

Communicating cultural difference and identity

Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius.

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Habit of seeing opposites. - The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature opposites (as, e.g., "warm and cold") where there are, not opposites, but differences in degree. This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyse the inner world, too, the spiritual-moral world, in terms of such opposites. An unspeakable amount of painfulness, arrogance, harshness, estrangement, frigidity has entered into human feelings because we think we see opposites instead of transitions.

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, § 67

"It takes at least two somethings to create a difference. (...)

There is a profound and unanswerable question about the nature of those 'at least two' things that between them generate a difference which becomes information by making a difference. Clearly each alone is - for the mind and perception - a non-entity, a non-being. Not different from being, and not different from non-being. An unknowable, a Ding an sich, a sound from one hand clapping."

-Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, p. 78

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5. Nationalism

"-But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse.

-Yes, says Bloom.

-What is it? says John Wyse.

-A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.

-By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.

So of course everyone had a laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

-Or also living in different places.

-That covers my case, says Joe.

-What is your nation if I may ask, says the citizen.

-Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland. "

James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1984 [1922]: 329-30)

Compared to other recently founded "pluri-ethnic" states, such as say, Malaysia, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, the case for nationalism seems strong in Mauritius. No mono-ethnic hegemony could possibly establish itself officially without a devastating civil war, and political separatism is definitely not an option for anybody. Yet we have seen many examples of the practical reproduction of ethnicity as providing ultimate frames of relevance (both as organisation and as identity) in civil society. This final chapter deals with practical attempts to establish unitary nationalist ideology, and the conditions for its emergence as a symbolic system capable of overruling the "particularistic" ideologies.

When, in the 1970's, the MMM launched its nationalist slogan *Enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon* ("A single people; a single nation"), there was much confusion. "What else can you expect," comments a journalist retrospectively, "considering *nasyon* in Kreol means *jati* and not nation like in French..." Early in my fieldwork, I asked a Creole if he conventionally tipped waiters. "*Selman bann nasyon*" ("Only nation people"), was his rather confusing reply. Later I was to learn that this meant he

only tipped waiters who were fellow Creoles. At another occasion, I introduced two African friends to a group of urban Creoles. "*Mo kontan zot parski zot nasyon*", said one of the Creoles, addressing himself to the Africans ("I like you, 'cause you belong to my nasyon"). During a political discussion with a group of Hindus, somebody mentioned *bann ti-nasyon* ("the small nasyons"), referring to the impure castes, the not-twice-born, the shudras. Again, when my brother came on holiday to Mauritius and we'd exchange the odd phrase in Norwegian with others present, people might tell each other that "*Zot pe koze so langaz, anfen, zot mem nasyon*" ("They're speaking their language; you know, they are the same *nasyon*").

Mauritius, on the contrary, is rarely talked about as a *nasyon*. If asked "What is Mauritius?", a native of the island might reply that it's *enn lil* (an island) or *enn peyi* (a country). Only people speaking a Kreol heavily influenced by French language and corresponding concepts could conceivably describe Mauritius as *enn nasyon*. The word is used normatively in political rhetoric; the MMM has been mentioned, and in addition, the word is listed in LPT's Kreol-English dictionary (Ledikasyon pu travayer 1985) as meaning simply "nation"[1]. Other politicians tend to avoid using the word altogether, and would rather talk of *le peuple mauricien* or *tous les Mauriciens* when invoking the concept of national unity: they are less likely to be misunderstood.

The Kreol word *nasyon* has, in other words, several meanings: (i) *Jati* or caste (*ti-nasyon* = low caste), (ii) ethnic community, (iii) race, (iv) language community, (v) nationality or nation-state. All the meanings connote "a people" in some way or other, and current usage suggests that most Mauritians don't abstractly consider themselves a people presently.

Mauritians participate in uniform political and economic systems[2]. This is probably a necessary condition for nationalism to be successful as a popular movement (cf. Gellner 1982), but it is hardly a sufficient condition for it to overrule and eventually replace competing ideologies. Nationalist ideology must additionally present itself as more persuasive (on the level of representations)

and probably more beneficial (on the level of action) to its adherents, than competing ideologies (of which the ethnic ones, our findings indicate, are empirically the strongest). Ethnic, class-based and nationalist ideologies are not, however, mutually exclusive - indeed, most Mauritians support all three from time to time - but they largely operate in the same fields of discourse and action, and can replace each other both as representations and as norms; there is in other words a partly competitive relationship between these symbolic systems; particularly in the labour market, where particularist practices (nepotism etc.) confront universalist practices (meritocracy/bureaucracy). Now, nationalism and ethnicity can co-exist in industrial society[3]. This may work e.g. within a politically authoritarian, "Furnivallian" system where ethnic differences are fixed and ranked, and cultural plurality is confined to homes, mosques and the like. Such stable co-existence is also possible in a democratic capitalist society, insofar as ethnicity does not interfere systematically with principles of meritocracy (modern capitalism) and bureaucracy (modern democracy). Granted the current state of Mauritian society, the latter alternative seems the more likely. The struggle between nationalist and ethnic ideologies and practices, then, does not necessarily lead to the extermination of one or the other. Rather, the struggle is being fought out where the two systems of representations and practices conflict. Nationalist ideology does not intend to do away with ethnic identity, only with the forms of ethnic organisation known as communalism.

As the ethnic ideologies invoke custom, language etc. as their ultimate core, so do conscientious nation-builders search for symbols of shared meaning that can justify unitary national strategies (laid in fields iv and v, and relevant on the macro level) and persuade lay actors to sympathise and participate. Below, I analyse the meaning of national symbols current in official Mauritius, illustrated by two important cases on the national level (monitored in field v). Then I examine the political development since independence (with focus on the MMM), before discussing certain aspects of the language situation in some detail. Finally, I briefly and tentatively consider the interrelations between current social change, ethnicity, and nationalism.

THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Symbols of national unity are difficult to construct and justify in independent, democratic Mauritius. The public symbols of "Mauritian-ness" current today are, therefore, largely inherited from colonial times. This continued use of colonial symbols and history as national ones, is much less controversial in Mauritius than in most African countries. In Mauritius, there was no violent discontinuity from colonialism to independence. Conflicts over independence were internal and did not involve the colonial power directly. The white settlers did not flee after the referendum (where the pro-independence factions won by a slight margin). If it hadn't been for the French and the British, there would have been no Mauritius - and people know this.

The national coat of arms depicted on bank notes, coins, postage stamps and official publications was introduced in French times; it consists of a key, a star, a ship and a small cluster of palms. The meaning of its Latin legend, *Stella et Claviscus Maris Indici* ("The Star and the Key of the Indian Ocean") is widely known. Until 1986, Queen Elizabeth I of Mauritius (Britain's Elizabeth II) was represented on all Mauritian currency. She is now gradually being replaced by the first prime minister of independent Mauritius, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who also served as First Minister of Mauritius during the last seven years of British rule.

Statues of 19th century governor Sir William Newton, Mahé de Labourdonnais and Queen Victoria have been erected in front of the parliament (and nobody would dream of removing them). The French missionary Jacques Désiré Laval, working in the mid-19th century and beatified in 1978, is also recognised as a great Mauritian by Christians and non-Christians alike. Crucial events in Mauritian history; the battle of Grand-Port (1810), the abolition of slavery and the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers (1835), and Independence (1968) are frequently invoked as justifications of Mauritian nationhood: shared meaning in its most encompassing sense (to do with identity) is held to lie in

shared history[4]. The interest in local history is not confined to academic circles: for instance, there is a regular monthly magazine devoted exclusively to the history of Mauritius (*Gazette des Iles de l'Océan Indien*). Despite attempts to break with the tradition (notably Allen 1983, Selvon 1985), Mauritian historiography remains largely the history of men in positions of power[5].

Certainly, the unusual "variety of traditions, races and languages" present in Mauritius is potentially a source of national pride. This is manifest in Mauritians' behaviour vis a vis foreigners (shared meaning as us-hood, cf. pp. 142-144 below), in tourist brochures etc. In actual social situations, however, multi-ethnicity is conventionally felt as a strain rather than an asset.

Some intellectuals (e.g. D. Virahsawmy 1983) are in favour of some form of pluriculturalisme mauricien, notions of tolerance and diversity, as a shared system of representations. The natural vehicle for this ideology is, according to Virahsawmy, Kreol:

"It is necessary that this language liberates itself from Eurocentric domination and develops new lexical fields in order to be able to express the spiritual, moral and cultural values of all the ethnics in Mauritius." (Virahsawmy 1983:4)

Whatever its merits, Virahsawmy's enduring engagement in favour of a national ideology of tolerance has won little popular support. Is this because an all-encompassing tolerance entails loss of own ethnic identity in Mauritius? For if a Christian accepts Islam as normatively equivalent to Christianity (i.e. he ceases to feel that his own religion is superior), then he must theoretically cease being a Christian as it no longer represents true truth.

In practice, however, it is far from impossible to reconcile tolerance with religious faith. To begin with, it should be remembered that it was a Christian priest, Henri Souchon, who, at the height of the 1968-9 unrest, took steps to create a practical mutual understanding, chiefly between Muslims and Christians, through "oecumenical" religious celebrations combining diverse

forms of ritual. Still today, Souchon deferentially visits others' places of worship, engages in open dialogue with Muslims imams and Hindu pundits, and encourages others to do the same.

On the popular level, "*Sakenn pe prie dan so fason*" ("Each prays in his own fashion") is a common proverb of tolerance, encountered in virtually every ethnic. Religion, rather than itself being the foundation of ethnic animosities, in this way functions metonymically as an identity tag, a symbol (of something different)[6]. This "something different" is chiefly, as argued in the previous chapter, a particular way of life (meaning) embodying - among other things - a real, potential or imagined collective strategy for carreering (utility) couched in ethnic terms. Insofar as the ethnics remain culturally and socially distinctive, no pluriculturalisme mauricien can get beyond statements of a rather programmatic nature; at the same time, this ideology presupposes that they do remain distinctive.

Virahsawmy's strategy of Mauritian pluriculturalism (which has had some influence in post-independent Mauritian politics) can be located to a higher logical level (in a Russellian sense) than the individual ethnic strategies: it attempts to arrange the latter within its own compass. It is an ism which has isms as its subject matter. As long as ethnicity is partly reproduced as competition, there is therefore a practical contradiction between this "order" (of universalism) and the "species" (of particularisms) it seeks to encompass.

The first of the two cases presented below is an attempted application of a form of "pluriculturalism" as a national ethos. The second case, on the other hand, represents an attempt to transcend ethnic identities altogether, replacing ethnic symbols with national ones.

Independence celebrations in the plural society

During Independence celebrations in March, 1986, a number of "composite cultural shows" were performed in local community centres. I was present at one

such show in the village hall of a large, ethnically diverse village. The show encompassed two Sino-Mauritian entries, two Tamil contributions and one Telegu, one European song, three performances representative of the Creoles, three each by Muslims and Marathis, and four entries in Hindi or Bhojpuri. The programme was printed in English, and the opening and ending speeches were held in Kreol.

The aim was to display and encourage "unity in diversity"; among other things, one wished to accustom spectators to the traditions of ethnics other than their own. In a word, these shows (and similar events occasionally taking place) strive to give significance to metaphors of "organic wholes" composed of incongruous elements but fused in the common destiny of the Mauritian people; that is, the whole (the show) signified something qualitatively different from its parts (the separate performances). In the terminology of systems theory, we might say that a composite cultural show propagates subjective perceptions of being integrated on a higher systemic level - from communal to national identity. Now, Mauritians are already - and have been for some time - participants in the same economic system although their positions and degree of participation to a great extent have been ethnically determined. Independence celebrations, like Ramgoolam's funeral (below) but unlike the MMM and associated trade unions, are intended chiefly as redefinitions of cultural reality. If such events are successful along these lines, people will accordingly redefine their cultural universes and modify their models for action (although patterns of social action itself are more inert than their models and thus may remain unchanged for a while). An individual defining himself as being a member of a nation rather than of an ethnic in a particular context, will then modify his representations relating to politics, economical relationships, marriage strategies, friendship etc. - and then proceed to modify his patterns of action.

It is not given that this strategy should be successful, even on the abstract level of folk representations. For one thing, the concept "unity in diversity" represents a contradiction in terms to many Mauritians. National unity can be taken to imply loss of distinctiveness (identity), whereas remaining distinctive precludes

national unity. Further, the practical reproduction of ethnic personal networks (in matters of say, work, marriage and friendship), is still believed to "pay off" as long as the wider social context (offering "incentives and restraints") remains unchanged. The two, ethnic identity and ethnic action, cannot, therefore, be done away with by means of certain cultural policies. When the channels for - and meaning of - successful carreering are changed, however, new representational and actional patterns necessarily result.

Ramgoolam's funeral

Sir Seewosagur Ramgoolam (1900-85) was Mauritius' prime minister during the first fifteen years of independence. A Hindu from the numerous Vaishya caste, he led the Mauritian delegation during independence negotiations in London in the mid-1960's. During the election campaign in 1967 he led the pro-independence parties to a narrow victory, and he is popularly considered as the man to whom Mauritians owe their political independence. Ramgoolam was a clever politician, cunning in the art of compromise and surrounded by an aura of wisdom and fairness. He earned the respect of many non-Hindus when persuading the leader of the anti-independence bloc, the eloquent Creole Gaëtan Duval, to join his first government (cf. e.g. Simmons 1982:191-2).

In 1982, his Labour Party lost the general election to the MMM-PSM alliance, and Ramgoolam, disappointed, reluctantly accepted the post of Governor General (an occupation independent Mauritius oddly has retained). Now he, the political loser, received the pity of his opponents and was simultaneously in a position to stay aloof from petty quarrels. Although bitter with the electorate, Ramgoolam thus spent his last years consolidating his reputation as the wise man of the nation Mauritius.

In December, 1985, Ramgoolam died. He was by then acknowledged by virtually every Mauritian as the founding father of their nation - indeed, he had become a "myth" in his own lifetime in the sense that his unpopular or mistaken judgements were rarely mentioned publicly; until Sydney Selvon's recent

biography (1986), even non-commissioned biographies of Ramgoolam were testimonies to his never faltering glory. Not all of them were written by Hindus.

The ceremony accompanying the cremation of Ramgoolam's body, therefore, had to be one relevant for every Mauritian. We shall go through it in some detail[7].

The news of Ramgoolam's death was brought on radio and television on December 15 and in the newspapers the following day. In advertisements, citizens were encouraged to show their "Chacha" (Hindi for teacher) a last honour in assisting at the procession leading to the garden where the ceremonial cremation of the corpse was to take place already the next day (December 17, 1985).

The procession started from Ramgoolam's home, a colonial mansion at Réduit which was also used as the residence of the Governor General before Independence. Une queue interminable of people filled the courtyard. At noon, the yard was considered full, and newcomers were denied access by the police. A Hindu religious ceremony next was conducted, immediately after the arrival of Ramgoolam's son. At least two of the pundits performing came from Ramgoolam's native district in the north of Mauritius. The *tatri* (a stretcher decorated with flowers) was brought outside and the corpse placed on it by close relatives of the deceased.

The journey towards Pamplemousses began towards 1:30 pm. Heading the procession, the police corps played Chopin's Marche funèbre as Réduit was left. The *tatri* was placed in an open military vehicle, accompanied by policemen on motorcycles and followed by local luminaries in motorcars. Those not possessing their own means of transport, would travel by bus to Pamplemousses if they wished to witness the incarceration of the body.

Huge crowds of onlookers had gathered on pavements and balconies as the cortège passed through the urban centres of Rose-Hill and Beau-Bassin, the industrial estate Coromandel and the capital, Port-Louis. Throughout, the

audience threw flower petals onto the tatri. Notably, churches on the itinerary rang their bells in approval of what was principally a Hindu ceremony.

In front of Ramgoolam's former residence in Port-Louis, the procession took a brief pause while the orchestra played a work by Händel and repeated the performance of Chopin's Funeral March. Upon reaching the Gardens of Pamplemousses at 5:30 pm., the tatri was placed onto the funeral pyre. Members of the police and paramilitary forces paid their last respects, as did high officials and foreign guests, as flower petals rained from helicopters. There was still a huge audience present.

Ramgoolam's son was dressed entirely in white, whereas most of the others in the front row (the Interim Governor General, Speaker of Parliament, Chief Judge, Doyen of Diplomatic Corps and certain foreign guests) wore Western clothes.

Finally, Ramgoolam's son went through the last motions strictly according to Sanatanist Hindu tradition; eventually setting fire to the funeral pyre.

The religious parts of the ceremony, then, did not at a single point deviate from tradition nor from the rules laid out in authoritative Sanatanist texts. Orthodox Sanatanism is still the largest Hindu denomination in Mauritius, but it is by no means a majority religion. Unlike in e.g. multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, there is no pan-ethnic, nationalist or humanist alternative to religious burial available in Mauritius. (And in any case, resentment towards Hindus has little or nothing to do with Hindu religious practices.) The acknowledgement of the churches has been mentioned; there is by and large a spirit of religious oecumenism in Mauritian religious organisations.

Important elements in the ceremony seen as a whole, nevertheless, transcend ethnic boundaries. Most striking, perhaps, was the choice of music to accompany the procession. In choosing music of two European composers rather than have the police band play Indian funerary music (which is not as impossible as it may sound: similar things have happened before[8]), the administrators lifted, as it

were, Ramgoolam's person above the Mauritian everyday reality of petty skirmishes to a higher, more universal sphere; this could be interpreted as meaning the level of humanity tout court but was, more likely, intended to give symbolic content to pan-ethnic Mauritianism. Classical European music is not very popular in Mauritius; it belongs to nobody's real or fictitious traditions (excepting perhaps increasingly marginal segments of the Franco-Mauritians) and can therefore easily be accepted as neutral by the entire nation[9]. The national anthem, which sounds much like any other national anthem, with lyrics in English written by a Francophile Creole poet, was, of course, also played at Pamplémousses.

The very visible parts played by the police and paramilitaries (Special Mobile Force) was not exclusively due to security measures. Uniformed rank and file had a highly prominent place both at Réduit and at Pamplémousses. Now, neither the police nor the SMF have a very strong position in Mauritius, compared with larger nation-states[10]. The 500 men who make up the lightly armed SMF, which is the closest the state comes to having an army, are virtually never involved in violence; their most important duties are peaceful (guarding, fire extermination, skindiving). Nobody perceives the threat of a military coup d'état as being relevant. Therefore, the police and SMF alike are fairly popular with the Mauritian population. Although there are inevitably rumours to the contrary, neither of them is dominated by one ethnic group. In thus displaying their uniformed and armed, the state representatives informed people that law and order was being maintained on a national level, and that this was done in a just way, not according to ethnic belonging (uniforms are identical).

With respect to clothing, an important vessel of ethnic demarcation, we have already noted that few high representatives of the state wore traditional Indian garb. Perhaps their wearing European-style suits was too obvious to be noticed, but had the prime minister (a Hindu) turned up in anything but a suit, people would certainly have taken account of it.

The form itself of the funeral, a long procession leading to a climax, is familiar to

the majority of Mauritians. In February every year, the Hindus celebrate their Maha Shivaratree feast in marching to a small sacred lake; while the Creoles in turn have their Père Laval pilgrimage in September; both annual events similar in form to Ramgoolam's funeral.

Had the ideological atmosphere been more tiersmondiste or anti-colonialist in Mauritius at the moment of the funeral, some might have reacted against the unwitting perpetuation of colonial symbolism in the decision to have the procession start at the Governor General's castle and end in the Gardens of Pamplemousses, the latter founded by Labourdonnais. However, this did not happen, and anyway, alternatives would have been hard to come by: Mauritius has no pre-colonial history, and its post-colonial one is very short. Choosing sites, situations and historical persons associated with colonialism as symbols of nationhood conveniently overcomes problems of ethnically-specific symbols, although the solution cannot be permanent.

It is also a matter of interest that the most prominently placed foreign guests were (providing L'Express got the details right) the representatives of India and the South-Western Indian Ocean (Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar and Réunion). The latter four are universally considered to be close neighbours, also in a non-geographical sense, but India is seen as an important ally only by roughly half of the Mauritian population (i.e., the Hindus); commodity exchange between the two countries is negligible, and geographically, Mauritius is if anything closer to mainland Africa. In placing the Indian representative in a position superior to that of say, the French and British representatives, Ramgoolam's origins were emphasised in a fashion perhaps unfortunate to nation-building, but significant in showing the Hindu ethnic's anxiety to maintain good links with India.

The Kreol language, a potential force of unity, was not used throughout the event. In different contexts and by different speakers, Hindi, English, French and Kreol were employed; compromise being the only viable solution as long as the Mauritian population is divided on the language issue. Interestingly, the mother

tongue of many of those opposed to Kreol as a national language, is Kreol (cf. discussion below on pp. -196)

Like in the previous case (the "composite cultural show"), the meaning-contexts consciously produced during this event aimed at redefining cultural reality toward shared, national meaning. But the content of the respective propositions differed. While the funeral defined Mauritianity as a quasi-religious, self-sustaining cultural system independent of the underlying mosaic, the definition inherent in the cultural show depicted Mauritianity as being identical with the mosaic itself (seen from a bird's perspective). As already noted, the former strategy is the more viable theoretically, given the relevant parameters of Mauritian culture and society.

A non-ethnic political party? The case of the MMM

Benedict (1965) ends his book on plural Mauritian society with a prophetic statement:

"The ethnic divisions of Mauritius are changing. They are no longer mere categories but are becoming corporate groups. The danger of communal conflict increases" (p. 67).

The political proverb *Sak zako bizin protez so montayn* ("each monkey must protect his mountain"), defending communalism in politics, has become a common saying since. In previous chapters, I have frequently mentioned the ethnic unrest around Independence, which began more or less simultaneously with the publication of Benedict's book.

Following the unrest, the Mouvement Militant Mauricien was founded according to not only non-ethnic but positively anti-ethnic principles, and it became the largest single political party in a matter of a few years[11]. The question asked here, is in what respect - if any - it can be viewed as a non-ethnic political party. The criteria for its aloofness from ethnic politics must be (a) its actual policies,

(b) the nature of its popular appeal.

The MMM came onto the political scene at a lucky moment, when there was discontent with the "treason" of the two major parties; bitter enemies who nevertheless had formed a coalition government (Rivière 1982:84). In addition, people had been fighting and to some extent killing each other, solely because of their ethnic differences. British soldiers had to be brought in to establish a truce. "People were terrified," reminisces Paul Bérenger[12], and adds that "they would probably have voted for any party that seemed able and willing to maintain ethnic peace." The MMM of 1969 was a "New Left"/neo-marxist party with strong, although hardly dominant, revolutionary elements. Their very first base of popular support was the docks of Port-Louis, where the MMM were instrumental in founding the militant PLDHWU (Port-Louis Dockers and Harbour Workers' Union) with a membership largely composed of Creoles. Eventually, an umbrella organisation, GWF (General Workers' Federation) was founded, and still maintains strong links with the MMM.

Strategically, the ideology of the new party was sound. Its profile as an anti-ethnic party was in fact the only viable possibility at the time. The ethnically-based political "niches" were already occupied; the MMM seized the vacant "niche": the ideology of Mauritianism or nationhood.

At a by-election in Ramgoolam's own constituency, Triolet where the population is massively Hindu, the MMM won an overwhelming victory in 1971. Shortly after, the party led a "general strike" with wide participation from unions of diverse ethnic composition. A state of emergency was declared when the internal transport system broke down, and MMM and union leaders were imprisoned for most of 1972. Most Mauritians today agree that this was a shameful move by the government; it had the unpredicted side-effect of making martyrs of the young radicals, including Bérenger himself. Following its leaders' release from prison, the party was banned and general elections postponed, but eventually things "returned to normal" (in Bérenger's words). After designating Jugnauth (cf. p. 61) as Prime Minister candidate and carrying out a hurried election campaign,

the MMM emerged as the largest single party in 1976. During six years in opposition, its major issues were: the return of Diego Garcia to Mauritius, nationalisation of important means of production, various extensions of the welfare state, official recognition of Kreol, and stricter sanctions against corruption. Of these five issues, the first four have a directly nationalist bias. The first, on Diego Garcia, concerns the legitimacy of its boundaries; the next two would have increased the nation state's internal power systemically viewed and the actors' integration on the national level, individually viewed; while the fourth issue aimed at establishing a common national identity.

During the brief rule of the strategic MMM-PSM alliance (1982-3), few of the proposed reforms were carried out. Nothing was nationalised[13]. There was a failed attempt to make Kreol the supreme national language. There was no money for new social schemes. The economic policies, led by an apologising Bérenger, were severe and neo-liberal (among other things, he reduced the export tax of sugar in order to stimulate new investments). As we know, the MMM-PSM government split after only nine months in office, and slightly less than half of it, by and large Hindus, founded the MSM (Mouvement Socialiste Militant; nowadays the abbreviation stands for Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien), which won the elections of 1983 after having carried out a campaign strongly flavoured with communalism, overt and covert. A journalist, who had just returned from his studies in Paris at the time of the election campaign, claimed that "in a matter of a few months, we lost everything that was gained during the '70's", referring to increased communalism in many fields. Accusations against Bérenger included claims that he was pro-Franco (viz. his attempted reduction of export tax on sugar) and pro-Creole (viz. the language policy; cf. Bowman 1984:2). Although the split between the Bérenger faction and the Jugnauth/Boodhoo faction was largely due to different economic policies, it was perceived by many Mauritians as an ethnic split. The group of ministers who remained loyal to Bérenger was composed of 1 Coloured, 3 Muslims, 3 Tamils and 3 Hindus (2 of them of low caste); whereas all but one of those remaining with Jugnauth in the Cabinet were Hindus.

In 1984, the MMM undertook its "autocritique" and admitted that its former, slightly Utopian socialism had to be left.

"Un socialisme démocratique, non-aligné et moderne" was the slogan of the 1986 MMM congress, where the autocritique of 1984 was elaborated on. By now, the MMM had become a socialist party à la française, skeptical of alliances with the global "blocs", pragmatic in economic policy, faithful to the rules of parliamentary democracy.

Even a very close examination of the respective political programmes of the MMM and the MSM (MMM 1983, MSM 1983) does not reveal dramatic differences: both emphasise development of the welfare state, slow and cautious nationalisation of key industries - which is not to include the EPZ industries, and a staunch stand against communalism[14]. Policies that were instigated by the MMM are furthered by the current government. (Bérenger himself never tires of pointing out that the current economic success is largely due to decisions taken by the MMM - nobody seriously challenges this statement.)

All this seems to imply that the conflicts between the two major political blocs now can be traced back to ethnic differences - in other words, that the MMM is not a nationalist party, but one that represents particular ethnics.

The material is ambiguous as to the conclusion. On one hand, there is the evidence (pp. 60-62) that the importance of ethnic divisions was acknowledged in MMM strategies from an early point. On the other hand, the actual, formal policies of the party, while in power, were definitely of a "nation-building" kind.

But so are those of the presumed Hindu party, the MSM. Large-scale politics (field v) in Mauritius today in practice place ethnic membership first as a criterion of allegiance, but national interests first in definition of policies. This conforms to the dictum of the highest common denominator: the denominator is, here, the "shared interests of the nation" in a series of zero-sum games, while the negotiators (politicians acting in field v) represent ethnics.

As previously noted, Mauritians tend to interpret political events in ethnic terms. If a Franco-Mauritian Minister of Finance decides to reduce the taxation on sugar, his ethnic membership is used against him (all the "sugar barons" are Francos). Similar arguments are used if a Hindu government takes steps to improve the lot of the smallplanters. Whatever the intentions of the MMM leadership, they therefore receive their votes largely on an ethnic basis today, after the disappointment of 1982-3. From the public's point of view, the MMM was seen, until the elections of 1982, as a party capable of doing the impossible. Their main slogan, seen in the form of graffiti all over the island, remains "L'Espoir vaincra" (Hope will win). The party was a symbol of honesty, youth and social justice. Bérenger perpetuated the myth of the stereotypical Franco-Mauritian as an unsurpassed administrator. Everybody knew somebody from his own ethnic somewhere in the MMM. It was the party of youth and utopian hope: As late as 1986, I have met people who hold that electricity, water and public housing will immediately be free of charge when the MMM takes over. But this attitude is no longer the rule: rather, people generally vote MMM for lack of alternative and fear of Hindu hegemony. Utopians go elsewhere.

The fact of being opposed to a Hindu bloc, along with the feedback from the electorate, leaves the MMM in a position as representative of the "minorities" (non-Hindus, possibly also Hindus of the ti-nasyons) - whether this was intended or not.

It is equally clear that this would scarcely have been the situation, had the feedback from the electorate been more persistently anti-communalist or nationalist. In other words, the MMM viewed as a system of potential policies on the national level is unambiguously nationalist, but if we regard it as a vessel of popular interests relating to careering, it empirically channels ethnic interests. In other words, it is widely believed that e.g. the Creoles and Muslims would improve their career opportunities under MMM rule. Whether or not this holds true in practice we don't know - apart from the obvious fact that an MMM government would almost certainly try to reduce nepotism and presumed Hindu dominance in public affairs.

LANGUAGES IN NATIONALISM

Religion and language are the most important formal principles of division of the Mauritian population along ethnic lines. Both provide organisational "vessels" for the articulation of interests not necessarily identical with their formal content; both are symbolic bearers of cultural identity. Both of these aspects have been exemplified in chapter 3; in this section, I discuss language from a different viewpoint.

The language discourse is considered legitimate (in fields v and vi); public discourses pertaining to religion are not. The former is therefore more important.

Religious and linguistic groups are de facto incongruous, and Kreol is casually spoken outside the Creole ethnic, while the Franco-Mauritians, although Catholic, do not speak Kreol between them. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the Mauritian populace speaks Kreol as a first language does not prevent interest groups from using linguistic differences, real or fictitious, as a principle of socio-cultural division. In chapter 3, I have linked this with a discussion of individual ethnic identity. Here, I consider problems of language in nation-building; first with reference to the controversy over school curricula, then examining the potential of Kreol as a unifying principle, as a symbolic vehicle of national identity.

Linguistic diversity in primary education

The Mauritian system of education, designed by Europeans, has always been relatively uniform. Since Independence, there have been policies aiming to "nationalise" it gradually, yet retaining its compatibility with European educational systems.

In November, 1984, the government appointed a committee of parliamentarians

to

"consider and report on the circumstances in which registered school candidates sitting for the Certificate of Primary Education examination may opt for ranking purposes for an oriental language from among Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Mandarin and Arabic in addition to the four compulsory subjects, namely: English, Mathematics, Geography and French". (Mauritius 1986:1)

Teaching in Oriental languages had formerly been available at private institutions and as additional subjects in some schools. The novelty of the proposition was its suggestion that Oriental languages should now become important in ranking and thus have direct effect on the admission to secondary school.

The committee was composed of 5 Hindus, 1 Muslim, 2 Creoles and 1 Coloured; two of the members belonged to the political opposition. Some of the members eventually resigned and were replaced, and the committee responsible for the report consisted of 5 Hindus, 2 Muslims, 1 Coloured and a Tamilo-Christian.

In two consecutive press communiques released during 1985, the public was invited to witness before the commission; i.e. to suggest solutions and discuss particular issues with the committee. 109 actors responded to the communiques; 62 individuals and 47 organisations. Ethnically, they were distributed thus:

	Individuals	Organisations
Hindu	45	24
Tamil	5	2
Muslim	7	5
Sino-Mauritian	1	
Creole/Coloured	2	5
Franco	2	
Mixed Oriental		1[15]
Non-ethnic/unidentified	10	

Table 8. Participation in public hearing on language instruction in public schools.
Source: Mauritius 1986

The pressure groups in question were founded on different bases. Some were religious groups (most of these Hindu sub-categories based on caste, ancestral language and/or denomination), some represented formal language groups (such as the Mauritius Arabic Language Teachers and Students Association), while yet others were national or local parents' organisations, teachers' unions, humanitarian groups or youth organisations.

The large majority of the individuals belonged to one or several elites (they were active in social fields iv, v and/or vi).

The very time-consuming hearings, then, took place within field v; the national political system. While it is clearly true that the hitherto dominant position of French has been due to power relations in field iv, the entire debate was this time undertaken with no reference to local economy. The preoccupation was with fairness, and whereas it might have been legitimate and indeed desirable to display adherence to sectional interests on level v, anyone wishing to participate on level vi, that is (here) the national press, where the issue was discussed extensively, was obliged to emphasise his or hers commitment to the common

good.

The issue represented a strong challenge to the representatives of the young Mauritian nation. It was very important insofar as Mauritians attach increasing value to education[16], and it demanded a redefinition of the highest common denominator. Formerly, the highest common denominator had been colonially defined and sanctioned; this time, it had to be specified nationally according to democratic rules.

In the event, a composite denominator resulted. I quote from the report:

"(a) English being the official language and the most widely used international language should continue to be promoted and given due importance;
(b) it would be desirable and in the interests of all Mauritians to be encouraged to learn French, which is readily acquired in the Mauritian context;
(c) language, being also a vehicle of culture, must be given its importance in order to understand and preserve worthwhile ancestral values; and
(d) children who do not take an oriental language would be offered a course in Cultures and Civilisations in Mauritius. "

(Mauritius 1986:11)

This means, in practice, that children of the General Population would be taught Cultures and Civilisations in Mauritius, a course aiming at "making children aware of the rich cultural heritage of Mauritius" (ibid.); denoting the same variety of nationalism as the cultural show described on pp. 173-4; "Mauritianity-as-identical-with-the-mosaic". Kreol was not considered to be a language worthy of systematic instruction, and as far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the groups and individuals involved in the hearing of the Select Committee suggested that it should be.

The lack of any corporate group representing those for whom Kreol is an

ancestral language is hardly surprising - despite the fact that in reality, Kreol is virtually everybody's first language - considering certain socio-cultural features of the ethnics constituting the General Population, discussed on pp. 109-124. In other words, Kreol is indexical of low social rank. However, the status of Kreol in fields v and vi has declined since the first post-independence decade (although this may not be the case in fields i and ii). In 1982-3, Kreol was used as a national language alongside English and French for a brief period.

Kreol as a potential national language

At the time of the French revolution, about a dozen dialects, some of them distinctive enough to be considered as separate languages, were spoken in France. The concept of the modern nation-state was developed during the same period; the peoples of France were to be integrated economically and politically on a state level. The demand for a common language as a practical instrument (in administration and the extraction of taxes) and as a vessel of national unity (in military and other matters) was strong. Today, then, some 200 years after, virtually every Frenchman speaks a variety of what was at the time the Isle-de-France (Parisian) dialect; some, however, as a second language.

Sometimes, otherwise diverse peoples have been successfully integrated into national states due to common language (Italy, Greater Germany). Linguistically plural politico-economic units are frequently either federative states (Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Soviet Union), ruled politically and/or economically by a hegemonic ethnic/linguistic group (Ian Smith's Rhodesia, USA, French DOM-TOMs, Peru) - or they are either not really integrated on a state level and/or unstable (African countries). Viewed in a perspective of *longue durée*, ethnic and linguistic groups emerge, change, and eventually vanish. Processes of ethnic and linguistic change are continuous; structurally they may be perceived as systemic adjustments aiming for stability, individually as struggles for meaningful survival.

In Mauritius, Kreol has over the last one-and-a-half century or so proven practically capable of uniting otherwise very diverse groups into a reasonably

homogenous linguistic group. This does not imply that ethnic differences have been eradicated; further, the importance of language as criterion of distinctiveness remains crucial in the real or partly fictitious maintenance of "ancestral languages" (until recently known as "mother tongues") on the part of the non-Creole populations (cf. discussion, pp. 89-98).

In the following paragraphs, I apply my own field material on actual use of languages (summarised in Table 9 on p. 191[17]), to a discussion focussing on attitudes to Kreol and their ethnic and national aspects.

None of the languages is strictly confined to one or several social fields. English is rarely spoken but frequently written; French is widely written and spoken in formal or semi-formal contexts; Kreol is normally used in informal situations etc. Generally, use of particular languages depends on social situation and status activated, not on field nor interactional partners. During the break between lessons, the lecturer naturally addresses his university students cordially in Kreol; the clerk addresses his subordinate in Kreol but his boss in French (and possibly his mother in Bhojpuri); the housewife addresses the Sino-Mauritian shopkeeper in Kreol but might speak French with the attendant in one of the posh shops of downtown Curepipe.

Popular conceptions of Kreol are, despite its near universal use in informal contexts, all but pejorative. This is partly because Kreol is associated with the despised (and publicly inarticulate) ("Black") Creoles (cf. the discussion on pp. 89-98, where it appears that people of Indian origin, whose first language empirically is Kreol, tend to state that their mother tongue is an Oriental language). It is a language the Mauritians speak *malgré eux*. The language is still widely regarded as "nothing but French badly pronounced and free from ordinary rules of grammar", as a colonial official would have it at the turn of the century. But Mauritians also fear further isolation from the international community if they were to replace French and English with the language spoken only locally: they feel their pride as us, the Mauritians seen under the gaze of the foreigners, threatened. Finally, I have met Mauritian intellectuals,

sympathetically inclined towards Kreol, who doubt its ability to conceptualise the increasingly complex Mauritian socio-cultural reality. In their - and in many's - view, Kreol is a beautiful language in poetry and songs, an accurate one in the fields, a colourful one in the bar. But, they claim, its syntax and grammar cannot accomodate concepts of abstract and complex character, such as those necessary in, e.g. sociological research, industrial design, or philosophical thought[18].

(1) Public contexts

Field ii

Church sermon (Catholic) F/K

Collective prayer at mosque A/K

Hindu rite H*/K

Primary school instruction K**

Field iii

University lecture E

Lunch break (anywhere) K

Field iv

Board meeting, private enterprise F/K

Board meeting, parastatal E/K

Field v

Speech at Legislative Assembly E/F

Public political speech K

Field vi

TV/radio news F/E (K)

Radio commercial K/F (E)

Press F (E)

Legend of political caricature K

Poetry K/F (E)

Play F/K

Popular literature F

Cinema film Hi/F

(b) Private contexts

Field i

Conversation at home K (Ha/B/F)

Conversation with servant K

Field ii

Personal letter F (K)

Conversation with friend K

Field iii

Written application for job F/E

Oral application for job K/F

Table 9. Languages and contexts.

Abbreviations: A=Arabic. B=Bhojpuri. E=English. F=French. H=Hindi. Ha=Hakka. Hi=Hindustani. K=Kreol.

* Hindu "Linguistic minorities" (Tamils, Marathis, Telegus) tend to use their ancestral languages in ritual.

** Officially, English is the medium of instruction already at the primary level. In practice, teachers speak Kreol (and in certain cases, Bhojpuri) in order that the pupils understand, although textbooks are always in English or French.

The metonymical character of the "linguistic division of labour" or diglossia between French and Kreol, as perceived by urban Creoles, can be expressed thus, simplistically:

FRENCH	KREOL
power	impotence
abstract thought	practical tasks
steak & salad	<i>Kari masala</i>
wine & whisky	rum & beer
whiteness	blackness
refinement	vulgarity
responsibility	carelessness
religion	superstition
education	ignorance
(literacy)	(illiteracy)
seriousness	jocularly
<i>bonne société</i>	<i>milieu populaire</i>

(etc.)

Table 10. Normative connotations of French-Kreol diglossia

Great efforts are made in order that the asymmetrical relationship between the two arguably most important languages in Mauritius be maintained and justified vis à vis non-Francophones. Command of French is a prerequisite for and tangible sign of high social status; the ruling class of colons has always been Francophone and has consciously used the French language as an important part of their ideological mystique. In books and newspaper columns, Franco-Mauritians and Coloureds of respectable standing regularly link the decline of manners to the supposedly deteriorating position of French in Mauritius[19]. Arguing that making Kreol a national language would isolate Mauritius in the world community, they have, with a great measure of success, managed to shift the attention towards the relationship between French and English rather than that between French and Kreol. The power of defining the relevant fields of

discourse, alluded to elsewhere, is visibly exerted here - in social field vi.

Representatives of France, the most important external power in the western Indian Ocean, are anxious to maintain a hegemonic position in the domain of "culture". The French cultural centre, L'Alliance Française, has a much higher level of activity than say, the British Council, and local dramatic groups staging plays in French receive financial support. Further, a powerful television transmitter broadcasting French programmes, aimed exclusively at Mauritius, has been installed on the eastern coast of the French DOM La Réunion.

Since independence, the taken-for-granted asymmetry between Kreol and French has been challenged in a much more serious manner in Mauritius than in the French DOM-TOMs (cf. Chaudenson 1974 for La Réunion; Bébel-Gisler 1975 for Guadeloupe and Martinique). From the beginning around 1970, the MMM used Kreol in their internal meetings, in press conferences, and of course, at public meetings. The discovery that their leader, an obviously educated and refined Franco-Mauritian, would rather speak Kreol than French, was a source of pride and wonder among the followers of the MMM.

It is likely that, had Mauritius had an ethnic composition similar to that in Seychelles, Kreol could, in the early 80's, have become a national language along with English and French. However; despite the indubitable fact that the majority of non-Creoles speak the language better than any other language, many Hindus continue to link Kreol to the Creoles; i.e., the language to the ethnic. Kreol is a language they speak *malgré eux*. Thus, when Kreol was made a national language overnight in late 1982, reactions were hostile from many quarters. Rather than unite the diverse populations in a nation, the decision awoke latent conflicts and accentuated the popular awareness of cultural differences. It was partly over the language issue that the MMM-PSM coalition and the MMM itself split.

Changes in attitudes to Kreol closely parallel political changes. From Independence to 1982, there was a period of increasing national sentiment and class consciousness, culminating in the general strike of 1979 and reaching an

anti-climax of sorts following the 1982 election victory of the MMM-PSM alliance. Nationalist and class ideology were compatible with a higher evaluation of Kreol; indeed, it might be said that the latter follows logically from the former (or conversely). Thus the use of Kreol in unusual contexts came to be perceived as a sign that a unified, just nation was about to be built; at least, such was the hope of MMM strategists. These dichotomies of the 1970's, then, were fought for.

FRENCH	KREOL
Oppression	Justice
Snobbery	Comradeship
Stratification	Equality
False consciousness	True consciousness

Table 11. Alternative connotations of French-Kreol diglossia

When attempting to replace folk classifications based on ethnicity with class-based ones, the cultural radicals alienated people seeing their own ethnic-dependent strategies threatened and those fearing cultural uniformisation and further isolation of Mauritius, this syndrome being epitomised in the linguistic idiom of Kreol. Perhaps the dichotomies reproduced above (Table 11) are acknowledged as "true" by most Mauritians, but their personal experience and strategies relating to carreering, and their perceptions of social rank (which are at least true as self-fulfilling prophecies), compel them, regardless of ethnic membership, to let the other model (Table 10), overrule them.

Kreol is correctly perceived as being in contradiction to social mobility. Within the Creole ethnic, where no third language interferes with the French-Kreol diglossia, upward social mobility entails a switching of basic cultural codes (cf. pp. 117 f). The switch to French language is crucial in this movement. As noted above, literacy and seriousness are associated with French: "One cannot live in a Western way and speak Creole"[20]. Thus, the widely accepted division of labour between Kreol and French (sanctioned publicly in fields v and vi) contributes to

preserving Kreol as an oral language lacking vocabulary and structures to conceptualise crucial aspects of social life in modern Mauritius. The entanglement of social status and language is self-fulfilling and remains valid until a new model of social reality, incorporating a model of Kreol as a perfectly adequate language, presents itself as a more compelling definition of what is to be perceived as relevant reality. Such a model is not at the moment viable.

NATIONALISM, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A common national identity must, briefly, be compatible with field i, accepted and reproduced in fields ii and iii, profitable in field iv, sanctioned by field v and publicly reproduced in field vi.

The first is, as I see it, unproblematic insofar as the "Furnivallian" ideology prevalent in Mauritius encourages cultural diversity at home. Whether or not national ideology is reproduced in field ii, depends on the pattern of settlement, and the nature of the institutions, the arenas for interaction present. I have given examples to the effect that several normative orientations may be "attached" to the shared system of representations (which is, naturally, itself evolving) in the course of practical interpretation. In field iii, the working-place, the structure and nature of hierarchies, the composition of the labour-force, and the spatial location of the enterprise seem to be the most important factors. This is discussed below. In field iv, then, where decisions affecting the total division of labour are taken, there can be no doubt that the ideology of meritocracy is most beneficial according to the internal criteria of the entire system of relations (efficiency, productivity). On the other hand, ethnic organisation (hiring of relatives etc.) may pay off better locally (i.e. to the individual owner of means of production). The political system as a whole is, in response to social change, inclining towards decisions strengthening the nation-state and influencing the five remaining fields in this direction (cf. discussion below) - although members of the state bureaucracy, seen from its aspect as fields iii-iv, still widely practice ethnic strategies (nepotism etc.). In field vi, finally, the national communicational systems, particularly the larger media, nationalism is as a matter of convention

communicated overtly. Communalism is simply not *comme il faut* in this sector of Mauritian public life.

Below, I briefly discuss some consequences - empirical and potential - of social change in Mauritius, linking them to the general discussion of nationalism vs. ethnicity.

Tourism, industrialisation and bureaucracy in the national state

I have frequently alluded to the high rate of social change in Mauritius. By 1986, the industrial "zone" (EPZ or Zone Franche) was, as a unit, the largest employer in Mauritius. In other words, more Mauritians are now industrial workers than agricultural labourers. Industrialisation does not take the shape of an exodus from the countryside; the population growth rate is higher in "rural" than in "urban" areas. Parts of Port-Louis have actually experienced a negative growth rate during 1972-1982 (Mauritius, 1984-6).

Rather, the change occurs, spatially located, (a) in areas formerly dominated by a rural division of labour and local organisation, (b) in newly established industrial estates outside the towns, (c) on chosen sites along the coast (the erection of hotels and *stations balnéaires*).

The cultural effects of tourism have been suggested in the comparison between the two coastal villages (pp. 139-142). In L., where most of the households had members working in hotels, people were up-to-date with European patterns of consumption; the young took great pains to adopt recent Western fashion in clothing and hairstyle, the adults invested much work in improving their dwellings, and many had bank accounts. In C., on the contrary, where nobody was employed in the tourist industry at the time of my fieldwork, the dominant ethos was largely the classical, stereotyped Creole morality entailing short, unmeasured temporal units and accordingly, lack of commitment to long-term strategies. The social and cultural schism between these neighbouring villages, which might conceivably have developed regardless of tourism, has certainly

been accentuated by it. The content of the cultural form emerging as the dominant one in L. (non-ethnic, "progressive") is visibly inspired by the culture encountered at the five-star hotels. The exigencies of the work itself include absolute punctuality, which is unimportant to the labourer and unknown to the fisherman. In L., most of the men wear inexpensive wristwatches daily. In C., watches are worn only at parties and at Mass.

Further, the employee at the hotel has the prospect - real or imagined - of promotion. The chairman of the Village Council, a poorly educated man, had begun as a waiter and was now, eleven years later, chief purser. Labourers and fishermen, on the contrary, have little or no prospect of "promotion". Nothing in their daily practices can, therefore, serve metonymically as a model of "development" or "progress", or simply change.

Social change as industrialisation has slightly different effects, although this, too, entails a new structuring of time and social relations.

Many of the roughly 500 EPZ enterprises are small, family-owned textile factories, often located in the family's living quarters. One typical such factory, owned by a middle-aged, university-educated Hindu in Rose-Hill, has six employees: his wife, two of her sisters, one of his nieces and two of his female cousins. Only his wife was working full-time. The wages corresponded to the national average (900 Rs monthly for full-time employees).

In this kind of enterprise, no qualitatively new type of social relation arises from the organisation of production. Compared with a small-planter with similar economic assets, the difference pertains to gender: in the small industrial enterprise, most or all the employees are girls and women; in the fields, most of the labourers are boys and men. In other words, industrialisation on a small scale leads to the strengthening of horizontal female kinship bonds and, perhaps, the weakening of their male correlate. But like in the traditional smallplanter's enterprise, workers are recruited according to individual kinship bonds with the employer - and this ethnically-based principle of recruitment, incompatible with

large-scale industrialisation, then, remains unchanged.

In the larger factories and especially in the industrial estates, the effects of change on small-scale social organisation are much more dramatic. Three immediate effects are obvious (and very visible):

(a) Increasing participation of women in the affected segments of the most numerous ethnics. Most of the workers in the textile industry are girls and women. This increases their freedom of movement (many Indo-Mauritian women were hardly allowed to leave the home alone) and their economic significance. I know of several households where the women's factory work is the only source of money[21]. As yet, the man remains head of household, and his wife's and daughters' wages are allocated to him.

(b) Increasing inter-ethnic contacts in a wholly shared meaning-context. Many of the larger factories are owned by foreigners, expatriates and Sino-Mauritians, who tend not to be ethnically biased in matters of employment in the largest, bottom segments of the hierarchies. All ethnics except Francos and Sinos are represented among EPZ workers. (I tried to sample figures, but the management of certain large factories denied me access to lists of employees. Creole girls and women are, not unexpectedly, greatly overrepresented in the unions, thus their membership lists couldn't be used either.) Extrapolating, then, from sporadic observations of casual, informal groups taking their lunchbreaks, waiting for the bus home, walking to and from the bus stop etc., it is very likely (many would say obvious) that the networks activated in field iii are much less dependent on ethnicity in the new industrial estates than elsewhere. Although collective, syndical action is very difficult in the EPZ, a certain awareness of shared interests is apparent. Many non-Creoles signed a petition defending Père Diard (cf. pp. 86-88). This signifies a class awareness which is in principle removed from gender, and definitely removed from ethnicity. Its relation to nationalism is less apparent.

The young age of the industrial workers is also significant. (Many, if not most, are

under 20.) This means that most of them have reproduced non-ethnically based action sets in all social fields but the household, throughout their lives. I know several young industrial workers who are either engaged or married to men from ethnics other than their own, and intermarriage is much more widespread in "industrial" than in "agricultural" villages, which has probably do with the pattern of settlement, i.e. field ii, as well as the social links formed in field iii.

The combined significance of social change as industrialisation and tourism can be summed up as follows.

(a) Workers are increasingly recruited according to universalist, not particularist criteria. This places the competitors for jobs in structurally equal positions, regardless of ethnic membership.

In abstract Parsonian terms, this can be understood as achievement replacing ascription as a leading principle of differentiation, and the process parallels those regularly described by "classical" sociologists - from Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber to Peter Berger and his associates - when they attempt to account for the changes in European society associated with the industrial revolution and the growing significance of the nation-state (cf. e.g. Weber 1922, Berger et al. 1974).

(b) Field iii, the working-place, is multi-ethnic and highly hierarchical. This leads to (1) increased inter-ethnic contacts, (2) a widespread understanding of the workings of the (ideal-typical) meritocracy. The values associated with meritocracy and/or class struggle may present themselves as more relevant in daily life than those of ethnic organisation.

(c) The working-place is also, often, composed of people from different parts of the island. Thus, workers establish non-localised networks founded on a shared experience as workers.

(d) The public participation of women is increasing as they begin to work with other women away from the home, and their representations of other ethnics

change. This, along with b, contributes to removing some of the constraints formerly preventing widespread intermarriage.

(e) Modernisation brings Mauritius closer to the rest of the world. First, tourists are popular sources of information about Europe and Australia. Second, Mauritius has to compete with Oriental countries about markets for its clothing industry, and the workers know this (they are being told by the management, e.g., that wages cannot be increased lest they lose the competition and thus their jobs). In other words, workers are being instructed to act in a global field - the world market. Further, the international exchange of goods is increasing (Yin/Yeung 1986, Tableau 8), as is, accordingly, the local demand for "Western" consumer goods - regardless of ethnic[22].

Social change, affecting the Mauritian lifestyles and uniformising them in some respects (thus confirming Gellner's theory), creates new types of social relations in field iii. Of crucial importance is the basis of recruitment to the labour force. While pre-industrial wage workers were largely recruited on geographical and ethnic bases via the mediation of personal contacts, workers in the industrial and hotel sectors are recruited on basis of formal qualifications and sheer availability. Applications usually have to be in writing. New statuses or aspects of the social person gain relevance. Thus, Claude and Veerasamy (pp. 31-40) can no longer take the ethnic status setup of their working environment for granted.

This new situation in turn encourages the cultural reproduction of non-ethnic identities (although this is not the only possible effect). The new "ideologies" need not be "nationalist" in character, but the most important ones are - unlike ethnic identities as they are played out in the labour market - compatible with nationalism. Moderate class struggle denotes faith in the nation-state as benefactor. Career-individualism, founded in a liberal belief in meritocracy, implies equal opportunity and precludes ethnic particularism. The two are perceived as being complementary. Whereas the latter symbolises the individual's right to progress unimpeded (and the state's duty to protect this right of unbounded freedom), the former symbolises the state's duty to establish

social justice (and the individual's right to demand protection from certain aspects of the freedom of other individuals). In Mauritius, an emergent industrial society, the part played by the state bureaucracy and the organisations influencing it, what we have called social field v , is in this sense an actor of increasing importance in the economy. Economic planning is perceived a public task (cf. MSM 1983, MMM 1983), and ambitious programmes of economic change are discussed in Parliament. Granted that Mauritius the nation-state is not a "minimal state" but aspires to develop into a "fully-fledged welfare state", taxation and social benefit schemes are also increasing activities of the state. This also serves to encourage the reproduction of individual identities as members of a nation in various contexts. In the end, then, it does make a difference to old Cotte in C. whether he receives his monthly pension of Rs 200 from his son or from the state.

I have now delineated some of the systemic parametres in the discussion of nationalism vs. communalism. In the final paragraphs of the study, I consider aspects of national identity, seen from the perspective of the individual.

The Mauritian and the world: "We" and "Us"

"Especially the fact of my being engaged with the others in a common rhythm to whose origin I contribute, serves to develop my experience of being engaged in a 'we-as-subject'. (...) I do not exploit the collective rhythm as a tool, nor do I regard it - in the sense I might, for instance, regard the dancers on a stage - it surrounds me and fascinates me without being my object. (...) But this is, as one knows, only necessary if I initially, through my acceptance of a shared aim and shared tools, constitute myself as undifferentiated transcendence through relegating my own aims to second place, after the collective aims now being pursued." [23]

(Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant*)

The plurality of Mauritian society, if not manifest in the composition of the social person, gives its inhabitants a sense of uniqueness and is as such a source of national pride (at least in conversations with foreigners). "We are the tomato of

the Indian Ocean," say promoters of tourism. "We go with everything." This implies an identity of us-hood. Mauritians are what they are as Mauritians, relatively to what others are. Seen rather as members of a collectivity of we (i.e. the system viewed from within), Mauritians rather tend to experience the daily multi-ethnicity as a perpetual cause of anxiety and frustration.

Self-awareness of being Mauritian as opposed to non-Mauritians implies a redefinition, an expansion, of relevant systems boundaries: this encourages Mauritianity as us-hood. Unity as we-hood, conversely, must be founded in shared or complementary representations of shared practices. I will discuss these two aspects of social identity separately for the sake of clarity; it seems, however, that every actual context must encompass elements of both: i.e., internal criteria for unity, and a difference that makes a difference (Bateson 1972) to all who are not included.

(i) New forms of "us-hood" as effects of expanding systems boundaries

Sports have frequently been invoked as focal points of ethnic unity, until recently considered legitimate. In 1982, several of Mauritius' leading football teams changed their names (from Hindu Cadets, Muslim Scouts, etc. to Cadets, Scouts etc.), and the official policy is now to encourage non-ethnic sports. Yet ethnic allegiances are still strong, despite the change in names (and the inevitable odd player or two from an "outside" ethnic in every team):

Early in March, 1986, I attended the finals of a local football tournament at George V Stadium in Curepipe. I had arrived in Mauritius only a few weeks earlier, and asked my companion, a young Creole, whether the teams had any link with the "communities". He assured me that they hadn't. "Formerly, it used to be 'Hindu Cadets'; now, it's only 'Cadets', see?" However, I couldn't help noticing the very visible ethnic clustering of Creoles and Indo-Mauritians in different parts of the stand. We took our place amidst the Creoles, and predictably - when the Cadets scored, cheers and handclaps soared from the other side of the stand, whereas the people surrounding myself silently lit

another cigarette.

Lately, other foci of group allegiance have consciously been created (from field v, notably the Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports). In 1986, for instance, the first Jeux des Villes de L'Océan Indien, an inter-town tournament with participation from Reunionan towns, Victoria (of Seychelles) and Antananarivo, changed the focus from ethnic to locality (large-scale). The interest in these new proposed allegiances was very low. In tiny Mauritius, where one town merges into another in urban Plaines Wilhems from Coromandel to Curepipe, and each town is spatially differentiated according to class and ethnicity, any Creole cité dweller in Beau-Bassin would rather identify with Creole cité dwellers in Curepipe twenty kilometres away (with whom he may well be linked by means of kinship or friendship) than with the bourgeois Sino-Mauritians and Francos a few streets off.

Sometimes, however, these conscious redefinitions of systems boundaries may have social repercussions which are stronger than predicted. In August, 1985, Mauritius was responsible for the second Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien, an international sports tournament. The event led to a sudden upsurge of national sentiment that could still be noticed a year later (people spoke fondly of Mauritian athletes belonging to ethnics other than their own, etc.). A schoolboy, quoted in *Le Mauricien* (February, 1986), wrote in an essay that "the country of Mauritius was born in 1968, but Mauritianity was born in August, 1985". This is clearly a significant statement: From being "us, the Hindus" etc., one suddenly became, within a larger system of relevant relations, "us, the Mauritians". This system can be defined as the sum of the social relations created and activated during the Jeux des Iles; the important thing is nevertheless the tournament's enduring influence on the representations of many Mauritians. After the event, the system depends on certain representations shared by a certain number of Mauritians, in order to be reproduced as a relevant potential system ("model"). For this to happen, the mere sports event could never have been sufficient. The more recent Jeux des Villes de l'Océan Indien, as noted, never led to town-based patriotism. There is, therefore, clearly an emerging self-awareness as citizens

among Mauritians, as participants in a system of more ambitious scale than those reproduced locally; a self-awareness which became visible in the strong manifestations of national sentiments symbolically conceptualised as "international sports".

The "underlying" processes of expansion of systemic boundaries, i.e. those that made the nationalism following the Jeux des Iles possible at all, are those of internationally-linked social and economic change, notably the development of communications, tourism and industrialisation. Tourists bring knowledge and awareness of the greater systems where Mauritians potentially take part, and encourage the creation of representations of a rather loftier scope than those they potentially replace. Industrialisation creates, demonstrates and reproduces a variety of these representations in practice (cf. above). Mauritius is being served by an increasing number of international flights (and the capacity of the airport is presently being increased). In addition, many Mauritians emigrated, permanently or for shorter periods, during the first decade after independence.

The enthusiasm encountered during and after the Jeux des Iles, then, can be traced back to a self-awareness of "us, the Mauritians" stemming from growing intercourse with the external world - in search, as it were, of a vehicle for its visible expression.

In the previous section, I noted that expansions of systemic boundaries are credibly interpreted (by the actors) as Mauritian us-hood in the social context of the industrial workers. From a different perspective than the factory owner's, the national authorities are painfully aware of the Mauritian industry's dependence on the interest of foreign investors - and the presence of competing sources of cheap labour. Their implicit plea to the workers goes something like "We've got to increase our productivity lest we, Mauritius Ltd., go bankrupt." Below, I present two examples of us-hood which is caused by expanding systemic boundaries in other contexts. In the first example, the new types of social relations emerge because of geographical, physical mobility; in the second, the ultimate cause rather consists in changes having taken place outside

Mauritius[24].

When abroad, Mauritians (like members of virtually any other nationality) tend to cling together. A Muslim friend, definitely skeptical of the Creoles at home ("You shouldn't mingle so much with those people, Tom!"), told me this about his stay as an assistant nurse at a British hospital:

"...And every Friday night, we'd have a huge séga party at somebody's place where we'd drink some rum - even I had a few glasses sometimes... Man, there were so many Mauritians there - Creoles, Hindus, you know; it's so nice to meet fellow-Mauritians when you're far away from home."

This is a familiar expression of we-hood, caused by an us-hood resulting from expanding systems boundaries - when the difference that makes a difference appears at a level outside ethnicity because the outsiders are non-Mauritians. In Britain, being Mauritian as opposed to British is more important than being Muslim as opposed to Creole or Hindu[25]. This example also illustrates my general point that ethnicity is conditional pertaining to persons-in-situations and not categorical pertaining to persons-as-such.

The Muslim shift from Pakistani to Arab "ancestral identity", which has taken place since the early-to middle seventies (cf. p. 95-96), can plausibly be interpreted as a wish to participate in a system of larger scale, rather than as "ethnic revitalisation". Embracing Pan-Arabism and later Pan-Islamism, local Muslim leaders stressed that they, as Mauritian Muslims, supported the Arab world in geopolitics and, indeed, that they contributed to it.

This international ideology is, unlike the tiersmondisme popular in the MMM of the 1970's, not compatible with Mauritian nationalism. In January, 1984, the staff of the Libyan Embassy in Port-Louis were expelled. Whether this "quixotic expulsion" (Bowman 1984:8) was due to "a judicious accomodation to the sensitivities of Washington and Riyadh" or to "an authentic revulsion toward Colonel Qaddafi's admonition to Christians to read the Koran" (ibid.), has been

kept secret. There are rumours that the Libyan diplomats bribed Christians into conversion (which would have upset the precarious ethnic equilibrium); whatever the case may be, Pan-Islamism is neither compatible with Mauritian foreign policy nor with its internal ideologies, notably the dictum of the highest common denominator and the attempts to have it "increased".

(ii) Growing areas of shared meaning

A nationalist ideology must have elements of the we aspect of unity ("pulling together", "sharing the fruits of our labours" etc.) although the us aspect is perhaps always its *raison d'être* ("We're better than the X'es" - put more directly: "We, Mauritius the actor in international affairs, are competitive"). Nationalism becomes pervasively relevant the moment it is more interesting to a Mauritian to compare himself (his country, its products etc.) with the foreigner than with his neighbour. Ultimately this is to do with expansions of the system considered most relevant at any given moment in the actor's life. If her status as an industrial worker, and the meaning produced therein, is more important (to her) than her status as a temple-going Tamil, then she is a Mauritian before she's a Tamil. This process cannot be measured, and it appears difficult to infer from observation: When, after all, do we know that Mlle Dimba's identity as a worker sets a deeper imprint on her self, as it were, than her identity as a Tamil? We don't know.

What we can do, however, is extrapolate from what we do know: Mlle S. Dimba, 19, is the eldest daughter of a small-planter near P., a large, "rurban" village with a rapidly growing industrial sector. There are three more children; two girls and a boy. S. passed her CPE five years ago, but there was no money to send her to secondary school. For a while she helped her mother in the house and her father in the fields; eventually, the father decided that she should work at one of the new factories in the area. One of his sisters had a job there already, and she could look after S. At this time, there were still relatively few women of Asian descent at the factories: the great majority were Creoles. S. was sometimes harassed by some of the Creole girls, she says, but she also made friends with some. Two

years ago, she fell in love with a Creole boy, working as a chauffeur at the same factory as herself. Since her aunt was always nearby, she could never see him for more than a couple of minutes at the time - but somehow they managed to agree to marry. Like virtually anybody in a similar situation, she had to make a choice between her family and her lover; she chose her family and abandoned him, but she kept her job - even though her aunt quit during this period. (Had her aunt been around, I should probably never have been able to interview her.) Today, she comments,

"It's all very silly. To me, there's no reason that I should marry a Tamil rather than anybody else. But I'm fond of my family, and don't want to offend them. After all, I'm still young. Perhaps later I'm stronger and can marry whomever I want."

About her religion, she says,

"I am a Tamil, but I don't know what that means. I go to the temple and I like it. Anyway, Sakenn pe prie dan so fason (Each prays in his/her way), I dislike the Muslims because of their fanaticism; not as people, only their religion - but Christians are very nice. Did you know that some Catholics have done a lot of good for us girls at the factories?"

Her identity as a Mauritian seems in several respects to be practically prior to that as a Tamil. The chief criterion is her openness toward intermarriage. She also perceives her status as a factory worker as an important one (referring to nous, les filles dans les usines, in French incidentally, as it would clearly have beneath her petit-bourgeois dignity to speak Kreol to a European like myself). The fact that S. spends a significant part of her day in a social context where the participants are mutually defined through sharing a task horizontally, seems to have liberated her from consistent application of ethnic taxonomies/stereotypes altogether. There is no relevant difference between herself and her Creole, Hindu and Muslim workmates - on the contrary, they are united in "we-hood" through the non-hierarchically shared work, and in "us-hood" as underpaid workers. If

we compare this with the division of labour in the sugar estate, the difference is obvious. Where Billy (pp. 74-75) works, for instance, the director is Franco, the middle managerial positions are held by Sino-Mauritians and Mulattoes, the artisans and mechanics are Creoles, and the labourers in the fields Hindus and Muslims: the division of labour is strongly ethnically correlated. At S.'s job, a clothing enterprise employing some 90 people, the boss is a Indian from India, who uses a youngish Creole woman as interpreter when addressing his non-Anglophone workers. The white-collar positions are held by a Sino-Mauritian, a Mulatto and a Tamil. The majority of the employees, female "machinistes", work together in a large, noisy hall; here, the four largest ethnics (Hindus, Creoles, Muslims, Tamils) are present, almost in statistically representative numbers.

An ethnically similar division of labour is found in the large hotels, too. Frequently, the upper managerial positions belong to foreigners, and Sino-Mauritians are often overrepresented among those of highest rank. But further down in the hierarchy, the pattern of employment does not reflect ethnic power asymmetries. This implies that the employees in question share a representation of meritocratic principles. This further means that they face each other in a competitive situation, unlike S. and her workmates at the factory. Unlike the factory worker, the hotel employee tends to consider the possibility of promotion, and no unity of the "we" variety is viable here. However, the adoption of principles of meritocracy entails a weakening of cultural and social boundaries: an acknowledgment that everybody is up to the same thing - and here, too, there is no relevant difference between employees on roughly the same level in the hierarchy. The social context of the hotel, like that of the factory, provides a system of shared representations, confirmed in action, which is independent from ethnicity and which is - I have argued, compatible with nationalism. Through paying increasing income taxes to the State and receiving increasing welfare benefits in return, the worker and his/her family further develop a tangible understanding of the we-hood inherent in the abstract model of nation-building: We take care of each other.

Areas of shared meaning are growing in many new and/or changing fields of

inter-ethnic interaction. In this much too brief discussion of social change, I have mainly focussed on the working-place. Other fields could have been chosen; for instance, it is certainly of some interest that virtually all Mauritians now eat their rice with spoon and fork and that body gestures are interethnically identical. It could also have been interesting e.g. to extrapolate from the fact that private television sets has grown from 50,000 to 100,000 sets in five years, and its potential effects on the cultural environment in field i -or to try to predict the effects of female employment on family organisation - or to describe the French magazines most cross-ethnically popular among the youth of Rose-Hill, etc. So be it. In leaving the questions here, I admit that neither the Mauritian metamorphosis nor my analysis of it are finished. At the moment, nevertheless, the case for nationalism seems a strong one. The national symbols are available and increasingly being perceived as relevant: colonial ones, Economic Progress and Ramgoolam as "we" symbols, the Diego Garcia conflict, economic competition and ethnic diversity as "us" symbols. The relevant forms of organisation (the nation-state as an increasingly important actor locally and internationally, the functioning meritocracy as the most important criterion for recruitment to the labour market) seem to be on their way.

On the other hand, many important events in the history of Mauritius were unpredicted.

NOTES

1. The dictionary has throughout a very strong normative bias.
2. Both of the large political parties are in favour of a strong state collecting taxes and monitoring comprehensive welfare schemes (cf. MSM 1983, MMM 1983). The Mauritian state is already much more active than what is common in the "3rd world".

3. As Epstein (1978) remarks, the important point about the American melting-pot is that it never happened; many (but probably not most) of the ethnics remain discrete after several generations; after the second and third industrial revolutions...

4. In 1985, the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery was held, after lobbying and planning by the Creole interest group L'Organisation Fraternelle. The government, sensing a possible conflict, rapidly ruled that the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured labourers from India should be celebrated simultaneously.

5. The national flag, incidentally, consists of four horizontal stripes; from top to bottom, they are red, blue, yellow and green. Officially, the colours symbolise (from below) the crops of the land, the tropical sun, the ocean enclosing Mauritius, and the struggle of the people. A popular interpretation holds that the red stands for the Labour Party (Hindu dominated), the blue for the PMSD (General Population), the yellow for the Sino-Mauritians, and the green for the Muslims.

6. I have myself discussed religion with a great number of Mauritians, and was as a rule unimpressed by their actual knowledge.

7. The main source for the following discussion is the newspaper L'Express (Wednesday, 18 December, 1985), which devoted seven large pages to an illustrated description of the ceremony. In addition, I have the testimonies of two (non-academic, non-Hindu) Mauritians who were present.

8. ...the most striking instance witnessed by me being a police brass band playing Tamil religious music at a Cavadee in Mahébourg, May 1986...

9. Note the parallels with the nearly universal acceptance of English as a national language.

10. Military expenditure in Mauritius amounts to 0.2% of the GNP.
11. The MMM was founded in 1969. At a local by-election in 1971, it easily won in the Prime Minister's own constituency. At the first General Election after independence, in 1976, the MMM took 34 of the 70 seats.
12. Personal interview with Bérenger, March 1986 (partly reproduced in Eriksen 1986b)
13. In their revised programme (MMM 1983), the party admits that "The EPZ and the industrial sector will be excluded from the nationalisations to be undertaken by an MMM Government" (p. 24).
14. The last point does not, in the Mauritian context, necessarily mean more than a ritual recognition of the rules for political discourse, although the MMM plan to establish "a severe legislation against any act of racist or communalist character" (MMM 1983: 39).
15. Basha Andolan is a loosely knit umbrella organisation comprising some 16 lesser collectivities, many of which deponed independently. 14 of the member organisations represent segments of the Hindu population (divided by caste, denomination and language), one represents Tamils and one Muslims.
16. The large number of organisations and individuals attempting to influence the decision of the Committee indicates this, as well as the enormous number of applicants to various schools and courses of higher education.
17. The table is inspired by a similar table in Chaudenson 1978.
18. Not having studied the syntax of Kreol systematically, I cannot tell whether this is a reasonable judgement in addition to being an ideological justification of the symbolic reproduction of the Franco- and Anglophiles's positions in power.

19. For examples, cf. de Rauville 1967, Dinan 1986; former journalist Masson's latest novel (1986) also contains fine samples of Franco-Mauritian contempt and Christian paternalism vis à vis Kreolophones.

20. The quotation is from one of Bébel-Gisler's (1975) Guadeloupean informants, and it fits the Mauritian context perfectly.

21. I have found most instances of this in the Creole suburbs of Port-Louis, where the men traditionally worked on the docks. Since the opening of a sugar bulk terminal ("vrac") in 1980, many have been unemployed. During the same period, many of the women have found jobs in the new industries emerging in the early-to middle eighties.

22. An Indian intellectual, *un Indien de l'Inde*, a frequent visitor to Mauritius, complained about the average Indo-Mauritian: "He's not an Indian, he just looks like it. What could his spiritual life possibly look like, when he spends all his time saving for a video machine! He doesn't speak like an Indian, nor think like one."

23. Sartre's distinction between "we-as-subject" and "we-as-object" (French does not have a word for "us") is illuminating, but his usage of the concepts ("we-as-subject" as a "subjective and psychological experience", his teachings on subject-object relationships etc.) cannot possibly be applied here. I use the terms, then, inaccurately and tentatively, in referring (a) to we, the social and/or cultural unit held together chiefly through its internal workings, and (b) to us, kept together against the "gaze of the Third (Tertius)". He is looking at us, but we are producing meaning together. The two are, empirically, non-existent poles in a continuum.

24. The Rodriguan independence movement, existing since the mid-seventies and represented in parliament by the OPR party (*Organisation du Peuple Rodriguais*), shows the importance of delineating changes in systemic boundaries. According to the OPR and some Mauritian intellectuals, tiny Mauritius has a colonial problem in (even tinier) Rodrigues, exploiting and

underdeveloping the dependency much in the same way as the previous colonial powers (mis-)treated their colonies. (a) Nobody conceptualised this model before independence, as the relevant system in question was then the British Empire or, more specifically, the system containing Mauritius-and-Rodrigues on the one hand, and the United Kingdom on the other. The new self-sustaining system of Mauritius-and-Rodrigues provided the structural conditions for a Rodriguan independence movement. (b) The formal relations within the respective delineated systems may be similar, although their substantial properties are not.

25. Even expatriate Mauritians sometimes activate ethnic networks, however. In Strasbourg, for instance, a large segment of the resident Mauritians are Tamils from a particular suburb of Rose-Hill, many of them relatives.