the core of what makes them interesting and what makes them worth studying. They are the way that they are due to a series of processes that separate them from the African continent. Rather than continuing to be defined in relation to who and what they are not, it was decided that these countries would create a new identity for themselves. This process took many years and it arguably ended as their respective independence processes ended. It was through these respective processes that these islands finally decided what they were. Now, that deserves to be understood.

Literature Review:

The literature mentioned in the introduction, namely the literature by Torabully, Mamdani, Mbembe and Fanon, serves as the conceptual framework for the thesis. It is through the lens of these thinkers in particular that the question of there being separate typologies for African independence on the mainland and on these island cases will be examined. Neither Mamdani, Mbembe nor Fanon seem to take these island nations into account when they write of the shared political and cultural aspects that, in their view, connect the independence movements across the African continent together. What this thesis aims to do is to reflect on these ideas by comparing and contrasting them with the works of Torabully on the culture of the countries that lie in the Indian Ocean. What this thesis will also attempt to do that Torabully does not is to apply this island typology specifically to these two countries' respective independence processes and compare those to the generalized mainland African independence process in order to not only highlight the differences between the mainland and the Indian Ocean islands but also the similarities between these islands themselves.

Aside from the literature by Torabully, Mamdani, Mbembe and Fanon that serve as the conceptual framework for the thesis itself, there is other literature that deals with the historical context surrounding the cases and the core issues of the thesis. Part of the reason for why this topic is worth addressing in the form of a thesis is that it is not a topic on which a lot of academic writing exists. With regards to the Seychelles for instance, there are very few sources that discuss the country's independence at all. In fact, one of the only sources that delves into the history of the Seychelles in any capacity is Deryck Scarr's book 'Seychelles Since 1770'. Although this book does touch on Seychellois independence and the

particular effect of the colonial powers on that process, it is only a very small part of a book that attempts to cover almost 300 years of the country's history. As a result, it touches on these processes only briefly and in a fairly superficial way, without placing it in the context of other countries either in the Indian Ocean or on the African continent itself (Scarr, 2000). The same thing could essentially be said (but with regards to the other case) of 'A new history of Mauritius' by John Addison and K. Hazareesingh, which is similarly one of the few works that discusses Mauritian history at all, let alone Mauritian independence specifically. Again, like Scarr, Addison and Hazareesingh highlight some important and interesting points about the role of colonial powers in Mauritian independence. The main aspect of Addison and Hazareesingh's work that is of relevance to this thesis is their highlighting in particular of the crucial role of immigrated Indian indentured labourers in the development of politics and the independence movement specifically in Mauritius. The book, in fact, starts to tell the story of Mauritian politics essentially from the perspective of these indentured labour workers, especially starting from the point at which many of these Indian immigrants entered the population after slavery was abolished in 1835. The book, however, does at that point focus on that aspect (namely the influence of these labour workers) to such an extent that it makes the eventual gaining of independence seem almost incidental, since independence was, for a long time, not necessarily the main focus of the Mauritian Labour Party. Rather, the party was formed as a means of gaining more rights for overworked and underpaid labourers. Addison and Hazareesingh's focus is therefore not on independence and while that is not in itself a problem, it does mean that the way that the two authors approach the topic of Mauritius' independence is quite different than how this thesis aims to do that same thing. The book is, in a sense, about describing the history of the country through the lens of these actors as opposed to analysing the independence process of this

country, which is more of what this thesis aims to do (Addison and Hazareesingh, 1984). Other available articles similarly fail to go beyond mere description. One such article is an article on Seychellois modern history by J. Coen, which looks more particularly at the state's colonial past (Coen, 1974). This article provides a background on the as-of-now agreed upon facts and historical narrative concerning the lead up to independence in the Seychelles, but it does not go on to provide an argument or a deeper analysis of how or why the process of independence in this country took place in the way that it did.

There are other parts of the existing literature that look, like Fanon, Mamdani and Mbembe, more generally at African independence as a general phenomenon. Most of these sources look particularly at independence movements on the African mainland, often without considering the Seychelles or Mauritius at all in their analyses. Works such as John A. Marcum's 'The United States, the Soviet Union and twenty-five years of African independence' and Michael Crowder's 'Whose dream was it anyway?: twenty-five years of African independence', for instance, both look at African decolonisation as a long-term process, examining its effects as well as its relative successes and failures as a whole. Through doing this, Marcum argues that African nations have largely failed to capitalize on political and economic potentials since decolonisation occurred (Marcum, 2018) while Crowder, in contrast, argues that current issues in Africa have been unfairly blamed on African leaders, while many of the still existing problems are, in actuality, either (at least partly) the fault of previous colonial powers or they are only framed to be issues based on overly Eurocentric standards that have been themselves unfairly placed upon African leaders (Crowder, 1987). Another author, Michael Hunt, argued in 'The World Transformed 1945 to the Present' that part of the reason for this Africa-wide surge of independence is that, in the 1930's, many future African elites and leaders were learning about the very

concept of self-determination through Western education in European, British and American universities. These leaders (Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere amongst others) were also able to make connections in the West that would later become vital during their own national independence struggles (Hunt, 2017). Other authors, such as Albert Memmi and Ali Mazrui in their respective works such as 'The Colonizer and the Colonized' and 'The Africans: A Triple Heritage', would argue that African independence continent-wide should have a very particular goal when it came to the colonial relationship. They would both go so far as to say that the African independence movement as a whole should align themselves specifically against the colonial power as a general entity in order to reclaim the freedom that was once taken from all of them. These sources in particular showcase a key thematic point that carries through across the majority of mainland African nations: namely that acrimonious relationship with the colonial power (Memmi, 1965), (Mazrui, 1986). Frederick Cooper wrote of the colonial relationship in his book entitled 'Africa since 1940: The past of the present.' Here, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is described in terms of a concept that Cooper himself coined, namely that of the 'Gatekeeper State'. According to him, because the colonial powers ruled these African nations largely from the outside, and without much focus on the population or the internals of these countries in general, they were largely unable to convince the Africans living in these countries of the legitimacy of their rule. He writes in particular that Gatekeeper States "had great difficulty getting beyond the limitations of a gatekeeper state" and that, because of that, these Gatekeeper States had a great deal of trouble "extending their power and their command of people's respect, if not support, inward" (Cooper, 2002). Because they remained such on the outside of these cultures, it made it easier for the Africans to rally against them and to see them as a faceless enemy that had no

understanding of them or their culture, but was unfairly attempting to rule over them regardless. Cooper also writes a great deal about Pan-Africanism and the role that it played in African independence movements. Although he makes sure to point out that African nations (and in particular their political parties and independence movements) were by no means a monolith or all the same, he does also at several points in his book take time to point out the value of Pan-Africanism both in terms of being able to unite individual countries "beyond individual territories" (Cooper, 2002) as well as in terms of how it made it more possible for these different countries to position themselves squarely against a common enemy in the colonizers, as many of the pre-existing Pan-Africanist movements almost simultaneously turned against the colonial powers after Ethiopia was invaded by Italy in 1935. Cooper also highlights in an illuminating way the role of a certain pocket of the African population in establishing Pan-Africanism as a key cultural force i.e. the same Western-educated established African elite that Hunt also discusses. While this is all very relevant to the content of this thesis, much of what Cooper writes about what he sees as the failure of individual African leaders and governments to live up to their political promises after they were able to gain independence (while interesting in and of itself) is not strictly relevant to the issues that we are exploring. What sources like these do that does have relevance to this particular thesis and thesis topic is that they highlight commonalities across African nations generally in terms of their independence processes. These commonalities, as described by these sources in particular, would include, for instance, the following: violence across nations, poverty (through the exploitation of African farmers and the taking of land, for example) or misgovernment. While these sources are useful in providing general insight into these overarching aspects in mainland African independence as a whole and in providing a basis on which we can place the conceptual ideas that we take

from Fanon, Mbembe and Mamdani, what they do not do is provide particular insight into the independence of the two specific cases that are the focus of this paper. Nevertheless, these sources do allow for a particular distinction to be made between the typical mainland African independence process and those of Mauritius and the Seychelles, which does show another level of the similarities between these two cases: they exist in a particular place on the world stage where it seems to each that the other is the only comparable case.

As was established early on in the introduction, there are very few available sources that deal directly with the independence processes of either the Seychelles or Mauritius. One that does deal somewhat directly with the independence processes of both countries is 'An exploratory study of constitutional design in three island states: Seychelles, Comoros, and Mauritius' by Elizier S. Poupko. This paper does, however, focus fairly specifically on constitutional design and how that affected democratisation outcomes in these African island cases, with little reference to the cultural aspects inherent within these two island nations, which is more what this thesis will focus on in particular. With that being said, Poupko makes some very interesting and relevant arguments regarding the lead up to independence in both the Seychelles and Mauritius. The article, along with giving a descriptive political history of the Seychelles from initial colonial settlement to legislative elections in September 2016, provides a particular narrative for the independence process in this country: one that focusses particularly on the disagreements between the two emerging parties at the time, the Seychelles Democratic Party (the SDP) and the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) as well as between their respective leaders, James Mancham and France Albert René, on the topic of independence. The SPUP, who were more in favour of independence from Britain would often find themselves at odds with the other main political party in the Seychelles, the SDP, who were keen for the Seychelles to remain as

closely aligned with the United Kingdom as possible for the foreseeable future. The Poupko article goes on to commend the relative success of Mauritius' constitutional design and general growth economically in its post-independence period, despite the ethnic division between groups such as Hindus, Muslims, Sino-Mauritian, Creoles and Franco-Mauritians, the effects of which were felt throughout the entirety of the Mauritian independence processes. What this part of the literature shows is that there are some fundamental differences in what drove the respective independence movements in the two cases. Poupko essentially describes the independence process of the Seychelles in terms of a political and ideological struggle between the two main parties at the time, namely the SDP and the SPUP. This independence struggle is marked here in particular by a struggle for power by the leaders of these two parties, in Mancham and René (Poupko, 2017). The fact that the former of the two figures was largely a supporter of the West (and therefore broadly speaking, the capitalist ideology) while the latter of socialism (dpseychelles.org, 2006) only further served to differentiate them from each other and increase the severity of the ideological struggle between them (Uranie, 2016). On the other hand, Poupko outlines the Mauritian independence process in terms of a longer series of different struggles (as opposed to one linear struggle leading up to independence as in the Seychelles), many of which would eventually lead to outbursts of violence, between several separate ethnic groups. This source, as can be seen, is very informative on this particular side of the topic, but in the absence of other sources that would provide other arguments and points of view, its value becomes limited in a sense, as any source in this position naturally would be. Because, for instance, each of these sources only deals with one of the countries without comparing them or placing their argument in a wider context, there is very little by way of comparative argumentation or analysis to be found in Poupko's writing. One of the main

aims of this thesis would therefore be to provide the kind of comparative analysis that sources such as this are currently lacking in their descriptions of these African island nations.

One of the few articles that deal directly with Mauritian independence specifically is Jean Houbert's 'Mauritius: Independence and Dependence', which places particular emphasis on the role of the colonial powers in Mauritius' independence process. Houbert implies throughout the paper that the specific relationship between Mauritius and its colonial power arose in the absence of a grassroots national liberation movement, the likes of which are often found in and hence associated with mainland African independence movements in general. The article establishes one of the main reasons for the absence of one such movement as being the fact that Mauritius was uninhabited prior to the arrival of settler colonials. He goes on to imply that the trigger point of Mauritius' eventual gaining of independence in 1968 was the British decision to install a military base somewhere in the Indian Ocean and their subsequent decision for it to be installed in Diego Garcia in the Chagos archipelago, which happened to be owned by Mauritius. Many of the aspects that Houbert brings up with regards to Mauritius also apply to the other African island nations off of the Western coast, including the Seychelles. What this thesis would expand upon is in making those kinds of connections and exploring what makes Mauritian independence, in light of these aspects, similar to or different to (for example) Seychellois independence (Houbert, 1981).

The issue with the existing literature, therefore, is not solely that there has been very little investigation into what makes the independence process of these two cases (Mauritius and the Seychelles) distinctive and interesting, but also that there has been little investigation into the particularities or the implications of the political history of these two countries in

general. There has not been much done to place these case studies into a wider context, such as African decolonisation in general, in order to for instance see what they could add to our already limited understanding of what that is. What we have instead is a collection of articles and books that only really complement each other on a surface level; that do not share much analytical or theoretical DNA. One could almost see this literature as a metaphor for our two cases: they lie context-less in a sea of theory, detached from the mainstream mainland, connected by definition but detached by necessity. The 'literature gap' that this paper hopes to fill, therefore, is actually two separate gaps: the lack of literature surrounding these African island nations specifically and the lack of literature that delves into the role of the colonial relationship on outlier independence cases generally.

Methodology:

As far as methodology goes, the research will be explanatory and deductive in nature. I plan to (as suggested earlier) do a comparative case study using the two African island nations of the Seychelles and Mauritius. The data that I will be using will be mainly historical in nature, namely from sources including, but not limited to, articles, books, government reports and records. This thesis will take much more of an analytical approach, generally looking at thematic similarities and/or differences between the two African island cases as well as analysing how these two cases together fit into the context of the larger discourse surrounding African independence as a whole. This will mainly be done by studying cultural and colonial similarities within the two cases and the two (potential) typologies of mainland and island African independence movements.[1]

The first thing that must be done is we need to define, as much as is possible, a typology of mainland African independence. This is because it is initially out of a sense of not belonging to, or existing in, this existing typology that a separate typology of African island independence (should it be deemed to, in fact, exist) will begin to be defined. This attempt to define mainland African independence will mainly be done, as mentioned in the introduction, through the study of the work of various African postcolonial authors. These works can show us better than any other source the power of a shared identity in defining mainland independence movements in Africa generally. Authors and scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe and Mahmood Mamdani would argue that, in their understanding, African struggles are forged by the unifying forces of race and origin (Fanon, 1963; Mbembe and Hofmeyr, 1996; Mamdani, 1996). Once this has been done, this shared identity that

[1] It should be noted at this point that, since we are dealing here with typologies, there are going to necessarily be generalizations regarding, for instance, the sentiments of the African mainland generally.

represents the core of mainland African independence will be contrasted with the identity (or identities) of the two African island cases of Mauritius and the Seychelles. This will be done by, again, contrasting the shared African independence identity (as described by Fanon, Mbembe and Mamdani) with the identity of these island nations, which will also be analysed through the use of postcolonial literature. This literature, however, will be less focussed on independence and liberation and more focussed on cultural aspects. Authors such as Khal Torabully have long stressed the fact that cultures such as those that exist in these island nations are defined more by discourse and a self-created Creole identity than by a shared sense of opposition to colonial power. Torabully's concept of 'coolitude', which is a term that refers to the experience of migrants and diasporas and the cultures that they create, fits into the framework of these African island nations as these nations were uninhabited before becoming populated by slaves and migrants from South Asia. Due to these historical factors, the identity of these nations reveal themselves more through the discourse between migrants of different origins as well as between the colonials and the colonized. According to Torabully, the thing that would unify the populations of these countries in particular would, in point of fact, not be a sense of opposition to their unjust leaders but full and open discourse between all of the diverse peoples and social groups within these nations in order to establish a shared identity of their own (Torabully, 1992). Through delving into works and authors such as these, we aim to illustrate the core differences in the ideology, perspectives and identities between the independence movements of mainland African nations and Island African nations.

The next part of the argumentation will focus on comparisons between the two island cases. Aspects in particular that will be compared will be cultural specificities and historical aspects to do with their colonial history. Any similarities found would then be compared, again, to

mainland African independence generally in order to demonstrate the validity of the idea of an African island independence typology. In terms of which cultural specificities are to be addressed in the thesis, the ethnic makeup, languages and customs of the two nations in particular will be compared while the section dealing with the historical colonial aspects will specifically address the internal political divisions that existed in both the Seychelles and Mauritius prior to their respective points of independence as well as how the actual physical, geographical location of these countries also affected their independence processes in ways specific to them. Here, I use the term historical colonial aspects specifically because both the internal political divisions in Mauritius and the Seychelles and the influence of the countries' respective geographical locations on their independence processes will be analysed through a historical framework. It is through highlighting the differences between these two cases in this way that we allow ourselves to ask ultimately bigger questions about the proposed typology of African island independence. For instance, it allows us to ask questions such as whether or not these differences in and of themselves can be considered enough to invalidate this new typology entirely. If not, can and should this typology be more widely applied? What would this new typology's place be in the wider context of the discourse surrounding African independence discourse? What would its existence tell us about some of the assumptions that we make regarding not only the universality of African pre-independence sentiment in IR, but also the nature of the relationship between a colonial power and the local population in any given situation or independence process? These questions will be addressed later on in this thesis as well, also through the lens of the works and thoughts of the postcolonial authors and thinkers mentioned: namely Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe and Mahmood Mamdani as well as Khal

Torabully, who will help form the central framework through which we look at these two African island cases.

Chapter: History and Typology

While the Seychelles had been discovered by various parties before 1770 (notably by ships from the East India Company in 1609 as well as by the Portuguese a century earlier in the early 1500's), it is in 1770 that settlers arrived on Seychellois soil for the first time, 14 years after the islands were claimed by the French in 1756. Prior to this point, the islands were completely uninhabited. The initial French colonialists brought slaves with them from the African continent, who would become the ancestors of the local Creoles. Later on, in 1794, the Seychelles were surrendered to the British, leading to the inclusion of more peoples, both settler and slave, into the country. In 1835, slavery was abolished by the British, which led to even more people being brought into the Seychelles in a myriad of ways. Many slaves liberated from slave ships going from East Africa to the Middle East were settled in the Seychelles, for instance. From 1861 to 1874, around 2400 people in total had been brought to the Seychelles. Along with slaves from East Africa, many Indians were also introduced into the population from the other side of the Indian Ocean. The language of Seychelles Creole, still one of the three official languages in the Seychelles (the other two being English and French), and certainly the most widely spoken language in the country, was developed as a way for peoples of different races and backgrounds to communicate with one another. Eventually, the first Seychellois political party, the Taxpayers Association, was formed in 1939 as a way of protecting the interests of the plantocracy, who had been badly affected by the economic issues that arose in the wake of the First World War (Scarr, 2000).

Much of the political developments within the Seychelles during the 20th century were in some way informed by these origins, either in terms of the initial settlement and how that played out or in terms of how the different cultures and peoples in the Seychelles interacted

with each other and how they came together to create what the people on the island would consider today to be Seychellois culture. It was only in 1964 that any real Seychellois political parties were formed at all (apart from the aforementioned Taxpayers Association). In that year, both the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP, later the Seychelles People's Progressive Front or SPPF), led by France-Albert René and the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP), led by James Mancham, were formed. René (and, by extension, the SPUP party as a whole) aimed for a future wherein the Seychelles was an independent, socialist nation while Mancham's SDP supported the interests of partners and businessmen. What he aimed for was a Seychelles that was closely affiliated with Britain politically and economically. At the end of that year, an election was held and the SDP won. Despite the fact that the SDP had sought closer integration with Britain while the SPUP had supported the idea of independence, both parties ended up advocating for independence in the elections in 1974, resulting in the eventual gaining of Seychellois independence in 1976. The reason for the SDP's change in policy was that Britain was unwilling to fully integrate the Seychelles to the extent that the SDP and Mancham had wanted. According to Mancham himself, he was invited to the Foreign Office in 1973 in order "to be told in no uncertain terms that integration was a no-go channel, and that bearing in mind international leftist pressures and the fact that Mr René's party was receiving increasing finance from communist sources, it was felt that I should alter course and go for independence" (Scarr, 2000).

Historically, the process leading up to independence in Mauritius was, in many ways, not dissimilar to that of its neighbour in the Indian Ocean. The initial discovery of Mauritius was done by the Arabs at some point prior to the 16th century. Later on, the country was visited by the Portuguese at some point between 1507 and 1513. In 1598, the Dutch East India Company arrived in Mauritius and, as a result, Dutch colonization began in earnest in 1638.

At the same time, Dutch colonialists started bringing in other peoples, including 105 Malagasy slaves, to the island. In 1715, after the island was abandoned by the Netherlands, France came in and colonized the island once again, ultimately coming to occupy it in 1721. After the island (at that point called 'Isle de France') was used to attack British commercial ships during the Napoleonic wars, the British attacked it back and captured it in 1810. After the 1814 Treaty of Paris, the island was renamed to Mauritius and the British promised they would allow for the maintenance of the local languages, laws, customs and traditions. In 1835, slavery was abolished, as mentioned previously in relation to the Seychelles. In Mauritius, the effect of this was that indentured labourers were brought in in order to work on the local sugar plantations. These workers came from several different places, including China, Indonesia, East Africa and Madagascar, but most workers eventually came from India. Between 1838 and 1870, the number of Indian labourers working on sugar fields increased by almost 200,000 (Addison and Hazareesingh, 1984). The massive influx of Indians onto the island around this time to work on these plantations had a great impact on the internal politics and economics on the nation, as well as on social aspects of life. The intense nature of Indian labour led to a great deal of animosity between those workers and those in power, namely the Franco-Mauritian elite. There were a number of reasons for the disenfranchisement of Indian workers around this time. For one thing, many of these workers had been misled about what lay in wait for them both on the island itself and on the journey leading up to it, leading them to think that the work would be fairly easy and that the boat trip would only last a couple of days at the most. For another, they were given no better accommodation nor working or living conditions than the slave workers of previous years had had. According to Addison and Hazareesingh, "It was relentless, heavy, unpleasant work" (Addison and Hazareesingh, 1984). On top of this, Indians had a social

stigma put on them as well, as exemplified by the derogatory term that sprung up in the country around this time: Coolie, which later on became the basis for many of the works of scholar and poet Khal Torabully, as well as the various rumours and stereotypes created by planters in order to justify increased regulations on workers. These stereotypes included the idea that Indians were restless, unreliable, unhygienic and unsanitised. As time went on and their population increased and they were given more voting opportunities, these Indo-Mauritians were able to gain more social prominence and political power in Mauritius, thanks to the work of various individuals of influence such as Manilal Doctor (an Indian barrister who became a member of the Action Liberale Party) and R. Gujadhar (one of the first ever Indians to be elected to the Mauritian Council of Government). Throughout the 1920's, conflicts between the Franco-Mauritian elite plantation owners and the Indian indentured workers reached the point of violence, often resulting in a disproportionate amount of Indian deaths. By 1936, the Mauritius Labour Party was formed in order to protect the rights and interests of these Indian workers. In 1948, this party won the elections for the Legislative Assembly; thereby marking the first win for a political party not ran by the Franco-Mauritians. This is partly because the number of registered voters since the last election in 1936 had increased by about 60,000 people with a large amount of these new voters being Indian workers. In 1961, the British decided that they would allow for self-government in Mauritius, with the implication being that eventually independence would be granted as well. In light of this, a coalition made up of the Labour Party, the Muslim Committee of Action and the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB) won a majority in yet another election for the Legislative Assembly in 1967. Mauritian independence was later successfully achieved on 12 March 1968. This is not to say that the end of this process was not complicated or violent, for the violence that burst out just prior to independence became so

much that British troops had to intervene. 300 people died during this outburst of violence (Addison and Hazareesingh, 1984).

With these histories in mind, what would a typology of African island independence look like? What would the defining aspects of it be? How would it be different from the typology of African mainland independence? As described by authors such as Fanon, Mamdani and Mbembe, many Africans on the mainland around the time of African independence generally found themselves bound together both by the circumstances that they found were largely imposed upon them by the colonial powers as well as by their common origins and racial identity. They, first of all, felt connected as well as emboldened in their pursuit of independence by a very clear sense of opposition to the colonial powers, who were for all intents and purposed considered to be, and treated as, a foreign invader who had been imposing an unjust and unfair rule for far too long. This is a common point amongst postcolonial authors. Noted author and essayist Albert Memmi wrote in his seminal work 'The Colonizer and the Colonized', for instance, that "colonization is, above all, economic and political exploitation" and that "[t]he mere existence of the colonizer creates oppression, and only the complete liquidation of colonization permits the colonized to be freed" (Memmi, 1965). There is unity in oppression and by framing the independence plight in terms of a continent-wide freedom struggle, a particular type of African independence identity can be created, developed and cultivated. The shared African sense of opposition towards their colonial leaders at the time was only intensified by the principle of Pan-Africanism, which encourages political and cultural unity amongst Africans and people of African descent (Kuryla, 2019). Author Frederick Cooper, while being somewhat critical of the idea that "French and British rule in Africa collapsed… because of an all-out assault from a clearly defined colonized people" (he says instead that it collapsed "because the imperial

system broke apart at its internal cracks, as Africans selectively incorporated into political structures based on citizenship or self-determination seized the initiative and escalated their demands for power"), does point out the vital role that Pan-Africanism played in consolidating this shared sense of opposition. As he himself states, "Pan-Africanism was one of several ways in which African organizations looked beyond individual territories", indicating the role that Pan-Africanism played in creating a sense of political unity across these African countries, which eventually resulted in a continent-wide surge of independence movements after the Second World War. Cooper says as much when he writes, "So 1945, the moment of victory, took on a special meaning... It was a moment which Pan-Africanist leaders tried to seize, to formulate goals and strategy for confronting the entire edifice of colonialism across Africa and its diaspora." Cooper often makes reference to how a shared sense of Africanism across states can easily translate into a shared sense of opposition to the colonial powers. As he writes in his book entitled Africa since 1940, "interwar Pan-Africanism had several elite versions" and "(a)ll of these movements were angered when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and many tried to mobilize against this new imperialist conquest" (Cooper, 2002). One can see illustrated here the sense of comradeship amongst states that came with this form of pan-Africanism: an attack on one country was not considered to exist in isolation from other African countries. It was largely at this point that Pan-Africanism shifted from being about political and cultural unity amongst Africans regardless of state or location to becoming a movement with a much more specific goal in mind: the liberation of these Africans from the now-former colonial powers that had long been ruling over them unjustly. The strength and universality of this sentiment is backed up by a sense of not only Africans belonging to the land but of African ownership of that very land. This connection to the African land only served to further fuel

the anti-colonial sentiment, as it was felt that the colonial powers had claimed ownership of something that very clearly did not belong to them. It was this connection to the land that also allowed for grassroots uprisings and movements to occur in an organic and effective way. Ali Mazrui refers to these first two aspects in his documentary 'The Africans: A Triple Heritage' wherein he highlights these two main influences in Africa: the colonial and imperialist legacy of the West; and Africa's own indigenous legacy (Mazrui, 1986). Mazrui saw the goal of African independence as being to end the relationship between African nations and the Western World, as it did not, in his mind, benefit these African nations at all (Sesay, 2002). The third aspect that connected these nations (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa) was, of course, race. People across Africa struggling for their independence could relate to one another through a shared 'blackness' as well as a shared history of racist actions and policies on behalf of the colonial powers that had negatively affected their lives in various ways, both economic and social. All three of these factors coalesced in a way to unify the African people by, as Fanon puts it, "the radical decision to remove from its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial, basis" (Fanon, 1963) against what Mamdani would refer to as "decentralized despotism", or a form of apartheid that, rather than being unique to South Africa, "is actually the generic form of the colonial state in Africa" (Mamdani, 1996).

On the mainland, another aspect that allowed for these African states to be able to align themselves so evenly against the colonial powers partly was that they were for such a long time actively kept at such a distance from the colonizer, as authors such as Frederick Cooper have described. As Cooper describes in his book, Africa since 1940, "Colonial states had ultimately derived their authority from the movement of military force from outside… (they) could turn to the armed forces of the distant metropole to insure control of the gate" but

"they had weak instruments for entering into the social and cultural realm over which they presided." Hence, as Cooper also says at one point in his book, "One of the origins of instability in Africa is the instability of gatekeepers to keep the gate" because their simultaneous control over the state and distance from the culture within those states allowed for a true sense of cultural opposition from within these countries to develop and grow across the continent (Cooper, 2002).

Because of the specific histories of these two island cases, this same typology does not apply to them. None of the three core aspects that define the mainland African independence typology can be found in either of these nations. They, first of all, do not have the same kind of relationship with the colonial powers that those African nations on the mainland did. James Mancham, the leader of the SDP, once stated for instance that most Seychellois "look upon Britain, not as an exploiting colonial power, but as a benefactor and champion of human dignity and freedom" (Scarr, 2000). In Mauritius, the colonial power was also not particularly thought of as being a major source of discontent or unwanted influence on the lives of locals. In fact, it was much more the Franco-Mauritian elite plantation owners that filled this role rather than the colonial power itself as they held more immediate influence on the lives of those who would go on to influence Mauritius' independence process. Both of these island nations were also, of course, uninhabited prior to their initial discovery and settlement by the French (in the case of the Seychelles) and the Dutch (in that of Mauritius) respectively. It was only after the discovery of these islands that the colonial settlers brought the slaves onto the island nations that would be the ancestors of much of the local population. As Jean Houbert states about Mauritius, for example:

> The majority of the present-day inhabitants are the descendants of those who willingly and unwillingly arrived and stayed during the last two centuries, so Mauritius is not a 'settler colony' in the same sense as Australia. It is not a replica of the European 'mother country' beyond the seas, but rather a flotsam left behind by the wreck of the colonial world. In Mauritius, colonialism was not something which came from outside; it was built into the fabric of the whole society" (Houbert, 1981).

Because of this, there is not the same sense amongst the population of these island nations that the land is something that belongs to them or that it is something that was at one point unfairly taken away from them by a colonial power. They do not have that same connection to the land or to each other through the idea of a shared origin. This ties in to the question of race on these islands as well. After the initial settlement, many different kinds of people with different ethnic backgrounds were introduced into the populations of both countries, namely people from an Indian background. They had an enormous influence on what eventually became the makeup of the people as well as the language and the culture of these countries. By the time we get to a point in both of these island nations where the independence process can begin in earnest, race is also no longer in and of itself a common unifying factor. Race could not be used as a way of uniting the population against an oppressive colonial power because no one racial group in either the Seychelles or Mauritius had had the same historical experience with that colonial power. Many of the Indians who had come to these islands after they first became inhabited to work on the plantations would not, for instance, have had the same experiences with the colonials that the East African slaves who had (more often than not) been taken there against their will and forced to work on those same plantations but without pay would have had. The cornerstones of African independence identity as it had been understood on the mainland were therefore

largely inapplicable here, making it so that a different lens needs to be used to understand their particular independence processes.

With this in mind, the typology of these countries fits more in line with the works of Khal Torabully, who in his books and poetry about 'coolitude' often highlights that what makes the culture of these island nations unique and distinct is the fact that they are comprised of many different groups of people of different origins, none of whom have a real claim to being the owners of the land, who have been forced to carve their own shared identity together. Torabully also defines his concept of coolitude in contrast to Césaire's concept of Négritude. Even if the two concepts are in many ways connected, for instance by the common aim of recognition and respect and a raising of voices that had otherwise been silenced up until this point in history, they are in many other ways very different. Thematically, for instance, there are many differences between the two concepts. Véronique Bagard, for instance, writes that "Coolitude is not a racial nor ethnic movement… (t)here is here no attempt to define the essence and qualities of the coolie" and:

> "While *Négritude* relied on a fixed and static identity, coolitude, as it is defined by Torabully, adheres to a contemporary vision of identity that is anchored in plurality and constant change epitomized in the movements of the ocean and the imagery of the coral. Coolitude is inscribed in diversity and takes different shapes and waves according to socio-historico-geographical-economic contexts" (Bragard, 2012).

While the two concepts have similarities at their core and are intertwined in many ways, Torabully has far more on his mind than simply creating a slightly different version of Négritude and consequently applying that to the experiences of the inhabitants of these African islands in the Indian Ocean. What he seems to have in mind instead is exploring the

uniqueness of the shared identities that developed in these countries. These shared identities are created through the through line among the populations of being a nation of immigrants; of 'routes' rather than 'roots', as well as through the melding of their cultures into something that is uniquely and newly their own, as highlighted for instance by their food, traditions and languages. More value is placed in these nations on constructive and positive discourse between these different groups in order to create new aspects of their culture. According to Torabully, the thing that would unify the populations of these countries in particular would, in point of fact, not be a sense of opposition to their unjust leaders but full and open discourse between all of the diverse peoples and social groups within these nations in order to establish a shared identity of their own (Torabully, 1992). In many ways, in these nations, the colonial power simply existed almost as if they were one of those groups. They become a part of the conversation and the discourse in the same way that any of the other actors (such as ethnic groups, political parties and unions) in these nations are as opposed to being, in a sense, the enemy that these conversations are about. In a poem that he wrote entitled 'Worker bees of the colonies', Torabully sums up in a very eloquent and evocative way the essential settlement that this thesis applies to the island nation cases with the following words:

> "In our tongues, we're at the fertile frontier of codes, to hear a word among the exchanges of masters and slaves. Is this why my true mother tongue is poetry? Why my only native land is the Earth? For this, I am ready to quell all border quarrels so all may see our star and share our common heritage: flesh and blood" (Torabully, 2018).

Torabully's typology of these island nations would essentially be summed up as follows: In isolation from the mainland and in place of a sense of identity that comes from the common racial and geographical origin of its population, these island nations have been forced to create their own identity through the pulling together of disparate cultural elements from different places. Because of having done this, these cultures subsequently put less value in oppositional movements and more value on constructive discourse amongst different actors, including those who would at one point be considered enemies, or former 'masters' as Torabully refers to them (Torabully, 2018). This would, again, seem to be incongruous with the way that postcolonial authors have described the colonial relationship on the mainland. Albert Memmi, for instance, refers at one point in his book to "the failure of assimilation", which he describes as being "the opposite of colonization". While he sees nothing inherently wrong with assimilation as an idea, he feels it is unlikely to work and that what really must be done is that the colonized "must cease defining himself through the categories of colonizers" as the "refusal of the colonized cannot be anything but absolute, that is, not only revolt, but a revolution" (Memmi, 1965). Torabully does not seem to perceive the islands in the Indian Ocean in these terms. There, assimilation is the key to self-definition rather than a roadblock towards it and the absolute refusal of the colonized is less necessary than the cultivation of new cultures and perspectives.

Chapter 2: Independence

Now that we have established the basis for our proposed typology of African island nations, we can apply this typology more specifically to the independence processes of these two nations. It is unsurprising that the respective independence processes of these nations would also be tied into these typologies in important ways, as the typologies are based on deep-rooted cultural aspects. In fact, the typology of the African island nation as we have so far described can be very useful in identifying and explaining many of the unique traits of the independence processes of these two countries. Firstly, these independence processes had developed on their own in very specific ways and were, therefore, uniquely disconnected from the mainland decolonization movement. This can be seen in the Seychelles, for instance, by the general sentiment felt by the Creole population that they did not share much of a cultural connection with the Africans on the mainland, nor did they feel as if they had strong political ties with them either. The Seychellois did not see themselves as particularly African, not even those who had descended directly from slaves brought over from the mainland by the initial colonial settlers. Any efforts to appeal to the African nature of the Seychellois people would be met with little reaction other than perhaps some sense of scepticism. This can be seen by how, for instance, the various repeated and tenacious attempts by the SPUP party in the Seychelles to appeal to a sense of connection between the local Creoles and their African brethren failed to result in votes or an increase in poll numbers. The independence movement in Mauritius had even less of a connection to the mainland, as the driving force throughout the Mauritian independence period were mostly (at least initially) indentured labour workers of Indian rather than African origin. Their path to independence was less as a result of the influence of (or a sense of connection to)

mainland independence movements and more as a result of wanting to secure more rights for the population of (at that point, mostly immigrant) indentured workers on the island.

Similiarly, as previously mentioned, these nations also had a particular kind of relationship to the colonial power that differed largely to the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized on the mainland. Neither the Seychellois nor the Mauritian independence processes were framed in terms of a debate between an independence movement on one side and the colonial power on the other, with the former fighting intensely for their rightful goal of independence and the latter attempting to contain the movement in order to maintain their own unobstructed power and control. In the case of the Seychelles, the independence debate was mainly fought between the two political parties in the Seychelles, the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) and the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP), with the former aiming for an independent Seychelles aligned with the Soviet Union and with Communism and the latter aiming for stronger ties and greater integration with the colonial power i.e. Great Britain. Britain itself, however, was not directly involved in this part of the political discourse at all. On top of this, it was actually Britain that convinced James Mancham, then head of the SDP, to soften that party's formerly anti-independence stance following a consultation at the British Foreign Office in 1973. After this, there was more or less an agreement between the two main political parties that Seychellois independence should and would happen in the near future, in large part due to that decision by the British Foreign Office. The main disagreement between the two parties was about, again, what would happen after independence and, specifically, how close politically and economically the Seychelles would be with the British. This contrasts, again, with what we've established about mainland independence movements in continental Africa whose aims were more definitive in that they aimed to cut off ties with the colonial power completely, as

exemplified by the works of authors such as Albert Memmi and Ali Mazrui. In Mauritius, the British colonial powers were similarly uninvolved with the independence process and the independence discourse for the most part. The question of independence was brought up in Mauritius after the political rise of the Mauritian Labour Party (MLP), whose aim prior to gaining independence was primarily to gain and protect the rights of the indentured labour population of the country. At the same time, running against them were the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD), who were aiming to protect the interests of the sugar plantations that employed these very workers. This party was anti-independence, but not necessarily because of a sense of loyalty to the colonial power. They were more concerned simply with trying to limit the influence of the largely Indian population of workers whose interests the Labour Party were actively fighting to protect at that point and who were the primary base of that same party. Addison and Hazareesingh say that, in fact, the PMSD was afraid of Mauritian independence primarily because they were afraid of "the political dominance of Indo-Mauritians which they believed would follow" (Addison and Hazareesingh, 1984).

The PMSD's anti-independence stance was not even representative of the stance of the British. This is also uncharacteristic of what we would see in the mainland African typology. Usually what we would see in those cases is a colonial power that is aligned politically with the anti-independence party of the African nation (should one of those exist) or at the very least against the pro-independence party. In the case of Mauritius, the colonial government had allowed for self-government and began negotiating the terms of independence in 1961, a full seven years before it actually happened. Prior to independence, the British had even aided the pro-independence MLP in dealing with issues to do with communal strife using their own troops. Part of the reason for why the colonial power was, in this case, more open

to independence was strategic. Britain had been interested, prior to Mauritian independence, in acquiring the Chagos Islands from Mauritius in order to build a military base in partnership with the United States. The question of British acquisition of these territories became a key part of the independence negotiations. Ultimately, it was decided through these negotiations that Britain would acquire the islands through a payment of £3 million. Authors such as Jean Houbert have implied that Mauritius' eventual gaining of independence in 1968 is to do largely with the fact that the British wanted to install a military base somewhere in the Indian Ocean and decided on Diego Garcia in the Chagos archipelago, which happened to be owned by Mauritius at the time. In order to gain access to this island, therefore, it was negotiated into the Mauritian independence deal. Interestingly, initially the British looked at Mahé, the main island of the Seychelles as another possibility before settling on Diego Garcia in the end (Houbert, 1981). This kind of negotiation-based independence process that was relatively free of physical and/or discourse-based violence is not at all representative of the typology that we have established and applied to mainland African independence generally. In particular, it flies in the face of the ideas of authors such as Ali Mazrui, who would have all African nations completely sever their ties with their respective colonial powers because he believes that there is nothing to be gained from this ongoing relationship from an African perspective (Sesay, 2002). Yet, this type of process does apply to the island nation typology based on Torabully's work, in so much as a party based on uniting various groups of people through dialogue across racial and social lines were also able to achieve the common goal of independence by having an open discourse with the 'former masters' as Torabully would call them – again across established racial and social lines (Torabully, 2018).

Torabully's sentiments about quelling quarrels amongst different peoples through discourses and the exchanges of masters and slaves play into the distinct relationship that these two cases have with the colonizers. Again, the histories of this relationship are very different to the history of the relationships that the majority of the African mainland had with their respective colonial powers. They did not have the same experiences with the colonial powers and so we cannot expect them to approach gaining independence from these powers in the same way. While those on the mainland often felt as if they were being invaded by unwanted outsiders, the experience of the population of these island nations was either that they had been brought to these islands along with the colonizers or that they had immigrated there of their own accord. From the very beginning, this affected the dynamic between the colonizer and the rest of the population. With neither group feeling as if they were the invader nor the invaded, they already had more in common with one another than the Africans on the mainland did with the colonizers there. Their relationship was already becoming more nuanced. As time went on, and more and more people from all over with different racial and cultural backgrounds came to these islands, this relationship became even more complex. We no longer have the somewhat binary nature of some of the independence movements on the continent, where you have a uniform group of colonizers and colonized on either side of a one-on-one conflict. Now you have several distinct groups of people that have very little in common with one another. None of the things that bound together Africans on the mainland could be applied to these cases: They did not share a sense of ownership of the land, nor a shared racial identity, nor a universally recognizable sense of opposition to the colonial power. The immigrants who came to the islands after the initial colonial settlers did not have the same relationship to them that the slaves that were brought over initially from East Africa did. This meant that, by the time that both of the

independences of Mauritius and the Seychelles had come along, the process by which they achieved said independence had evolved organically in a completely different way to the countries on the continent. It grew out of the Coolie identity that they had to create and the subsequent values that emerged out of the creation of that identity. These values, as Torabully would point out, included an acceptance of diversity and an emphasis on dialogue between disparate racial and social groups.

What has been established thus far, therefore, is that the independence processes of both Mauritius and the Seychelles lie outside of the typology of what one would see as being the traditional African nation's path to independence. The key aspects of what bound together individual African nations on the mainland, according to postcolonial authors such as Mamdani, Mbembe and Fanon, are separate and distinct from the key aspects of how the Seychelles and Mauritius gained their independence. While we can see at this point that the two cases in question do have a shared difference from mainland African nations in common, does this in itself warrant the establishment of an entirely new typology based around the independence processes of these two African island nations? We have, in the previous chapter, highlighted the work of Khal Torabully regarding the value of having a multi-ethnic society and of open discourse as a common thematic link between the two nations that could also act as a basis for this typology. However, while both nations are similarly multi-ethnic, how much can open discourse among the population be said to be a key factor in the Seychelles gaining independence in 1976? This was certainly true in Mauritius, where the Labour Party was able to unify the interests of many different ethnic and social groups as part of their political mandate, but it is not necessarily as true for either of the main political parties in the Seychelles. This is because the main aims of both of these parties were as to do with (if not more to do with) foreign policy as they were to do with the

internal politics of what were to happen inside of the country itself. Much of the political discourse at the time was about who the Seychellois government would align itself with on the world stage. The SDP was of the stance that the Seychelles should maintain its close relationship with the West and with Britain specifically, while France-Albert René and the SPUP were campaigning for a closer relationship with the Soviet Union and for Socialism more generally. The tension between these two parties with their conflicting ideologies as well as their preoccupations with the external i.e. the ultimate fate of the Seychelles on the global stage, may have contributed to the fact that neither party took it upon themselves to foster an environment of open discourse amongst the population or at least their base in the same way that, for instance, the Labour Party in Mauritius managed to do.

Despite this, I would argue that the core sentiment of Torabully's ideas and concepts come through very clearly in the history of the Seychelles' independence process in a way that is, in itself, distinct from mainland independence processes generally. The end of the process, in particular, showcases Torabully's aim of cooperation across political lines as the two main Seychellois political parties (the SDP and the SPUP) came together not only in the sense that they both, in the end, were campaigning for independence but they also literally came together in so much as the leaders of the parties came together to form one coalition government after independence, with Mancham as the country's first president and René as Prime Minister. This is emblematic of Torabully's wish for these countries to "quell all border quarrels" in order to achieve whatever common goals are required to be achieved. Let us also not forget that another part of Torabully's poetry refers to "the exchanges between masters and slaves" (Torabully, 2018). We see this sentiment, again, reflected in what happened in the Seychelles in those final years before independence. Not only was the decision for the SDP to shift its focus to gaining independence born out of talks between

Mancham and the British Foreign Office, but the actual independence itself was heavily negotiated with the British as well. In point of fact, the Seychellois constitutional conference took place in London in March 1975. Deryck Scarr highlights several times in his book the fact that the SDP had been in close contact with the British during this period, writing at one point that "(s)tability had nonetheless remained Britain's watchword" when it came to the Seychelles' independence (Scarr, 2000). This relationship that specifically the SDP had with the British former colonial power is unique to the Seychelles and was not seen amongst mainland African independence parties at the time or before. It also showcases, again, that the Seychelles independence process was more built upon constructive discourse between political actors than the kind of purely oppositional force highlighted in the mainland by postcolonial authors such as Frantz Fanon.

One could also make the argument that not every part of the Mauritian independence process lines up with the typology that has been set up by the thesis. Part of this typology is the idea that openness is a key part of the African island identity. This principle of political openness is reflected in particular in how the Labour Party opened its arms to all peoples and thereby aimed to unite the highly diverse population of the island. However, some might argue that this sense of openness was not entirely shared by, on the other side, the colonial power in this case. These people might point to the acquisition of the Chagos Islands by the British as an example of a political action that was not completely done in the spirit of Torabully's idea of openness. It has been asserted by the Mauritian government in the years after independence that the islands were "forcibly taken" by Britain. After that, Britain went on to remove all of the 3,000-plus inhabitants of the islands in order to make room for the US military base as per an agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom that there be "no indigenous population left on the island except seagulls"

(Adegoke, 2019). This might suggest that the independence process for Mauritius was perhaps not quite as built on positive discourse and openness as it could have been. There are still certainly aspects of the malevolent colonial power to be found in this situation. However, this information does not dismiss the fact that the Mauritian independence process still largely conforms to the African island typology as we have established it. While there is still, as can be clearly seen, an uneven power dynamic between the colonial power and Mauritius in the independence negotiations, it is still more a negotiation than a conflict (I mean conflict here in the political as well as the literal sense), as would have been more common in the mainland African independence movement. It is in this distinction where the African island 'coolie' identity and independence typology proves its relevance, as it explains a much more discourse-based and less politically intense or tumultuous independence process than you would find in many an African mainland nation at during their respective independence period.

Conclusion:

We began by asking what made the independence struggles of the Mauritius and the Seychelles unique. How does being an African island nation such as these two affect the process of achieving independence? In our attempts to define a typology of African island independence processes, what we have discovered is that these countries have thematic ties in their respective narratives that go beyond the fact that they are both similarly separated from the African countries on the mainland. While this physical distance is certainly the most obvious defining factor and has had an enormous amount of influence over these two countries, there is a great deal more that connects them than simply their geographical location. Going so far back in their history as their respective discoveries and initial settlements, the two nations have mirrored one another both culturally and politically. That is not to say that there are no political or cultural differences between the two, for of course there are. The main political parties that rallied for independence in the two countries, for instance, had very different origins, makeup (in terms of membership as well as support bases) and, to an extent, political goals as well. Despite these differences, the two cases remain connected by a 'Torabullian' sense of a creolized identity. It is this creolized identity that serves as the key to understanding both the connection between these two island cases in particular as well as the cultural disconnection between them and the African continent generally. This is an identity that was created in the absence of any underlying factors that otherwise would have connected a widely varied population. Unlike on the continent, there were no clear similarities that were in place that could subsequently be politicised to use against a clear or obvious oppositional force (in this case, the colonial powers). Without a sense of camaraderie born out of a shared opposition, a feeling of ownership over the land or a common identity based on race or origin, a new cultural

identity had to be created based on a melding of different customs and language. This became a creolized identity: a culture created by and for immigrants, forced or otherwise that applies to their shared experiences as opposed to the experiences of Africans living in countries on the mainland.

With regards to their independence processes specifically, these countries could be said to be 'separate' to the mainland in a few different ways. They are, of course, separated geographically by an ocean, but they were also separated politically. The politicians in these island nations did not have access to the same network of other political leaders that a lot of African leaders did, particularly when many of them were at University in the West. The sense of camaraderie that was fuelled by this network later proved invaluable for crafting the narrative of the grand struggle against oppression during the independence movements in Africa, and it was something that unfortunately did not extend to our cases in the Indian Ocean. They were also separated in terms of their values. The mainland African independence movement was built on ideas to do with reclaiming the land to its rightful owners and overcoming the colonial powers. This was not the case for the Seychelles nor Mauritius. Their values, as per the coolie identity, were more about constructing connections between different peoples. While on the mainland, independence was about reclaiming the land, on these island nations, the cultural and political discourse became more about how to let people in. Independence parties on the mainland were also driven by different goals than independence parties on the island nations. None of the main political parties on these islands were particularly concerned with independence as an ends in itself. The SDP in the Seychelles were actively anti-independence up until it became clear that achieving might it actually help in reaching their actual goal, of stronger ties with Britain. The other main party in the Seychelles, the SPUP, saw independence mainly as a necessary

step to stronger ties with the Soviet Union, which was their goal at the time. Meanwhile, in Mauritius, the Labour Party was formed not as a party that aimed towards independence necessarily but as a party that aimed to secure greater rights for indentured labour works. These goals are generally much less specific, confrontational and absolute than the goals of these other independence movements and leaders. The actual methods of gaining independence were different for these parties as well. These methods are much more influenced by constructive discourse than purely by opposition. They take the form of negotiation and compromise in the case of the Seychelles (as seen between the two parties as well as between the SDP and Britain) and in the form of a focus on multiculturalism and diversity (in the case of the Labour Party in Mauritius), for instance.

Khal Torabully aimed in his work to explore the particularities of the Mauritian experience, from the leaving of one country to the influence of a myriad of different cultures in another. It is the process of combining and reinterpreting these two aspects of Mauritian culture that Torabully has called the “coral imaginary” (Khal Torabully, 2018). Through both this concept and the concept of ‘coolitude’, Torabully has been able to both reframe the histories of these island nations in the Indian Ocean beyond their ‘otherness’ to the mainland as well as highlight a space wherein several cultures can interact with one another while each being equally and fully represented on an even plain in order to construct new identities in a fair and effective way, all while managing to reclaim the derogatory term ‘coolie’ and turning it into a term that can be applied to cultural migrants anywhere in the world who have been able to transform disparate aspects of their experiences into a new identity. This is the gift that Torabully and this typology has given to us. The concept of coolitude and the coolie identity has given us a way of discussing not only island nations like Mauritius and the Seychelles, which are entirely populated by various forms of cultural migrants (having once

been uninhabited) but also the very processes that have made them the societies that they are today. For the first time, these countries and countries like them were being described (and crucially, were being given the ability to describe themselves) as what they were: something unique and worth examining rather than simply outliers who are defined solely by what they are not.

The fact that this typology and the works of Khal Torabully regarding 'coolitude' remain perennially overlooked in mainstream academia is therefore highly unfortunate. It would seem that it is still difficult to make a dent in mainstream academia at this point by focussing on cases such as these, the particulars of which remain unknown to the average reader. The issue is most likely that cases such as these are thought of as being too specific or too insular in a way. It is assumed largely that, aside from simply a general history of that country, there is not much to be taken from a source that deals with such a case in-depth. There is certainly not much that would be applied to a wider group of cases or to a larger existing theory, our hypothetical academic might conceivably say. But there is, in actual fact, much that these cases can show us from a global perspective. While Torabully did aim to write about the Indian Ocean, his ideas regarding diversity and new identities and discourses forming from a melding of existing cultures can be applied to any culture where migrants have come together to form a culture that did not, in that new form, previously exist. It also adds to the global understanding of inter-cultural discourse while problematizing previously held assumptions about colonization, migration and the perceived universality of the African independence movement. It is understandable that academics have, in the past, not given islands like Mauritius and the Seychelles as much thought and attention as many of the African countries on the mainland, since they were

often trying to explain larger continent-wide processes, but in doing this the opportunity of learning from an equally interesting type of independence process has, sadly, been missed.

In summation, not only can an African island nation typology be defined, and not only is it useful in understanding the independence processes of both Mauritius and the Seychelles, but it also has a lot to offer with regards to understanding a kind of process that can be seen around the world in many different guises. It shows us, more specifically, the process of how a country builds a cultural identity from the ground up. It shows us how the separate stories of many vastly different groups of people coming to a country from different places and through different means can, over time, become one story. Furthermore, this typology shows us that there is no one way that an African independence process looks like. One might be tempted to treat African independence as a continent-wide phenomenon: something which existed as a universal truth for African countries but it was actually based on certain key aspects. What cases such as Mauritius and the Seychelles show us is that, if you were to remove one or indeed all of these aspects, the process of independence suddenly appears to be completely different, even if the country in question is still technically in the same continent or is ruled under the same colonial power. Suddenly the universal truth no longer seems so universal. With the little bit of perspective that can be gained from treating seemingly 'peripheral' cases such as this with respect, hopefully this lesson can be learned and we can be more open to exploring the global stage in an honest way, taking into account all of its many peculiarities and complexities. If these often forgotten small island nations in the Indian Ocean can teach us one thing, let it be that.

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