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Discourses of Tension in a Rainbow Nation: Transcultural Identity Formations among Hakka Mauritians

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Abstract

Identity formation happens at a crossroads of that which people believe they *are* and are *not*. Acknowledgment, reification, or subversion of identity frictions form powerful communicative patterns that I call 'discourses of tension'. I argue in this dissertation that discourses of tension are foundational to the formation of transcultural identities—positionalities that emerge between or beyond perceived cultural boundaries—because they enable people to identify and express cultural complexities and expectations.

Based on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork and research in other relevant sites, this argument is supported by my analysis of how Hakka Chinese Mauritians express agency and identity within the affordances and constraints presented by historical relations, ideologies, policies, and sociopolitical developments in postcolonial Mauritius. This small Indian Ocean island state is lauded for its peaceful multicultural society while imposing restrictive ethnic classification into four groups (Hindu, Muslim, Chinese, and 'General Population') onto its citizens. Mauritian identity formation is anchored in raciolinguistic ideologies which view language and race as naturally linked. These ideologies produce expectations of people's language use and identity expression, which often conflict with social realities in Mauritius.

Within this field of tension, Hakka Mauritians often find themselves having to reassert their identities as 'authentically' Mauritian, Chinese, or Hakka. This is further complicated by the recent 'rise' of China, which promotes Mandarin language education (instead of Hakka) and affects local perceptions of what it means to be 'Chinese'. I present three key contexts in which discourses of tension become salient for Hakka Mauritian expression:

a) Mauritian discourses of nation-building and ethnolinguistic community formation
b) Shifts from Hakka to Mandarin in Chinese Mauritian heritage language classrooms
c) Ideologies of 'Chineseness' in the semiotic landscape of Mauritian Chinatown

My research shows that Hakka Mauritians occupy constant 'in-between' spaces and engage in discourses of tension to (re-)examine their identities. My dissertation thus contributes to anthropology an account of individual agency in expressing fluidity and complexity in transcultural identities against the backdrop of discursive tensions.

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

In this dissertation, I examine how Hakka Chinese Mauritians assert their identities in the context of the history, norms, policies, and political developments in Mauritius. The small Indian Ocean island nation is praised for being multicultural and living in harmony, although the state strictly classifies its citizens into four groups (Hindu, Muslim, Chinese, and 'General Population'). In Mauritius, identities are often believed to be based on an alleged correlation between language and race. Such 'raciolinguistic ideologies' create expectations of how people speak and act, which often contradicts actual experiences. This creates tension for those who do not fit easily into the designated categories or want to identify simply as Mauritian.

Within this tense setting, Hakka Mauritians often feel that they have to advocate for their identities as 'authentically' Mauritian, Chinese, or Hakka. The political and economic 'rise' of China has caused an emphasis on Mandarin language education (instead of Hakka) and changes local interpretations of what it means to be 'Chinese'. Identity can be understood as that which people believe they *are* and are *not*. When they recognize, reinforce, or challenge identity frictions, they engage in language patterns that I call 'discourses of tension'.

Based on data from ten months of fieldwork in Mauritius, I argue that discourses of tension are central to 'transcultural' identities that form between or outside of supposedly separate cultures. Transcultural identities emerge in diverse societies such as Mauritius. In discussing tensions, people identify and express expectations which others may have of them and which they cannot always meet. I present three contexts that show the importance of discourses of tension for Hakka Mauritian identities:

a) Mauritian discourses of nation-building and ethnic community formation
b) Shifts from Hakka to Mandarin in Chinese Mauritian language learning
c) Interpretations of 'Chinese' symbols in public spaces in Mauritian Chinatown

My research shows that Hakka Mauritians find themselves in a constant 'in-between' space. My dissertation's contribution to anthropology is to extend our understanding of transcultural identities by demonstrating how individuals make sense of, accept, mitigate, and diffuse tensions through language practices.

Acknowledgments

A lot happens "backstage" in grad school. I would not have been able to pursue this research without the many people whose enthusiasm and generosity built the foundation for my work. I was never truly braving it alone, and for that I am grateful. This list must surely be missing a bunch of names. Please know that if I failed to mention you, this is not due to a lack of gratitude but rather due to my forgetfulness.

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Austin Box, my German "Wahlfamilie", and so many other dear friends whose names could fill pages upon pages, for their endless support via text messages and video calls.

Grad school rarely comes without hardships, and I would be remiss if I did not mention the mental health support I have received over the past few years. I would like to acknowledge Rebecca D. for hours of vulnerable, inspiring, and empowering therapy, and Leslie B. for providing much-needed medical treatment. Thank you for giving me tools—both material and immaterial—to better manage my anxiety. Advocating for mental health service accessibility has been an admittedly minor but consistent side project of mine throughout my grad school journey, and I want to thank everyone who has supported or inspired me in that endeavour.

Last, but decidedly not least, I need to thank my family, and most of all my sibling Arianna Guccini, whose love, support, fierceness, and infectious laughter make my work worthwhile and my life infinitely better. Ich hab dich so lieb, to the moon and back. Thank you for always believing in me.

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Wiltrud and Walter Rancke, who always inspired me to be kind and curious in life as in scholarship.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BCE Before Common Era

BRI Belt and Road Initiative

CCC China Cultural Center (or: China Culture Center; Chinese Culture Center)

CCP Chinese Communist Party

CE Common Era

CI Confucius Institute

CPE Certificate of Primary Education

EIC East India Company

FTA Free Trade Agreement

GP General Population (Mauritian ethnic classification)

IOW Indian Ocean World

KMT *Kuomintang*/Nationalist Party

MSR Maritime Silk Road

PRC People's Republic of China

REB Research Ethics Board

ROC Republic of China (Taiwan)

SREB Silk Road Economic Belt

VOC *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*/Dutch East India Company

WHO World Health Organization

Glossary of Non-English Terms and Phrases

-la	Kreol morisien	suffix for definite article ('the')
briani	Kreol morisien	'biryani' (spiced rice dish)
ci ga ngin / 自家人 (*ci² ga¹ ngin²*)	Hakka	'one of us/our family'
corona	Kreol morisien	'coronavirus Chinese' (derogative)
dimounn	Kreol morisien	'person'/'people'
dina arobi (دينا أروبي)	Arabic	'abandoned island' (Mauritius)
duilian / 對聯 (*duìlián*)	Mandarin	'opposing couplet' (poetry)
enn sel lepep, enn sel nasion	Kreol morisien	'one people, one nation'
fangui / 番鬼 (*fan¹ gui³*)	Hakka	'foreign devil' (derogative)
fangyan / 方言 (*fāngyán*)	Mandarin	'regional speech'/'topolect'
gaau si / 教師 (*gaau³ si¹*)	Cantonese	'teacher'
gens de couleurs	French	'people of colour' (ethnic marker)
gung gung / 公公 (*gung¹ gung¹*)	Hakka	'grandfather'
haiwai / 海外 (*hǎiwài*)	Mandarin	'overseas'/'abroad'
Hakka ngin / 客家人 (*hag⁵ga¹ ngin²*)	Hakka	'Hakka person/people'
hanyu / 汉语 (*hànyǔ*)	Mandarin	'Han/Chinese language'
hanzi / 汉字 (*hànzì*)	Mandarin	'Chinese character(s)'
hong ge / 红歌 (*hóng gē*)	Mandarin	'red song(s)'
huaqiao / 華僑 (*huáqiáo*)	Mandarin	'overseas Chinese (by nationality)'
huaren / 華人 (*huárén*)	Mandarin	'Chinese (by ethnicity)'
huiguan / 會館 (*huìguǎn*); *kwon*	Mandarin, Hakka	'clubhouse'/'association'
Ile de Bourbon	French	'Bourbon Island' (La Réunion)
Ile de France	French	'Isle of France' (Mauritius)
(Ile) Maurice	French	'Mauritius (Island)'
Ilha do Cirne	Portuguese	'Island of the Swan' (Mauritius)
jiapu / 家谱 (*jiāpǔ*)	Mandarin	'family genealogy'
jianpu / 简谱 (*jiǎnpǔ*)	Mandarin	'simplified notation' (music)

kejiayu / 客家语 (*kèjiāyǔ*)	Mandarin	'Hakka language' (linguistic)
kominalis	Kreol morisien	'communalism'
Kreol morisien	Kreol morisien	'Mauritian Creole'
Kreol rénioné	Kreol rénioné	'Reunionese Creole'
kreol sinwa	Kreol morisien	'Creole Chinese'
labutik sinwa	Kreol morisien	'Chinese (corner)shop'
lame dan lame	Kreol	'hand in hand'
lang ban anset	Kreol morisien	'ancestral language(s)'
langue(s) ancestrale(s)	French	'ancestral language(s)'
laoshi / 老师 (*lǎoshī*)	Mandarin	'teacher'
Lasinn	Kreol morisien	'China'
le malaise Créole	French	'the Creole malaise'
lingua franca	Latin	'Frankish language'/bridge language
manze	Kreol morisien	'eat'
min 面 (*min^6*; *miên^4*)	Cantonese, Hakka	'noodles'
minn (often spelled *mine*)	Kreol morisien	'noodles'
Moris	Kreol morisien	'Mauritius'
Moyen / 梅縣 (*moi^2 yan^4*, *méixiàn*)	Hakka, Mandarin	city in Guangdong Province
Nam Shun	(Sino-)Kreol morisien	'Cantonese'
nasion arkansiel	Kreol morisien	'rainbow nation'
ngai / 倨 (*ngai^2*)	Hakka	'I'/'me', also: 'Hakka people'
ni hao / 你好 (*nǐ hǎo*)	Mandarin	'hello'/'hi'
nou bann	Kreol morisien	'our group'
paifang / 牌坊 (*páifāng*)	Mandarin	'memorial arch'/Chinatown gate
pailou / 牌楼 (*páilou*)	Mandarin	'decorated arch'/Chinatown gate
pinyin / 拼音 (*pīnyīn*)	Mandarin	(Romanized) 'phonetic writing'
po po /婆婆 (*po^2 po^2*)	Hakka	'grandmother'
punti / 本地 (*bun^2 dei^6*; *běndì*)	Cantonese, Mandarin	'native'/'local'

putonghua / 普通话 (*pǔtōnghuà*)	Mandarin	'common speech'/'standard'
san go / 山歌 (*san¹ go¹*; *shāngē*)	Hakka, Mandarin	'mountain song' (Hakka genre)
sinwa macao	Kreol morisien	'Chinese from Macao' (derogative)
sinwa nef	Kreol morisien	'new Chinese' (derogative)
tangren / 唐人 (*tángrén; tong² ngin²*)	Mandarin, Hakka	'Tang people' (self-description)
tangren jie / 唐人街 (*tángrén jiē*)	Mandarin	'Tang people's street'/Chinatown
ti sinwa	Kreol morisien	'little Chinese' (derogative)
tongsin / 唐心 (*tong² xim¹*)	Hakka	'Tang heart'/'Chineseness'[1]
tongsin / 同心 (*tung² xim¹; tóngxīn*)	Hakka, Mandarin	'of one mind'/'Chineseness'[1]
travay	Kreol morisien	'work'
tulou / 土樓 (*tu³ lêu²; tǔlóu*)	Hakka, Mandarin	'earth buildings'/Hakka houses
waiji / 外籍 (*wàijí*)	Mandarin	'foreign'
xiang / 姓 (*xiang⁴*)	Hakka	'[name of] family or clan')
zhongguoren / 中國人 (*zhōngguórén*)	Mandarin	'Chinese (by PRC nationality)'
zhongwen / 中文 (*zhōngwén*)	Mandarin	'Chinese language'
zilwa	Kreol morisien	'(outer) islander'
zupu / 族谱 (*zúpǔ*)	Mandarin	'family/clan genealogy'

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[1] These are my interpretations of what research participants called *tongsin* or 'Chineseness' (see 4.3.4). I cannot claim accuracy for either transcription or translation.

Preface: A Note on Names, Terms, and Transliterations

Writing about and in transcultural and translingual settings often complicates the use of names, terms, and transliterations. To simplify matters as much as possible, I offer some transparency on my practices in this dissertation:

'Western' naming conventions may prompt people with Chinese names to switch the order of their name from the Chinese 'family name-given name' to the 'given name-family name' order. In translingual names including Chinese naming elements, the family name may appear in various places, or consist of multiple name components in the Mauritian Chinese case. When I quote my research participants, I use the names and name order that they indicated when we conducted our interview. This means that the participants' names do not follow a standard format. Participants who opted for anonymity will be cited as "anonymous interviewee".

Where citations in the body of the thesis are concerned, I write out authors' names according to the naming convention they choose for (the majority of) their publishing record whenever it is possible and applicable to determine. For consistency's sake, the bibliography will follow a standard format of listing the first author with their family name first, followed by a comma and the given name, and any following authors with their given name first followed by the family name without a comma. In-text citations that distinguish between authors with identical family names will also follow a standard format whereby the initials of their given name(s) (or full given name if the initials are identical as well) will precede the family name.

The preceding page shows a list of non-English terms and phrases to which the reader may want to refer for better reading flow. Whenever appropriate, I use terms that are closest to how my research participants described and explained the experiences they shared with me, as translations cannot always capture the full meaning of an original term. This means that my writing features some recurring words in, among others, *Kreol morisien* ('Mauritian Creole'), French, Mandarin, or Hakka. All such terms are marked in italics, with literal translations in singular quotation marks ('translation').

For written language systems such as Chinese, Arabic, or Hindi, I include the writing in the respective script as well as transliterations and translations. I do this to provide context for my

translations, as in some cases, Romanized transcription as well as homophones in pronunciation may obscure the full meaning of the term without the script. Chinese writing further encompasses Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese, which may make a difference in transliteration, translation, and pronunciation in spoken varieties. When calling a concept by its Chinese name repeatedly, I use the Romanized spelling without tone indications for simplification. When the word is first introduced, I provide *pinyin* (Mandarin phonetic spelling) and/or Hakka or Cantonese phonetic spellings, both based on the Scheme of the Cantonese Phonetic Alphabet (see S.-P. Cheng and Tang 2016, 43–45 for a detailed description). I am not always able to give pronunciations for all two or three varieties. Sometimes this happens due to the exclusive use of a concept in one of the three varieties. Other times it is due to my personal limitations as a learner of Mandarin, as well as lack of language resources for the Hakka variety. Mandarin is therefore overrepresented in most transliterations. I tried as best as I could to find the proper characters, varied phonetic spellings and translations for all terms but am aware that this endeavour may not always have been successful.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the translation resources that I had at my disposal for interpreting terms and phrases from and to various languages:

Apps and Websites

- [Pleco App](#) for (photographic) character identification in the Chinese script
- [Google Translate App](#) for photographic character identification in the Chinese script
- https://www.mdbg.net/chinese/dictionary for Mandarin-English translation, Mandarin *pinyin* and Traditional and Simplified script
- https://en.wiktionary.org/ for Sinitic language-English translation, as well as Hakka and Cantonese phonetic transliterations based on the Cantonese Phonetic Alphabet
- https://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/dictionary.html for Kreol-English translation and Kreol spellchecks
- https://www.dict.cc/ for German-English, English-German, and French-English translations

Dictionaries and Language Guides

- Baker and Hookoomsing (1987): Morisyen—English—Français. Diksyoner kreol morisyen.
- Carpooran (2011): Diksioner Morisien. Premie diksioner kreol monoleng.
- Choy ([2012] 2014): Korek! A Beginner's Guide to Mauritian Creole.
- Fischer, Lehwald, and Michel (2016): Ki pe dir? Sprachführer Mauritius-Kreol.
- MacIver ([1926] 1991): A Chinese-English Dictionary: Hakka-Dialect as Spoken in Kwang-tung Province.

<div align="center">

Chapter 1

</div>

1 Introduction

1.1 "Where Does the Water Come From?" Framing Identity

<div align="right">

饮水思源。

Yǐn shuǐ sī yuan.

When you drink water, think of its source.

(Chinese proverb)

</div>

Sources, origins, roots. Over five hundred years ago, a man of the name Yan Qindu arrived in Moyen (梅縣, *moi² yan⁴* in Hakka, *méixiàn* in Mandarin), a Hakka village in the southern Chinese Guangdong Province. In the centuries that followed, his descendants would go on to disperse around the world; however, they reconnected with their extended family of over seven hundred people in the twentieth and twenty-first century to honour their shared ancestry. In January 2020, I sat down for an interview with Maxime King, a Hakka Mauritian businessman in his 60s—and one of Yan Qindu's descendants. Maxime had brought a book to the interview which he kindly gifted to me for my research. I was amazed to find out that the book contained genealogical records of his transnational extended family spanning seventeen generations all the way up to Yan Qindu. Relatives had compiled and printed this *jiapu* (家谱, *jiāpǔ*; alternatively: 族谱, *zúpǔ*), meaning 'family genealogy', and distributed it among all known adult members of this lineage. It contained names, pictures, whereabouts, and occupations of relatives around the world, including Maxime's family in Mauritius. Maxime asked me to read the book's preface (in English) aloud during the interview. The first two sentences read:

> Woods have got roots while rivers have its source. Searching our roots is human's instinct while forgetting our country and ancestor is regarded as humiliation. (Mouheng Yan, J. Yan, and L. Yan 2004, 5)

This introduction to the *jiapu* is embedded in narratives of filial piety that are common in Confucian discourse (Hertzman 2020, 3527). To neglect piety is considered shameful, and to be pious one must honour the ancestors. Two nature metaphors are used here to epitomize this ancestor veneration: that of the woods and its deep roots, and that of the

river with a source from which the water flows. The second allegory stems from "the Confucian moral imperative that is central to the religious cult of ancestors: 'When you drink the water, remember the source'" (Trémon 2018, 70). At the core of this proverb is the importance of ancestral remembrance and familial obligations (cf. Oxfeld 2004, 973–74, 2010, 4). I encountered this saying a few times during my research with Hakka Mauritians in the Indian Ocean island state of Mauritius. Study participants would frame their ancestry as a tangible and traceable identity marker by using the water source as a metaphor. Consider the following exchange from one of my interviews:

> FG: When you think about being Chinese or being Hakka, what does it mean to you, personally? What does 'being Hakka' entail?
>
> PLCH: Being Hakka? I mean, it is important [that] we preserve our cultural identity. Where do we come from? Eh? There is a Chinese saying that when you drink a glass of water, you must always think of its source. Where does the water come from? (Laughs.) So, it gives us an identity. We are different, we are different from—them. And you know that in Mauritius, there is a lot of culture conflict, eh? Culture conflict. That is: The consciousness is there. We are conscious of our identity.
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

Philip here spoke of maintaining a Hakka cultural identity that is based and contingent on knowing the source of the water ("Where do we/does the water come from?")—collective origins. This, he claimed, gave Hakka Mauritians an identity that made them "different from—them". The emphasis on an unspecified 'them' marks the positionality and relationality that are embedded in identity discourse (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2005, 587). Identity gives us a sense of who we are, but it also gives us a sense of who we are *not*. Hakka identity has historically been constructed "against an ethnic other" (Erbaugh 1996, 197) precisely because their 'source' or 'origins' were somewhat elusive due to centuries of migration and displacement (see 2.2 and 2.4). As so-called 'guest people' (客家人, *hag⁵ga¹ ngin²* in Hakka, *kèjiā rén* in Mandarin), they were considered outsiders by the predominantly Cantonese populations in the southern Chinese areas in which they settled (Oxfeld 2004, 962).

Philip further contextualized this us/them dichotomy by alluding to the presence of "culture conflict" in Mauritius, which in his eyes increased the "consciousness" of identity among Mauritians. Mauritius' history as an uninhabited-island-turned-multiethnic-community

plays a central role in the awareness and discursive formation of cultural identities and communal boundaries (cf. Ludwig and B. Schnepel 2009, 9–10). Cultural identity can simultaneously be understood as something very personal and an expression of communal belonging. Multicultural identities, based in plural contexts such as that of Mauritius, can signify belonging to multiple communities while simultaneously being constrained by external factors and by actors on individual, communal, and governmental levels. Official categorization places Mauritian citizens into one of the four groups Hindu, Muslim, 'General Population' (encompassing, for instance, Creole Mauritians and Franco-Mauritians), and Chinese, which on the one hand fosters feelings of communal belonging, but has been increasingly instrumentalized for political matters (Benedict 1965, 67). While this mobilization of multiethnicity is profitable for some, it has also been reported to be anxiety-inducing for many Mauritians (Eriksen 1995, 429). As a result, "Mauritians have highly developed sensibilities for boundaries of identity and potential conflicts" (Ludwig and B. Schnepel 2009, 12). Within this field of tension, Hakka Mauritians may find themselves at a crossroads of identity maintenance and transformation. Mauritius provides a social environment that is particularly conducive to fluid but also rigid (dis-)identification processes. Between and beyond these positionalities, new 'transcultural' identities may emerge (cf. Tetreault 2015, 15).

A central force in Mauritian senses of ethno-communal belonging are language practices and language ideologies (widespread, and often institutionalized, beliefs and judgments about language(s); cf. Kroskrity 2003, 8). Mauritians form a community of multilingual speakers (Baggioni 1992, 97), and as such, Mauritian transcultural encounters involve a variety of language practices. Language ideologies are at play in these interactions, as languages are valorized and commodified along hierarchical patterns in Mauritian nation-building discourse. In multiethnic societies such as Mauritius, raciolinguistic ideologies often produce a joint understanding of language and race as inherently interrelated in the sense that "languages are perceived as racially embodied and race is perceived as linguistically intelligible" (Rosa 2019, 2). In terms of identity, this ideological co-production leads to raciolinguistically loaded definitions and expectations of qualities such as 'Hakkaness', 'Chineseness', and 'Mauritianness'. Lived experiences of what it means

to be Hakka, Chinese, and Mauritian often differ significantly from the expectations, creating a tension that can be challenging in some cases and motivating in others.

In this dissertation, I propose that 'discourses of tension' are foundational in the processes of transcultural identity formation. I frame discourses of tension as powerful semiotic dynamics that allow social actors to acknowledge, reiterate, or subvert affording and constraining expectations of their identities. Such expectations and tensions are produced by various co-existing and contrastive raciolinguistic ideologies. In Mauritius, this may manifest, for instance, in the acknowledgment of competing alignments in being Mauritian and being categorized as distinctly Chinese, Indian, or Creole at the same time. Examining these discourses reveals the agency of Hakka Mauritians in the continuous (re-)assertion and (re-)articulation of their identities. This work explains how language ideology-informed discourses create raciolinguistic expectations (i.e. the notion that a person who 'looks Chinese' must also 'speak Chinese') for Hakka, Chinese, and Mauritian identities. I argue that these expectations introduce a host of affordances and constraints into Hakka Mauritian identity formation. This is not to say that affordances are automatically beneficial and constraints inevitably limiting to Hakka Mauritian identity; rather, their interplay in the Mauritian fields of tension are cause for (re-)interpretation of how one may transform imaginations of Mauritian nationhood, Chineseness, or Hakkaness into social realities. New meanings and transcultural identities may emerge out of these interpretations. Being Sino-Mauritian, and specifically Hakka Mauritian, thus means occupying a constant in-between space due to multifaceted raciolinguistic expectations as affording and constraining factors.

This argument anchors the thesis in the body of sociocultural and linguistic anthropological work on identity/identification, transnational, transcultural and translingual practices, and raciolinguistic ideologies. My work offers a nuanced understanding of how raciolinguistic ideologies create identity tensions in transcultural contexts, and how such tensions are discursively fuelled or diffused. The Hakka Mauritian example at the heart of this thesis shows how such expectations and discourses impact identity formations and expressions of individuals and communities who are enmeshed in these contexts. In this dissertation, I present three contexts in which discourses of tension become salient for Hakka Mauritian

identity negotiation: first, Mauritian public discourses of nation-building and ethnolinguistic identity; second, language shifts and practices in Mandarin language classrooms for Hakka heritage language learners; and third, ideological manifestations of 'Chineseness' in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown in Mauritius' capital Port Louis. These scenarios and places show that discourses of tension permeate all social spaces and places, creating expectations for how people will speak, act, and present themselves.

Sources, origins, roots—they seem tangible enough at first glance, but most of my research participants attached highly personal meanings and interpretations to their Hakka Mauritian ancestry. I would not do the complexity of their identities justice if I were to provide a simple answer. Rather, this work is an homage to the nuanced identity articulations with which Hakka Mauritians navigate raciolinguistic tensions as affording and constraining factors. My research findings furthermore show that Hakka Mauritians do not only ask themselves where 'the water' comes from, but also where its flow will lead them. They have concerns about the future of cultural and linguistic heritage and practices, as well as the future of their community overall, which depend on Hakka identity advocacy as well as Mauritian and Chinese government policies and practices.

1.2   Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

1.2.1 Discourses of Tension in Transcultural Encounters

Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006, 43, 133–134) has considered language—and particularly standardized language under print capitalism—the primary means through which the idea of nationalism spreads in national communities. However, as Patrick Eisenlohr assesses, "the link between language and community has increasingly been conceived as resting on ideological mediation" (2004a, 62). As such, language ideologies play a role in the processes of collective identity formation. Anderson wrote about the nation as "an imagined political community" ([1983] 2006, 6). The imaginative aspect stems from the impossibility to know every single member of the collective, which Anderson extends from the nation to other collectives such as religions, villages, and kin groups. Furthermore, by framing the nation as an 'imagined' community rather than an 'invented' community, Anderson rectifies the idea that the existence of nations may be unnatural or make-believe.

This subtle change in definition makes it possible for us to discuss social constructs without dismissing their continuous (re-)imagination and idealization as well as their legitimate existence with real-life consequences. The concept of 'community' has been debated and critiqued by Gerald W. Creed (2004, 56–57) as a romanticized image of homogeneity and uniform cooperation, whereas his own work on Bulgarian mumming (a European-origin winter holiday tradition in which groups of costumed and masked 'mummers' walk through town and visit people's houses) shows instead how communities can operate on conflict or tension. In Creed's words,

> A notion of community in which conflict is part of its very constitution easily accommodates such ambiguity. Ethnic antagonism is not anathema to community where community linkages between co-nationals are also relations of conflict and tension. […] The challenge is to find ways to redress the unequal relations between community members without destroying the inclusiveness that the notion of "community-through-conflict" facilitates. (Creed 2004, 68)

Creed thus suggests emphasizing local interpretations of community rather than using the concept in unmarked ways. In other words, people "do not just possess cultures or share ancestry; they elaborate these into the ideas of a community founded upon these attributes" (Fenton 1999, 3). It is the process of elaboration which is important for the researcher to investigate. In Creed's case study, for instance, it is the participation in mumming rituals with stereotypical, racialized character costumes through which the notion of 'community-through-conflict' is made tangible (2004, 61–65). Practices are thus a major factor in community elaboration; they are also central in reducing essentialist conceptualization: For instance, approaching the interrelation of language and community in a practice-focused way "avoids the assumption that language itself establishes community" (Irvine 1985, 566). It instead accounts for variation, divergence, and agency. This view "allows us to see the individual as an *actor* articulating a range of forms of participation in multiple communities of practice" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, 96; my emphasis). Multiplicity is another key factor here, as actors can participate in and claim belonging to various communities. Social positioning matters and may, again, involve tensions:

> Increasing interculturality, so to speak, is reflected in the rise of different cultural positions within the self of individuals, which in turn deepens the dialogue between these positions that all have a voice within the self. And these voices are involved in complicated conversations that reflect the differentiation of culture in the global world. Negotiations, tensions, conflicts, agreements and disagreements not only take

> place between different cultural groupings at the social level, but also within the dialogical self of multicultural individuals. (van Meijl 2008, 182)

This argument encompasses the tension individuals may feel in positioning their personal identity in alignment with various affordances and constraints, as well as the tension that may emerge from figuring out such positionalities among communal groups. The involvement of these actors in "complicated conversations" suits the idea of what I call 'discourses of tension'. I propose that such discourses recognize, reify, or challenge frictions and ambiguities in identity formation processes.

I use the term 'discourse' to denote powerful semiotic and communicative systems that overtly and covertly shape our experiences and interpretations of social situations (Blommaert 2005, 160; Duranti and Goodwin 1992, 30; Philips 2013, 93). In this sense, "a discourse is a cultural complex of signs and practices that regulates how we live socially" (Duranti and Goodwin 1992, 30). Discourses are thus inseparable from the notion of power. In turn, discourse viewed through the lens of power "is intrinsically ideological" (Blommaert 2005, 160; cf. Strauss 2005, 203). Languaged power dynamics control the hegemony of production, distribution and maintenance of what is considered to be a (universal) 'truth' or (common) 'knowledge' (cf. Duranti and Goodwin 1992). Anthony Giddens (1984, 4–8) differentiates—albeit with an admission of permeability and fluctuation—between discursive and practical consciousness of social actions. While the former represents an abstract reflexivity regarding motivation for actions, the latter is a more directly applicable knowledge of reasons behind an action. As such, social actors may show different levels of awareness of how (locally contextual) norms affect their perception, negotiation, and expression of their own and others' social positionalities. The degree to which they are aware or unaware can be made tangible through a lens of discourses of tension, that is: paying attention to how people and institutions articulate, reiterate, critique, or subvert tensions between ideological expectations and lived experiences of social realities.

Toon van Meijl speaks of intercultural or multicultural dynamics in the above excerpt; I prefer the concept of '*trans*culturality'. Transculturality captures not only the multiplicity and interconnectivity of cultural groups, spaces, and practices, but also transcends

perceived boundaries between them. Migrants in transcultural contexts, for instance, "experience and express migration and diaspora in ways that are related to the experiences of their parents, but that are also innovative, bifurcated, and differential" (Tetreault 2015, 4). These are thus not experiences that are entirely separate from each other, viewed through the lens of multiplicity or interaction, but experiences that draw from and build on each other. In this sense, "the phenomenon of transculturality is understood as the formation of multifaceted, fluid identities resulting from diverse cultural encounters" (Lehtola et al. 2015, 6). Transculturality does not mean a homogenization of cultural formations but rather an alteration of diversity (Welsch 1999, 203). This is then a useful means to describe encounters and interactions between actors and groups of actors that belong to various communities of practice and may have different expectations of each other. Although tensions may arise in such transcultural encounters, due to diverging sets of norms or ideologies, the interaction may also forge new commonalities among them. This happens by way of "intersections among social relationships and discursive forms that are not neutral, but rather (over)loaded with historical and political meanings" (Tetreault 2015, 17). I thus situate discourses of tension within transcultural encounters that bring to light meaningful intersections of identity formation and ideological expectations of the 'Other'. The following sections introduce theories of identity and language ideology into the discussion.

1.2.2 Revisiting Identity, Identification, and Agency

'Identity' is a central concept in my dissertation project as an exploration of how Hakka Mauritians position themselves and their community within the culturally and linguistically diverse social environment of Mauritius. The concept has had a controversial history. It was first introduced in 1950s psychology as a conceptual improvement of 'personality' (van Meijl 2008, 169–70). American social scientists and members of the public subsequently started using the term 'identity' in the 1960s (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 2). It gained immense popularity in the following decades, then typically interpreted as a state of being the 'same', either within itself or the 'same' as others (Sökefeld 2001, 531–32), and as something "housed primarily within an individual mind" (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2005, 587). This sense of identity has since been renounced by scholars in various fields.

A major point of contestation emerges out of the ambiguity with which the term has been and continues to be applied, ranging from the hard notion of identity as fixed and unchangeable to the softer idea that identities are rather dynamic and multipliable. Critics argue that the broadening of the term makes it "mean either too much or too little" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 10), rendering it useless for scholarly analysis. On the other hand, disregarding a widely and publicly used term in search of a new one that adequately encompasses all possible angles, yet offers clarity, seems neither practical nor useful. Rather than dismissing the idea altogether, an anthropological study should ask "*why* identities are claimed in this [dualistic] manner" (Sökefeld 2001, 533; emphasis in original). This is not to say that the critique is entirely unfounded. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper wish to differentiate the uses of the term 'identity' in sociopolitical and academic arenas, and urge other scholars to "avoid unintentionally *reproducing* or *reinforcing* [essentialist] reification by uncritically adopting categories of practice as categories of analysis" (2000, 5; emphasis in original). To do so would mean to falsely take for granted an objectifiable existence of identity in social realities. We need to be aware that "[t]here is an awkwardness about affirming native self-representations while stressing the contingencies that brought these collectivities into being and/or continue to sustain them" (Leve 2011, 514). Leve's critique is certainly reasonable and aims at re-evaluating how we represent our research participants. However, deconstructivist criticisms rarely offer an alternative or improvement of the terms and concepts they seek to eradicate (S. Hall 2000, 15–16).

There are some authors who suggest alternate terms, for instance the 'dialogical self', promoted by Toon van Meijl (2008, 185), or Brubaker and Cooper's (2000, 14–21) propositions of 'identification', 'categorization', 'self-understanding', 'social locations', 'commonality', 'groupness', or 'connectedness' as alternatives to 'identity'. Their arguments for each of these terms are quite sound, and I am not against using any of these alternate concepts in specific contexts. However, with the exception of 'identification' as a verb-turned-noun focused on 'identity' as a process (see below), most of the other terms represent smaller, specific categories under the umbrella of identity research. To be sure, identity cannot be used as a blanket term for everything and anything. However, "since [concepts such as 'identity'] have not been superseded dialectically, […] there is nothing

to do but continue to think with them" (S. Hall 2000, 15). Therefore, and despite its drawbacks, I believe that the notion of identity can be useful for anthropological analysis if it is carefully reviewed and conceptualized within a larger framework of anthropological ideas. As Martin Sökefeld (2001) points out in his defense of identity, the criticisms are not unique to this particular term but can be extended to other fundamental anthropological concepts such as those of 'ethnicity', 'culture' or 'nation'. The arguments against such concepts point to a general critique of postmodern theorizing, as they bemoan the loss of clear-cut concepts and the increased blurring of meaning. I see this precisely as an *advantage* of concepts that are discussed by academics and the greater public alike. We can assess the point of divergence and investigate how identities are formulated, performed, and negotiated by social actors in their day-to-day lives and encounters with others. Ultimately, all "central concepts of social anthropology are embedded in political ramifications" (Sökefeld 2001, 542). They do not lose their analytical usefulness once they enter the political stage. On the contrary, this is the exact moment of opportunity for refinement. It should also be noted that identity emerges in various social and linguistic contexts, and is therefore represented in different stages of analysis (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2005, 607).

To be sure, I take the risks and limitations of identity as a concept seriously, so as to not reify essentialist notions of identity in my writing. Erasing essentialism from the concept is a difficult, but not impossible task. Stuart Hall proposes to think of it as 'identification', turning the concept into an active process rather than a constant state of being. He reasons that this "discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed—always 'in process'" (2000, 16). Moreover, identification allows scholars to look at self-identification and identification through others (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 14). In other words, it encourages the inclusion of intersubjectivity and positionality. Accordingly, Bucholtz and Hall define identity as the "social positioning of self[2] and other"

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[2] Like identity theory, the conceptualization of 'the self' has undergone changes. It has increasingly been recognized as dialogical and disunited (van Meijl 2008, 177). There is thus a tangible movement from singularity and unity to pluralities and fragmentations in most disciplines concerned with studies of self and identity.

(2005, 586). The positional aspect makes for the emergence of a "field of tension […] in which new or hybrid positions have space to emerge" (Hermans et al. 2017, 513). Such new forms do not necessarily stem from a combination of two (or more) social positions but are rather located in the space *between* such positions. As Chantal Tetreault observes, the 'transcultural teens' in her research "forge transcultural identities through the *simultaneous* creation and counter-opposition of Frenchness and Arabness […] rather than in a synthesis of the two" (2015, 15; emphasis in original). Transcultural identities thus emerge out of and within discourses of tension.

Identity evidently entails processes of *active identification* with a cluster of positions available to social agents with varied predispositions. It is through this intersubjective, positional aspect that we can reformulate identity formation as a result of *difference* and *tension* instead of unity or sameness. We need a "constitutive outside" (S. Hall 2000, 17) or constitutive other—that which we are *not*—to construct our identities, positioning ourselves vis-à-vis other actors in social space (Bourdieu 1985, 724). Some call this exclusionary process 'dis-identification', denying identification with a certain position (Skeggs 1997, 12–13). (Dis-)identification—claiming or renouncing social positions—is a continuous process of 'doing', of performance and articulation (S. Hall 2000, 27; Bucholtz and K. Hall 2005, 588).

Considering identity an act speaks to the agency that is involved in its expression. Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall rightly point out that agency has, in the past, been misconstrued to mean pure assertion or authorship regardless of the limitations of social norms and stratification. They prefer to think of it as an "accomplishment of social action" (2005, 606) within the larger-scale constraints of society and power relations. Constraints need to be in the focus of agency-related research because social actors are actively involved in meaning-making processes, including what they consider (and impose as) its boundaries and limitations (cf. Ahearn 2001, 112). Only certain social positions are available to claim for identification under these constraints, as "choices are limited by the discourses that are available to [an individual]" (Gewirtz and Cribb 2008, 40). Affordances and constraints for identification processes are thus grounded in power dynamics. There is a great deal of tension in these dynamics, as "[t]here is always 'too much' or 'too little'—an over-

determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality" (S. Hall 2000, 17), in identification processes. Agency can thus also mean negotiating identities against the backdrop of ideological constraints and affordances, as "[a]gency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place" (Giddens 1984, 9). Similarly, Sherry Ortner sees the anthropological study of agency as an effort to reveal the "ideological underpinnings" (2006, 152) of our social worlds, and the reproduction or transformation of such ideologies through our interactions within these worlds. In this sense, identities always need further explanation as they do not provide one in and of themselves (Leve 2011, 526; Sökefeld 2001, 530–31); their meaning is inherently social and subject to individual interpretation. Due to this relational aspect— the need of an 'Other' to be constructed against—identities are always situated in a particular context (Bucholtz 2011, 10; Bucholtz and K. Hall 2005, 605). Thus, we "ask how actors see themselves and others[,] […] how [their identities] come into being, how they change, and how they are maintained" (Sökefeld 2001, 532). We engage in dialogue with our research participants, who themselves are negotiating their identities in dialogue with others. In my study, this became most clear in group interview settings, in which participants would invariably discuss among themselves when it came to questions of identity instead of answering based solely on their individual experience.

1.2.3 Language Ideologies and Raciolinguistic Expectations of Identity

Language plays a central role in the formation and expression of identities. As with identity, scholars have noted that language(s)—and their correlation with identity or other concepts—are constructed and complicated (Blackledge et al. 2008, 535). Both identity and language are "terrains of struggle, of contradiction and ambiguity" (Heller 2003, 490), which speaks to their dynamic, non-essentialist conceptualization in anthropological scholarship. More broadly, we can define "language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice" (Duranti 2002, 8899), as language is a means to make sense of one's social worlds (Ganassin 2020, 67). This view opens the definition to include an inherent ideological component. Ideology can be understood as "a set of beliefs, symbols, and doctrines held by any given group in reference to their cultural, social, and political life" (A. F. Jones 1997, 20). In conjunction with language, ideologies present as

> ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them. […] [W]e call these schemes *ideologies* because they are suffused with the political and moral issues pervading the particular sociolinguistic field and are subject to the interests of their bearers' social position. (Irvine and Gal 2003, 35; emphasis in original).

Language ideologies thus can be defined as beliefs or valorizations about not only language varieties themselves but also about the people and practices connected to them. It is important to distinguish language ideologies as imagined norms from language practices as lived speech acts, which are often informed by such ideologies (cf. Flores and Rosa 2015, 152). The ideological aspect stems from the positional power dynamics at play within the sociolinguistic context, as uses of and attitudes towards language and language varieties are linked to "histories, power, and social organization" (Blackledge et al. 2008, 549). Social positionality is a central factor in identity conceptualizations as well (see above). Unsurprisingly, then, language ideologies are often associated with identity formation. Our opinions and beliefs about languages and their speakers influence how we choose to position ourselves and others (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2008b, 154). Moreover, language ideologies say more about identity than language itself, as "they are in the service of other, more basic, ideologies about social groups, which they cloak in linguistic terms" (Bucholtz 2011, 9). Language is also often ideologically regarded as a marker of identity:

> Although it is an oversimplification to consider languages as symbols of identity, researchers do need to take into account the fact that people might believe that languages can function as a salient feature of their identity […] [and that] languages carry with them constructions of hierarchies amongst groups. (Ganassin 2020, 69)

This assessment shows again that the quotidian use of a concept such as 'identity' matters, even if it is difficult to theorize without reinforcing some of its essentialist and ideological tendencies. Of course, ideologies can change or be subject to criticisms over time, but are generally instrumentalized by social actors to wield, gain or maintain power (Bucholtz 2011, 5; A. F. Jones 1997, 21). Colonial ideologies ascribing 'one language' to 'one nation', for instance, popularize monolingualism as a state norm and a powerful tool to control and suppress minority languages and groups (Groff 2018, 4). Linguistic descriptions and categorizations of language varieties were similarly "influenced by an ideology of racial and national essences" (Irvine and Gal 2003, 47). Scholarship of 'translanguaging' has offered a powerful counterargument against such linguistic

essentialism by framing the language of multilingual speakers as a creative meaning-making process that transcends imagined boundaries between languages as separate entities (cf. García et al. 2021; García and W. Li 2014; W. Li 2011, 2016, 2018; H. Zhu and W. Li 2020). The concept of translanguaging differs from the idea of 'code-switching'—the mixing of codes *between* languages—in that it also goes *beyond* named languages (W. Li 2016, 3). Like transculturality, translanguaging emerges from ideological tensions between labelled entities, while simultaneously diffusing such tensions by challenging essentialization.

Racial essentialization is also at the core of a relatively young but growing field of sociolinguistics, namely that of raciolinguistics. Raciolinguistic scholarship examines the social constructions of language and race in their various intersections—"that is, to view race through the lens of language, and vice versa—in order to gain a better understanding of language and the process of racialization" (Alim 2016, 1–2). A central critique for both sides of the coin is their circular, self-contained definitions, according to which "race [supposedly] is the social construction of race and named languages are straightforward sets of linguistic forms" (Rosa and Flores 2017, 637). Racialization then needs to be understood as a product of colonial ideology, as it

> refers to a cultural and political process, not a natural impulse. More specifically, it is the process of transforming physical and cultural features into identities, of classifying people into historically specific categories such as 'Chinese', 'Aboriginal', 'black' and 'white'. Whatever the strength of peoples' emotional attachment to their origins, the ascriptions are what *allow* prejudice and discrimination on the part of more powerful groups to occur and continue. (K. J. Anderson 1990, 139; emphasis in original)

The elaboration of racialized classification and ascription as the cause of prejudice and discrimination, rather than any perceived features in and of themselves, theorizes race and ethnicity as systemic, institutionalized constructions that nevertheless carry immense weight in social realities (cf. Alim 2016, 4). From this premise emerged a 'raciolinguistic perspective' that brought together critical race and critical language scholarship along five key elements:

> (i) historical and contemporary co-naturalizations of race and language as part of the colonial formation of modernity; (ii) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (iii) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (iv) racial and linguistic

intersections and assemblages; and (v) the contestation of racial and linguistic power formations. (Rosa and Flores 2017, 623)

A comprehensive basis for the study of race through a language lens and language through a race lens, these five components can be recurringly observed in the Hakka Mauritian case study I present in this thesis, as language—and especially ethno-communal 'ancestral language' (see 5.3.1)—has been a defining and stratifying issue for discourses of Mauritian cultural identification (Eriksen 1990, 3). The above conceptualization also provides context for how and why *Kreol morisien* ('Mauritian Creole'; henceforth: Kreol), the *lingua franca* of Mauritius commonly—ideologically—associated with the Creole community, is framed as 'bad' or 'broken' French or, more subtly, a French dialect, rather than a language (Eisenlohr 2006a, 181; Eriksen 1990, 4) in the same way that Creole Mauritians are treated as culturally inferior or identity-less (Boswell 2006, 13) (see also 4.2). Here, again, we need to heed the ideologization of race and language as inherently factual and co-constitutive. This can be viewed through the lens of 'raciolinguistic ideologies', first defined by Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015, 150) as deeming racialized bodies linguistically inferior irrespective of the actual language they produce. They elaborate two years later:

> The raciolinguistic ideologies that organized [..] colonial relations continue to shape the world order in the postcolonial era by framing racialized subjects' language practices as inadequate for the complex thinking processes needed to navigate the global economy, as well as the targets of anxieties about authenticity and purity. Contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies must be understood within this broader history of European colonialism. Indeed, contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies are an ongoing rearticulation of the processes of racialization at the core of nation-state/colonial governmentality. (Rosa and Flores 2017, 627)

Their argument regarding the ongoing reification of racialization processes is crucial in an understanding of raciolinguistic ideologies as anchored in the colonial system while also continuously producing and contributing to hierarchies of language and race in correlation. This happens through processes of "*raciolinguistic enregisterment*, whereby race and language are rendered mutually perceivable" (Rosa 2019, 7; emphasis in original) in mutual emblematicity. These processes are central to *raciolinguistic expectations*: Based on ideological imaginations of racialized language and languaged race, social actors navigate encounters with others through a lens of preconceived notions of who these others are and how they will act. This creates a dissonance between raciolinguistic expectations,

and lived experiences and self-understandings of identity, which impacts and complicates the ways in which people will (be able to) articulate and present their identities in their respective social spaces. Stuart Hall writes that

> [i]dentities are, as it were, the positions which the subject is obliged to take up while always 'knowing' (the language of consciousness here betrays us) that they are representations, that representation is always constructed across a 'lack', across a division, from the place of the Other, and thus can never be adequate—identical—to the subject processes which are invested in them. (2000, 19)

If identities can never fully capture the complexity of people's social positionalities, each representation of one aspect is also a misrepresentation of another. Hall also plays with the word 'knowing', pointing out that while it implies a consciousness or awareness of the imperfection of representation, identity is still often taken for granted as factual and holistic. It should be noted that although "[i]deologies are so pervasive that it is often difficult for their proponents to view the world in any other way" (Bucholtz 2011, 5), people "may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies" (Kroskrity 2003, 18). This fosters discourses of tension, in which frictions between raciolinguistic expectations and actualities are reproduced, acknowledged, or subverted to varying degrees. Fields of tension, as I have argued above drawing on Hubert J.M. Hermans et al. (2017, 513), are central to identification processes because they render visible the positional and situational relationships between social actors. What I think is crucial to point out here is that this visibility may also make for needs to express such tension. Hence, I speak of discourses of tension to tease out the levels of recognition and communication of identity frictions among social actors.

1.3 Situating the Research

1.3.1 Research Contributions to Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology

Mauritian historian Vijaya Teelock considers Mauritius to be "a hotbed of cultural influences, and consequently a gold mine for anthropologists" (2005, 108). Anthropologists have indeed researched Mauritian ethnic relations for decades. Mauritian multiculturalism, identity, and nation-building have been at the forefront of such research (Eisenlohr 2007; Eriksen 1988, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2019; Ludwig and B. Schnepel 2009; Prabhu 2007; B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2009, 2011),

providing comprehensive accounts of how "the often-praised 'unity in diversity' remains fragile[,] and divisions persist in the country at all levels" (Eriksen and Ramtohul 2018, 7). Other anthropological studies examine Mauritian ethnoreligious diversity (Couacaud 2016; Eisenlohr 2006b, 2016, 2018b), migration and diasporic formations (Guccini and Zhang 2021; Jeffery 2013; B. Schnepel 2018), Creolization and Creole identities (Boswell 2005, 2006; Eisenlohr 2009; Eriksen 2006; Jeffery 2010; Prabhu 2007), politics (Couacaud, Sookrajowa, and Narsoo 2020), and tourism (B. Schnepel 2009; B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2008, 2009, 2011). Linguistic anthropological queries have focused on local ethno-linguistic diversity, language practices and ideologies in community formation processes (Boswell 2020; Eisenlohr 2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2009; Eriksen 1990).

In terms of Hakka studies from anthropological perspectives, a prominent source is Nicole Constable's edited volume *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad*, in which contributors discuss Hakka identity formation (Constable 1996a, 1996b; Oxfeld 1996), Hakka as a language variety impacting social relations in Southeast China (Cohen 1996), and (the lack of) public expressions of Hakkaness in the Chinese political sphere (Erbaugh 1996; also Erbaugh 1992). Other anthropological—or anthropology-adjacent—Hakka research is preoccupied with Hakka migration history (Clement Chan 2010; Leong 1997), correlations between Hakka language use and identity (C.-I. Liao 2018), morality and filial piety in Hakka communities (Hertzman 2020; Oxfeld 2004, 2010), Hakka diasporic, global and transnational relations (Hertzman 2014, 2020; J. Jones 2010; Leo 2015; Lozada Jr. 2005; Oxfeld 2005; L.-J. Wang 2018), religiosity among Hakka (Lozada Jr. 2001), Hakka foodways (Oxfeld 2017; Y. Liao and S. He 2018), and Hakka conferences as sites of Hakka cultural production (J. Zhou 2007). There has of course also been a wealth of Chinese-language literature in the realm of Hakka studies; unfortunately, and certainly to the detriment of my understanding of Hakka scholarship from a more mainland Chinese perspective, I am not literate enough in the Chinese script to consult these studies.

Sino-Mauritian academics have done significant research on their own community. These works have been largely focused on historical developments and archival records of Chinese immigration to Mauritius (Clement Chan 2010; M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1981, 1998; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008; Siew 2016),

with similar studies undertaken in La Réunion (Wong-Hee-Kam 1993, 1996). These studies were invaluable to my understanding of the colonial developments of Chinese settlement on the Mascarene islands, even more so because they were penned by authors from the respective communities in Mauritius and La Réunion. (Auto-)biographies and memoires complement the scholarly literature on Mauritian Chinese history (i.e. Ng Cheong Tin-Leung [2017] 2019; Tsang Kwai Kew 2021). Anthropological studies of contemporary Sino-Mauritian lives have, however, been neglected in the literature at large. This is all the more true for scholarship focused on Chinese language practices in Mauritius (Lefort 2019, 1). This dissertation research project is, to the best of my knowledge, the first larger-scale ethnographic study focused specifically on Hakka Mauritian identity negotiation and language ideologies in Mauritius. It also adds to the existing scholarship of Mauritian nation-building, multiculturalism, and ethnolinguistic diversity a new angle on the raciolinguistic expectations and identity tensions that permeate Mauritian transcultural encounters. While this research thus fills a gap in the ethnographic literature of Mauritius and the Western Indian Ocean, I also believe that a focus on the Chinese communities of Mauritius has the capacity to contribute valuable findings to anthropology more generally.

My work is embedded in anthropological conceptualizations of sociocultural phenomena as open-ended, unbounded processes and practices. Throughout the dissertation, I balance an understanding of identity as something inherently multifaceted, dynamic, and permeable (regardless of the levels of multiculturalism in the social environment) with the recognition of constraining factors that make representations of identity more rigid in what I term 'discourses of tension'. My study thus acknowledges that multicultural policies do not automatically lead to social harmony and equity (cf. Ludwig and B. Schnepel 2009, 9) and that, similarly, multilingual policies do not always accurately reflect lived experiences of linguistic heritage. I specifically contribute a nuanced discussion of how identities are fractured, molded, and continuously (re-)negotiated when various raciolinguistic ideologies and policies are at odds with one another in diverse transcultural contexts.

1.3.2 Positionality and Ethical Considerations

I owe this work to the communities and individuals who have so gracefully and generously shared their knowledge and memories with me over the past four years. In terms of connections and invitations especially, I owe a lot to Roland Tsang Kwai Kew, a retired Hakka Mauritian journalist in his 70s with well-established connections around the island. I did not know anyone before coming to Mauritius for the first time, but through a chain of email communication with people from Canada to La Réunion to China to Mauritius, I was able to connect with Roland, who promptly took it upon himself to get me settled and connected in Mauritius. I made my first research contacts mostly through his connections— and from there my network of research participants and informal contacts grew. Without their eager and invaluable contributions, I would not have anything to talk about, as I am neither Hakka nor Mauritian. In fact, the question I was asked the most in the field was, "Why Hakka in Mauritius?" It is a fair question. Why *is* a white European woman with no prior connections to either Mauritius or Hakka communities researching this topic? Critical ethnography requires researchers to be transparent about their own positionalities and biases (Hornberger 2013, 104). In part, I wanted to combine my prior anthropological foci on (East) Africa and China and identified Mauritius as an interesting case study after perusing some literature. In some ways, however, I also approached this research from a personal perspective, as I can relate to the topic at least distantly.

I come from an Italian island, migrated several times in my life, and have limited knowledge of Italian despite it being my 'first' language. The prospect of doing fieldwork on another island, in a community facing migration and language challenges, seemed appealing to me not just academically, but personally as well. To be sure, the Mauritian Chinese community's experience is entirely different from my own. Additional layers of being part of or coming from a history of mass emigration, growing up in a (post-)colonial context, being racialized and subjected to racist remarks, and finding one's place in long-venerated ancestral lineages and traditions, did not affect (much of) my life. Still, "[t]here will always be experiences and aspects of life that are recognizable for both sides" (Horst 2008, 10). In this sense, my background as a half-Italian half-German woman growing up bilingually and biculturally seemed to resonate with many of my study participants, as they

occasionally drew on this shared experience to make a point during interviews. One interviewee relayed the experience of being Chinese in Mauritius with being Italian in the US, explaining that people would know about the existence of Italians (Chinese), but not specifically that of Sicilians (Hakka). Others used my background to contrast it with theirs, for instance to argue that my lack of fluency in Italian would have little impact on the continuation of Italian language practices in the world, whereas they posited that the increasing lack of Hakka speakers in Mauritius was reflective of the overall global trend that may endanger Hakka as a language on local and global scales. This comment emphasized to me the responsibility I have as an anthropologist in representing research participants' voices and perspectives.

I go into detail about my methodological approach to this dissertation project in Chapter 3, but I shall introduce some of my ethical considerations here, as they formed an essential part of my positionality in the field. Anthropological research with living human populations requires a formal ethics review at most Anglo-American institutions. I obtained approval from Western University's Research Ethics Board (REB) for my pilot study in 2018, and again for my longer fieldwork in 2019, including an amendment to accommodate the shift from in-person to virtual research during the COVID-19 pandemic a year later in 2020. Relevant research protocols that were submitted to the REB can be found in Appendix A through Appendix D. Although community-immersive ethnographic research quite naturally pairs with a snowball sampling approach to recruiting, in which research contacts point out potential participants on an interpersonal basis (Noy 2008, 330), I made sure that I gave out my contact details to share with potentially interested candidates rather than contacting them out of the blue myself. I obtained either written or verbal consent for interviews and exclusively written informed consent for the online survey I distributed. For interviews, I gave study participants the option to appear in the study either under their full name, a partial name, or as an anonymous interviewee. If they wanted all or some parts of their names to be used in the study, they were given free rein over the form and order in which this name would appear. As such, the way names are ordered and represented in my pool of study participants will vary according to their individual preferences.

I have had my fair share of anxiety that I might misrepresent the Hakka Mauritian community while trying to tell their story. This may surely still happen: All research is subjective and "all researchers are in one manner or another socially and politically situated" (Malkki 2007, 168). Even the selection of data to include or exclude is a conscious, subjective choice. I cannot claim that my research represents all Hakka Mauritians or the complexity of their collective stories, as all ethnographic studies are approximations (Bucholtz 2011, 40). What I can offer instead is a glimpse into the lived experience of the Hakka Mauritians whom I met in the field, their and my impressions of events and encounters, and interpretations of what this may mean for the anthropological study of Hakka Mauritian identity. It is my hope that in documenting and sharing my participants' stories, this project may become a valuable contribution to the Hakka community in Mauritius as well as those in other local and global contexts.

1.3.3 Terminology and Marked Language

As a linguistic anthropologist, I examine the language I use to describe my research critically. It was challenging to find monikers for descriptions of cultural backgrounds and identities without essentializing the very diverse lived experiences and preferences of my research participants. While I can neither guarantee nor expect universal applicability, I can at least be transparent about my choices and define the terms that I do use. The first term that warrants discussion is 'Chinese'. Much has been written on the topic of 'Chineseness'—and I draw on some of these writings in section 2.2 and analyses in Chapter 4, 5, and 6—but suffice it to say at this point that its application has been controversial and widely criticized. I will often use the term 'Chinese' as a descriptor for people who consider themselves or are considered by others to be Chinese, places, things, and events that are generally thought to be Chinese. In these cases, I will not mark the term in any way. However, I will also use the term in singular quotation marks—'Chinese'—whenever I use it in a critical, challenging way, for instance to question cases in which 'Chinese' may be an ideological and/or stereotypical ascription. Similarly, Hakka and 'Hakka', and Mauritian and 'Mauritian' will be divided along these lines, and so forth. Other concepts may also be marked by singular quotation marks whenever I first introduce them, or challenge and critique them in my writing.

The terminology I struggled with the most was the monikers for communities and cultural identities in Mauritius. Hyphenated and compound terms for cultural identities often come with ideological notions of hierarchy, which I do not wish to reinforce. Therefore, the terms 'Mauritian Chinese' or 'Chinese Mauritians', 'Mauritian Hakka' or 'Hakka Mauritians' come with cultural and sociopolitical attachments. I have opted in most cases for the latter, respectively, simply because it allows for an easy distinction between singular and plural noun use. (On a related note, some people use 'Hakkas' in plural form but there seems to be little consensus across the literature. I use 'Hakka' in plural as I would with 'Chinese'.) Putting 'Mauritian' at the back of the word also has the added benefit of letting me distinguish between various Mauritian communities, with the particularity being the first half of the word (i.e. 'Hakka Mauritian' vs. 'Cantonese Mauritian' or 'Indian Mauritian' vs. 'Creole Mauritian'). As I did my main fieldwork in Mauritius, this distinction makes more sense in the ethnographic context of the research than distinguishing between various Chinese or Hakka groups by specifying the Mauritian aspect. Moreover, I also often speak of Sino-Mauritians (meaning Mauritian Chinese/Chinese Mauritians) as this is a commonly used term in Mauritian discourse. It is also used in French: *Sino-Mauriciens*.

1.4   Thesis Overview and Directions

I begin each chapter in this dissertation with immersive scenarios that highlight stories and voices from my fieldwork. Centering the lived experiences of Hakka Mauritians as I examine the emergence of raciolinguistic expectations and discourses of tension in multicultural Mauritius, I showcase the nuanced perspectives with which my research participants approach identity negotiations and transcultural encounters in Mauritius.

In Chapter 2—*"They Had Nothing When They Came": Connecting Histories from Moyen to Mauritius and Beyond*—I delve into the connected histories that inform the context of my fieldwork. I build the chapter from the premise that Chinese and Hakka mobility from early dynasties to contemporary times were and are shaped by changing migration ideologies. From there, I introduce Mauritius in the context of historic and contemporary China-Africa relations and as part of what is known as the 'Indian Ocean World' which connects a variety of land masses through the ocean as the common denominator. At the center of the chapter is the argument that histories do not occur in geographic isolation but

rather in intricate connections across time and space, and thus I present the ethnographic background of my research in the form of a timeline of connected histories across the Indian Ocean World.

In Chapter 3—*Ethnography in a "Rainbow Nation"*—I outline my field experience and the various methodologies I used to conduct my ethnographic research. I do this alongside an exploration of Mauritian celebrations of fifty years of independence in 2018, which epitomized long-standing narratives of Mauritius as a 'rainbow nation' and diversity haven. Such multiplicity is not only the focus of my assessment of Mauritian nation-building tropes but is also mirrored in my methodological approaches. In the first half of the chapter, I present three ways in which I carried out my fieldwork: with multilingual methods, in multi-sited fashion, and with a multisensory understanding of ethnography. In the second half of the chapter, I elaborate on how I collected data in the field as a co-production of knowledge between the research participants and me, how I transcribed and coded the data using grounded theory, and how I analyzed situations, conversations, and discourses that emerged from the coded themes.

Chapter 4—*Hakka Mauritian Dodos and other Metaphors: Discourses of Tension in Mauritian Nation-Building*—is the first of three specific contexts I present in which discourses of tension become salient in Hakka Mauritian identity articulations. The chapter centers around the argument that Hakka Mauritian identities are in continuous flux but simultaneously constrained by paradoxical raciolinguistic expectations emerging from narratives of Mauritianness, Chineseness, and Hakkaness, respectively. I do this by applying the lens of discourses of tension to Mauritian multiculturalism tropes, ethno-linguistic community formation, and the emergence of potentially transcultural national identities. I then show how Hakka Mauritian research participants (re-)framed their identities by adopting, challenging, or rejecting raciolinguistic expectations, and by navigating communal concerns and tensions such as language shifts and loss, community decline, and lack of intergenerational cultural and linguistic transmission. However, global resurgent movements of Hakka people reframing and renegotiating their place in the world have had an impact on local expressions of Hakkaness in Mauritius, resulting in

transnational connections and renewed interest in Hakka ancestry and practices. Finally, I examine translingual practices among Hakka Mauritians, which sets up the next chapter.

Chapter 5— *The 'Rise of China' in the Classroom: Ideological Education and Heritage Language Shifts*—is an exploration of various Mauritian Mandarin classrooms as sites of heritage language shifts from Hakka and Cantonese to Mandarin, influenced by the economic and political 'rise' of China. Raciolinguistic ideologies bear a significant impact in this context, as Chinese government and local Mauritian institutions impose expectations of what '(speaking) Chinese' means onto the local Hakka and Cantonese communities. 'Chinese' is seen as part of the community's 'ancestral language' heritage which is a main marker of Mauritian ethnolinguistic identity. However, although Sino-Mauritian communities used to speak predominantly Hakka and Cantonese, language education in these varieties was (and continues to be) gradually replaced by Mandarin-language courses. Nevertheless, I argue in this chapter that Hakka language as well as Mauritian translingual practices still form part of the classroom repertoire, allowing Hakka to emerge as a 'bridge' toward Mandarin despite not being the (primary) target language. Starting with an overview of Chinese ideological (language) education, I show how 'Chineseness' is homogenized in ways that create tensions in diasporic communities such as that of the Hakka Mauritians, whose cultural identities are positioned less 'authentically' Chinese than those in mainland China. Continuing with the introduction of 'ancestral languages' as a Mauritian ethnic marker, I explore the significance of both Hakka and Mandarin in the Hakka Mauritian community. Finally, I focus on the three Mandarin classrooms I frequented during my fieldwork and the translingual practices that I observed and analyzed in them, showing how Hakka language remains an integral part of the Mandarin classroom.

Chapter 6—*Re-Imagining "Ghost Chinatown": Semiotic Landscapes and Language Ideologies*—focuses on the semiotic landscape of Chinatown in Mauritius' capital Port Louis as a place in which raciolinguistic ideologies and expectations of Chineseness and Hakkaness manifest visually and aurally. A hub for Hakka Mauritians and an emblem of the Chinese presence on the island, Chinatown is envisioned as an anchor of communal identity in the past, present, and future of Mauritius. Contemporary trends, however, seem to indicate that the area is turning into a "Ghost Chinatown", losing the vibrancy and

liveliness for which it was known in the past. Consequently, local and transnational activists and artists are trying to 'revive' Chinatown, resulting in a changing semiotic landscape and renewed tourist interest despite controversial reviews of the area. I argue that these developments mirror the treatment of the Sino-Mauritian community from internal and external perspectives (i.e. Sino-Mauritian community, Mauritian and Chinese governments, tourists), making Chinatown a 'window' into discourses of tension highlighting community trends and challenges. I build the argument by first contextualizing the history of Chinatown(s) in Mauritius and elsewhere, and, secondly, outlining heritagization and revival efforts that are taking place locally. I then analyze the semiotic landscape of Chinatown on the premise that raciolinguistic ideologies can be traced in the scriptscape and soundscape. Moreover, the 'rise' of China manifests in visual representations of 'Chineseness' in the area. Finally, I complement my interpretation of the semiotic landscape with an analysis of tourist and community imaginations of Mauritian Chinatown to contrast raciolinguistic expectations with social realities of life in Chinatown.

I close the thesis with a reflection of discourses of tension in Mauritian transcultural encounters, a summary of my contributions, limitations, and future research directions, and concluding remarks on potential futures of Hakka Mauritian identity.

Chapter 2

2 "They Had Nothing When They Came": Connecting Histories from Moyen to Mauritius and Beyond

2.1 Mauritius-bound: Leaving China

For Hakka Mauritians, remembering the 'source' may not just mean honouring the memory of their ancestors in Moyen and other parts of southern China, but also that of those in their lineage that made the journey to Mauritius. I asked research participants at the beginning of our interviews to describe their childhood in Mauritius and growing up as Hakka Mauritian. If they had active memories of their families' immigration to Mauritius, they often started with the family member who started it all. Sometimes, obtaining more information about these journeys to Mauritius activated a sense of Hakka pride. Lysebie shared with me in her interview that it was not until she went on a trip to Moyen/Meixian that she understood what her father went through:

> To be honest, before I went to Meixian, to me, it didn't matter whether I'm Hakka or—I felt Mauritian. But when I went there, I went to the place where my dad took the boat, and they [had] built a museum there. And it was very interesting, where they showed you how the Hakka women work hard, and—and I felt very proud. Because then I see, that's why our parents came to Mauritius. They had nothing when they came. Really. Just the clothes, like my dad said, just the clothes. When I look at the migrants now from Ethiopia and all, going to the Mediterranean, and I thought, "Oh my god, my dad was like that." He said he only had a small bag. And really nothing, and how he came and worked hard. And I thought, we grew up with him telling us that we have to be honest and work hard to succeed in life. You don't go stealing to get rich, that's the wrong thing. And really, it's been inculcated in us, and I feel very proud looking back now. Saying: That's where it all comes from.

> (Interview with Lysebie, f, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Lysebie saw her father's decision to come to Mauritius in a new light following her trip to Moyen. She emphasized the lack of belongings that he brought with him and the hard work he had to do to build a life from scratch once he arrived in Mauritius. The values that he passed on to her, honesty and hard work, filled her with pride looking back. The work that immigrants had to do to earn a living was a common narrative in people's family stories. Hakka Mauritian Canadian writer Joyce Ng Cheong Tin-Leung, for instance, shares the protagonist's grandmother's journey to Mauritius in her semi-autobiographical novel *Dancing on the Waves*:

> I remember the stories [our grandmother] told us. She talked about her early years on the island, the sea voyage on the big ship. She was already pregnant with our Papa during their long journey. She left her natal village to go to Hong Kong through the port of Shantou. Then on to the ship towards Mauritius, to her life as a new immigrant. She […] had to work relentlessly to feed her large family of ten children. In our teens, we discovered that the shop the family bought when they first arrived on the island went bankrupt, due in part to the prevailing economic climate—the global slump of the 30's. (Ng Cheong Tin-Leung [2017] 2019, 17)

Stories of early settlement of Hakka immigrants in Mauritius often involve themes of hardships on the one hand and communal support on the other. Large extended families and clan networks helped keep their fellow Hakka Mauritians afloat even when they had many mouths to feed and struggled to establish or maintain their business. Moreover, what both Lysebie and Ng Cheong Tin-Leung's stories have in common is their connection of local events to global phenomena. While Lysebie tries to make sense of her father's experience by comparing it to the more recent migration of Ethiopian refugees, Ng Cheong Tin-Leung embeds the bankruptcy of her protagonist's family's shop in the contemporary global context of the Great Depression in the 1930s. We thus see historical connections across time and space in both of their accounts. This observation informs the central argument of this chapter, namely that histories do not occur in geographic isolation. The historical movement of Hakka people from southern China to Mauritius thus requires thorough contextualization in the happenings of various localities and world events at large.

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of Chinese and Hakka migrations, migration ideologies, and implications for related notions of 'Chineseness' and 'Hakkaness'. I then situate Mauritius within historical and emerging China-Africa relations as well as the conceptualization of what is called the 'Indian Ocean World', at which point I build a case for the theoretical and methodological approach of 'connected histories' and 'entangled ethnographies'. Finally, I apply these frameworks to a detailed timeline of Hakka Mauritian connected histories, which give the reader a comprehensive understanding of the historical and ethnographic factors and interconnections that have influenced and continue to affect Hakka Mauritians' lived experience of transculturality in Mauritius and beyond.

2.2 Chinese and Hakka Ideologies of Migration and Ethnicity

One of the constitutive ethnographic factors of this work is Chinese and Hakka migration, and the implications this history of migration has had on local and global conceptualizations of 'Chineseness' and 'Hakkaness'. My research may focus on Mauritius as the site of immigration, but this cannot be done without situating it within the context of historical Chinese emigration trends, especially considering the controversy of migration in Chinese society at the time. Interviewee Kit Hau told me:

> One of the reasons why the Hakkas had to leave China was because of the fights, uh, the wars. Okay? One of the reasons, not just *the* reason. Other reasons being poverty and, you know, uh, [the] search for better life outside China, because for a Chinaman to leave his country, that was the last thing to do, the very last resort, you know?

> <div align="right">(Interview with Kit Hau, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

There were many factors that contributed to the mass emigrations of Chinese—and specifically Hakka—people in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Kit's assessment of emigration as "the very last resort" for Chinese people can be contextualized within historical and ideological developments in China regarding piety and patriotism. It is therefore important to embed the migration stream from southern China to Mauritius in the broader context of Chinese migration ideologies. The scholar who has been among the most prolific in the study of Chinese migration and the Chinese overseas is Wang Gungwu (J. Huang 2010; G. Wang 1993, 2001, 2009). He is particularly known for his extensive work on relevant terminology regarding Chinese overseas communities (J. Huang 2010, 5). One of these terms is *huaqiao* (华侨, *huáqiáo*), which translates to 'Chinese sojourner'. In Confucian thought, one's ancestral home and filial piety were so important that temporary sojourning was the only acceptable practice of mobility:

> Migration was simply not an option; only sojourning on official duty or as a trader was permissible. Any other kind of departure amounted to rejection of the family, and life as an exile from home was punishment indeed in China because no other place would normally receive such people except in bondage. Leaving home was feared, and seeking settlement elsewhere was an unwelcome prospect (G. Wang 2001, 9).

Sojourning, as opposed to indefinite settlement overseas, would then ensure that migrants return to be with their families, work, retire, and be buried in China (Douw 1999, 23). Taking this view on migration into account, it makes sense that leaving China would have

been a "last resort" under exceptional circumstances such as social and political unrest. There is palpable tension in the practice of sojourning as it meant both leaving and being committed to an eventual return, which likely had profound implications for sojourners' identities. The ideological correlation between migration and filial piety also puts into perspective the proverb "When you drink water, think of its source": If permanent emigration was frowned upon, 'forgetting one's roots' after the fact would have severe moral consequences, as migrating meant rejecting one's family.

The popular English term 'Overseas Chinese' was once used to translate *huaqiao*. Nowadays, *huaqiao* is only narrowly applicable to Chinese national citizens living abroad. 'Overseas Chinese', however, can also connote a multitude of Chinese compound words referring to *huaren* (华人, *huárén*) as 'ethnic Chinese people' who have migrated. These include *waiji huaren* (外籍, *wàijí*, 'foreign') and *haiwai huaren* (海外, *hǎiwài*, "overseas" or "abroad"), which are free of the "political and legal connotations in the term Huaqiao" (J. Huang 2010, 10). Problems arise in translation, as both *huaqiao* and *huaren* are commonly translated as 'overseas Chinese' despite the conceptual differences in the original terms (Ganassin 2020, 11). Considering China's changing geopolitical area(s), the term 'overseas' at times also includes Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, and Macaoers, which prompts Zhou Minglang (2019, 249–50) to differentiate, in English, between 'overseas Chinese'—as opposed to mainland Chinese, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao— and 'ethnic Chinese' living elsewhere. Wang Gungwu opposed the ideas of a 'Greater China' and a 'Chinese diaspora', conceptually on grounds of their muddiness and homogenization, and politically due to their potential as nationalist and fear-mongering rhetoric (J. Huang 2010, 12). In this sense, Ien Ang critiques 'diaspora' as a form of "transnational nationalism based on the presumption of internal ethnic sameness and external ethnic distinctiveness" (2003, 145). The concern about the term 'diaspora' then lies in its application to a seemingly singular, homogenous global Chinese community that Chinese governments may lay political claim on, and not in a careful use of the term that avoids conflating Chinese communities around the world (G. Wang 2004, 168–169). I personally speak of 'diasporic communities' rather than 'overseas communities' because the term 'diasporic', to me, more aptly implies permanent and/or continuous settlement

outside of mainland China, which also challenges the idea that ties to China will always be maintained. As mentioned above, it also bears political implications for the residents of places such as Taiwan and Hong Kong:

> If members of the diaspora are Chinese living 'overseas,' then they are 'away from home'—and home, of course, is 'China.' By contrast, Chinese who live outside the mainland (most notably in Taiwan and Hong Kong) are, in this scheme, somehow less crucially Chinese than those on the mainland—an interpretation that would be greeted with some skepticism, I would think, by the Chinese people living in both places. (Fung 2003, 19)

I agree with Fung that this definition is problematic at best and outright harmful in its least benevolent interpretation. The core issue here, however, lies not necessarily in the conceptualization of 'overseas' but in that of an essentialist notion of 'Chineseness'. 'Chineseness', while often invoked as a self-explanatory concept in everyday conversations, has been refined and critiqued by many scholars. Most criticism goes towards scholarship preoccupied with a 'one-size-fits-all' Chineseness. As Anthony Reid puts it, "quests for either an essence of Chineseness or boundaries to it are bound to fail—and should fail" (2009, 199). In an article bluntly titled *Fuck Chineseness*, Allen Chun (1996) details his grievances with the image of a homogenized, bounded Chinese identity. His argument can be summed up as a critique of the politicization of alleged commonalities that build the base of Chineseness, such as ethnicity, culture, language, and history. While the title may suggest otherwise, Chun does not quite argue to dismiss the concept of Chineseness or Chinese identity altogether, but rather to obscure its (localized) meanings and ask when and why an articulation of Chineseness may become important in various social contexts. This resonates with me, as I understand identities as dynamic, multivalent, and complex; thus, when it comes to Chineseness, I am less preoccupied with definitions than complicating its various meanings. Chineseness is at its core a relational position to occupy vis-à-vis 'non-Chinese' others (Ang 2013, 17). Of course, the binary of Chinese vs. non-Chinese also makes it difficult to distance oneself from Chineseness. As Lily Wong writes, "conceptions of 'China' and 'Chineseness' […] operate as particularly 'sticky' forms of cultural imagination that carry considerable political salience" (2018, 6). The 'stickiness' makes for tension, particularly if someone actively disidentifies with being Chinese. It may be interesting here to differentiate between different 'qualities' of Chineseness. A Chineseness based on racial appearance and state categorization would be

quite 'sticky'; a Chineseness based on cultural performance is relatively easy to leave behind by being non-practicing, as it were (cf. Reid 2009, 199). And yet, "one can never be completely free of one's ethnic origins: a residual Chineseness is always part of me – for example, in the form of family memory or inherited cultural knowledge, however truncated" (Ang 2013, 18). In this sense, Lily Wong (2018, 11–13) also calls Chineseness an 'attachment'. This tense power play between what one (dis)identifies as and what others identify them as leads to a feeling of being inauthentic, something that Ang distinctly links with linguistic issues: "I was either too Chinese (because I looked like one) or not Chinese enough (because I didn't speak the language)" (Ang 2013, 18). This, again, raises the questions of exactly *when* and *why* expressions of (different) Chineseness(es) may become salient, and "why people have crises of perception that give rise to new identities" (Chun 1996, 132). The idea of 'being Chinese' certainly meant something to the people I worked with in the field. Furthermore, as Jessieca Leo writes, "[b]eing Chinese has currency and cultural capital in the twenty-first century" (2015, 117).

Similarly, 'being Hakka' is an attachment that holds value for many of my research participants. There is no official data on the size and distribution of the global Hakka diaspora. Worldwide, Hakka populations may account for between 40 million (Leo 2015, 4–5) to 80 million people (C. C. Chang 2018, 427), although the ambiguous nature of Hakka ethnic classification makes it difficult to state certain numbers (Lozada Jr. 2005, 95). About eighty percent of the lower estimate of 40 million are said to live in mainland China (Leo 2015, 4–5). The word *Hakka* (客家人, *hag⁵ga¹ ngin²* in Hakka, *kèjiā rén* in Mandarin) means 'guest people'. *Kè*, literally 'guest' or 'traveller', can be interpreted as similar to *qiao* (侨, *qiáo*), in that both imply the practice of sojourning (G. Wang 2001, 223). This terminology is connected to the discursive, social construction of Hakka people as a nomadic group of outsiders. Although Hakka people are typically considered to be part of the ethnic Han majority of China, they experienced increasing 'ethnicization' when they were multiply displaced within China over centuries and clashed with local populations, especially with the Cantonese in southern China (Lozada Jr. 2005, 93–94; see also 2.4.5). Migration and ethnic conflict are thus central to the historic formation of Hakka identity:

Despite their ethnic rhetoric, none of the Han Chinese groups can claim a purely Han ancestry. But nothing had shaped interethnic relations as much as the forced migration of lesser groups. […] This environment engendered a sense of racial defensiveness; this may have been stronger in some ethnic groups than others, but all the Han Chinese in the area at times felt the need to assert their racial purity with categorical certainty. One and all they were *Tangren* (people of Tang culture), descendants of migrants from the Central Plain (*zhong yuan*), that is, the cradle of ancient Chinese civilization in the north, and their ancestors were upper-class gentry families (*yiguan zhi zu*). Both the Cantonese and Hakkas had an implausible lore about how their ancestors entered Guangdong. The history of settlement in the area makes intelligible the singular preoccupation of these groups with racial and cultural purity, which in turn accentuated the racial aspect of nationalism when that phenomenon emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. (Leong 1997, 40; emphasis in original)

Leong's assessment shows how 'racial defensiveness' and notions of 'cultural purity' enabled what Eriberto P. Lozada Jr. has called the "ethnogenesis" (2005, 93) of Hakka groupness. Tensions between Hakka and Cantonese groups in southern China were fundamental in these emerging ethnic delineations, and they persisted in diasporic communities as well. Typically, where there is a historically large Cantonese community, fewer Hakka people can be found, although, interestingly, Mauritius has been noted as an exception to the rule (G. Wang 2001, 221). Mauritius had a predominantly Cantonese community that was gradually outnumbered by new Hakka arrivals, which led many Cantonese in Mauritius to relocate to Madagascar and La Réunion and influenced local geographic dispersal (G. Wang 2001, 221–22; Yu-Sion 1998a, 347–49, 1998b, 359). In this sense, diasporic formations were strongly influenced not only by the Hakka-Cantonese rivalries in China but also by community dynamics in the neighbouring islands (cf. Guccini and Zhang 2021, 108). Interviewee Philip Li Ching Hum elaborated on some of the movements of Hakka people from the north of China to Mauritius all the way to South Africa:

PLCH: The Hakka people, they come from the north [of China]. Then, after a time, they say that because of the turbulence, they moved south. When they moved south, then, after a time, they moved to Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia, you have many Hakka. Hakka people. And they have come even to Mauritius. Mauritius is a gateway—[it] is a gateway for Chinese immigration to…? South Africa! South Africa is the mountain of gold. Eh? There, they believed that you have gold. You dig the soil, you will have gold. But by accident maybe, they come here [to] Mauritius. Halfway.

FG: Mh-hm. And then they stayed.

PLCH: They stayed. Now, they did not have the ambition to stay. Most of them, most of them, they came with the idea of going back to Meixian. They [would] amass a fortune here and they [would] go. Because there was a saying in Kreol [that said],

> "*Lasinn enn bon pei. Enn dimounn travay, dis dimounn manze*." "China is a good country. One person works for ten people [literally: 'one person works, ten people eat']." (laughs)
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

There are many layers to Philip's words. He invokes popular narratives of Hakka migration patterns and places of settlement, motivations for migrating as well as intentions to and incentives for an eventual return to Moyen/Meixian. However, what I find most striking in this excerpt is how Philip situates Mauritius as a point of transnational and cross-regional interest. The fact that there was a saying in Kreol, the Mauritian lingua franca, about the advantages of life in China illustrates the continuing diasporic imagination of China as a place of collective origins while also recognizing the firm role that Mauritius has played in the community, at least linguistically. Moreover, in calling Mauritius a "gateway" to South Africa, the "mountain of gold", he embeds Hakka Chinese migration to and from Mauritius within the history of the gold rush. Mauritius has been called a "gateway" in other aspects of the historical and contemporary relationship between China and Africa (see below), accentuating its strategically pivotal location in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, "the study of Mauritian history is inherently transregional" (Teelock 2005, 104). I therefore contextualize Hakka migration to Mauritius within broader scholarship of China-Africa relations and the conceptualization of the 'Indian Ocean World' (IOW).

2.3 Situating Mauritius, Connecting Histories

2.3.1 China-Africa Relations and the Indian Ocean World

Encounters, connections and trade between China and Africa are far from new; they have historical roots (A. Li 2022, 3–4; Siu and McGovern 2017, 338). Distinctions can be made between long-established 'old' Chinese communities and those who consist of 'new' migrant communities that have more recently come to African countries for (temporary) employment, trade, and business (Carol Chan 2021, 109; Tremann 2014, 70). The latter are often situated in a larger trend of China's economic and sociopolitical investment in Africa, often resulting in "fear-mongering 'yellow peril'" (Alden [2007] 2009, 6) narratives. What many of these studies neglect is a qualitative perspective on how China-Africa relations impact feelings of 'being Chinese' (Zhang 2018; Guccini and Zhang 2021)

or identity formation processes overall. While I am cognisant of the greater influences of the contemporary Chinese presence in Africa, I believe that they are dependent on China's historical connection to Africa. Both historically and in present times, the island state Mauritius can be considered a key player in China-Africa relations. In his foreword to the Sino-Mauritian historical account *From Alien to Citizen* (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008), Wang Gungwu writes that:

> Sino-Mauritian history might not have been unique, but the way Port Louis served as a dispersal centre for other parts of southern Africa certainly was. Mauritius became the key to the numerous connections that were established between China and Africa and still plays a distinct role in the future of that development. (G. Wang 2008, xv)

Indeed, Mauritius is home to one of Africa's four oldest and largest Chinese diasporas (Haugen and Carling 2005, 643, 661) and has been identified as China's "'island gateway to Africa'" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 137). The other three countries which Haugen and Carling (2005, 661) list as homes for the most "sizeable, longstanding" Chinese communities in Africa are South Africa, Madagascar and the French overseas department, La Réunion.[3] What all four have in common is that they are located in or by the Indian Ocean. In the past, maritime routes played a key role in facilitating China-Africa exchanges (Siu and McGovern 2017, 339), and it can be argued that this interconnectivity persists until today. To be sure, Mauritius is politically part of Africa and its government seeks to maintain and further establish economic ties to its fellow African countries (Alpers 2003, 40). Geophysically, however, it is far removed from the African continent, and some even claim that it has "nothing to do with Africa either historically or geographically" (Toussaint 1967, 4). Maps of Africa often fail to include Mauritius as well (Eriksen 1998, 11). As an island of roughly 2000 km^2 located about 800 km from the eastern coast of Madagascar (Rajah-Carrim 2005, 317), a more accurate descriptor of the surrounding area is the Western Indian Ocean.

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[3] It should be noted that the numbers Haugen and Carling cite, i.e. 40,000 for the Chinese population in Mauritius, are based on estimates from 1996. Most of my contacts in the Mauritian Chinese community spoke of much lower numbers (however, also estimates) ranging from 10,000 to 20,000, a rough number 12,000 Mauritian Chinese being the most commonly stated. The estimates in other countries seem to be similarly outdated, as the 1996 estimate of 28,000 for South Africa (Haugen and Carling 2005, 661) do not match with the 10,000 cited in other works (cf. Deumert and Mabandla 2015, 19).

Figure 1: Map of Mauritius' location in the Indian Ocean World (Google Maps and INEGI 2022).

Figure 2: Map of the Mascarenes (Google Maps 2022c). From west to east: La Réunion, Mauritius, Rodrigues.

Figure 3: Map of Mauritius (Google Maps 2022b).

The Mascarenes (the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues and La Réunion), the Seychelles and the Chagos—all typically denoted as 'African islands'—"form a little New World in the Indian Ocean, a world away from Africa: they have more in common with the distant West Indies than with their non-Creole neighbours" (Houbert 2003, 124). It is therefore crucial

to not only speak of Chinese migration to Mauritius in the context of Chinese ventures into Africa as a political entity but also as a settlement in an insular and maritime space with manifold historical interconnections. The best way to situate Mauritius, then, is as part of what is called the 'Indian Ocean World' (IOW), a concept which has been increasingly promoted since the mid-twentieth century, mainly by historians (Campbell 2017, 25). They critique the normativity of continental, landed area studies, instead considering water bodies, coastal lands and islands the main connective factors for the flows of humans, animals and goods within a distinguishable 'world' (cf. Campbell 2017; Pearson 2003; Vink 2007). In worlds-system analysis, a 'world' is considered to be a system, empire, or economy that spans and connects various parts but not necessarily all of the globe, or: "a spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many political and cultural units" (Wallerstein 2004, 17). Indeed, it is improbable "to imagine histories of the [Indian O]cean that do not have these sorts of connections and movements at their core" (Walker and Slama 2021, 78). While the approach of a large body of water as a world is long-established for regions such as the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean has been severely understudied and disregarded even in maritime scholarship (Pearson 2003, 3; Toussaint 1967, 1–2; Vink 2007, 41–42). This is surprising, given that it is the ocean with the oldest history of maritime encounters (Pearson 2003, 3). These encounters have long rendered the Indian Ocean an inherently diasporic space "through which people moved [and move] for economic, religious, educational, political and family reasons" (Walker and Slama 2021, 78), playing a pivotal role in enabling the creation and maintenance of diasporic groups and inter-diasporic connections.

Applying the lens of diverse interconnections within the IOW, Mauritius is a particularly attractive case study, "[h]aving experienced several variants of European colonialism, been marked by slavery and indenture, and currently held up as a model of multi-culturalism" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 8). Yet, despite the vast availability of literature on Mauritius' multiculturalism and multilingualism on the one hand, and a promising potential for Mauritius scholarship in the context of China-Africa relations on the other, studies of the Sino-Mauritian population have been surprisingly scarce. In my effort to rectify this, I will draw on the concept of 'connected histories' to do the various transnational, transregional, and transcultural influences justice.

2.3.2 Connecting Histories, Entangling Ethnographies

Just as the IOW was a concept born out of a critique of landed area studies, a general critique of such geographically fixed studies has created approaches based on connectivity rather than isolation. For instance, proposing that historians adopt the concept of connected histories, Sanjay Subrahmanyam writes that "[n]ationalism has blinded us to the possibility of connection" (1997, 761). Connected histories—or its related concepts entangled histories and *histoire croisée* ('crossed history')—can be used to challenge methodological nationalism (Randeria 2009, 80), that is: to create an interconnected narrative web "that is not reduced to the sum of the histories" (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 43) of seemingly separate states. Kay Anderson aptly writes that, "lest we risk misconstruing the novelty of the multicultural present, […] it seems as helpful to identify lines of continuity with the past as it is to emphasize points of change" (1990, 138). This approach can also help us see connections in identity formation processes:

> National identities, especially, are typically imagined as bordered and bounded, and
> their historical and global entanglements have historically been silenced in discourses
> of nation-building. (Deumert and Mabandla 2015, 17)

A connected histories perspective is thus not only helpful in situating Mauritius and Hakka Chinese migration to Mauritius, but also in expanding my theoretical framework. After all, the silencing of historical and global connectivity in nation-building discourse alludes to the tension that I conceptualize as pivotal in identity discourse and negotiations in Mauritius. A connected histories approach further allows us to confront the coloniality of standardized history and world views. In this sense, "[d]iasporic experiences make evident that the world can no longer be fixed and shaped into a system, and, therefore, that History is a fantasy peculiar to the Western imagination" (Veronelli 2016, 415). Ethnographically, the focus on encounters, or "engagements across difference" (Faier and Rofel 2014, 364), can similarly bring to light the various power dynamics at play within contextual relationships between actors and groups. It is precisely these "historical agents […] that make the geography" (Appadurai 2010, 9), a perspective that forces us to question the existence of distinct geographies and focus on the people and groups that live in, make and shape these places. This approach also highlights how racial, ethnic, national, communal and linguistic categories change over time and space and depend on the people that

construct and use them to navigate their social realities (Carney 2021). It then holds that "any ethnography of a cultural formation *in* the world system is also an ethnography *of* the system, and therefore cannot be understood only in terms of the conventional single-site mise-en-scene of ethnographic research" (Marcus 1995, 99; my emphasis). If we follow this line of thought further, allowing connected histories and entangled ethnographies to be the norm rather than the exception, "[p]ractices of displacement might emerge as *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension" (Clifford 1997, 3; emphasis in original).

While this may be important to consider in any ethnographic research, it certainly is crucial for work that is embedded in multiple diasporic contexts. In a conceptual critique of *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (edited by L. Pan 1998), Christopher Fung writes:

> [T]he histories of diaspora communities are so intertwined with those of their 'host' countries that focusing on what is 'Chinese' in a cultural sense tells us almost nothing about the ways in which these communities have adapted to, resisted, and transformed the places in which they lived. (2003, 19)

In other words, transnational connectedness is so central to diasporic contexts that it would be counterproductive, if not downright questionable, to treat local cultural contexts as distinct from one another. In that same vein, we have to consider that "'global China' today is also a local phenomenon" (Ang 2020, 1371), meaning that what we consider 'global China' presents differently in various local contexts. To do the connected histories at the heart of this research justice, I will thus sketch the trajectories of different groups and relevant developments in their social environments by sorting events chronologically rather than artificially separating geographic and ethnographic contexts. This will enable me to situate events within their cross-regional and transnational connections. Moreover, it shows when these connections were established, how they further influenced and continue to affect the Hakka Mauritian situation today. The goal of the next section then is not to compare or describe different regions in which Hakka (Mauritians) have settled, but to show how their lived experiences in each of these regions were—and are—processual and interconnected.

2.4   A Timeline of Hakka Mauritian Connected Histories

2.4.1 Before 1500: Chinese Migration, Trade, and Proto-Colonialism

It is difficult to mark the beginnings of several millennia of Chinese history. Apart from the early Xia and Shang dynasties in the second millennium BCE, the life of Confucius in the sixth and fifth century BCE may be a suitable starting point (Wasserstrom 2016, 5), considering the impact his teachings have had on Chinese cultural practices until today. Another option would be to start with the first emperor of unified China, Qin Shi Huangdi, who ruled from 221 to 206 BCE (Roberts 2001, 22–24; Wasserstrom 2016, 5). His reign was followed by a four-century rule of the influential Han dynasty over the turn of the first millennium CE. The Han period also marked a new beginning in China, as "[i]nevitably a history of China is a history of the Han Chinese" (Roberts 2001, 14). Due to the muddy delineation between Han and Hakka ethnic and geographic origins, the near-synonymous use of Chinese and Han history makes early Hakka history a controversial topic to say the least:

> [A]ll Chinese claim to have north central Chinese origins and the Hakka are no different […] [b]ut although in many significant ways the history and culture of the Hakka resemble those of other Chinese, Hakka are at the same time regarded as distinct. (Constable 1996a, 30)

There are undertones of tension as well as consolidation in the way that Hakka history has been conceptualized as both part of the wider Han narrative and separate from it. However, the claim to Hakka northern origins is also not entirely undisputed; Clement Chan (2010, 29–47) counts and interrogates three competing theories according to which Hakka people are either Han people from the north, non-Han people of southern Chinese ethnicity, or from the north but descendants of the Huns. The first is the most widely accepted and theorized in various 'migration wave' models, which attempt to sketch the Hakka migrations from northern to southern China in different stages over the centuries, starting in most models with the Jin dynasty in the fourth century CE (cf. Clement Chan 2010, 30–34; Leo 2015, 99). As Jessieca Leo points out, however, pinpointing exact Hakka migration patterns is a futile task because "migration is not a 'single-point in time' exercise" (2015, 100). Suffice it then to say that the Hakka were not always considered to be a distinct ethnic

group and rather experienced an "ethnogenesis" (Lozada Jr. 2005, 93) due to their migration to and settlement in areas in which other groups regarded them as outsiders.

Hakka people were of course not the only Chinese people historically in movement. Historians have recorded a long history of Chinese trade, with routes extending as far as Africa. During the Han dynasty, most trade took place via land routes (Siu and McGovern 2017, 339). The Tang dynasty's (618-907 CE) capital Chang'an became a Silk Road trading hub and home to a diverse population of traders (Roberts 2001, 68–69). Chinese maritime trade and sojourning became more common (Lockard 2013, 767) and expanded through the fifteenth century (Siu and McGovern 2017, 339). By the eleventh century, Quanzhou and Guangzhou had emerged as the main ports in southern China (Guy 1992, 70; Lockard 2013, 766). Both cities "bear the legacy of large Muslim communities" (Guy 1992, 71)—a testament to the long-standing contact and trade between Southern China and the Middle East—as well as other archaeological evidence of the presence of foreign merchants. The establishment of the Chinese fleet in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to more trade relationships with merchants from Asia and Europe (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 9). Maritime trade networks were expanded to the East African Coast in the early fifteenth century with the help of Zheng He, a Muslim Chinese admiral who served under Ming dynasty emperor Yongle (Siu and McGovern 2017, 340). Apart from trade and diplomatic activities, Zheng He's missions also included military operations, in what Geoff Wade calls "maritime proto-colonialism of the Ming" (2005, 51). Claims that the Chinese fleet under Zheng He 'discovered' America in 1421 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 11), popularized by self-proclaimed historian Gavin Menzies in the early 2000s, have been refuted as baseless and sensationalist (Finlay 2004, 230–31). However, Zheng He's voyages had significant impact on European colonial history in the IOW, as they may have served as a roadmap, as it were, for "colonial enterprises [which] followed and eventually occupied many of the same conduits and the nodes that Zheng He expeditions utilized or created" (Sen 2016, 611).

Some places in map records of Zheng He's journeys remain unidentified to this day. One of them is an island which has been proposed to be (among other contenders) one of the Chagos Islands, which are located on a more or less direct sea route between Sri Lanka and

the Mascarenes (Ptak 2019, 193–94). However, historical and archaeological evidence for this claim is largely inconclusive (2019, 193–97). Similarly, sailors' acquaintance with Mauritius in the pre-colonial era is not entirely free of speculation, as "[t]here is no record of early or indigenous settlement on Mauritius and no one knows who first discovered the island" (Bowman 1991, 8). Thomas Hylland Eriksen points out that "Austronesian speakers who became Madagascar's aboriginal population around AD 500 seem to have bypassed Mauritius, like the many tradesmen active in the Indian Ocean for centuries before European colonialism" (1998, 7). On their journeys through the Indian Ocean, voyagers from Greece, Phoenicia, Arabia, China and India are said to have sailed by—but not settled on—the island nowadays known as Mauritius (Hookoomsing 2009, 21). Chinese pottery from the late first millennium BCE made its way to the Swahili coast and even Mauritius; however, "[a]n actual Chinese trading presence seems to date only from the twelfth century" (Pearson 2003, 89). Although undocumented in historic records, it is likely that Arab and Swahili sailors became aware of the Mascarene islands during their voyages prior to 1500 (Allen 2006, 9). Arab sailors are said to have called the island *dina arobi* (دينا أروبي), likely meaning 'abandoned island' (Boswell 2020, 257). It remained abandoned for roughly another century.

2.4.2 16ᵗʰ Century: European Colonialism and Trade in the IOW

In the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese established themselves around the IOW, setting up trading posts in places as far apart as Mozambique, Soqotra, and West India (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 14). Mauritius first appeared in Portuguese expedition records as *Ilha do Cirne* ('Island of the Swan') (Bowman 1991, 8). They did not settle on the island, likely because they were not in need of the timber resources in Mauritius due to their access to Brazil and India (Bowman 1991, 9). After landing in China in 1514, the Portuguese stated an unabating interest in local trade, which eventually led to Chinese permission to establish a Portuguese trading station in Aomen (present-day Macao) in 1553 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 15; Roberts 2001, 135). Back on the European market, the Dutch took note of the wealth of Portuguese traders: The Portuguese presence in the IOW was soon to be rivaled by the Dutch (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 15). The Dutch first set foot on Mauritius in 1598, naming it after governor Maurits van

Nassau, but they only started a settlement on the island forty years later (Bowman 1991, 9; Pearson 2003, 152).

The late sixteenth century saw Hakka people move toward the southern Chinese Lingnan area for the first time, many of them motivated by—often illegal—zinc and lead mining opportunities (Leong 1997, 43–45). The blooming economy of this period also marked the transition into the late imperial rule in China (Gerritsen 2016, 11). Spain had colonized the Philippines in 1569 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 15). Alongside East Asian and Southeast Asian buyers, the Portuguese, Dutch, Flemish, and now Spanish spent their money on Chinese porcelain ware, making the Ming rulers very wealthy but also unable to keep up with the "costs of maintaining an ever-growing palace household and staving off invading forces" (Gerritsen 2016, 15). The decline of the Ming was on the horizon, not only due to European trading station permissions but also due to Japanese pirates endangering trade routes along the Chinese coast, and inland unrest being caused by Mongol forces raiding Beijing (Roberts 2001, 135).

2.4.3 17th Century: Dutch Colonization and Chinese Late Imperial Rule

The Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, short: VOC), founded in 1602, expanded their reach into the Southwestern Indian Ocean and were the first to colonize Mauritius in 1638 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 15–16). They established the island settlement as a strategic midway point on the sea route between their Cape Colony (in today's South Africa) and the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) (Pearson 2003, 152). The VOC had an interest in the ebony resources of Mauritius, which involved the import and exploit of an enslaved workforce (Bowman 1991, 9). There may have been Fukkien[4] Chinese convict labourers from Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia among this workforce (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 21).

European agricultural techniques were of little use in the local vegetation, and Malagasy slaves' knowledge became essential in the initial success of farming endeavours on the

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[4] Fukkien hail from Fujian Province. They are also known as Hokkien, depending on the Sinitic variety that is used as the basis of pronunciation (Lefort 2019, 3).

island (Pearson 2003, 156–57). The Dutch also exploited the local fauna, as it had become common to eat local birds, including the flightless dodo whose population declined by the end of the 1630s (Cheke and Hume 2008, 77–80) and was rendered extinct, due to human consumption and the introduction of pigs, by the 1670s (Bowman 1991, 10; Pearson 2003, 259). The last dodo sighting was reported in 1681 (Bowman 1991, 10). Twenty years after first settling, in part due to rat infestations and related crop failure, the Dutch abandoned Mauritius for the Cape of Good Hope in 1658 (Bowman 1991, 9; Cheke and Hume 2008, 80). The British did have an interest in Indian Ocean colonization as well, and their East India Company (EIC) was a rival force to the Dutch VOC; however, the British focused their attention on India in the 1660s (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 16). The Dutch, meanwhile, subjected Mauritius to a second colonization attempt in 1664, which lasted for almost half a century before environmental challenges such as droughts, cyclones, agricultural problems, and illnesses drove them out for good (Tyagi 2011, 91). Over the course of the century the French attempted to establish colonies in Madagascar and La Réunion, which they named *Ile de Bourbon* ('Bourbon Island') (Pearson 2003, 152). They also founded their own East India Company, *la Compagnie des Indes Orientales* (Bowman 1991, 10; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 17).

Meanwhile, from the 1620s to the 1640s, Chinese society suffered from the consequences of European trade depression and climatic changes, which led to a rapid decline of the economy (Roberts 2001, 137). The Ming Dynasty fell in 1644, giving way to the last imperial dynasty of the Qing. It was established by the Manchu whose political and military organization had grown and spread through southern China over the years until they invaded Ming territory (Gerritsen 2016, 17). While the Manchu were considered an ethnic minority, they strategically positioned themselves as no different from the Han in a united China (Roberts 2001, 143). They had planned a political transition which would let them establish their legitimacy by keeping most of the administrative and institutional elements of the Ming dynasty rule, and which ultimately swayed many Han Chinese subjects into Qing loyalty (Gerritsen 2016, 17–19). The Hakka took advantage of changes in jurisdiction during this time, as a ban on settlements in coastal areas was lifted in the 1680s and resulted in further Hakka migration to the south (Leong 1997, 53).

2.4.4 18th Century: Mauritius under French Rule and Qing Expansion

The Dutch leaving Mauritius by 1710 caught the interest of French colonists in La Réunion who did not have access to a good local harbour (Bowman 1991, 10). The French claimed the island of Mauritius for the King of France in 1715 and began settlement in 1721, by which time supervision had gone to the French East India Company (Bowman 1991, 10; Pearson 2003, 259). The French signified the change in colonial rule by renaming the island *Ile de France* ('Isle of France') (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 351) . The new Governor General of La Réunion and Mauritius, Bertrand-François Mahé de La Bourdonnais, arrived in the 1730s and transformed the town of Port Louis into a fortified harbour and headquarters for the *Compagnie des Indes* (Bowman 1991, 11–12). Port Louis then became the naval base for French colonial operations in India, over which they warred with the British (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 17–18). The French also claimed nearby Rodrigues and the Seychelles in the second half of the eighteenth century (Pearson 2003, 152).

Economically, Mauritius saw the introduction of plantation farming under French rule (Eriksen 1998, 8). The French colonizers brought captured and enslaved Chinese tradespeople, some of whom later settled on the island even when most demanded to be repatriated (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 19–24). However, the main sources of slave labour in the French Mauritian colony were Madagascar, Mozambique, West Africa, the East Indies, and India (Bowman 1991, 13). A new *lingua franca* emerged in the form of the French-lexifier Kreol (Eriksen 1998, 8–9). At the time, it was known as "corrupted French or *mauvais patois* [meaning 'bad patois']" (Hookoomsing 2009, 22; emphasis in original). After the French East Indian Company was dissolved in the 1760s, Mauritius became the new seat of the French overseas government in the 1780s, which solidified its pivotal role in IOW trade (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 18).

Chinese territory expanded to twice its size under the rule of the Qing (Roberts 2001, 155). As military projects expanded, contractual agreements with foreigners decreased and Manchu conversion to Christianity was outlawed (Gerritsen 2016, 21). Guangzhou became the only port with foreign trade permission, which mainly involved tea exports through the British EIC (Roberts 2001, 156). While the EIC mainly traded raw cotton for tea, which

was in high demand among the British, traders also made profit by smuggling Opium from company property in Bengal (Roberts 2001, 164).

2.4.5 19th Century: British Rule, Indentured Labour, and Hakka Exile

In August of 1810, during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), British and French forces fought over Mauritius at its southeastern coast in the Battle of Grand Port (Eriksen 1998, 9; Pearson 2003, 152). The British valued the island's convenient position along European trade routes (Dobson 2007, 5). When they won and captured the island, they renamed it "Mauritius"—in concordance with the Dutch predecessors' name choice—though it also became known as *Ile Maurice* in French (Eriksen 1998, 9). Despite the British takeover, the French influence continued to be dominant in Mauritian society:

> Unusual in the annals of colonial conquest, the terms of the 1810 Act of Capitulation, which officially ceded Mauritius to Great Britain, magnanimously guaranteed that the inhabitants of Mauritius could retain their religion, customs, property, and laws. The 1814 Treaty of Paris reinforced this understanding. Implicitly, the French language was preserved. Mauritius thus continued to be a French and French creole speaking society under the relatively unintrusive umbrella of British sovereignty. (Miles 2000, 217)

Thousands of French and Creole lived in Mauritius and were thus allowed to continue to do so after the British took over, likely because "the prosperous, well-organised community of planters was recognised as a valuable asset" (Eriksen 1998, 9). The plantation economy was also influential in the development of the Mauritian workforce of the nineteenth century: Under British rule, slavery was abolished in 1834, though the insubordination of some French plantation owners and the independence of Zanzibar until the late 1890s (when it became a British protectorate) meant that slave trade and ownership persisted in the Western Indian Ocean even after abolition (Pearson 2003, 222–23). Indentured labour (or 'coolitude') gradually replaced slavery (B. Schnepel 2018, 132), although the system was merely a new form of bondage (McPherson 2009, 33). The island's main industry was the production of sugar, facilitated by a favourable climate, the island's vast unused lands, and its proximity to Asia, where suitably experienced agricultural workers could be recruited (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 21). As "labour demand from the West met dislocation and desperation in the East" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 3),

colonialists were able to exploit these workers, employing them for a few years with binding contracts and little pay (Pearson 2003, 223).

Chinese workers in the Mauritian indentured system "numbered not more than 10,000 on an estimated total of 450,000" (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 22), the majority of whom came from British India (McPherson 2009, 32–33). However, this was just a small number compared to the about 2.5 million people, mostly from Fujian and Guangdong, that left nineteenth-century China to pursue settlement overseas (Tjon Sie Fat 2002, 233). Huguette Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Edouard Lim Fat classify emigrants in the Qing Dynasty as either "political fugitives or victims of the economic slump" (2008, 31), alluding to the uneasy political climate and economic decline under Manchu regime. This was only made worse by widespread opium addiction and the resulting first Opium War (1839-42) with Britain, which ultimately resulted in the unequal 1842 Treaty of Nanjing forcing the Chinese into the opening of more port cities for British trade (Roberts 2001, 167–68). It also introduced British rule over Hong Kong, which provided Britain with a convenient coastal venue to facilitate transportation of indentured labourers into their other colonies (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 35). Mauritius was the first colony to be introduced to indentured labour as soon as 1834 (Pearson 2003, 223). Some Chinese immigrants had come to Mauritius already in the early nineteenth century, and an organized form of Chinese labour recruitment and immigration followed in the 1820s with the appointment of 'Chinese captains' that would vouch and be responsible for any newcomers (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 351). At this time, Chinese migrants had to pass through Macao under Portuguese control to evade emigration restrictions; it was not until after the seizure of Hong Kong in 1842 that Chinese indentured labourers were shipped to Mauritius on a larger scale (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 35–38) in what Marina Carter and James Ng Foong Kwong call "the 'coolie' exodus" (2009, 3). Over the course of the century, Chinese continued to come to Mauritius as free merchants and craftspeople (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 49; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 351). In its beginnings, the Mauritian Chinese population mainly consisted of Cantonese and Fujianese people, between which little or no conflict existed (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 351). This was about to change with the first Hakka arrivals in 1860.

The early 1850s saw the Qing dynasty in China on hostile terms with the British after the Opium War; however, the British were occupied with the Crimean War and the Manchu rulers had a number of rising rebellions on which to keep an eye (Roberts 2001, 170–72). One of the rebelling groups was the Christian-inspired and Hakka-led Taiping (太平天国, *tàipíng tiānguó*, 'Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace') (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 35; Roberts 2001, 176). They captured Nanjing in 1853 and were in control of it until 1864 when the Manchu defeated the rebellion (Roberts 2001, 176). This was a tumultuous time for the Hakka people, as another pressing issue were the Hakka-Cantonese Wars between 1855 and 1867, which were "to leave a legacy of mutual hatred" (Leong 1997, 79) between both groups. Cantonese laid claim on the lands in which Hakka people settled by calling themselves 'native' or 'local' (本地, *běndì* in Mandarin), which reinforced a sense of collective ethnic identity among the Hakka (Lozada Jr. 2005, 94). Dealing with hostility from the Cantonese and the repercussions of the Taiping rebellion, Hakka people started leaving China in masses as from the 1860s (also known as the fifth migration wave of the Hakka; see Lozada Jr. 2005, 94; Leo 2015, 365). They were enabled to do so by consequences of the Second Opium War, toward the end of which in 1860 the emperor had no choice but to sign the Beijing Convention, allowing Chinese nationals to emigrate, enter work contracts with foreigners, and take their families[5] with them (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 65–66; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 39).

Colonial immigration restrictions in Mauritius were similarly loosened in the late nineteenth century, with the 1862 removal of the 'captain' role to vouch for Chinese newcomers and further easing of all immigration controls in 1877 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 353). Hakka people first landed in 1860 and, with successive immigration waves, quickly rose to the majority of the Mauritian Chinese population (Lefort 2019, 4; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 352–54). At the time of their arrival, the Mauritian plantation economy was restructured, with a large number of previously indentured Indian planters buying

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[5] By the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants were still mostly male, and while sexual relations were fairly common, legitimate marriages between Chinese men and local women were rare (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 353). Many Mauritian Chinese started marrying within the Chinese community once there were enough women on the island to do so (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 146; Lefort 2019, 4).

peripheral estates, and Hakka traders set up *labutik sinwa* ('Chinese shops') on lease agreements with these planter communities to provide food, goods, and loans (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 5, 194-196). This economic move, combined with pre-existing clashes between the Cantonese and the Hakka, led to long-lasting prejudice and rivalries (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 352). Intracommunal conflict was not the only issue that Sino-Mauritian were facing, as there were several global and local developments worth noting. The sugar economy in the 1860s suffered from long droughts and globally falling sugar prices, and a harsh malaria epidemic resulted in around 40,000 deaths in the small Mauritian population of 330,000 (Haines 2021, 84–85). In 1869, the opening of the Suez Canal created new maritime trading routes via the Red Sea, which decreased the importance of way stations in the Western Indian Ocean, namely Mauritius, Madagascar, and the Comoros (Benedict 1965, 3; Pearson 2003, 210–11). Nevertheless, Mauritius emerged as an important hub for the Chinese diaspora in the IOW (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 353). Chinese migration to and from Mauritius was frequent, often tied to economic availabilities, such as the promising discovery of diamond and gold in South Africa in the 1880s and 1890s (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 121). By 1888, more Chinese had departed from than arrived in Mauritius, relocating to La Réunion, the Seychelles, Madagascar, and South Africa (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 353). Restrictions on Chinese immigration put in place, for instance, by the Australian and United States governments in the 1870s and 1880s, pointed toward a rise in anti-Chinese racism in light of the emigration streams coming from China (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 42). Colonizers' interest in China, on the other hand, had increased since the 1860s. Border wars with Russia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, and territorial cessions to European imperial powers France, Britain and Germany significantly weakened the Qing Dynasty (Roberts 2001, 190–95). China had become a "subjugated, semi-colonial state" (Ang 2020, 1370) by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Meanwhile, the Western Indian Ocean saw its first Chinese-language news publication with the emergence of the *Mauritius Chinese Gazette* in 1895 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 48).

2.4.6 20th Century: (Post-)Colonial Nations and the 'Rise of China'

The beginning of the twentieth century in China was marked by uprisings and war. The year 1900 marked the spread of the Qing-supporting, anti-missionary Boxer Rebellion, and Empress Dowager Cixi's declaration of war on foreign oppressors (Zarrow 2016, 90–92; Roberts 2001, 201–2). The ensuing punishment from the so-called 'Eight-Power Expedition'—consisting of British, German, Russian, French, Italian, US-American, Austro-Hungarian, and Japanese soldiers—resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Chinese people (Zarrow 2016, 94). In the years that followed, the waning Qing Dynasty issued a series of reforms to try to prevent their downfall (Roberts 2001, 203–5). In 1909, for instance, the Qing administration introduced a *jus sanguinis* law which would make all descendants of a Chinese parent official subjects of China, regardless of their place of residence in the world (Tsang Mang Kin 2004, 26). In Mauritius, tensions between the Cantonese and Hakka population began to rise. A dispute over the presidency of the Kwan Tee Pagoda in Port Louis erupted in violence in 1903 and was finally resolved by the Supreme Court's decision in 1906 that the Fukkien, Cantonese and Hakka communities were to take annual turns between temple presidents (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 165; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 354). In the same decade, Mauritius underwent a financial crisis which was later found to be caused by its dependence on global sugar prices as it remained the main profitable crop of the colony (Allen 2006, 1).

In Guangdong Province, a revolutionary group had formed around Sun Yat-sen, intending to overthrow the ruling Manchu and fuelled by the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion (Zarrow 2016, 95). On what is now known as the "Double Ten"—the tenth of October in 1911—the New Army occupied Wuchang in Hubei Province, declaring its independence (Roberts 2001, 206). About a third of the 18,000 troops in the area had joined the revolution, and Sun Yat-sen briefly became the first president of the Republic of China (ROC) on January 1, 1912 before being forced to resign in order to ensure the formal abdication of the Qing (Zarrow 2016, 106–8). These events were closely followed by an era of warlordism from 1916 to 1928, which saw the collapse of central government, the rise of Western imperialism, but also an increase in Chinese exports during World War One (Roberts 2001, 219). The war similarly drove up sugar prices to the benefit of the

Mauritian economy (Bowman 1991, 26). Germany was forced to give up its former colony of Shandong in China, which Japan had seized and retained in the meantime, sparking a nation-wide protest of Chinese students and academics (Roberts 2001, 220). The Russian Communist International (Comintern) sought to "export revolution" (J. Carter 2016, 129) and became a driving force in the early establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), of which Mao Zedong was a member. In what is known as the Nanjing Decade from 1928 to 1937, the Kuomintang (KMT) or Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek established Nanjing as their capital and ruled as a one-party dictatorship (J. Carter 2016, 141; Roberts 2001, 228–29). The CCP, on the other hand, took advantage of the KMT's lack of control over the countryside, as well as Chiang Kai-shek's reluctance to take a stance against the Japanese, to disavow the party's credibility (J. Carter 2016, 141–48). Upon abduction and imprisonment, Chiang Kai-shek had to relent and agree to end the civil war, unite the CCP and KMT, and fight the Japanese (Roberts 2001, 239–40). The ensuing Sino-Japanese War was essentially a clash of Chinese nationalism, fuelled by the aftermath of the 1911 Revolution, and Japanese imperialism, driven in part by the economic decline of the Great Depression (Mitter 2016, 150–52). Japan's position in the Sino-Japanese War was weakened by the outbreak of World War Two, during which the United States and Great Britain went to war with Japan, claiming Chiang Kai-shek as an ally in the process (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 49). The Sino-Japanese War was ended by the 1945 bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima by the United States (Roberts 2001, 245). The events of World War Two also changed international attitudes towards the Chinese, and several governments, for instance in Canada, the United States, and Australia, began revoking immigration restrictions in the following decades (Bangarth 2003, 395; McKeown 1999, 73–74; Tsung 2015, 277). The Sino-Mauritian diaspora had witnessed the events of the war with horror:

> What remained most in the collective memory of the Chinese people—especially the members of our grandmother's generation—were the tragic events surrounding the Japanese invasion of China, the bloodshed of Nankong and Shanghai. From the capture of these two towns, the figures of 300,000 civilians slaughtered, and 80,000 women raped, became a tragic leitmotiv for all the future conversations in China and the diaspora for decades to come. […] [T]he tragic events reached the people of the diaspora soon after through the survivors who had been able to flee the country. The whole community abroad was shocked by those tragedies that caused the migration of millions of Chinese. The 1930's in particular witnessed the emigration of thousands

> of our grandmother's compatriots from the south of China, to Mauritius and to other lands. (Ng Cheong Tin-Leung [2017] 2019, 161–62)

Chinese migration to Mauritius thus continued in the twentieth century due to war and civil unrest. Census numbers from 1962 show that at the time, the Chinese community accounted for the largest number of Mauritians born outside the colony, as 5,000 Sino-Mauritians indicated their birth place to be China or Hong Kong (Benedict 1965, 21). Although not struck by outright war, Mauritius also faced its own tumultuous times in the 1930s and 1940s. The economic depression had left its marks in form of low wages and malnutrition, and workers started striking and rioting (Bowman 1991, 30). Meanwhile, the end of the Sino-Japanese War in China set the stage for a continued civil war, during which the Nationalists first captured Manchuria before the Communist People's Liberation Army overran it to take it back (Roberts 2001, 250). By 1949, the PLA had control over most key cities, including Beijing (then Beiping), Nanjing, and Shanghai (Mitter 2016, 175). Chiang Kai-shek and two million KMT supporters fled to Taiwan by the end of the same year (Roberts 2001, 251). In the meantime, Mao Zedong had announced the founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949, marking a "new era for the Chinese people" (Mitter 2016, 175). The term *huaqiao*, notes Wang Gungwu, lost its "political significance" (1991, 246), as the new Chinese government ceased to claim overseas populations as their own in the 1950s. The first and only political Asian-African conference, the Bandung Conference, was hosted in Indonesia in 1955 and became a key element in China's strategy to build a united front in Southeast Asia while excluding the United States (T. Wang 2021, 170–72), although the border war between India and China in 1962 betrayed the image of such unity (Kraus 2016, 221–22). On the mainland, Mao Zedong aimed for a "spiritual and moral transformation of the masses" (Smith 2016, 190) to establish Communism. The main event associated with this ideological transformation is the Great Leap Forward of 1958, which was meant to advance China economically and intellectually but failed to set realistic targets (Roberts 2001, 268–71). Despite its "terrible human and material cost" (Smith 2016, 202), the 1960s saw the emergence of a cult movement of Mao worship. Convinced that the CCP was losing its revolutionary origins (Kraus 2016, 204), Mao drove forward the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966, which overtook China until Mao's death in 1976 (Roberts 2001, 287).

China also had its hand in various African independence movements that swept the continent from the 1950s to the 1970s, as "aid to Africa became a central part of the [PRC's] revolutionary foreign policy" (Burnham 2021, 1). Diplomatic ties between China and Mauritius were not established until after its independence in 1968 (see below). The Mauritian independence movement did not come without losses. Starting in 1959, the British government entered an "extended dialogue over the timing and conditions of Mauritian independence" (Bowman 1991, 37). In 1965, British politician Harold Wilson promised Mauritius independence and a sum of three million pounds for development, but with the caveat that Mauritius had to surrender and agree to depopulate the Chagos Archipelago to the UK (Houbert 2003, 156; Pearson 2003, 283). This happened in light of US American interest in one of the Chagos Islands, namely Diego Garcia, as the US wanted to have empty land at its disposal for military operations (Pearson 2003, 283). Mauritian politicians from the Labour Party feared that if they did not agree to the terms, their opposing party would negotiate plans for a British integration of Mauritius instead of independence, and so they accepted the conditions (Houbert 2003, 156). In 1966 the UK leased Diego Garcia to the US and forcibly relocated its population of 1,000 people to Mauritius (Pearson 2003, 283). While the US rebuilt Diego Garcia as its new air military base in the 1970s, the displaced *zilwa* ('outer islanders') were left to live in "the slums of Port Louis" (Houbert 1992, 472) without resources or care. Diego Garcia remained an operational base for decades, being instrumental in wars such as the Gulf War in 1991 and the War against Terrorism in the early 2000s (Pearson 2003, 283). With Mauritians now preparing for their independence, many Chinese feared that they would be driven out of the country if an Indian majority won the elections, and therefore made plans to emigrate to Australia, America and Europe (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 354), or China, if they had retained relevant language skills (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 216). Tensions between the Creole, Hindu, and Muslim communities of Mauritius had emerged in the 1950s and erupted in violence in 1965 and 1968 (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 1999, 183). The conflict was not necessarily (only) political in nature:

> There was one last spasm of disruptive and destructive rioting, this time between Creole and Muslim gangs in Port Louis at the beginning of 1968. The causes appeared to be not so much politics as unemployment and economic uncertainty. A state of emergency was declared, and British troops were again brought in to quell the unrest;

they were still on hand when Mauritius was formally declared independent on March 12, 1968. (Bowman 1991, 41)

Despite the outbreak of violence, Mauritius' transition to independence and democracy has generally been considered successful and relatively harmonious (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 1999, 179–80). People born in Mauritius and recognized as citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies would thereafter become Mauritian citizens, which gave many Sino-Mauritians more economic freedom and mobility (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 220). Following independence, in April of 1972, the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and Mauritius' first prime minister, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam established formal diplomatic ties, which meant that Mauritius officially switched its support from Taiwan to China (Burnham 2021, 2–4). China's interest in Mauritius at the time has to be understood in light of the gradual ideological rupture between the PRC and the Soviet Union in the 1950s (Smith 2016, 202). The Soviet Union had started to show an interest in Mauritius following its independence and negotiated a series of development "projects likely intended to disguise intelligence activities" (Burnham 2021, 8), which worried not only the UK and the US with their new base in Diego Garcia, but also China. Mauritius then received foreign aid from China for the first time in 1972, in the form of a loan of US$31.5 million (Copper 2016, 26). China also established "a concentration of Chinese embassies" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 137) in the Western Indian Ocean during the 1970s and 1980s. The first China Cultural Center (CCC) in the world was built in Mauritius in 1988 (Bowman 1991, 154). Spurred by economic investment and in "hopes that the island [would] become an Indian Ocean Singapore" (Pearson 2003, 260), the Mauritian government expanded the local economy from previously mainly sugar export to now include a prominent tourist sector and textile industry. The latter took off in the 1970s and experienced a 'boom' in the following decade with the help of foreign direct investment from Hong Kong (Peedoly 2009, 144–145). Mauritius, alongside Madagascar and the Seychelles, founded the Indian Ocean Commission for joint trade in 1984 (Pearson 2003, 286).

The 1970s were also a time of economic changes in China. 1978 marked the year of China's political-economic reform (J. Qian 2014, 608). The new Open-Door Policy of 1978, led by Deng Xiaoping (Ang 2020, 1370–71), opened China to "global capitalist development"

(Candela 2013, 432). A decade later, in 1991, they launched a Patriotic Education Campaign, which "proceeded alongside systematic ideological and institutional efforts to cultivate Chinese nationalism among diasporic communities" (Kuehn, K. Louie, and Pomfret 2013, 4). In 1997, Mauritius became the founding location for the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) which includes member states from around the IOW and promotes joint economic activity among members. This association emerged in light of the end of the Cold War and South African apartheid in the early 1990s, acting on the belief that less ideological conflict in the world would mean more room for globalized capitalist enterprises (Pearson 2003, 286). Despite the Asian Financial Crisis in the years of 1997 and 1998, China's economy remained stable (Lanteigne 2005, 69–72). In Mauritius, foreign investment increased from US$ 11 million to US$ 47 million in the span of a year from 1998 to 1999 (Pearson 2003, 260). Just before the turn of the century, however, in 1999, Mauritius witnessed an incisive tragedy: The death of Creole musician Kaya under "mysterious circumstances while in police custody" (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 2000, 26; cf. Boswell 2005, 198) sparked riots among Creole Mauritians in retaliation against the predominantly Hindu police force. In what Thomas Hylland Eriksen calls the riots' "climax of sorts, [the] famous old gambling club [L'Amicale] run by a Sino-Mauritian family was set on fire, and seven people died" (2004, 87).

2.4.7 21st Century: Chinese Investment in Mauritius and COVID-19

The turn of the twenty-first century marked the beginning of the Chinese Go-Out Policy, through which the government hoped to "acquire scarce and strategic resources by means of foreign investment" (S. Zhu 2014, 49). Trade between China and Africa increased by six times between 1999 and 2004 (Diallo 2016, 195). By the end of 2006, China, after the United States and France, had become Africa's third-leading trade partner (Alden [2007] 2009, 8). In Mauritius, the Chinese government introduced a new special economic zone (SEZ) just north of Port Louis—JinFei Smart City (晋非, *jìnfēi*, combination of the abbreviations *jin* for 'Shanxi Province' and *fei* for 'Africa')—although the project was stalled for a decade after being announced in 2006 (Kasenally 2018; Murphy 2022, 179). Moreover, with the move of Chinese technology giant Huawei to Mauritius, China set up

a base to promote its electronics on the African market (Copper 2016, 64). Mauritius generally received an increase of Chinese investment in the early twenty-first century, including the building of infrastructure such as airport terminals, bridges, and stadiums, as part of China's strategic move into "India's traditional 'backyard' of the Indian Ocean" (I. D. Watson 2014, 116). Mauritius' geographic and economic position was a key factor in this move (Copper 2016, 64). The Mauritian government, on the other hand, has used these investments to diversify its economy, strengthening the local information technology and financial sectors (I. D. Watson 2014, 116). China solidified its efforts in economic, political, and cultural investment overseas by introducing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) program in 2013, which bears resemblance to the silk roads of the Tang Dynasty (Siu and McGovern 2017, 342). The name BRI stems from the overland Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which have allowed China to improve its influence in Oceania, Africa, and Europe (Amineh 2022, 2). The BRI has "catapulted China onto the world stage" (Gresh 2018, 31). Despite the role Mauritius has played as a Chinese 'gateway' to Africa, there have been concerns that the 'friendship' between the two countries is just a political façade and that China may forget about Mauritius in the long run (Kasenally 2018). At the end of July 2018, the President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, was scheduled to be in Mauritius for a short stopover of only 24 hours on his way back to China from South Africa. Local Sino-Mauritian organizations had decorated Chinatown in Port Louis with welcoming banners and Mauritian and Chinese flags (see Figure 4); roads across the country were closed so that local traffic would not hold up Xi's transport. The outcome of Xi's visit were a grant for Mauritius totalling US$23 million and an invitation to attend the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing later that year (Kasenally 2018). Trade cooperation between Mauritius and China was further solidified by the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which went into effect in January 2021 as the first FTA between China and an African country (Johnston and Lanteigne 2021; Murphy 2022, 176).

Figure 4: Chinatown decorations to welcome the visit of Xi Jinping in July 2018.

One of the most recent and ongoing global events of the twenty-first century is, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. Mauritius started a three-month lockdown in mid-March 2020 (Tandrayen-Ragoobur, Tengur, and Fauzel 2022, 2), which came only a week after I returned to Canada on short notice due to impending border closures. This shutdown of social and economic life meant staying at home at all times except on designated, household-specific shopping days and times (Boswell 2020, 270), and it also brought down tourist arrivals by almost 69% compared to the year before (Tandrayen-Ragoobur, Tengur, and Fauzel 2022, 2). In May 2020, during lockdown, some impoverished Creole Mauritian families faced evictions from their homes on state land, which sparked new discussions about racism in Mauritius (Boswell 2020, 271). It is also worth noting that anti-Asian racism and specifically Sinophobia, which increased around the world in response to the perceived origin of the virus in China (Zhang 2021, 3–5), presented in Mauritius as well. Research contacts reported having been called *corona* or *coronavirus* on the street, and news or social media posts about Sino-Mauritians would sometimes receive comments about COVID-19 even when unrelated to the topic. This shows that even a place like Mauritius, where the local Chinese community has been an integral part of society for centuries, can become a hotbed for globally fueled Sinophobia. It also shows the intricate

connectedness of Mauritius with the world at large—historically and contemporarily—through migration, trade, and globalization. In July of 2020, Mauritius made headlines in worldwide news as the Japanese ship MV Wakashio ran aground near the southeastern coast and started spilling oil into the sensitive coral reefs in early August (Rajendran et al. 2022, 3–4). This globally observed incident also highlighted urgent issues of climate change (including rising sea levels, droughts, and cyclones), overfishing, tourism, and pollution, all of which have contributed to the precarity of the local ecosystem (Fakim 2021; Pasnin et al. 2020). The political mishandling of the oil spill as well as various corruption cases caused citizens to repeatedly demand the government step down in what was "the first anti-government protests in postcolonial Mauritius" (Ramtohul 2022, 174), to which the government responded with militarized police deployments (Degnarain 2021). Similarly, in April 2022, tensions over rising costs of living erupted in riots after activist Louis Dominique Seedeeal was arrested for allegedly partaking in an 'illegal' protest (Moonien 2022). Rising authoritarianism in government across the world, continuing economic depression in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and, most recently, rapidly inflationary prices in the wake of Russia invading Ukraine in early 2022 have clearly left their mark in Mauritius (Degnarain 2021; Moonien 2022). Despite its insularity, Mauritius is therefore entangled in the global web of current events.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Mauritius and China have a long-standing history of connection, not only with one another but with other parts of the wider Indian Ocean World as well. Over three centuries of colonization by three European colonial powers, displacement and exploit of various groups of enslaved and indentured labourers, and continuous migration flows to and from the island have left an imprint on Mauritius—once uninhabited, the island now hosts a diverse young post-colonial nation that is invariably tied to other people and places across the globe. A connected historical timeline like the one I have crafted here is, of course, neither all-encompassing nor finished. It does, however, help contextualize my field experience in Mauritius, which similarly spanned various groups of people, communities, places, and languages. While Mauritius was my primary field site, and the Hakka Chinese community my main point of interest, they were embedded in multiple connected histories and entangled ethnographies. In the following chapter, I discuss how I navigated these multiplicities methodologically.

<div align="center">Chapter 3</div>

3   Ethnography in a "Rainbow Nation"

3.1   "Hand in Hand": Mauritian Multiplicities

The year of my pilot study in Mauritius, 2018, coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Mauritian Independence. Upon landing in Mauritius and entering the airport, I headed to immigration. While waiting, I noticed posters with two joint hands and the Mauritian flag as a backdrop for the number 50 (Figure 5). The caption read *Lame dan lame*—Kreol for "hand in hand". Before I had even officially entered the country for the first time, this slogan gave me a glimpse into Mauritian nation-building. It evoked in me the idea of a society lending support and practicing resilience through joining hands, though I also asked myself whether it was supposed to be the statement of a fact ("we go hand in hand") or a call to action ("let us join hands").

Figure 5: Poster for the 50th anniversary of Mauritian Independence.[6]

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[6] This image appears as part of the header for a special issue of conference proceedings edited by Bissoonauth-Bedford and Issur (2019b). Available online at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/mauritius50/ (accessed February 24, 2022).

The phrase *lame dan lame* was new to me, though it echoed the sentiments I had heard prior to coming to Mauritius, which painted the picture of a multicultural, harmonious society. For instance, Mauritian self-promotion often involves "well-known slogans [such as] 'unity in diversity' and the 'rainbow nation'" (B. Schnepel 2018, 140).[7] Mauritian poet Jean Georges Prosper explores the latter in his poem of the same name:

> We are the link and bond
> Between a courting sun
> And a young blushing rain
> Since we all reflect
> The colours of the world.
>
> All of us Mauritians
> Are we not committed
> To our native land?
> Are we not true lovers
> Of colourful nature?
> Are we not ourselves
> So full of tints and hues?
>
> (Prosper 1997, 147–48; excerpt from the poem "The Rainbow Nation")

Here, Mauritian national identity is constructed as multicultural; Mauritians are supposed to reflect the "colours of the world." It could also be noted, though, that Prosper then proceeds to ask questions of his fellow nationals, almost casting doubt onto the initial statement. Perhaps it is to be understood as a work-in-progress. As one of my research participants told me:

> Overall, like, a national identity, being Mauritian, is still new because we only became independent in 1968. So, the nation-building hasn't really completed, so still in progress. Yeah. Takes time (laughs). There is no really strong, like, national Mauritian identity. This way, we can feel it only at times when we have, like, games, the sports. You know? [...] Everyone could identify with the Mauritius team. So, it didn't matter

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[7] Neither of these are unique to Mauritius. Another country that calls itself a 'rainbow nation' is South Africa, where the phrase is said to have been coined by Desmond Tutu (Baines 1998, 1). The 'unity in diversity' concept is popular in many places as well, as evidenced by the fact that an edited volume under the name of *Revisiting Unity in Diversity in Federal Countries* (edited by Gagnon and Burgess 2018) lists a number of contributions on states in virtually every continent.

> if you were Chinese, you were Indian, you were Creole, you were white, you were whatever, you know? Sports is the only thing that's really, like, we feel like we belong.
>
> (Interview with Kit Hau, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Connecting Mauritian national identity to the relative youth and novelty of the nation itself, Kit singled out international sports as the sort of event during which Mauritians would feel strong in their collective identity, when they would feel that they belonged. He said that in those moments, belonging to other communities did not matter, implying that it did in other circumstances. In fact, a criticism of the 'rainbow' model that I heard quite frequently from Mauritians and also Rodriguans (who would say this somewhat pejoratively about Mauritians) was that "the colours of the rainbow touch, but they do not mix" (see also 4.2.2). The notion of staying among one's own is often prevalent in Mauritius, though not without critique:

> [T]his hegemonic form of Mauritian nationalism, according to which membership in a Mauritian nation and intense cultivation of diasporic ties are not only compatible but actually reinforce each other, has not gone unchallenged. […] [Critics oppose] official politics of "ancestral cultures" and ancestral languages for what they see as encouragement of "communalism" along ethnic lines and for impeding the emergence of a "real" nation in Mauritius that overcomes such divisions. The Mauritian term for ethnic politics, "communalism" (*kominalis* in Creole, *communalisme* in French) follows Indian usage, where "communalism" is a label for the predominance of ethnic and religious communities as actors in colonial and post-colonial public spheres (Eisenlohr 2007, 975; emphasis in original).

We see here another instance of connected histories (see 2.3.2), as colonial and post-colonial Indian concepts of ethnic and religious community alignments have spurred the emergence of a similar system in Mauritius. Moreover, it is interesting to note the juxtaposition between a 'real' nation without ethnic divisions and one that combines an emphasis on diasporic ties with a sense of national belonging. The dichotomy between 'communalism' and a more homogenized pan-Mauritian nationhood, I learned quickly in the field, is a major source of sociopolitical tension in Mauritius. From the reification of group boundaries through rigorous ethnic classification to the perpetuation of raciolinguistic stereotypes in everyday language and discourse, communalist thinking seems pervasive in Mauritian day-to-day life. On the other hand, de-emphasizing diasporic senses of belonging causes concerns of heritage erasure. To be sure, many people with whom I spoke did not take a clear-cut stance in favour of either option, but they felt and

acknowledged the balancing act of this in-between space nonetheless, which is what sparked my idea of 'discourses of tension'. In this sense, I understand the sentiment of *lame dan lame* as a response to this ethnic tension, offering the touch the rainbow colours are missing. The phrase originally comes from a popular Kreol-language song entitled *Donn to lame, pran mo lame, lame dan lame* ("Give [me] your hand, take my hand, hand in hand"). It was originally recorded by brothers Soogreeve and Bahal Gowry in January 1968 in the wake of the race riots that had erupted (see 2.4.6). The tune quickly became the Mauritian "brand of independence" (Bissoonauth-Bedford and Issur 2019a, 1). Fifty years later, for the anniversary of Mauritian Independence on March 12, it was reinterpreted as a celebratory, festive song by a collaboration of several Mauritian artists (Mahatma Das 2018).

My fieldwork in Mauritius thus started at what was evidently a time of celebration, but also reflection on Mauritian nationhood. From the first impression, Mauritius presented itself to me a place of multiplicity. Keeping this in mind, I approached the Hakka Mauritian community with an expectation of heterogeneity and tried to capture diverse voices and perspectives through my data. I conducted a total of 32 semi-structured interviews (in one-on-one and group settings), some held in-person in Mauritius, Rodrigues, La Réunion, others via virtual platforms such as Skype, Zoom, and WhatsApp. Overall, I interviewed 41 people. Twenty-seven of them identified as men and fourteen as women. I did not record everyone's (approximate) age but fewer than ten of my participants were aged under 40 and more than twenty-five of them were aged over 40. I met and recruited most research participants through other contacts (snowball sampling; see Noy 2008, 330 and 1.3.2) or at community events, but also sent out recruitment calls in Hakka Mauritian Facebook groups. In these Facebook groups as well as in WhatsApp group chats and via emails to community organizations, I also distributed an online survey that I created using Qualtrics. The main themes I explored in the survey were place of residence, multilingualism, and the use of specific languages in the Hakka Mauritian community, as well as self-identification with labelling terms for cultural background or identity (see Appendix E for the survey questions). The survey returned 93 responses from Hakka Mauritians residing in various countries, the results of which will mainly be discussed in section 4.3.2. I collected further data through participant observations at various gatherings, classes, and

events, as well as a range of ethnographic practices that I will discuss in the following section, contemplating how these multiplicities challenged and enhanced my ethnographic work from data collection to analysis.

3.2 Multiplicities in Methodology

3.2.1 Multilingual Ethnography

On that same first day in Mauritius, during the taxi ride to my initial accommodation on the western coast of the island, I spotted another Independence anniversary poster with an extended slogan. This one read: *Lame dan lame, ansam nou fet nou pei* ("Hand in hand, together we celebrate our country"). The fact that the slogan was written in Kreol, rather than French or English, intrigued me. I thought of opposition movements to the introduction of Kreol as a language of instruction (cf. Foley 1992, 369), who still bemoaned this move after the *lingua franca* first made its way into school curricula in 2012 (Le Mauricien 2012). I wondered whether this might mean that Kreol was becoming more prominent (or controversial) in Mauritian nation-building as well. Lastly, I took note of the slogan not only for its sociopolitical implications, but also to get a sense of the languages I would need in conducting my research. In this sense, my pilot study was the first step to me "becoming 'enlanguaged'" (Blackburn 2020, 167) in—or immersed in the language context(s) of—the field. Anthropology as a discipline has only recently become more transparent about language use in the field, as many anthropologists gloss over their processes of language learning in preparation for or during fieldwork (Gibb 2020, 58). This is an even more pressing matter in multilingual field contexts, and there have thus been calls to speak up about "the multilingual aspects of contemporary ethnographic work" (Gibb, Tremlett, and Danero Iglesias 2020, 1). After all, in such contexts, "the challenges related to learning 'the language' of 'the community' multiply" (Reyes 2020, 178), which may confront researchers with choices of which language(s) to learn and with difficulties in building rapport with participants across language barriers (cf. Tremlett 2020, 120–22). The recruitment of research participants in my study thus heavily depended on mutual language repertoire. In other words,

> which languages are in play in the researcher-researched relationship […] was significant as it impacted on the negotiation of trust (negotiating access in the research

sites), power relationships (with adults and children), and representation (whose voices were represented in the research) (Ganassin 2020, 37).

Children were not a part of my research; as such, navigating power relationships took a different form than in my study than it did for Sara Ganassin, whose work is based in a primarily educational context. My own concerns about power dynamics centered around my positionality as a white researcher doing fieldwork in a postcolonial context as well as the more general positionality of a white scholar of anthropology, a discipline that has its roots in colonialism and "participates in practices and ideologies of white supremacy" (Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2020, 69). Language played a role in this question of power dynamics as well. Jan Blommaert (2005, 214), for instance, points out that language-related studies often ideologically consider so-called 'native speakers' as ideal representatives of ethnolinguistic communities. In my study this was neither desirable nor logistically possible considering that the majority of research participants reported that they did not speak much Hakka. The concept of the 'native speaker' more generally has been criticized for adhering to a monolingual bias, as the idea prevails that one is born into a language and obtains an intuitive grasp of its grammar that non-native speakers would not possess (cf. Valdés 2005, 415). For racialized bilingual and multilingual speakers, the experience is more nuanced, yet their competency is often considered to be deficient rather than proficient in more than one language (García et al. 2021, 209). Critics of the multilingual Mauritian education system have similarly claimed that students are not learning to be adequately literate in any language, rather than acknowledging their competencies in up to four or five language contexts (Bowman 1991, 57). I was therefore careful not to perpetuate notions of the 'native speaker', 'first/second language', or 'mother tongue' in my fieldwork, emphasizing instead the translingual repertoires of my research participants.

In an attempt to practice "multilingual consciousness" (Blackburn 2020, 165), I thus want to offer some transparency about my own approaches to the languages I encountered, learned, and made use of in Mauritius. I had expected to engage in multilingual fieldwork and prepared by brushing up on my French (which I had learned in German high school alongside English) and learning basic Kreol with online resources. Seeing the poster at the airport seemed to initially confirm that I would need to interact in Kreol a lot, but I soon realized that most study participants felt comfortable speaking English with me. I decided

against finding interpreters for the linguistic contexts which were not as accessible to me (mainly Kreol, Hakka, and Mandarin) because it would add another layer of interpretation and ethical considerations to my data (cf. Gibb and Danero Iglesias 2017, 137). While this meant that I would not be able to interview elders who exclusively spoke Kreol and/or Hakka, it turned out to be only a minor exclusion factor in my potential sample population. After all, many Mauritians are at least trilingual (Bissoonauth and Offord 2001, 398). The results of my survey with Hakka Mauritians additionally indicate that 88% of respondents learned between two and five languages throughout their life, the most commonly five languages listed for this scenario being English, French, Kreol, Hakka, and Mandarin. Accordingly, while I still learned to converse in Kreol enough to hold and listen to informal conversations, most of my conversations and research interactions happened in English and French. I typically began my interviews with a preamble that participants were welcome to speak either English or French, or both, and that I also understood Kreol to some extent. However, the only participants who chose French as the main language for the interview were a couple of participants from neighbouring islands Rodrigues and La Réunion, where the French influence is more dominant (cf. Yu-Sion 2005, 240–42 on the 'frenchification' of La Réunion). Whether conducted in English or French, interviews frequently featured words or phrases in Kreol, Hakka, or Mandarin, and translanguaging sequences accessing these broad semiotic repertoires. Sometimes, while recording an interview, conversations in Kreol—and to a lesser extent Hakka and Mandarin—would unfold when I was not the sole addressee. Unexpected phone calls, visits, or other interruptions elicited these exchanges. Although researchers sometimes misleadingly term such exchanges 'bad data' (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2008a, 411), these conversations always provided valuable insights into language choices and translingual practices.

As I was still learning Kreol, I always carried with me a *Créole mauricien* guide (Carpooran 2015) that I found at a local bookstore. While I initially stored the book in my backpack to read it on the go, I soon realized that it also served as a methodological tool to prompt conversations about the language itself. My standard reply to *Eski to koz Kreol?* ('Do you speak Kreol?') became *Mo pe li aprann ek enn ti liv* ('I am learning it with a small book'), which was the moment I would pull the book out of my backpack and show it around. More than once, people seemed bewildered that I knew how to read the words in the book

because they did not think of Kreol as a written language. Despite its use as a *lingua franca* in Mauritius, Kreol on a more formal basis has seen a history of rejection in Mauritius. The influence of the Franco-Mauritian elite and the Catholic Church has privileged French over Kreol, and left-wing politics proposing the use of Kreol in a more formal national setting has been met with resistance (Foley 1992, 369). These sentiments have left their mark on the contemporary use of Kreol, as I observed amusement and confusion over its written form. Some flipped through the pages of my Kreol language guide and laughed at unexpected spellings of certain words, for instance *trwa* for 'three' (*trois* in French).[8] Others flat out told me that I was wasting my time learning a 'local' language like Kreol when everyone spoke French or English anyway. These reactions indexed language ideologies not only regarding Kreol, but also the languages to which it would be compared.

Unlike preparing for using Kreol in the field, trying to learn Hakka proved to be trickier. There are few Hakka learning resources and those that do exist are often geared toward people who already speak, and more importantly read, a Chinese variety. Although a couple of kind elders taught me some of the basics, I did not have any continuous training and never picked up more than a few words or sentences in Hakka. To be sure, I had already expected Hakka to not be as prevalent among Hakka Mauritians as it was in the past; however, I was surprised to see there were no community classes either. This begged the questions whether I even needed to learn Hakka for my research, an issue that often presents itself in multilingual ethnographic work (Gibb, Tremlett, and Danero Iglesias 2020, 6). Moreover, I did not anticipate the widespread shift toward Mandarin-learning in Hakka's stead. Mandarin was not only a popular language among Mauritian learners, but it was also one of the ancestral languages officially taught in school. To accommodate this shift, I adjusted my plans for my long fieldwork phase from June 2019 to March 2020 and made the decision to learn Mandarin instead of Hakka because a) many of my research participants did the same and b) I already knew some Mandarin due to a prior class. Over the course of my fieldwork, I joined three different Mandarin classes for adult learners to explore the implications of the Hakka-Mandarin shift and Mandarin-learning for the Hakka

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[8] The Ministry of Education officially standardized Kreol orthography in 2011 (Carpooran 2011, 15).

Mauritian community (see Chapter 5). As a participant observer in all three classes, my notes were a mix of Mandarin vocabulary, class content, and observational remarks about the learner group dynamics, teaching methods, language choice, translanguaging, or references to Hakka vocabulary and practices. I obtained permission to audio-record a few sessions in one class, which gave me the chance to review and transcribe relevant interactions. In documenting these small-scale "speech events" (Hymes [1974] 2001, 52), I was able to infer larger-scale dynamics such as language policies, language ideologies, and discursive identity formations in the classroom.

Studying Mandarin also came in handy for my analysis of Chinese public signage, as the Sinitic script and spoken Hakka and Mandarin were more prominent in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown (see Chapter 6). While I often found myself unable to read signs either due to my lack of knowledge of characters or my lack of familiarity with Traditional Chinese writing, conversations with research participants revealed that they faced similar challenges with Chinese signage. With the help of friends and translation apps, I was, however, able to translate relevant signs. In a joyous moment with an elderly Hakka Mauritian language enthusiast, we discovered, pulling out our phones to translate a Mandarin word at the same time, that we both used the app "Pleco" for identifying Chinese characters. As such, despite at times feeling disadvantaged by my limited knowledge of the Sinitic script, it also brought about feelings of mutuality. My use of the Pleco app even at times prompted contacts to ask me for help in transcribing and translating Chinese writing on family heirlooms, pictures, or other keepsakes, which I did gladly but without guarantee that my interpretation would be correct.

Although I enjoyed the feeling of solving a language puzzle with my limited literacy in the Sinitic script, imposter syndrome caught up with me frequently in such instances: With my lack of 'fluency' in three (Kreol, Hakka, Mandarin) of the five languages that were regularly used in my field context (French and English being the remaining two), I often worried that I might not be the right person for the job. This, in part, stemmed from the aforementioned lack of transparency about language learning in ethnographic fieldwork. As Sarah Burton observes, "only being able to employ multiple languages in a tentative, rudimentary, or makeshift manner is perceived as suggesting a contrasting lack of academic

capacity in the researcher" (2020, 208), without considering the doors that admissions and demonstrations of 'imperfect' language use may open in the field. As a last note on doing multilingual ethnographic work, then, I should add that neither of my 'native' languages, German and Italian, were languages for which I had much use in the field. That being as it was, I found myself both at an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, the main language of my interviews, English, was a third language (in most cases) for both my participants and me. This brought with it a shared sense of speaking in a non-judgmental space, where errors were natural and/or went unnoticed. In a way, this also brought to light daily Mauritian multilingual practices in which speakers negotiate a shared language base on an interaction-to-interaction basis dependent on context. On the other hand, I did not grow up with *any* of the languages my study participants regularly made use of, which sometimes caused additional language barriers. In one interview, for instance, I was told that something was "the real McCoy," an English idiom meaning 'the real thing'. Not being familiar with the phrase, I asked the participant whether "makoi" was a Hakka word. Despite my participant's explanation of the term, I did not catch the misunderstanding until the coding process, when I realized that my transcription seemed off. This highlighted for me how contingent my interpretations would be on my (proper) understanding of the communicated content. In another sense, it subverted the classically "hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched" and positioned me as "the one who did not have control of the interaction" (Reyes 2020, 183). I further deconstructed potential researcher bias by letting emerging findings guide my choice of fieldwork sites, which resulted in another multiplicity: multi-sited ethnography.

3.2.2 Multi-Sited Ethnography

Mauritian Independence in 1968 came after long years of ethnic conflict, which even led 44% of the population to oppose independence (Eriksen and Ramtohul 2018, 2). It was also the start of a Sino-Mauritian emigration trend, as "the fear of emergence of an Indian-controlled government drove some Chinese, as members of an ethnic minority, to seek greater security in Europe, America or Australia" (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 354). Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Ramola Ramtohul (2018, 3) echo this observation for Creole and Franco-Mauritians. I was not aware of how ongoing this emigration trend was until I started

my fieldwork and noted Canada as a recurring topic of conversation. Introducing myself as a PhD candidate from Canada regularly prompted Hakka Mauritians to tell me about family members and friends who lived in Canada as well, or that they themselves (had) studied or worked there.[9] I had not originally planned to do ethnography anywhere else, but early on in my research I decided to expand my project to include Canada as an emergent emigration destination.

With an "object of study [that] is ultimately mobile and multiply situated" (Marcus 1995, 102), multi-sited ethnography presented itself as a suitable field approach. Mobility, as Jan Blommaert argues, brings with it a paradigmatic challenge of unpredictability (2013, 8). On the other hand, it allows researchers to "follow the people" (Marcus 1995, 106) who are migrating and living their lives beyond national borders. Multi-sited ethnography also harbours the potential for valuable insights into the cultural productions of race and ethnicity, as it "can illuminate the ways in which each local context influences how social processes manifest in each particular location" (Carney 2017, 1). In places such as Mauritius and Canada where national identity is framed around multicultural ideologies (Ng and Bloemraad 2015, 623; Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2015, 680), multi-sited ethnography with its comparative qualities thus allows us to better understand how racial and ethnic identities are constructed in both contexts. Another advantage of multi-sited ethnography is that it accomplishes similar goals as the connected history approach I used in Chapter 2 to make sense of historical developments across and beyond (perceived) geopolitical boundaries.

Various field sites and excursions ended up being a point of interest over the span of three years during which I collected data (2018 to 2021). I started in June and July 2018 with a five-week long pilot study in Mauritius, during which I established a contact network and found a place to stay to which I would return the next year. The place was owned by a Hakka Mauritian woman who was kind enough to rent out her spare bedroom to me. Living

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[9] For holistic purposes, I should mention that disclosing Germany or Italy as part of my background did not elicit the same, widespread response, though there was the occasional Hakka Mauritian who had (family) connections in either country.

with a member of the community allowed me to get a sense of Sino-Mauritian day-to-day life, the importance of communal and familial connections, and Mauritian food. I was lucky to be able to ask my landlady (as well as her friends and family) questions about linguistic and cultural aspects of my research. The apartment was located in Beau Bassin, which was not only helpful because it is an area of Mauritius with a substantial Sino-Mauritian population, but also because of its convenient location more or less halfway along a bus route between Rose Hill and Port Louis, the other two main sites for my fieldwork. I conducted four recorded interviews during my pilot study, which provided me with a good basis to adjust and improve the themes and questions for my future semi-structured interviews.

My pilot study was followed directly by a study trip to China, during which I participated in an interdisciplinary summer school on Indian Ocean World connections in three coastal cities (Shanghai, Nanjing, and Quanzhou). Following the summer school, I visited a Hakka heritage site in southern Fujian Province (see 4.4.1). Shortly after my return to Canada, I made a trip to New York City, where I attended the 2018 New York Hakka Conference. The weekend-long program allowed me to understand Hakka identity formation from a more transnational perspective, as I met non-Mauritian Hakka folks from various backgrounds and walks of life who gathered to share and learn more about their collective heritage. In 2019, not long before embarking on my second field trip to Mauritius, I visited an exhibition in Toronto called "The Hakka Odyssey" which was organized by a local Hakka organization. It emphasized the many migrations of Hakka people from China to other places in the world, and subsequently to Canada, where the Hakka diaspora is made up of people from Asian, African, and Caribbean diasporic communities.

From June 2019 to March 2020, I conducted my main fieldwork in Mauritius. Refamiliarizing myself with the social network I had started building during my pilot study, I was graciously welcomed into Sino-Mauritian spaces over the course of nine months. I had to renew my visa every three months, which meant that my fieldwork was divided into intermittent field periods. On two occasions, I made use of this visa renewal break to go on short research excursions to the neighbouring islands Rodrigues and La Réunion. I spent a little less than a week in Rodrigues and a week and a half in La Réunion, interviewing

twelve people in Rodrigues (including one large group interview with eleven participants) and two in La Réunion. Rodrigues was the only place where I included interviews with non-Hakka people, as some interviewees were of Cantonese heritage or unsure of their exact ethnolinguistic background.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face while I was on site, but I also interviewed some people in a virtual setting, which expanded my reach to Hakka Mauritian participants residing in the US and Canada. The multi-sitedness of not only my research activities, but also my participants' residences and work or study experiences, makes it difficult to describe exactly how many participants I interviewed for each site or location—some Hakka Mauritian Canadians I interviewed on site in Mauritius as they travelled to visit relatives, while I led virtual interviews with participants back in Mauritius after I had returned to Canada. Out of 32 interview sessions, four were recorded during my 2018 pilot study, and one took place in Canada in late 2018. In the 2019-2020 field season, I conducted seventeen interviews in Mauritius, three in Rodrigues, and two in La Réunion. I did one virtual interview while on site in Mauritius and four more online interviews in my 2020-2021 virtual field season in Canada.

I had planned to leave Mauritius in April of 2020 and conduct follow-up research in Canada but did not anticipate a global health crisis putting a stop to all my in-person research activities. Toward the end of my stay in Mauritius, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (2020) declared the spread of the coronavirus, or COVID-19, a global pandemic. Borders started closing and flights were cancelled, causing chaos in international airports. As an international student, I had only a small window of time before Canadian borders would be closed to foreign nationals, so I had to cut my fieldwork in Mauritius short by a few weeks to ensure my re-entry into Canada. My departure from Mauritius thus felt sudden and hectic; I barely had time to say my goodbyes, not to mention tie up loose ends in my research. In some ways, my research felt incomplete, though I knew I still had research to do in Canada as well. To ensure the health and safety of my research participants during the ongoing pandemic, my fieldwork in Canada was carried out from my home. I conducted online interviews and attended the virtual Toronto Hakka Conference 2021 on Zoom. In many ways, it made these events more accessible, as people

from all over the world were able to tune in without having to travel. However, this was not the multi-sited fieldwork for which I had been angling, nor was it as in-depth as I would have liked. Thankfully, I had collected Canada-related data even before I returned from Mauritius, since Canada was, as mentioned above, a naturally recurring topic of conversation. The few interviews I did virtually thus complemented the trends and narratives I had already noted in Mauritius. As the pandemic caused significant disruptions to global migration and travel, my interviews post-March 2020 also documented some of the challenges Hakka Mauritians now faced in their (annual) travel itineraries and transnational lifestyles. Many who live abroad usually visit Mauritius over the Lunar New Year period, and many who live in Mauritius visit their families abroad for extended periods of time to help with housekeeping and childcare. Routines were also disrupted for people who spent half of the year in Mauritius and the other half elsewhere, which applied to some of my Mauritian Canadian research participants, for instance. The immobility of our new pandemic lives thus became part of the multi-sited ethnography I was conducting.

3.2.3 Multisensory Ethnography

For Mauritian Independence celebrations in 2020, my landlady invited me along to a day of Mahjong, card games and karaoke with her relatives and friends. I had been to a gathering with this group once before and could anticipate the soundscape: the concentrated, loud clack-clack of Mahjong players placing their tiles, the joyful laughter of the card rounds, the singing in the karaoke room, and the clinking of plates and cutlery during the potluck-style lunch. Although such sensory experiences are in many ways mundane parts of day-to-day life, paying deliberate attention to them can enhance ethnographic data (Culhane 2017, 46; Pink 2009, 10). In retrospect, I wish I could have enjoyed the day more and taken more detailed fieldnotes. A day earlier, the WHO had declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic (see above). There had not been a single case detected in Mauritius at the time, but there was a palpable fear of what would happen once it did, as conversations kept going back to the virus and case numbers abroad. I myself was anxious about my return to Canada and ended up looking up alternate flights most of the day. The stark contrast of the game day and the gloom of the global news makes this one of the most memorable last days in the field for me. While I wish I had been less distracted

that day, affective experiences also play an important role in sensory—or 'multisensory' (Culhane 2017, 51)—ethnography.

Of course, not all days went like March 12, 2020. Typically, when I was not attending scheduled events for my research itinerary, I often found myself visiting people, exploring new sites and sights, or heading to Chinatown or other parts of Port Louis to see if there was anything noteworthy going on. Living in the municipality of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, conveniently located along the most populated and frequented strip of the island from Port Louis to Curepipe, I had easy access to most major towns. However, Mauritius is a traffic-heavy island with regular traffic jams, which meant that I spent a lot of my time on busses or walking to get to places. Whenever the humid summer weather turned sitting on a non-air-conditioned, slow-moving bus into a heavy workout, I would get off the bus early and walk the rest of the way instead. Walking can be considered an ethnographic practice (Moretti 2017, 96). As a literal way of 'being' and 'participating' in the field, I would, in fact, consider all my mobile activities—walks, hikes, rides in cars, on busses and the metro—as part of my ethnographic work. Not only did I often find myself reflecting on my project during such times; they also provided new research impulses. One day I got lost in the street grid of Port Louis and found myself walking past a Canada immigration agency. I almost kept walking but then decided that I had enough time before my next appointment to go in. Not five minutes later, I was talking to one of the organization's directors about Mauritian emigration to Canada. Many other times, I would spot public signs that piqued my interest. In anticipation of such signage, I routinely had my mobile phone ready to take pictures or videos while walking or bussing. I found videos particularly helpful in later reminding myself of the soundscape, a way of doing "sonic ethnography" (Moretti 2017, 99), as well as the visual semiotic landscape.

An enhanced, phenomenological form of interview that I wanted to try was one in which a research participant would guide me on a walking tour (cf. Moretti 2017, 96–102), which is called a 'walking interview' (P. Jones et al. 2008, 8; Stevenson and Holloway 2017, 88). The idea behind doing this is to explore local 'senses of place' and 'place-making' (Pink 2008, 178). The place that was of particular interest to my research was Chinatown in Port Louis. Walking it alone sometimes was a great exercise in finding new corners, buildings,

or street art, but it was others who introduced me to a Chinatown beyond the tourist lens. I walked Chinatown as someone who only got to know it for the first time in 2018. My research participants, on the other hand, had memories from Chinatown often going back to pre-Independence times. They told me of childhood memories, painting Chinatown in a nostalgic light, and remembered buildings long gone but whose history was cherished in the community. I will elaborate more on this in Chapter 6, but it is worth noting here that the Chinatown I got to know through my interviewees' eyes and memories was one that many agreed no longer existed. Addressing this in my interviews was thus all-the-more important. Unfortunately, I only had the opportunity to do formal (meaning recorded) walking interviews twice. While I shared calls for walking interview participation on Mauritian Chinese Facebook groups, many contacts opted to meet with me in a more traditional sit-down interview, and my abrupt departure from Mauritius due to the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited any further walking interviews as well. I still asked most interviewees questions about Chinatown; however, this was a vastly different experience from the two interviews that I did conduct on a walking tour. In both cases, my interviewees led me to spaces I had never even known existed in Chinatown, despite visiting the area on my own on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis. Informal walks with study participants or other acquaintances often had similar effects, highlighting the 'sensory sociality' (Pink 2008, 193) of walking and being in a place together.

Last but not least, a type of sensory sociality that took somewhat surprising precedence in my research itinerary was based on music and performance (cf. Kazubowski-Houston 2017). A popular Hakka Mauritian pastime, especially among women, is line dancing. I was introduced to this pastime on my very first visit to Chinatown. As my main contact Roland Tsang Kwai Kew showed me around the area, we happened upon a line-dancing class that was in session. He pulled aside a few participants with whom he wanted me to get acquainted, who promptly invited me to join them in the dance. The next year, during my longer fieldwork phase, I joined two regular line-dancing classes to partake in a community activity, learning Chinese, English, French (and even occasionally Italian) songs and dances alongside other line-dancers. Another activity that opened my eyes (and ears!) to practicing Chineseness through music was observing, attending, and assisting with music classes, rehearsals, and performances. These included—to varying degrees—

instrument instruction (*dizi*/bamboo flute, *hulusi*/cucurbit flute, *yangqin*/dulcimer, *erhu*/two-string fiddle, *tangu*/ceremonial drums), Chinese classical or popular dance classes, and voice/singing classes. Once word got around that I had a personal interest in music, I was invited to more and more such opportunities. Occasionally, I would be part of a performance as performer, tech assistant, or photographer. While this was not the primary focus of my research, I found these moments extraordinarily valuable in understanding how identity can be practiced and performed through artistic expression, in finding shared joy and pride rehearsing and performing, as well as in reflecting on my positionality as a researcher in the field. I initially did not target these sorts of activities as part of my fieldwork; rather, music activities seemed to happen everywhere around me. Indeed, one of the first performances I suddenly found myself in was related to the fiftieth Independence anniversary, which will serve as our starting point for the next section.

3.3   Methodologies "Hand in Hand": Approaching the Data

3.3.1 From Fieldwork to Data: A Subjective Co-Production

While I was not yet in the country for the day of the 50th anniversary, March 12, 2018, Mauritian Independence celebrations were still ongoing when I arrived in Mauritius later that year. A couple of weeks into my pilot study, in July, another music video for Mauritian Independence was filmed in Mauritius. The song, called *Mauritius Tujhe Mera Salam* (Hindi for 'Mauritius, I greet you'), is sung in various languages, including Hindi, English, Kreol, and Mandarin. The singers express a love for Mauritius and each other as a diverse nation: "Our diversity is our pride" (MAAS Entertainment 2018, 00:01:23-00:01:27). The *lame dan lame* motif has a comeback in the song, as the subtitles translate: "We take hands in hands and let us make the name of our country famous" (2018, 00:02:09-00:02:28). This is accompanied by images of performers helping each other up on the way up a hillside, and another group walking up a flight of stairs while joining hands. A study participant who was involved in the song project, invited me to attend the filming. We drove out to the set—a hilly field in front of a mountainous backdrop near Quatre-Bornes—where song performers were already gathering and setting up, preparing a Mauritian flag to be waved, flag-coloured sand to be thrown, a dove to be released, and more. I was excited to observe Mauritian nation-building through this creative lens. Ready to take pictures and take notes,

I was taken aback when I was asked to wave the Mauritian flag for one scene. "I am not Mauritian," I stammered out, not wanting to impose on a celebration of Mauritian national identity as an outsider. The challenge that "an ethnographer may become more involved in the scene than anticipated" (Charmaz 2006, 21) took a literal turn as everybody insisted I should be part of the video. Thinking it rude to refuse, I gave in and waved the flag but purposely stayed back for other group shots that were being recorded that day. When I watched the performance back later, I pondered the way my presence as a researcher changed the situation, and how my being there and having contextual cues would change my interpretation of the events. Would a viewer without context know that I am not a Mauritian or that I was there for research? Would I be able to tell whether anyone in the *Donn to lame* video, the filming of which I did not observe, felt similarly out of place? What contextual knowledge might I lack in any given research moment? And how would this affect my analysis of the data?

Cristina Moretti poignantly defines ethnographic work as "an embodied practice of learning in the presence of others" (2017, 102). Ethnographic data, after all, does not emerge in isolation; rather, the researcher and 'others' jointly influence the research process, *co-producing* the data (Bucholtz 2011, 37). Our presence as researchers thus permeates the data. Its co-production does not absolve us from ethical responsibilities, as we "alone are obligated to be reflexive about what [we] see and how [we] see it" (Charmaz and Mitchell 2014, 162). This has implications not only for data analysis, but also data collection and documentation. Taking fieldnotes, for instance, is never a purely descriptive undertaking: The selection of what we observe and then write down is informed by our analytic goals, which turns fieldnote-writing into a "process of 'analysis-in-description'" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 126). Fieldnotes, as well as transcriptions (Ochs 1979, 44), are merely the *form* the co-produced data takes on, reflecting researchers' theoretical inclinations. However, even in the analysis of transcripts and notes, we (subconsciously) always draw on the broader context of our ethnographic endeavour (Philips 2013, 93). Accordingly, Sarah Pink stresses that we need to think of documented data as representations "of the research encounter through which they were produced, and of the embodied knowledge this involved" (2009, 144). This approach helped me frame my

fieldnotes and visual material as a memory aid for my affective experience and subjective interpretations in the field rather than objective truths.

3.3.2 From Data to Theme: Grounded Theory

Given the co-productive and subjective nature of ethnographic data, subsequent theoretical approaches should be flexible and emergent in their design. As our research is always pre-informed by our theory backgrounds (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 198–99), many studies extrapolate their findings from a top-down outlook, taking classifications and categorizations as their basis for data and analysis. Concerns for such approaches include that researchers may manipulate their data to fit the pre-selected concepts, "rather than discovering the ways in which they do not fit" (Bucholtz and K. Hall 2008b, 159). Wanting to reduce such theory bias and code my data in the most unassuming way, I used a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is arguably compatible with anthropological inquiry, as it "involves documenting and acknowledging the contexts and situatedness of research participants' lives and the research situation" (Morse et al. 2021, 4). It can thus "assist the ethnographer in focusing, structuring, and organizing" (Charmaz 2006, 23) their findings. Likewise, in-depth ethnographic work can prevent grounded theorists from rushing through and muddying qualitative research processes (Charmaz and Mitchell 2014, 160).

I transcribed 45.5 hours of interviews (31 recorded files in total) using the Express Scribe transcription software. The same software was also helpful in transcribing some video recordings, although I was more selective with these files and only transcribed passages as needed. My fieldwork also yielded vast photography material, which I sorted into folders organized by date and event (i.e. specific participant observation instances) so as to be able to pair them with fieldnotes of the same day for context. Photos that more generally depicted the semiotic landscape in Mauritius (and especially that of Chinatown) needed their own folder, in which I grouped them by location. I created an Excel file for the photos and videos that I would need for my semiotic landscape analysis of Chinatown, documenting their location in Chinatown (i.e. street or block), the site type (i.e. storefront, mural, street sign), semiotic elements such as visual text (with transcriptions and translations as needed), sound bits, potential functions of language codes, intended audience if identifiable, and other notes such as colour schemes or architectural features.

I coded my textual material—fieldnotes, interviews, Mandarin class notes, and some supplementary material such as flyers or magazine excerpts—using NVivo12. In the grounded theory coding process, "codes are suggested by the *data*, not by the literature" (Urquhart 2013, 38; emphasis in original). This can be achieved by keeping the code wording close to the original data and, whenever applicable, using gerunds (Charmaz and Mitchell 2014, 165–66; Charmaz 2021, 168–71), such as '*sending money back to Moyen*', '*joking about multilingual practices*', or '*feeling proud to be Hakka*'. Such specific, active codes "preserve a sense of action and indicate the participants' meaning" (Charmaz 2021, 171). Accordingly, I found that using gerunds in the coding process made me pay more attention to the agency of my participants, rather than sorting their experiences into inflexible analytical categories. My codes showed a wide array of practices that Hakka Mauritians in my study used to maintain, communicate, or negotiate their identities. I continuously compared these initial codes with one another and started sorting them into more focused codes and themes as they emerged (Charmaz and Mitchell 2014, 167). Such comparisons allow us to understand reproductions and reiterations (Philips 2013, 94) of "situated knowledge in action" (Fosket 2021, 283).

3.3.3 From Theme to Analysis: Situations, Conversations, Discourses

In their introduction to conference proceedings surrounding the notion of *lame dan lame*, Anu Bissoonauth-Bedform and Kumari Issur ask the question: "Have fifty years of independence from colonial rule resulted into [sic] a firmly united nation, which is truly multilingual and multicultural and not divided across ethnolinguistic lines?" (2019a, 1) This is, of course, a loaded question, and one that surfaces in many Mauritian conversations as well. A phrase that I sometimes heard from people was that they identified as Mauritian 'first' and then something else. People, or groups, that they perceived to work against the idea of a unified Mauritian nation, were accused of identifying as Mauritian 'second', which would make them communalists that are primarily loyal to their own (cf. Ramtohul 2022, 165). Many of these perceptions are rooted in historical events, such as the aforementioned race riots. This has not only left the Mauritian Muslim population in a scapegoat position, often accused of being "non-minglers" (Eriksen 1998, 54) who care only for their own community. It has also long alienated the Mauritian Creole population,

whose socioeconomic and political status—or lack thereof—in the country has been termed *le malaise Créole* ('the Creole malaise') (Boswell 2005, 198) and is imagined to be "a social disease belying the tropical island's reputation as a haven for inter-ethnic and pluralistic entente" (Miles 1999, 211). This puts the ranking of national and ethnolinguistic or ethnoreligious identities in a 'first' versus 'second' way into much-needed context.

Much like the connected histories approach that I employed throughout Chapter 2, the methodologies I used for data analysis were geared toward providing context and explanation on a grander scale. Susan Philips identifies as the forte of anthropologists that we understand "what goes on outside" (2013, 83) of our data due to our in-depth ethnographic work. To recontextualize individual, coded data points back into 'what went on outside,' I used a mixed analysis approach, consisting of elements from conversation analysis, situation analysis, and discourse analysis.

Conversation analysis—also referred to as "dialogic analysis" (Goffman 1981, 5) and bearing similarities with what Li Wei calls "moment analysis" (2011, 1224)—is the assessment of conversational actions and reactions, or: "communicative events" (Hymes 1964, 13). It consists of identifying speech acts in a given conversation, such as agreeing, (dis-)approving, praising, blaming, and so forth (Goffman 1981, 20), as well as turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, 696; Wooffitt 2005, 8). I mainly used conversation analysis for the strands of data that I documented in Mandarin classes, or conversational sequences between interviewees in group settings (i.e. interactions that did not primarily address me as the observer or interviewer). I paid particular attention to multilingual and multi-variety repertoires and practices, or 'heteroglossia' as the overarching concept for language alternation practices (García and W. Li 2014, 36), within this subset of my data. I took note specifically of the act of translanguaging, which "refers to the act of languaging between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them" (García and W. Li 2014, 42). It thus challenges the construction of languages and language varieties as separate and bound entities (García et al. 2021, 215), reimagining a person's language repertoire as a more fluid, translingual "semiotic repertoire" (García and W. Li 2014, 42). Translanguaging illuminates the distinct social functions that multilingual speakers intuitively know and expect resources in their semiotic repertoires to fulfill (Canagarajah

2011, 4–5). Intention and creativity also play a role here, as "translanguaging spaces are interactionally constructed […] [through] creative and critical practices of the multilingual individual" (W. Li 2011, 1225). In other words, an analysis of translingual conversations is indicative of speakers' communicative competency and agency to build shared social spaces and negotiate their identities within these spaces. However, choices of semiotic resources are "limited by social barriers" (Gumperz 2008, 48) rather than communicative challenges, which means that we also have to take the larger social context of small-scale conversations into account.

Therefore, apart from looking into the contextual and creative implications of momentary conversations, I also identified the broader social constructs and ideologies that informed said interactions. Conversation analysis alone would not suffice for this endeavour because speech events are already discursively informed at the time of their utterance. As such, "language constitutes social realities through discourse structure" (Philips 2013, 93). Discourse analysis lets us uncover widely perpetuated sequences of powerful communicative patterns, which often center around controversies:

> Controversy is basic to this form of discourse analysis because it involves the study of power and resistance, contests and struggles. The basic assumption here is that the language available to people enables and constrains not only their expression of certain ideas but also what they do. (Taylor 2001b, 9)

This view of discourse as embedded within power dynamics and related affordances and constraints is constitutive for my conceptualization of 'discourses of tension' in Mauritius. Tension is intrinsically connected to power because it is the result of concurrent forces causing a stretch; discourses of tension make tangible this strain and the forces behind it. The observation that language availability "enables and constrains" people's expressions and behaviour then brings in the notion of agency. Anthropologist Rosabelle Boswell advises that "researchers need to become aware of power dynamics in the field and not presume that agency exists, even though it may be politically expedient to do so" (2005, 217). The idea of 'tension' encapsulates this problematization of agency as it illustrates the power field of ideological discourses within which people (are able or unable to) express their identities.

To initially identify discourses and ideologies in my data, I first used a situational mapping technique which aided me in "clarifying relationships between elements, understanding who and what was important to the situation, and […] conceptualiz[ing] the wholeness" (Fosket 2021, 271) of a phenomenon and its immediate context. The technique required me to categorize and write up different actors, places, and forces in the field which had—in one way or another—impact on the construction of Hakka, Chinese, and Mauritian identifications in Mauritius. I wrote these out on flashcards which I then placed onto a blank sheet of paper, connecting them with lines and arrows to map their relatedness and co-influence. This mapping procedure allowed me to visualize power dynamics and fields of tension behind the raciolinguistic ideologies that I was starting to identify in my data.

Situational mapping of emerging ideological forces thus provided the basis for subsequent discourse analysis, in which I looked at "prior […] expressions of the ideologies in question" (Strauss 2005, 222) to better understand their origins. An example of this would be the "Mauritian 'first'" vs. "Mauritian 'second'" ideology above: The notion that people either put being Mauritian or being part of their ethnolinguistic community 'first' has historic precedents in the ethnic conflicts of pre-independence Mauritius. Analyzing such discourses, I noted repetitive keywords or key phrases (Strauss 2005, 205), compared units of interaction for reiterations of similar ideas and values (Philips 2013, 93–94), and linked them to "related practices […] [which] constitute aspects of society and the people within it" (Taylor 2001b, 9). I also considered counter-data that deviated from patterns that I identified, as divergent cases are integral to discursive power structures and exemplify social diversity (Taylor 2001a, 320).

Following the notion that "culture is both enacted and produced in the moment of interaction" (J. H. Hill 2005, 159), I wanted to cover a broad spectrum of such culture-enacting and productive units. The three analysis tools I used were suitable to tease out subtly different perspectives: My use of conversation analysis could be attributed more to the micro-level of interactions, whereas my analysis of discourses focused more on the macro-scale of broader (language) ideologies. Situation analysis allowed me to "blur distinctions between micro/macro/meso levels" (Fosket 2021, 280) by mapping actors, places, events, and relationships at and between all levels. What emerged were powerful

discursive patterns through which Hakka Mauritians form, negotiate and contest national, cultural, and linguistic identities in their daily lives. With this in mind, if we now return to the question at the beginning of this section—"Have fifty years of independence from colonial rule resulted into [sic] a firmly united nation, which is truly multilingual and multicultural and not divided across ethnolinguistic lines?" (Bissoonauth-Bedford and Issur 2019a, 1)—we can find embedded two concurrent discursive forces in this inquiry: a) the idea of a translingual and transcultural society in Mauritius that draws from one unitary semiotic repertoire, and b) the idea of a Mauritian society which continues to emphasize separate belonging to ethnolinguistic communities based on ancestral, diasporic ties. Although there is, of course, some overlap between these two ideas, they are viewed as oppositional and creating tension within the Mauritian nation to move either in one or the other direction. These discourses are then emblematic of what anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen has called the "Mauritian dilemma" (1998, 167) of a society united and divided at the same time. In the following chapter, I examine the implications of this Mauritian paradox for processes of identity formation and negotiation among Hakka Mauritians.

<div align="center">Chapter 4</div>

4 Hakka Mauritian Dodos and other Metaphors: Discourses of Tension in Mauritian Nation-Building

4.1 Being "Mauritian with a Twist"

The Mauritian 'dilemma' or 'paradox' is not only an exercise in theorizing multicultural nations, but also a recurring argument in day-to-day social encounters in Mauritius. Christelle, a Hakka Mauritian woman in her thirties, recounted to me a time a few years ago when she walked past a teenager on the street. He saw Christelle and started calling out "*Ni hao*, *ni hao*, *ni hao*!"—or 'hello' in Mandarin (你好, *nǐ hǎo*)—toward her. This is neither a greeting among Hakka nor Cantonese speakers, much less in Mauritius, where the Sino-Mauritian population, like other Mauritians, communicates primarily in Kreol. Christelle was not the only person among my research participants to have experienced such raciolinguistic commentary while out and about in Mauritius (as I will discuss at a later point in this chapter). She said she felt upset in that moment, and asked the teenager, "Why would you say something like this?" The teenager gave no response and ran away. Christelle elaborated on her disappointment:

> What makes me most angry [is] that, in the twentieth century, people still think like this. Like, they are still in the 80s, in the 70s, so it's quite frustrating. Yeah. When you really want to be Mauritian, when you really want […] all the communities to be as one. Like the national anthem (laughs): "As one people, as one nation."
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Christelle, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

The frustration Christelle voices stems from the discrepancy between the Mauritian ideal of a united nation and the social reality of not being able to cross the street without being subjected to cultural and linguistic mockery. She refers to the Mauritian national anthem, called *Motherland*, in which the line "as one people, as one nation" is supposed to remind citizens that they are one, the variety of ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds among them notwithstanding. Indeed, the Mauritian state proudly proclaims its 'unity in diversity' but is simultaneously known for intricate ethnic stratification and tensions (Eriksen 1998, 168–69; B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2011, 113). In pre-colonial Mauritius, the label 'Mauritian' was used exclusively for white Franco-Mauritians and

some Creoles with light skin colour, but "almost never refer[red] to Indians and Chinese" (Benedict 1965, 22). Nowadays, everyone is considered Mauritian, but in multifarious ways. Interviewee Charles explained it as follows: "When everything's mixed up, then you get Mauritian." Another anonymous participant called it "Mauritian with a twist". The two responses seem similar but capture slightly different nuances—one is the idea that being Mauritian is, in and of itself, a motley conglomerate, the other describes a view in which being Mauritius is one thing and the 'twist', a separate background, is what makes for the diversity. This nuance creates subtle tension in Mauritian identity discourse.

In this chapter, I examine Mauritian diversity narratives, multicultural nation-building, diasporic identity maintenance, and social realities thereof through the lens of discourses of tension. I argue that there is an inherent tension between expectations and realities in Mauritian identity and community formations—a tension with or against which Hakka Mauritians work to express their identities in accordance with their social positionalities in transcultural and translingual encounters. The chapter starts with the emergence of distinct ethnolinguistic identities in the self-proclaimed 'rainbow nation', considering inclusive diversity narratives vis-à-vis the more rigid 'communalism'. Using a research participant's metaphor, I introduce the 'briani nation' as a locally envisioned direction for Mauritian nation-building. Against this backdrop, I outline the raciolinguistic ideologies that inform Mauritian expectations of what it means to 'be Chinese' or to 'be Hakka (Mauritian)'. I then discuss how Hakka Mauritians define their 'Hakkaness' and reasons for claiming or distancing themselves from this label. As part of this discussion, I look at challenges of cultural and linguistic continuation in a community that compares itself to the extinct dodo, as well as intergenerational tensions among Hakka Mauritians of different ages and family immigration histories. Building on these discourses of tension in Mauritius, I look beyond the local context to transnational Hakka identity resurgence and global Hakka 'disneyfication' to show how the 'Hakka' label is contemporarily renegotiated, reclaimed, and also commodified. The local and global connect as Hakka Mauritians engage in heritage practices to trace and maintain their 'roots'. Lastly, I discuss how these connections have resulted in a translanguaging practices, which in turn have become a central factor in Mauritian Hakkaness.

On the one hand, there are the culturally and linguistically diverse social spaces in Mauritius, in which Chinese and Hakka identities are discursively shaped to become both compliant and subversive to the Mauritian nation-building project. Being Mauritian, in this sense, can either be seen as a vital, constitutive part of local 'Hakkaness' or a detriment to the maintenance of the community and its practices. Challenges such as language loss and shift, emigration and intergenerational tensions also play a role in how being Hakka is negotiated and enacted in Mauritius and among Hakka Mauritians abroad. Meanwhile, the 'rise of China' in recent decades has added layers of complexity to both the Mauritian and transnational ways of being Hakka, as a form of Chinese 'mainstream' culture that paints Hakka culture as outdated or even 'exotic' is now omnipresent in most diasporic communities. In Mauritius, this has led to a more pronounced shift in how being Chinese is lived and expressed by those in the local community.

At the heart of this chapter is the argument that Hakka—and specifically Hakka Mauritian—identities are not written in stone but in continuous flux. They are expressions of social positions that Hakka Mauritians occupy and claim in various situations, agentively enacted and practiced in an ongoing and participatory process of active Hakka identification. Mauritius presents itself as a field of paradoxes and tensions in this regard, as transcultural and translingual encounters and practices set the tone for both fluid and rigid understandings of ethnolinguistic and cultural identity. Hakka cultural ideologization and essentialization in the People's Republic of China (PRC) is an additional force impacting local Mauritian perceptions of 'Hakkaness' and broader 'Chineseness'. As such, I do not seek to provide a catch-all definition of Hakka identity but rather lived experiences and expressions of the social meanings of being Hakka in Mauritius.

4.2   Ethnolinguistic Identities in the Mauritian Nation

4.2.1 "The World in Miniature": Paradisiac Multicultural Discourse

A phrase commonly read and heard in Mauritius is, "Mauritius was made first, then heaven; and heaven was copied after Mauritius." This quote is popularly but somewhat erroneously attributed to Mark Twain (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 2000, 45), who had travelled to Mauritius in 1896 and wrote about his visit in his published journal *Following the Equator*

(1897, 609–29). The actual passage reveals that Twain was citing a common Mauritian narrative:

> *April 18.* This is the only country in the world where the stranger is not asked "How do you like this place?" This is indeed a large distinction. Here the citizen does the talking about the country himself; the stranger is not asked to help. You get all sorts of information. From one citizen you gather the idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven; and that heaven was copied after Mauritius. Another one tells you that this is an exaggeration; that the two chief villages, Port Louis and Curepipe, fall short of heavenly perfection; that nobody lives in Port Louis except upon compulsion, and that Curepipe is the wettest and rainiest place in the world. (1897, 618–19; emphasis in original)

Although taken out of context, the idea of Mauritius being the original heaven has become engrained in Mauritian nation-building discourse and has contributed to an overall positive image of the country in the public eye. Academic literature has also incorporated some of these tropes. Some scholars, for instance, describe Mauritius as "extremely multi-ethnic" (Dobson 2007, 4), "one of the clearest success stories among ethnically divided developing states" (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 2010, 122), "an extraordinarily multiethnic and multilingual community" (Biltoo 2006, 543), or as hosting an "exceptional variety of races, religions, cultures and languages" (Sonck 2005, 37). It is unclear what exactly makes them consider Mauritian diversity in such exceptionalist ways. I would concur with Eriksen (2019, 55) that Mauritian authorities are committed to promoting Mauritius as the ultimate multicultural society in a fashion that is less fact than ideology. After all, such qualifications speak to an (academic) understanding of monoethnic nation-state models as the norm when this is neither historically nor contemporarily the case (cf. Chun 1996, 135; Gupta 2008, 6). There is nothing inherently 'extreme' or 'outstanding' about the multiethnic composition of Mauritian society, given that "[f]ew former colonies are ethnically and culturally homogenous" (McPherson 2009, 32). On the contrary, cosmopolitanism has long been the norm in most Indian Ocean communities, in which "globalisation was the normal state, one which was profoundly disrupted by colonialism" (Gupta 2008, 11).

It is, on the other hand, useful to take into account how Mauritian nation-building discourse has incorporated such observations and commodified them for political and economic gain. In the tourist sector, for instance, Mauritius has branded itself "'The Most Cosmopolitan

Island under the Sun'" (Dobson 2007, 4). Considering that cosmopolitanism can be broadly understood as an expansion of locally bounded cultural identity to a globally connected one (Appadurai 2011, 28), it seems counterintuitive to quantify the concept as it is done here by using the superlative. Context is key here because, for a multicultural nation, Mauritius does have a few unique features that warrant further exploration. The first is its lack of a population that claims Indigenous status. Mauritius was uninhabited prior to colonial settlement (Eriksen 1990, 2; Ramtohul 2022, 157), which engrained the idea that all Mauritians hail from origins outside of Mauritius into national discourse (Eisenlohr 2006a, 5).[10] To understand this construction of 'Mauritianness' as inherently diverse, I asked participants how they would describe their cultural background to non-Mauritians. An anonymous interviewee captured the balancing act of being Mauritian as follows:

> What I explain to them is that "Yeah, I'm from an island that's in Africa. Uhm, ethnically Chinese. And there are Chinese people living in Mauritius, but Mauritius is made of many people, like myself, [who] come from somewhere else. And so, that's what makes us Mauritian. Regardless of where we came from, you know, Mauritius is not where we came from but what we feel. […] We feel Mauritian."
>
> (Anonymous interviewee, m, 40s, resides in the US)

The interviewee interpreted Mauritianness as a feeling rather than a geographically bounded category precisely because everyone in Mauritius came "from somewhere else". Cosmopolitanism is thus baked into the very foundation of Mauritian national imagination. The second feature is the island's triple colonial history (Dutch, French, British) and subsequent affiliation with both the Commonwealth and the *Francophonie* (Julia 2008, 837). Thirdly, Mauritius is a small island state, which gives the previous features even more of an emphasis considering the population of just shy of 1.3 million. Roland Tsang Kwai Kew put it this way:

> Mauritius is one of the few countries of the world living in a microscope society. A small piece of land, we have so many cultures. […] I might have been born in China or India. But I am happy to be born in the Chinese community in Mauritius where all the main civilizations, cultures, and languages are. In such a small island!
>
> (Interview with Roland Tsang Kwai Kew, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius and Canada)

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[10] This widely accepted view is, however, not without critique—see Gitanjali Pyndiah (2022) for an excellent discussion of colonial ideologies of 'discovery' of 'uninhabited' land, particularly in the Mauritian context.

Roland describes the idea of Mauritius as a microcosm, which claims that the island's multicultural population reflects the world's cultural and linguistic diversity. This notion is also represented on a wallet that I bought from at a Sino-Mauritian souvenir shop (see Figure 6). It shows the Mauritian national flag and a map of Mauritius in the background, as well as the line *Mauritius—the World in Miniature*.

Figure 6: Mauritius-themed wallet from a Sino-Mauritian souvenir shop.

This is then further represented in the four people shown on top of the Mauritius map whose clothing and appearance indicate their belonging to the Muslim, Hindu, Creole, and Chinese communities. This is of course a simplified depiction. Mauritian community categories are "by no means easy to identify in Mauritian society, as social and interracial relationships since the seventeenth century have created a physically and socially heterogeneous people" (Boswell 2006, 44–45). Nevertheless, rigid ethno-religious, ethnolinguistic, and racial categorizations are frequently reinforced in Mauritian society. As Ralph Ludwig and Burkhard Schnepel observe, multiculturalism, "which usually has positive connotations, conceals a much more problematic 'multi-social' unequal structure"

(2009, 9) in Mauritius. Election candidates often garner the support of 'their' communities in their campaigns, making political representation in Mauritius depend on community size (Eriksen 2004, 80–81). After Mauritians re-elected prime minister Pravind Jugnauth in the 2019 national election, some Sino-Mauritian contacts told me that they were not surprised because "the Indians are the majority, so they are always in power". Cultural stereotypes play a large role in everyday practices; at different points during my fieldwork it was suggested to me that Muslims are troublemakers and religious fanatics, that Creoles are lazy and spend money recklessly, that the Chinese are greedy and clannish, and that Hindus are dishonest and abuse their political power (see Dobson 2007, 5–6; Eriksen 1998, 54, for lists and discussions of self-views and stereotypes of Mauritian communities). Chinese Mauritians are also at times regarded as lacking discretion, as evident in the saying *isi pa labutik sinwa*, 'this is not a Chinese shop', used to mean 'this is a private place' (cf. Boswell 2020, 268). Mauritian YouTuber Shiraaz (posting on the channel *its.SHIRAAZ*) recorded a video of American friends reacting to Mauritian (Kreol) slang. One of the words he chose was *sinwa nef* ('new Chinese'). In the reveal of the term's meaning, he demonstrated its use with a sample sentence:

> Shiraaz: The context was, "I confronted him, but he acted like a new Chinese."
>
> Chabelly: (laughs and covers mouth) Oh my god!
>
> Bolaji: So, he acted like he didn't know anything?
>
> Shiraaz: Exactly, you act as if you don't know anything. […]
>
> Chabelly: (sarcastically) Assuming that all Chinese are fake.
>
> Shiraaz: Dude, that's Mauritian slang. […] Here's the thing. In Mauritius, this is not—like, we have a lot of racial undertone in our humour, but we don't realize it's actually racial undertones. It's like we're completely blind to it (waves hand down in front of face), so it's-
>
> Chabelly: Like new Chinese… (laughs)
>
> Shiraaz: Yeah, like, when I first came to New York, I was making so many jokes about race and genders.
>
> Bolaji: (looks at the camera and nods knowingly)
>
> Shiraaz: It was just not sensitive at all. And I'm like, "Why are you guys angry?" (its.SHIRAAZ 2016, 00:04:20–00:05:05)

The term *sinwa nef* is used to describe someone who pretends to not know anything but can be interpreted more literally as "pretending to be a recently arrived Chinese migrant"

(Boswell 2020, 268). As Shiraaz proposes, such racially and ethnically charged vocabulary is quite common in the Mauritian lexicon; an oft-cited example in my data was the expression *amize kreol*. Its literal meaning is 'to have fun like a Creole' but its figurative meaning draws from the racist and classist stereotype that Creole Mauritians handle money in irresponsible ways. Another example would be *fer grand nwar*—literally 'to make big black', figuratively used to mean 'to show off'—which is rooted in the idea of a Black person emphasizing their high status (Boswell 2020, 268). The above excerpt from the YouTube video (its.SHIRAAZ 2016) also shows how Mauritian humour, which at times involves racialized commentary, can be offending in other cultural contexts. In fact, many Mauritians themselves see it as offensive and are actively decreasing their use of such vocabulary and jokes, if some of my research participants' views are any indication. They associate humour based on stereotypes with the maintenance of communalism in Mauritius, which aims to reinforce distinct ethnic identities for the sake of political gain.

Multicultural nation-building requires the recognition and encouragement of cultural and linguistic maintenance to ensure a continuously heterogeneous cultural mosaic (Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten 2015, 680). Conversely, "Mauritians rarely celebrate their 'hybridity', displaying instead a strong preference for emphasizing their (presumed) 'roots' and for drawing distinctions between other apparently distinct and 'natural' ethnic groups" (B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2011, 113). Population censuses also included a section about respondents' 'ethnic group' until 1982 (B. Schnepel 2018, 138). The population was then stated to consist of 52% Hindus, 29% General Population, 16% Muslims, and 3% Chinese (Eriksen 1994, 552), and these numbers are often still used today to represent the ethnic composition of Mauritius. After 1982, the 'ethnic group' category was abandoned and changed to more vague questions about 'language of forefathers' and later, in 2000, 'linguistic group', which, however, still indicated ethnic belonging (Rajah-Carrim 2005, 321–22). Similarly problematic is the way that ethnic diversity is 'ensured' in Mauritian political representation, which requires political candidates to state their ethno-communal membership in order to run for office (Eriksen 1998, 174). Meant to function as a means of transparency that will provide underrepresented communities with seats in parliament, it also reifies imagined boundaries between ethnic groups. Indeed, the notion of distinct ethnic groups prevails in Mauritian discourse, as is evident by information that was

obtained from patients at a Ministry of Health and Quality of Life event in Chinatown in 2019. Hakka Mauritian community members invited me to attend a Health Day about non-communicable diseases in Chinatown, which included a talk about Chinese medicine as well as free finger prick bloodwork and other health tests. When I got in line for the general health assessment and bloodwork, I was handed an 'Adult Health Card' and a patient intake form (see Figure 7). On the intake form I noticed that line 7 asked for patients' 'ethnic group', the options reading 1) *GP* (meaning General Population), 2) *Hindu*, 3) *Muslim*, 4) *Chinese*, and 5) *Other* followed by a blank line to write additional information. I was unsure of what to pick; I had never been asked for racial or ethnic information in Germany and was otherwise used to demographic forms in the US and Canada, in which there were more options listed from which to choose. This was clearly a form specific to the Mauritian context, with four major categories and one 'other'. I asked staff for help and was told to just leave the line blank since I was not Mauritian.

Figure 7: A patient intake form from the Mauritian Ministry of Health & Quality of Life, including an inquiry about the patient's "ethnic group" in line 7.

I brought this anecdote up in my hiking group a while later. The other hikers I spoke with were surprised to learn that patients were asked about their ethnic group since this sort of information was not supposed to be on public records anymore. I never learned whether any formal laws existed prohibiting the obtaining of information of this sort, but it was clear that ethnic groups were still major measures of identification in public settings (cf. Dobson 2007, 5).

This continued ethnic grouping seems to underscore the idea of diversity in Mauritius, indicating the omnipresence of communities whose ancestors had come from someplace else. It may even allude to unity as this is obviously a *Mauritian* categorization which does not apply to a foreigner who, like me, does not fit any of the suggested groups. These ethnic groups are diverse but united in their common Mauritianness. On the other hand, it also does not leave room for transculturation or Creolization. Where would someone identifying as *kreol sinwa* ('Creole Chinese') see themselves? Which box would someone with a Chinese and a Hindu or Muslim parent tick? Can you tick more than one box? And, most importantly, what effect does the continued ethnic categorization have on communal identity and practices? This was, as implied at the beginning of this chapter, a recurring conversation in Mauritian discourse. Interestingly, I seemed to have to get away from Mauritius to truly see the bigger picture, as it was research participants residing (or having long-standing experience) outside of Mauritius who voiced the most criticism of the Mauritian 'rainbow nation' trope.

4.2.2 Touch without Mingling: Multiculturalism vs. Ethnocommunalism

In October of 2019, I was lucky enough to visit Rodrigues, which forms part of the islands under the name of the Republic of Mauritius but has had semi-autonomous status since 2002 (Jeffery 2010, 427). I was spontaneously offered an opportunity to tag along to Rodrigues when Chantal Chung, a Hakka Mauritian woman with whom I had connected a few months before, had to tend to friends' private affairs on the island. Through Chantal's social network, I was able to schedule a group interview with some members of a Chinese society in Rodrigues' capital Port Mathurin. They were eager to tell me about the differences between multicultural life in Rodrigues and Mauritius:

Participant A: Like, here, the different communities and religions, they are more, uh... they tolerate each other more. Even, like, in Port Mathurin, there is an agreement, an arrangement. For example, the mosque, they don't do the—how do you call—the prayers…

FG: The call to prayer.

Participant B: Loudspeakers!

(Overlapping voices.)

Participant A: And the church also—at some times, they won't ring the bells, you know, stuff like that. […] Here, every—I mean, we don't make the point to necessarily, you know, point out the differences [between communities].

Participant C: Segregate.

Participant A: Yeah. You know, everybody's just… we're all…

Participant D: Everybody is human. […] *L'harmonie, et cetera, c'est creux.* (<u>Translation:</u> Harmony, and all that, it's shallow.). They live as 'one people, one nation' in harmony. That's not true.

Participant E: Ah, you see, the 'rainbow nation'. But, like, the colours of the rainbow, they don't…

Participant D: They don't touch. (Laughter.) They don't touch.

Participant E: You see, the rainbow, the colours… (laughs).

(Group interview[11] in Rodrigues, October 2019)

The group cited some examples, such as the reduction of noise from religious institutional buildings, as well as widespread interfaith and interethnic marriages in Rodrigues, to explain why they felt that Rodriguan multiculturalism was less divisive than that in Mauritius. The Mauritian 'harmony' trope being called shallow and false was not something I had encountered much on the main island of Mauritius, at least not as directly, although critique of the 'rainbow nation' certainly existed there as well. It was, as above, often packaged in an allegory of the rainbow colours being "formed of distinct shades rather than ones that blend into one another" (B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2011, 113). As the blurb for the illustrated book *Maurice—50 ans et un jour* ('Mauritius—50 years and

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[11] Transcribing this group interview proved to be challenging because I was not always able to understand individual contributions or distinguish between the voices of the eleven speakers. I therefore decided to label the participants without using names, even though they all indicated their consent to be quoted with their full names. However, for transparency and to express my gratitude to the group for their participation, I list the names here (in no particular order): Noëlla Leung Kei, Vincent Kwet Lien How Chow Wah, Hans Didier Leong Kye, Lim Kin Janick, Gail Leong Kye, Jacquelin Wong Lit Wan, Jean Yves Ong Tone, John Harry Lam Vo Hee, Michel Chung Yoon, Dominique Wong, Chantal Chung.

one day', referring to the fiftieth independence anniversary) states right at the beginning: "Les couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel mauricien se chevauchent mais ne se mélangent pas" (Sivaramen 2018), or: 'The colours of the Mauritian rainbow overlap but do not mix'. I heard many versions of this saying in various interviews and informal conversations, making the idea of the 'rainbow nation' both popular and controversial in Mauritian discourse. In order to understand why this is so, we need to delve deeper into the origins of Mauritian nation-building.

As stated in the previous section, Mauritius did not have a pre-colonial indigenous population. Although it could be argued that the enslaved population from colonized places in East and West Africa might have a claim to indigeneity in terms of forced displacement and indigeneity elsewhere in Africa, there seem to be no such claims or movements in present-day Mauritius (cf. B. Schnepel and C. Schnepel 2011, 110). Instead, the idea prevails that *all* Mauritians once came from elsewhere and made it to the island one way or another (Pyndiah 2022, 180). As such, Mauritians typically understand themselves as "having origins in other parts of the world with continuing commitments to putative ancestral traditions" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 5). Unlike national identities based on citizens' 'sameness', 'Mauritianness' is therefore based on internal difference. On the one hand, this leads to the idea of Mauritius as a "cultural mosaic", as a speaker at a Lunar New Year event called it; on the other hand, it enables the formation and reiteration of sub-groups and communal boundaries. This can in part be understood as an outcome of the British colonial strategy of 'indirect rule', which allowed colonized groups to "maintain their traditional institutions of political mobilization to minimize the costs of governance" (Ray 2018, 369). The effects of this strategy, evident in "the country's long history of ethnic tension" (Boswell 2006, 50), are still felt in Mauritian society today. In fact, many Mauritians bemoan the 'communalism' that permeates Mauritian society and politics. Figure 8, for instance, was included in Nad Sivaramen's (2018, 83) above-cited book. It shows a stroller and three baby bottles of milk, one for the morning, one for noon, and one for the evening. The label for the first bottle reads *nou bann*, Kreol for 'our group'. The second and third read *racisme* ('racism') and *communalisme* ('communalism') in French. This comic strip thus indicates that Mauritians are socialized—or, more metaphorically, *fed*—with ideas that their ethnic communities are their primary allegiance.
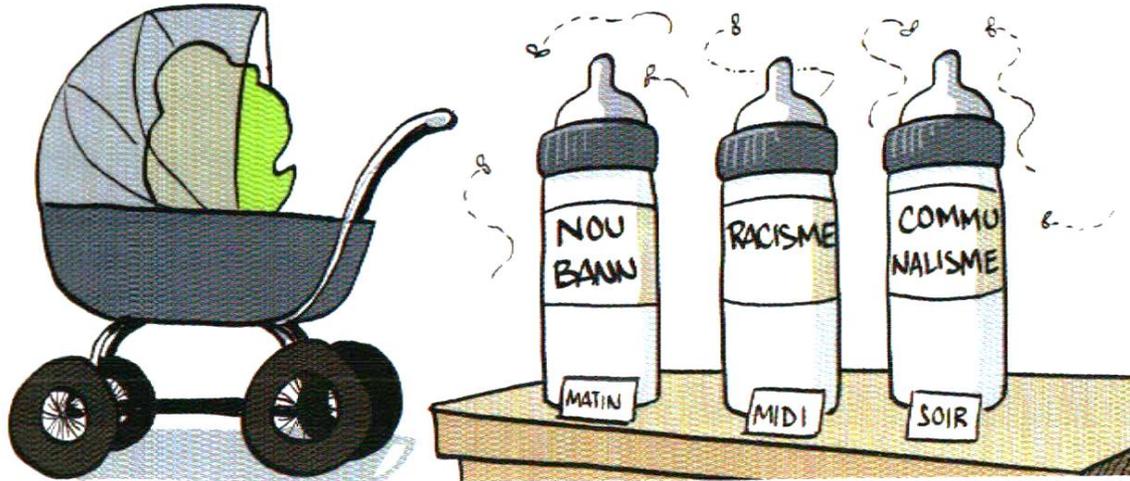
Figure 8: Comic strip depicting Mauritian socialization of communalism, as it appears in Sivaramen (2018, 83).

This *nou bann* thinking is so prevalent among many that it is noticeably absent when Mauritians of different communities meet abroad (cf. Eriksen 1995, 432). Roland Tsang Kwai Kew, who splits his time between Mauritius and Canada for a half year each, recalled a serendipitous encounter in Toronto's Chinatown, and Clement Chan offered an explanatory comment:

> RTKK: Last time I was in Chinatown, I was speaking English [with] somebody, eh? "Oh, you're from where? What country?"—"I am a Mauritian Chinese." Eh? Then— I think the chap was a Muslim—"*Mwa osi mo enn Morisien*! (Translation: Me too, I am also a Mauritian!)" (Laughs.) Then we start talking in Kreol! Somebody behind us said, "Hey! *Mwa osi mo enn Morisien*!" Then we start—we were three in the shop (laughs).
>
> CC: […] Mauritians become Mauritians—of Chinese, Muslim, whatever background—when they travel abroad. But when he comes back, he's no longer a Mauritian. He talks in terms of community. Right?
>
> (Interview with Roland Tsang Kwai Kew, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius and Canada, and Clement Chan, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

This comparison of 'Mauritianness' in Mauritius and 'Mauritianness' abroad is interesting insofar that it provides us with a lens through which to understand when and why communalism carries (or does not carry) importance. It seems to be less salient outside of Mauritius. I can imagine a variety of reasons behind this: It is, for one, likely that Mauritians are not typically 'read' as Mauritians abroad. Many Chinese interviewees were

mistaken for Chinese mainlanders or other Asian nationalities and ethnicities when travelling or living abroad; I was also told that most people one encountered abroad would not know of Mauritius or, if they did, would not be able to locate it on a map. As such, the first marker of difference would, for many, be their Mauritian nationality:

> When I'm in a non-Chinese country, let's say I am in England or in Canada, then they… when they first look at me—or people like me, Sino-Mauritians—they again associate [me], because of my skin colour and my appearance, with Chinese. With being a Chinese. And then […] usually, I do not present myself as Sino-Mauritian. I say I'm from Mauritius, I'm a Mauritian, because this is, I think, the particularity. And usually we are among a bunch of other Mauritian friends, with different ethnic backgrounds, it could be Indians, African origin, so (laughs)... we […] could be sitting with some Mauritian friends, like, whether of Chinese origin, Indian origin, African origin, and we could be like, talking in some weird language and the people will be looking at us, like, "What are they doing? (laughs) What language is this?" Yeah, and we are laughing (laughs). So then we have to explain to them that Mauritius is a multicultural society, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, in different contexts, we present [ourselves] or we appear as a different identity, I would say.
>
> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Kwang's account of presenting himself differently depending on the context of the situation is testament to the fluidity and contingency of identity. Just as Roland described above, Kwang speaks of Mauritians of different origins speaking Kreol with one another abroad, and confusing outsiders as to what their common denominator (the shared language) may be. Mauritianness thus becomes "the particularity", as Kwang puts it.

Another possible reason for the different enactments of Mauritianness in Mauritius and abroad may be the lack of sociopolitical context for communalism outside of Mauritius. After all, being part of the Hindu community has a different connotation in Mauritius than it has in, say, Canada; similarly, being Chinese—not to mention Hakka—is a different experience in Mauritius than elsewhere. Reduced communalist discourse among Mauritians abroad may also be rooted in the mostly non-violent nature of the conflicts in Mauritius itself. Scholars have noted Mauritius as one of the exemplary polyethnic nations that are successful in establishing ethnic harmony over ethnic conflict (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 2010, 122; Eriksen 1998, 169). Although Mauritius has seen a couple of tumultuous riots in its roughly half a century of post-colonial independence—including the 'race riots' leading up to March 12, 1968—it has done comparatively well as a peaceful democratic state and growing economy in the decades that followed (B. W. Carroll and

T. Carroll 1999, 179–80). As far as the Mauritian Chinese community was concerned, many speakers at events that I attended stated that the Chinese were "lucky" to have come to a place such as Mauritius where they were encouraged to honour and maintain their cultural practices. This praise for successful polyethnic nation-building is not unwarranted, especially in public sociopolitical discourse. However, I want to be cautious not to reify this view without a grain of salt, as it may cause us to overlook the racist and raciolinguistic commentary which also persist in Mauritian everyday life (Boswell 2005, 215, 2020, 263; Jeffery 2010, 427). Gitanjali Pyndiah argues, for instance, that "a sense of belonging to the supposedly multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial society rainbow nation that the state promotes is not experienced in the same way by the different communities" (2022, 196). Such powerful statements highlight the tension between state-mediated images of multicultural harmony and communities' experiences of barriers to belonging. Take, for instance, this comment from sisters Cynthia and Daphnée who discussed being routinely addressed with *ni hao* on the street:

> C: Yeah, about the discrimination, I find it sad, because, like, in Mauritius, everyone knows that we are multiracial, so I don't know why they should be like that with us, because they know that we have a Chinese community in Mauritius, so why would you, like, discriminate us?
>
> D: Yeah, they still treat us like we're not from here. Like we're different.
>
> C: Yeah! It's very—I find it sad, because, like, we're Mauritians.
>
> (Interview with Daphnée, f, 20s, and Cynthia, f, late teens, residing in Mauritius)

In Cynthia's eyes (as many others'), being Mauritian inherently means having diverse backgrounds. This gives the *ni hao* greeting some multilayered meaning: It singles Daphnée and Cynthia out as Chinese but also denies them their Mauritianness, as Mandarin vocabulary is not typically used among Sino-Mauritians. Apart from giving them the feeling that they are being treated as though they are not also from Mauritius, these sorts of encounters also indicate some of the raciolinguistic tensions that are at play in the perceptions of Sino-Mauritian, or Hakka Mauritian, identities. Their commentary also begs the question whether there could be a version of Mauritianness in which they would not be constantly made to feel like the 'Other'. In the next section, I explore the idea of what interviewee Kwang Poon called a '*briani* nation'—a version of the Mauritian nation that emphasizes transculturality rather than diversity, multiculturalism, and communalism.

4.2.3 A "*Briani* Nation"? Hakka Mauritian Transculturation

Mauritius may be a 'rainbow nation' to some, whereas others see the rainbow narrative as a façade behind which hide ethnocommunalist and racially charged ideologies. Then others see these two possibilities more on a spectrum or even as a chronological process. Mauritians have a range of metaphors for these ideas, a common one apparently being the 'fruit salad' with fruits that "do not mix but are held together by the syrup of nationalism" (Boswell 2005, 215), which has been described by critics as a form of "apartheid with a human face" (cf. Eriksen 2004, 82) because it insists on the separation of fruits to preserve their individual flavours. I did not hear about the fruit salad metaphor during any of my field stays in Mauritius, which perhaps speaks to its unpopularity among Mauritians. In my interview with Kwang Poon, he shared an improved metaphor with me:

> [The Mauritian] nation is sometimes referred to as 'rainbow nation', like South Africa... but the rainbow nation, you see, the seven colours, they do not mix. […] I tend to describe it as a '*briani* nation', because—have you tried the *briani* here? [It] is one of the favourite dishes. It is similar to [the Reunionese] *zembrocal* dish. Again, it's a mixture of several spices and then you cook it together, you get something new. Uh-huh. Totally different because it's a mixture of all these flavours. And at the same time, you can taste each of the different flavours. And you have to put it in the right proportions (laughs), otherwise... of course, you can modulate it according to taste, so, I believe... uh, again, if we look at the Brazilian model again. [Brazil] is also a land of immigrants. Africans, the Portuguese, so, they kind of... but they have longer history because this is Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, so they [have] seven, eight generations. Because in Mauritius, we're at fourth, fifth. So, we are moving towards that. So, this is, I believe, quite a natural evolution. So, as from my generation to the next, the mixing, the interactions will only increase. Uh-huh. Because we're not in an Apartheid situation, everybody's free to move, and so this interaction will sometimes lead to marriages, and so, it's clear that this—to me, this is how the Mauritian society will evolve in the future. I see it evolving in that direction. And this term, the '*briani* nation' (laughs), [is] how one can perhaps describe it. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Zembrocal, a popular dish in La Réunion, is made of rice, a variety of spices, and protein typically in the form of meat and beans. Earlier in the interview, Kwang had mentioned that Reunionese people are supposedly "much more mixed" than Mauritians and call themselves "*zembrocal* nation", likening themselves to the dish because of its many ingredients that are mixed together as one. *Briani*, according to Kwang, could be the Mauritian equivalent: A spiced rice dish as well, typically mixed with meat and/or potatoes and eggs, *briani* is the local version of the more globally known *biryani*. Kwang uses it as

his new and improved moniker for the Mauritian nation: *briani* nation. He describes how each ingredient adds to the rich flavour profile but can still be tasted individually. Unlike the 'rainbow' or 'fruit salad' in which the colours and fruits do not mix, the ingredients of *briani* are all thrown together until they form something new; if we were to translate this into anthropological discourse, we could speak of the difference between a multicultural and a transcultural understanding of the Mauritian nation. Whereas multiculturalism operates on the assumption that cultures are separate, bound entities, transculturality views cultural formation as a more fluid and open process (Lehtola et al. 2015, 6). Eriksen (1998, 175–76) points out the significance of socioeconomic changes in this development, as work and relationships are becoming more focused on the individual in light of Mauritius becoming more of a meritocracy, and thus less dependent on ethno-communal groups as a primary support system.

Kwang does not, however, believe that Mauritians have achieved the transcultural status of *briani* nation yet, unlike the Brazilian nation, which he cites as a counterpoint. The difference, in his eyes, is that colonization in Brazil took place a few generations earlier than that of Mauritius, giving them a longer time to stir the dish, as it were. Ethno-communal boundaries thus continue to be reified in Mauritian day-to-day interactions, in both official and informal settings. On the other hand, younger generations of Mauritians are increasingly emphasizing and celebrating their transculturality (cf. Boswell 2005, 211). As Ramola Ramtohul points out, "citizenship, community and belonging have [long] been sources of significant contestation in Mauritius, and nation building remains an ongoing process" (2022, 158). Apart from Kwang, many other research participants seemed to hope and advocate for an abandonment of communalism in the Mauritian future as well. Whenever I asked for examples of all-Mauritian aspects in daily life, people typically mentioned either religion, food, or language. In terms of religion, Sino-Mauritians were quick to tell me that Chinese people are very adaptive to their social environment and therefore converted to Christianity easily. In Alain Wong So's words,

Original

AWS: *Et le Chinois, il a cette faculté de s'adapter dans l'environnement ou il est. Il essaie de se modeler et c'est pourquoi on fait un* joke […]: *Le Chinois, il est comme la pomme d'amour. On dit la pomme d'amour.*

CC: (laughs) *La tomate.*

AWS: *Ah, la tomate.* […] *Avec la tomate, on peut tout faire* (laughs).

Translation

AWS: And the Chinese, he has this capability to adapt to the environment where he is. He tries to mould himself and that's why we make a joke […]: The Chinese is like a 'love apple'. We say 'love apple'.

CC: (laughs) A tomato.

AWS: Ah, a tomato. […] With a tomato, you can do everything (laughs).

(Interview with Alain Wong So, m, 50s, resides in Rodrigues, and Chantal Chung, f, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Alain used the word *pomme d'amour* (literally 'love apple' but here used, notably, to mean 'tomato' instead of the more common translation to 'candy apple') to illustrate how Chinese people can adapt to any environment just like tomatoes go with virtually every dish.[12] Adaptability was used as a trope equally for Hakka and Chinese traits, associated particularly with diasporic communities. In a conversation over afternoon tea, a Hakka Mauritian acquaintance similarly told me that

"Hakka people are very practical: They can be Buddhists in the morning and Catholics in the afternoon."

(Informal conversation, documented in fieldnotes on September 9, 2019)

This is not necessarily surprising, given that syncretism can be viewed as a "hallmark of Chinese religiosity" (Lozada Jr. 2001, 28). Practicality, or pragmatism, was thus something that Hakka Mauritians often emphasized when discussing departures from more traditionally Hakka or Chinese practices. Some also framed the large-scale conversion to Christianity as a survival tactic, as Hakka Mauritians had to ensure their future in Mauritius by conforming to colonial and post-colonial social norms. Patrick Eisenlohr (2018b, 137) identifies religion as the most important factor of distinction between the four major Mauritian 'communities'—Hindu Mauritians, Muslim Mauritians, Sino-Mauritians, and General Population—but names the Sino-Mauritian community as the only one who is not

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[12] This metaphor is apparently not exclusive to Chinese discourse in the Mascarenes, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen has observed that "Mauritians sometimes proudly describe their society as 'the tomato of the Indian Ocean', adding that 'we go with anything'" (1992, 83).

defined primarily by religion. Hindu and Muslim Mauritians are of Indian origin but separated along the lines of Hinduism and Islam, whereas the General Population comprising Creole and Franco-Mauritians is primarily Catholic. While Catholicism is also the main official religious affiliation among Sino-Mauritians, it is not as engrained in the public perception of the Sino-Mauritian community, and ancestor veneration at local pagodas is still widely practiced even by Sino-Mauritian Catholics. Although Christianity is not necessarily an all-Mauritian religion, considering the Indo-Mauritian majority in the country, religion was often named as part of the Mauritian environment that Hakka immigrants adopted soon after their arrival. The conversion to Christianity specifically is likely connected to the supremacy of Christianity in the colonial education system (see 5.3.2), but may also in part stem from the history of Protestant and Catholic missionary work in Hakka areas in mainland China in the nineteenth century, which introduced Christianity into the local belief systems (Lozada Jr. 2001, 4–5, 2005, 99).

Food was another factor that was named as a Mauritian conglomerate of sorts. The national cuisine is, as perhaps already conjecturable from the '*briani* nation' concept, influenced by various communities' regional cuisines. Sometimes, this results in fusion-style foodways or uniquely Mauritian Chinese dishes, such as the *bol ranverse* ('upside-down bowl'), in which a fried egg, stir-fry vegetables (and meat), and steamed rice are layered in a bowl placed upside-down on a plate to reveal the dish with the egg on top. Hakka dishes were often adapted to include local ingredients or spices, which goes with the Hakka canon of migratory adaptation to new environments. Many Chinese dishes in Mauritius retain their Hakka names even in the Mauritian lexicon, such as *niouk yen* (肉丸, *ngiug⁵ yan²* for 'meatballs' in Hakka; also known as *bulet chouchou* in Kreol, meaning 'chayote dumpling' and referring to the locally grown chayote as an additional ingredient) and *ham choy* (鹹菜, *ham² coi⁴* for 'salted/pickled greens' in Hakka). Others are known mostly under Kreol monikers (such as the *bol ranverse*), many of which, however, get their names from Sinitic vocabulary rather than French. Noodles, for instance, are called *minn* or *mine* in Kreol, which stems from the Chinese 面 (pronounced *miên⁴* in Hakka, *min⁶* in Cantonese, and *miàn* in Mandarin). This example also shows more generally how Kreol is incorporating words from the Hakka vernacular, which I will explore more toward the end of this chapter.

This takes us to language, which is, according to Eriksen, "the most important single criterion of cultural identity in Mauritius" (1990, 3).[13] This chapter will be followed (see Chapter 5) by an in-depth account of 'ancestral language' policies in Mauritius and the shift from Hakka to Mandarin learning in the community. For the moment, however, I will focus on the role language plays in transcultural encounters in Mauritius and in the communication of racialized expectations of Hakka and Chinese identity expressions.

4.3 Hakka Mauritian Identity Tensions and Expressions

4.3.1 Being Chinese/Hakka Mauritian: Raciolinguistic Expectations

In my interview with Sister Cécile Leung, I noted that she called herself, in a determined tone, "Chinese from Mauritius." Many other research participants answered the question in a slightly different way, saying, for instance, "Mauritian of Chinese origin". I asked Sister Cécile if starting with 'Chinese' was an intentional choice on her part. She paused briefly before replying,

> That's a good question because I had Mauritian friends who said, "You say Chinese first. What should I say?"—"I don't know what *you* should say. *I* feel Chinese first." I think—I can't explain it, but being Chinese is Chinese, and that's it.

> (Interview with Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the US)

Sister Cécile's comment underpins the highly subjective nature of identity, as well as its elusive quality in being difficult to explain. In her eyes, "being Chinese is Chinese"—of course, this does not bring much clarity to the concept of 'Chinese' but it does allow for an inclusive sense of belonging without any prerequisites. Her friends' struggle with not knowing how to frame their own identities, however, may stem from the tensions between inclusive and exclusive ideologies of 'Chineseness'. A controversial construct, the perhaps most pervasive critique of Chineseness is its essentialism and political implications, which undermines diverse experiences of being Chinese (cf. Ang 1994; Chun 1996; W. Li 2021;

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[13] It is unclear whether the identification of either language or religion as the primary factor constitutes a disagreement between Thomas Eriksen and Patrick Eisenlohr (cited above in the discussion on religion), as Eriksen applies language to cultural identity and Eisenlohr uses the factor of religion for his assessment of the four major 'communities' in Mauritius. In any case, both language and religion play important roles in the formation and reification of ethno-communal differences in Mauritian everyday life.

L. Wong 2018). I saw this in the way Christelle, Daphnée, Cynthia, and other interviewees recounted their thoughts on street harassment. Ah Sen Hok Fen (m, 30s, resides in Mauritius) one day had enough of being called *ti sinwa* ('little Chinese'), *sinwa macao* ('Macao Chinese/Chinese from Macao'[14]), or even just a long-stretched *wah-chaaa* (imitation of martial arts sounds in Kung Fu films) and posted about it on social media. He has since expanded on the list, adding, among others, *corona* (in reference to the novel coronavirus outbreak which was globally associated with China and led to a large wave of anti-Asian and specifically Sinophobic racism; see also C. Wu, Y. Qian, and Wilkes 2021 and Zhang 2021). Fen noted that it was often school children and teenagers who would make these sorts of remarks and thus suspected that the issue was a lack of education (at home and at school) about derogatory and racist language. Christina also spoke about education when recalling the words with which she was regularly addressed:

> Walking down the street, I would always have […] construction workers calling me *ni hao* or *macao* or *ching chong* or... yeah. I've heard *ching chong* a lot. Yeah. Some people think it's okay to say it, like, when I was quarantine, even one of the nurses, she said *ni hao* to me. Like, we're in 2020. You're a nurse, you're educated. You should know not to say that. But I just smiled and then left. […] I think people know [that we don't speak Mandarin]. They just... it's just funny to them.

> (Interview with Christina, f, 20s, resides in Mauritius)

Ching chong, like the above *wah-chaaa*, is mocking imitation of speakers of Sinitic languages. This points to raciolinguistic ideologies that link certain practices (like martial arts) as well as phonetic qualities (i.e. tones, nasals, affricates) to a pejorative and exoticized image of Chineseness. Just like Fen, Christina links the behaviour to education, saying that the nurse should have been educated enough to address her differently. She also states that the year was 2020, indicating that it is too late to claim ignorance of such issues. Her assessment of time and justice is reminiscent of Christelle's words at the beginning of this chapter, in which she claimed that some Mauritians seemed to be stuck in the thinking of earlier decades. This adds a chronological weight to the insults, as they are perceived by

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[14] Many derogatory terms for Mauritian ethnic groups make reference to (perceived) origins of the person that is spoken to or about (Boswell 2005, 218), including Macao (Dobson 2007, 6). As I have pointed out elsewhere (Guccini and Zhang 2021, 105), Sino-Mauritians do not typically claim to hail from Macao, although Macao was commonly a point of embarkation for early Chinese immigrants. This shows that these terms have long been entangled with Mauritian history of immigration and ideologies of ethnic divide.

younger Mauritians to be backward and stuck on the wrong side of history, as it were. In our interview, Christina also asserted her belief that people are aware of the impact and inaccuracy of their address but do it for their own amusement ("it's just funny to them"). These remarks do not then come from a place of ignorance but are deliberately made

> […] in a mocking, condescending way. In a way that makes you feel like you don't belong here and that you should go back to China. I don't know if people are aware that that's how we feel when they do this, but we are Mauritians too. We know how to speak your language.
>
> And they couldn't have mistaken us for tourists because we were in our fucking school uniforms.

<div align="right">(Waye 2019)</div>

The above excerpt from a blog post by D.K. Waye makes the intentional mockery and exclusion even clearer, given the presence of visible Mauritian school clothing. She specifically connects this to language, stating that Sino-Mauritians "know how to speak your language" (Kreol). Not only does this show a social construction of Mauritianness through a shared *lingua franca*; it also implies that expressions of identity in Mauritius are often linked to language practices. As a community of practice, Mauritians recognize each other as Mauritian by speaking Kreol, which is also evident from Roland Tsang Kwai Kew's anecdote (see above) in which he met two people in Toronto Chinatown who started speaking Kreol as soon as they learned that they were among other Mauritians. Conversely, addressing someone in Mauritius not in Kreol but in another language, may indicate a raciolinguistic expectation that they belong to a different community. If two people have the same communal background, they may greet each other in a shared language and with common phrases. "Have you eaten (yet)?" is, for instance, a common greeting in Sinitic languages. In Hakka, this question would be phrased as *Ngi ced fan mang?* (你吃飯盲?, *ngi2 cêd⁵ fan⁴ mang²*) or *Sed bau mang?* (食飽盲?, *sêd⁶ bau¹ mang²*).[15] The more generic and Mandarin *ni hao*, on the other hand, is not commonly used among Sino-Mauritian

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[15] 食 (*sêd⁶*) means 'to eat' and is typically used in both Hakka and Cantonese, whereas Mandarin speakers tend to use the word 吃 (*chī*) like in the first example of the phrase. 盲 (*mang²*) seems to be an exclusively Hakka term to mean '(not) yet', as I have not been able to find translations in other Sinitic varieties. Linguist Lau Chun Fat describes it as a "confirmative for past events, which is equivalent to the [Putonghua] mei" (2016, 475) (没, *méi*, verb negation).

Hakka speakers. In fact, Chinese people generally do not (or did not always) use *ni hao* as a greeting, as the concept of an informal 'hello' emerged from interactions with Europeans and has been popularized through Chinese classes for foreigners (Erbaugh 2008, 631–32). As such, the intention behind this mocking greeting is less connected to indicating belonging to a Mauritian ethnolinguistic community and more connected to devaluating the addressees' Mauritianness and inflating their Chineseness. This can be especially frustrating for those who feel that their Chineseness is somewhat precarious:

> Me and my friend […], every time we would go to tuition, there would always be people commenting on our race. Like, every time. And every time, she would be like, "One day, I will be fighting with them." But then, we don't know Chinese. Because we wanted to reply with, like, a Chinese thing, but then, because we are so alienated from that culture itself, and we have just have each other… (trails off)
>
> (Interview with Daphnée, f, 20s, resides in Mauritius)

Daphnée and her friend wanted to fight back and reply in 'Chinese' (of unspecified variety) but found that they were unable to because of their own alienation from the culture. They were perceived by passers-by as quintessentially Chinese while feeling the opposite. This alienation, both in terms of cultural context and linguistic practice, made it more difficult for them to voice their vexation.

Embedded in this raciolinguistic expectation is the idea that Sino-Mauritians automatically speak Mandarin—in its standardized form—as the language that is globally promoted as *the* Chinese language (cf. A. M. Hill 2004, 336–37; see also Chapter 5). What we call 'Mandarin' is actually *hanyu* (汉语, *hànyǔ*), the 'Han language' of the ethnic majority in China. The all-too-interchangeable use of 'Mandarin' and 'Chinese' pertaining to language (Gu 2006, 344) and 'Han' and 'Chinese' in terms of ethnicity comes with additional problems. Apart from the inaccurate representation of Chinese ethnic and linguistic diversity, Mandarin and Han are also not the monoliths they are presented to be. After all, "[t]he group we now refer to as 'Han' encompasses a broad range of cultures, languages, and ethnicities" (A. D. Wong, Su, and Hiramoto 2021, 132), and Mandarin itself encompasses several varieties (Blum 2004, 123). Confusingly, while both Hakka ethnicity and the Mandarin language are connected to the 'Han' umbrella, Hakka as a language

variety is grouped under Chinese varieties of the non-Mandarin kind (Gu 2006, 344).[16] This muddiness then not only makes it difficult to define 'Chineseness', but 'Hanness' and 'Hakkaness' as well—and even more so in diasporic communities with all their transcultural influences:

> One cannot be Overseas Chinese without addressing the adoption of new modes of understanding Chineseness. This is not simply a 'loss' of culture, […] but a creation of something entirely new. (Fung 2003, 20)

The diasporic transculturation of Chineseness (and Hakkaness) in Mauritius gets quite complicated when considering some incongruences and overlaps between racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic categorizations in the colonial and post-colonial history of the island state (see above). Ethnolinguistic classification and heritage have been noted by various scholars (Eisenlohr 2006a, 5; Eriksen 1990, 3) to be among the strongest factors of group membership negotiations in Mauritius. This is not unique to Mauritius; ethnolinguistic identity is often understood as factual and unproblematic in public discourse despite its ideological and essentialist dimensions (cf. Blommaert 2005, 214–15). In Mauritius, the government's way of standardizing and stratifying ethnolinguistic identity has been to assign each (allegedly distinct) community an 'ancestral language' (see 5.3.1). In Mauritian census data on language use, for instance, people may disclose as their ancestral language Hakka "and—more problematically—'Chinese', [when] a more balanced approach would be to separate 'Chinese' into Hakka and Mandarin, disregarding Cantonese […], given the small number of speakers in census reports" (Biltoo 2006, 544). Whether or not Cantonese should be included might be a separate debate; based on my data, I would not dismiss its influence due to speaker numbers alone (see 6.3.2). More importantly, however, this classing shows that 'Chinese' is a largely undefined category and may either refer to Mandarin or a more umbrella-like use of 'Chinese' to denote 'a Sinitic variety of some sort'. It should be noted here that "an analytical distinction must be drawn between self (or emic) definitions of identity and those etic classifications that are conferred from without" (K. J. Anderson 1987, 584). The census information represents a

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[16] Joseph Tsang Mang Kin (2004, 1) prefers to call the Hakka language 'Hakkanese'; Paul Brendan Tjon Sie Fat (2002, 233) uses the Mandarin word '*Kejia*' to distinguish the language from the Hakka people. I decided to stick with 'Hakka' because it was the term most research participants used for both language and ethnicity.

raciolinguistic ideology of Sinitic languages and linguistic heritage superimposed by government authorities, not an accurate representation of actual language use in the communities themselves. Anil Biltoo does note that the official recognition of ancestral languages in Mauritius "represents political expedience rather than linguistic fact" (2006, 543), using the example of Mandarin as a Mauritian ancestral language. Mandarin is the only Sinitic language taught in Mauritian schools even when the actual ancestors of the Chinese population arriving in Mauritius in the nineteenth and twentieth century would have spoken Hokkien, Cantonese or Hakka (see 5.3). Eisenlohr even states that Mandarin "never had any native speakers in Mauritius" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 275), recent mainland Chinese immigrants likely excluded. We can thus infer the inclusion of Mandarin in theory (i.e. census data) and practice (school curricula) as politically and ideologically motivated rather than rooted in the social realities of the Sino-Mauritian community. However, we see that the implementation of a Mandarin curriculum in Mauritius has already had an impact on the way Mauritians perceive the local Chinese community, as evidenced by the "'ni-hao' treatment" (Waye 2019).

Apart from raciolinguistic ideologies about Chinese identities in Mauritius, it was also eye-opening to speak with interviewees who had experience navigating their complex Sino-Mauritian identities outside of Mauritius. In these contexts, raciolinguistic ideologies went beyond the use of Sinitic languages and Kreol, but also affected how others viewed Sino-Mauritians as speakers of French or English. Consider this anecdote from Sister Cécile Leung regarding her French teaching experience in the US:

> When I just walk into class […], they look at my face, and their eyes—that is: […] Americans—their eyes say, "Dr. Leung, wrong class, this is French." Their eyes tell me that. I stand there, and say, "*Bonjour. Non, je suis bien votre professor de Français. French 101. Je ne me suis pas trompé, je suis le professor, et voilà. Voilà, je m'appelle Dr. Leung, Cécile, j'ai un degré de l'université de Chicago, et je suis très hereuse d'être là pour vous enseigner. Oui, vous voyez bien, je suis Chinoise. Et de l'île Maurice, voilà pourquoi je parle Français, parce que l'île Maurice, c'était une colonie Française avant d'être une colonie Anglaise, et avant d'être independent […]. Je suis Sino-Mauricienne, il n'y a pas de problème. Et si vous êtes très gentils, je vous enseignerai un peu de Chinois.* (teasingly) Buy one, get one free."

> Translation: When I just walk into class […], they look at my face, and their eyes— that is: […] Americans—their eyes say, "Dr. Leung, wrong class, this is French." Their eyes tell me that. I stand there, and say, "Hello. No, I really am your French professor. French 101. I am not mistaken, I am the professor, that's right. See, my

name is Dr. Leung, Cécile, I have a degree from the University of Chicago, and I am very happy to be here to teach you. Yes, you see right, I'm Chinese. And from the island of Mauritius, that's why I speak French, because it was a French colony prior to being a British colony, and before being independent […]. I am Sino-Mauritian, there is no problem. And if you are very nice, I might teach you a little Chinese. (teasingly) Buy one, get one free."

(Interview with Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the US)

I took note of how Sister Cécile asserted her authority and competency in front of the class by letting the students know that she was aware of their potential surprise at being taught French by a visibly Chinese person and by briefing them about the cultural-linguistic history of Mauritius to explain her French-speaking background. She did so in a playful way, even joking about giving the students more than they bargained for by teaching them some Chinese as a bonus. She handled her students' raciolinguistic expectations of what a French teacher would look like by agentively breaking the tension and addressing ideological misconceptions head on. On that note, I should say that most of my research participants would be typically identified as visibly 'Chinese' in the Mauritian canon. What I found much harder during my research was capturing the voices of those who felt more in between ethnolinguistic communities, such as the *kreol sinwa* ('Creole Chinese'). In Eriksen's (1998, 51) representation of Mauritian ethnic stratification, they would be grouped in the General Population of Mauritius. During my fieldwork, I observed two people arguing about whether a third person was *kreol sinwa* or not:

A: *Li koz sinwa li, non?* (Translation: He speaks Chinese, doesn't he?)
B: He speaks very good Chinese.
A: *Li enn kreol sinwa?* (Translation: Is he a Creole Chinese?)
B: No, full Chinese.

(Informal conversation, documented in fieldnotes on July 23, 2018)

Although the two speakers did not elaborate which criteria would make someone Creole or 'full' Chinese in their view, the implication was clear that *kreol sinwa* were thought to be less Chinese than members of the Sino-Mauritian community. Ethno-communalism in Mauritius is therefore "legitimised through references to notions of purity and descent" (Eriksen 1998, 176). This rigid distinction likely prevented me from recruiting Creole Chinese participants in Mauritius as my primary contacts identified as Sino-Mauritians. I did meet some people in Rodrigues who might have been classified as *kreol sinwa* in

Mauritius, but it was more difficult to do so in Rodrigues where Creoles make up 90% of the island population (Boswell 2006, 36). People I spoke to reported that in Rodrigues, everyone felt, to some degree, Creole—in the sense of 'mixed' identity. In Mauritius, Creole identity is considered mostly a "residual population category" (Jeffery 2010, 427), and it "remains partly bounded, largely because most Mauritians define themselves as non-Creoles" (Eriksen 1998, 176). The Mauritian interpretation of *Creolité* differs significantly from that in La Réunion or farther away in the Caribbean, "where all those born in the islands are considered as Creole" (Claveyrolas 2015, 3).[17] The common definition of a Creole person in Mauritius back in the eighteenth century was that of a white European born in the colony, but the terminology shifted in the late nineteenth and twentieth century to mean primarily people of African or 'mixed' descent (Boswell 2006, 44–46; Jeffery 2010, 426–27).

Although Creole Mauritians might not 'look Chinese', some may well have Hakka or Cantonese ancestry and identify as Chinese. In Rodrigues, Chantal Chung and I asked a taxi driver about the *ruyi* knot (如意結, *rúyì jié*, 'wishful knot', a symbol of good fortune) in his car and it turned out that he was Chinese when neither of us had expected him to be. This shows how embedded raciolinguistic ideologies are in our day-to-day perception of people around us. An anonymous interviewee, for instance, shared his view of people with Chinese names who did not "look Chinese":

> You have a lot of Black people, Indian people—they have Chinese names. They don't look Chinese. So, maybe, these ones, they lose their culture when they marry, […] they have kids. They have only the name Chinese, they don't have a Chinese culture, like us. You know, they are, like, lost. […] Sometimes you can get very dark people, Black people, with a Chinese name! Because their grandfather was Chinese, but they lost it.
>
> (Anonymous interviewee, m, 40s, resides in Mauritius)

The idea that someone may have a Chinese name but not a Chinese culture, simply based on their phenotypical appearance, sheds some light on the existence of the *kreol sinwa*

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[17] Anthropologist Laura Jeffery notes that "Creoles frequently compared and contrasted the smaller Indian Ocean islands, pointing out the differences between the diverse Creole cultures of the various islands and each asserting the uniqueness and rootedness of their island's particular 'Creole culture'" (2010, 430).

category. Many other research participants also said that they were (perceived to be) disconnected from Chinese culture, but this would not automatically result in their exclusion from the Sino-Mauritian category in Mauritian community formation. Indeed, anthropologist Ari Nave found that the rate of interethnic marriage was higher than that of mixed descent Creole Mauritians formally recognized as such because "children of intermarriage generally take on a single ethnic identity and cultural orientation from one of the parents" (2000, 348). The difference is then in racial perception rather than some form of supposedly measurable ethnic or cultural retention. If someone with a 'Chinese' look in Mauritius has a Chinese grandparent, they would likely be perceived to be Chinese. The same does not seem to be true for Black Mauritians with a Chinese grandparent. It would likely also not be assumed for Sino-Mauritians that they immediately "lose their culture when they marry" outside the community. This ideological construction of racial appearance correlating with linguistic or cultural identity seems to also apply to hierarchizations of 'Chineseness' in La Réunion:

> The last group consists of persons of mixed descent who no longer have any knowledge of the Chinese language or culture. This 'métissage' [hybridity], recent or not, of a fringe sector of the Chinese population is noticeable above all in the physical appearance of different individuals. In some cases their dominant physical features do not correspond to their Chinese surnames. A person from Reunion with a Chinese surname may look like a Creole, a Malagasy, a Tamil, or a Caucasian. (Yu-Sion 2005, 239)

Note here the assertion that, "above all", racial phenotype is named as the indicator for whether someone is well-versed in Chinese linguistic or cultural matters. As long as someone has a 'Chinese' appearance, then, their status is assumed to be Chinese, and vice versa. Conversely, announcing one's Mauritianness or Africanness abroad would also often evoke raciolinguistic ideologies about what it means to 'look African':

> In China, in Taiwan, […] I had to explain that I came from Africa. And they would not believe me because, for them, I had to be a Black person. But of course, […] people wouldn't know. […] Being Hakka is already an adventure, the word 'Hakka' [already causing confusion]. Being a Hakka from Mauritius is a Mission Impossible, almost.

(Interview with Ng Cheong Tin Patrice Entse, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

What Entse described here is telling in that Hakka Mauritian identity may feel like a stretch when trying to explain it in all its facets. Being Hakka, Chinese, Mauritian, and African simultaneously then means navigating various raciolinguistic expectations of each

individual aspect. The issue here lies in the widespread misconception of 'race' as biological fact when it is actually a social construct (Carney 2021, 377). Racial ideologies of the colonial system continue to prevail globally and reify white supremacy, which in turn enables the "magnification and invention of grouphoods that often function to stir up jealousies and rivalries among subordinated populations" (Smalls, Spears, and Rosa 2021, 153). Cultural and ethnic belonging are then often perceived to be inherently prescribed by an elusive racial identity, which makes it harder for people whose appearance diverges from that which the dominant discourse dictates to feel a part of their community. However, such ideologies can of course also be challenged and unlearned.

In late 2018, I attended the New York Hakka Conference, which was primarily organized by Paula Williams Madison, a former National Broadcasting Company (NBC) executive. A screening of the documentary that follows her family's story, *Finding Samuel Lowe: From Harlem to China* (Kong 2015), was part of the program. I was eager to watch the film as it had been recommended to me already by some Hakka Mauritian contacts during my pilot study. The documentary illustrates Paula Williams Madison's genealogical quest to trace her maternal grandfather's journey from China to Jamaica, where her mother was born before moving to the United States, and subsequently reuniting with her extended Hakka family in China. Her story is not only a comment on vast Hakka diasporic family connections but also on the racial implications of being Black and Chinese:

> On the morning after I returned home [from the 2012 Toronto Hakka Conference], my husband [Roosevelt] and I popped into the hot tub at four o'clock for some conversation and reconnecting. […] I told him about the conference, about the people there, about being a part of the Hakka experience […]. He sipped his coffee and listened.
>
> "You know," he said. "This has now turned into an almost all-consuming passion. […] When you find these Chinese people in your family," he continued. "What are you expecting will happen?"
>
> I began to wonder where this was going. "I don't know," I said […]. "What are you asking me? What do you mean?"
>
> He gave me one of his serious, twenty-four karat, all-Roosevelt looks. "Baby," he asked, "do you know you're Black?"
>
> I looked at him, puzzled and defensive. "Yes. I know I am Black."
>
> […] There was a possibility, in fact a likelihood, that they would not share my enthusiasm for discovering long-lost relatives—long-lost African American relatives. They might see an African American woman and reject me. I sat in our hot tub—with

my ginger-brown skin, my proudly worn Afro—and as my glasses fogged from the steam, wondered first why he was saying this to me and, second, shockingly, why I hadn't thought of it on my own.

I paused and inhaled slowly. "I expect that because I am their family, and they are my family, we will be family. That is all I expect."

He nodded gently, with a soft look in his eyes. And at that moment, I realized his question came from love, from his wanting to protect me, and from his experience as a man who had grown up in a racist, racially divided United States. […]

But in every fiber of my being, I knew several absolute truths:

That I didn't have to worry.

That I am a Lowe.

That I am African American and I am Chinese.

That the face of my mother is a Chinese face.

[…] That her family will want to know about my existence as much as I want to know about theirs. (Williams Madison 2015, 139–41)

The example of the Lowe family shows that being Chinese and being Hakka is not (or at least should not) be determined by skin colour. Paula Williams Madison holds space for both her African American and Hakka Chinese identity, and she was met with acceptance and love by her Hakka family in and beyond China. At the same time, racist ideologies of what it means to be Chinese (or African, for that matter) still do exist and are, I would argue, reified by Mauritian ethnocommunalism with its all-too-rigid boundaries. Kwang Poon spoke of being "always classified" until he leaves Mauritius and has to recontextualize and renegotiate his identity:

> In Mauritius, we are always classified. Because, even in the constitution, we are classified as Sino-Mauritians. So, this is our ethnolinguistic group, or ancestral—uh, based on our ancestry. […] When I'm in China, they look at me and they think I'm Chinese, so they don't know... and then when I start speaking, they say, they try to see, "This accent is a bit funny—are you from Hong Kong, are you from Malaysia?" You know, those overseas Chinese. […] Most Chinese, mainland Chinese, have not even heard of Mauritius (laughs). So, you have to explain a lot of those things.
>
> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Being perceived as Chinese on the basis of his appearance raised questions among Kwang's interlocutors as soon as he started speaking. While they would try to place his origins in East or Southeast Asia, Mauritius would not typically be anyone's first guess. Kwang's anecdote shows a strong perceived correlation between visible Chinese features, language or accent, and imaginations of Chinese diasporic communities ("you know, those overseas

Chinese"). In an autobiographical—and somewhat autoethnographic—account of her upbringing in a *peranakan* (Southeast Asian-born) Chinese family, cultural theorist Ien Ang (2001, 23–31) unravels what it meant for her to not *speak* 'Chinese' as someone who *looked* the part. In the chapter's closing statement, she writes, powerfully, that "if I am inescapably Chinese by *descent*, I am only sometimes Chinese by *consent*. When and how is a matter of politics" (2001, 36; emphasis in original).

With the discrepancy between default Chineseness by descent and situational Chineseness by consent in mind, I now shift focus from raciolinguistic expectations that *other* people have of Sino-Mauritians, and Hakka Mauritians especially, toward which raciolinguistic ideologies are present within their communities. We should, after all, consider the "community's own theory of linguistic repertoire and speech" (Hymes [1974] 2001, 31). How do Hakka Mauritians position themselves amid their multilingual repertoires? My online survey prompted respondents to name the language(s) they felt most and least comfortable speaking. Although I did not find it surprising that Hakka, Mandarin, and 'Chinese' were the most named answers for the 'least comfortable' option, given the trends that my prior research and data indicated in this regard, it still poses a major challenge for Hakka and Chinese ethnolinguistic identification processes in Mauritius. After all, "the Chinese believe that language is essential for the maintenance of their Chinese culture and identity" (X. Wang et al. 2015, 192), and the question of Hakka language as a marker of Hakka identity is a recurring, albeit controversial, debate (Leo 2015, 211). Kwang Poon put it this way:

> I think the Hakka, we have a strong belief in our culture, because we [would] rather move or sell our land than to forget our language or culture. Because if you lose the language, you somewhat lose the culture. At least part of it. Because some things are lost in translation. You can still transmit a lot of values through festivals and events and storytelling, but if you get back to the real source, then you can get the, let's say— they call [it] the real McCoy, the real thing. How it was intended to be initially.
>
> (Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Ideologically linking language and culture so closely means that language loss will inevitably also mean a cultural loss. Many Hakka elders with whom I spoke were concerned about the declining number of Hakka speakers precisely because it meant not only losing the language but associated cultural practices because of the aspects that would

get "lost in translation". Kwang also mentioned going back to "the real source", which is reminiscent of the water drinking metaphor for the source of collective identity (see 1.1). Sino-Mauritian scholar Clement Chan writes in his book Hakkas Worldwide:

> The importance of language for cultural identity cannot be ignored. Can [a] Mauritian of Chinese descent who does not speak the Hakka dialect claim to be a Hakka? For the conservative Hakka elders the ability to speak Hakka is a sine qua non of Hakka identity. They usually say if you do not speak *T'ong Fa* (Chinese) you become a *fan kou* (foreign devil). Language is fundamental to cultural identity. It is through language that culture is expressed. It is the cornerstone of what we are as an ethnic group. It is the bedrock of ethnicity. It carries within it the history, the culture, the values, the traditions, the customs, and the very life of the group. Language is people. A language cannot exist without people, and people cannot exist without a language. A Hakka feels through his dialect that he is a Hakka or Chinese. Without his dialect he can hardly claim to be a Hakka or Chinese. (Clement Chan 2010, 361; emphasis in original)

Chan addresses a fundamental question in Hakka public and academic discourse: Can Hakka ethnolinguistic identity be separated from the practice of speaking Hakka? Multiple interviewees brought up anecdotes of being called *fan kou* or *fangui* (番鬼, *fan¹ gui³*), meaning 'foreign devil', by family members or elders because they did not speak (enough) Hakka. Language has long been a central pillar of Hakka identity discourse. Fluency in Hakka was even a prerequisite for joining Hakka associations among diasporic Hakka communities in the mid-twentieth century (Yang 1967, 322). Nowadays, however, Hakka is no longer as widely spoken, not only in Mauritius but in other diasporic communities (cf. C.-I. Liao 2018) and in mainland Chinese Hakka communities as well (C. Zou 2020, 12). It is evident that Hakka identity is in flux. In Mauritius, as elsewhere, its changes are tied to challenges and questions of language loss, as well as stubbornly persisting raciolinguistic ideologies. However, the emergence of ambivalent, transcultural and translingual Hakka identities in diasporic communities has paved the way for Hakka people to be Hakka without speaking the language (C.-I. Liao 2018, 51). Others have argued that language is a key agent but not the primary force in Hakka group identification (Ardizzoni 2021, 33; Lozada Jr. 2001, 183). Keeping this in mind, I set out to understand my research participants' self-conceptualizations of what being Hakka (in Mauritius) might entail.

4.3.2 "What is a Hakka, anyway?" Outlining Hakka Discourse

"What does being Hakka mean to you?" This was a central question in my interviews with Hakka Mauritians, intended to elicit answers about participants' sense of identity and narratives around "cultural markers that identified people as Hakka in the first place" (Leo 2015, 203). Some participants had very clear ideas about what their 'Hakkaness' entailed, others voiced ambivalent feelings. Interviewee Kwang Poon stated having done research to learn more about his background:

> Well, first I have to say that my interest in Hakka actually increased over time, because I think there comes a time in a person's life when they ask, "Where do I come from? And where am I going?" […] I started to say, "Hakka, okay, I'm Hakka, but what does it actually mean? And what is a Hakka, anyway?" So, then I started doing some digging. So, it appears that the Hakka [have] a very rich, rich culture. And they are […] very proud of this heritage.

> (Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Kwang went on to tell me more about Hakka culture and heritage, some of which I will share in the following sections, but for the moment, I want to linger on the way he narrated his newfound interest in the definitions and meanings of being Hakka. He was not the only one of my research participants who indicated that their attachment to and pride in their Hakka background had increased (or even started) later in life. This not only indicates a changing and fluid sense of identity at different life stages, but also coincides with a resurgent movement of Hakka people around the world investing time and resources into building transnational networks and communities (see 4.4.1). The fluidity of (Hakka) identity also allows for a variety of discourses to act as potential identity data points rather than fixed prerequisites for identifying as Hakka. As such, being Hakka is not just one thing or the other: "It is an identity that is still in the remaking" (Leo 2015, 8). There are multiple discursive options for people to define their own Hakkaness. It is of course neither my place nor my aim to define what Hakka identity is or is not; however, this is not to say that there are no external affording or constraining factors in Hakka identity formation. In fact, dominant discourses of tension may police Hakka identity from outside as well as within the communities and intentionally or unintentionally exclude people. At the same time, such discourses are flexible and permeable, too, inviting change and inclusivity.

A somewhat unexpected source for Hakka identity discourse was the online survey that I distributed to Hakka Mauritians via Facebook and email. Its purpose was to gather data from residents of different countries to also capture voices of emigrated Hakka Mauritians, as I had heard from a lot of contacts that there was a vast emigration trend in the Sino-Mauritian community. Roughly half of the 93 respondents resided in Mauritius (47 responses) and most of the others stated their (sometimes dual) residence to be in popular emigration destinations such as Canada (26 responses), Australia (7 responses), the USA (3 responses) and the UK (3 responses). The first question of the survey was: "Do you consider yourself to be Hakka? Why or why not?" It was initially meant to be nothing more than an inclusion or exclusion criterion for survey-generated data; however, I designed the question as an open-ended prompt rather than a selection of either yes or no. This prompted many participants to write a sentence or two. While I had purposely chosen the write-in answer format so that participants could express complexities in their Hakka identity if need be, I had not anticipated how many respondents would provide detailed answers. Only 17 people gave an affirmative response without providing any justification. Every other respondent left a few additional words, sometimes even a longer paragraph, explaining why and how they identified as Hakka. Two participants responded that they were not Hakka, one of whom identified as Cantonese while the other considered themselves not Hakka because they did not "speak it". Technically an exclusion criterion, I found these answers to be just as valuable as the ones that confirmed their Hakkaness because they gave me some insight into why someone may distance themselves from the Hakka label for their identity (see below). The most common reason for identifying as Hakka, stated by 49 respondents (more than half of the total 93), was related to the theme of ancestry, lineage, and parentage. Consider these responses from my sample:

R1   Yes. Both parents and all relatives are Hakka.

R2   Yes. My parents are Hakka, so I'm Hakka by descent.

R3   Yes, due to my origin as my parents and grandparents were Hakka.

R4   Yes, my ancestors are Hakka people.

R5   Yes. Because some of my ancestors are from that ethnic group. However, that's not a central part of my identity, it's been 4 generations ago that my ancestors left their country. I don't know much of that culture.

R6   Yes. I speak Hakka. We have a Hakka heritage through our ancestors.

R7   Yes, simply because my grandparents and parents are. It's like the colour of your skin, I am Hakka because I was born as is.

<div align="right">(Anonymous survey responses)</div>

Mentions of Hakka kin, closely or distantly related, seemed to be the way to 'prove' that one was Hakka. Respondent R7 claimed that being Hakka by birth is as genetic as skin colour. Respondent R5, on the other hand, stated that they were of Hakka ancestry but did not consider this a "central part" of their identity because they were not that familiar with Hakka culture. Even within the discourse of Hakka ancestry, we can thus find different interpretations and ways of incorporating Hakka lineage into questions of identity. In this sense, "Hakka ethnicity is a cultural interpretation of descent" (Lozada Jr. 2001, 183).

The theme of ancestry also tied in with the idea of Hakka 'roots' or 'origins' (see response R3), which was a factor in other responses as well and often connected to geographic locations: 10 people vaguely stated that their origin or cultural background was Hakka, but in some other cases, respondents linked their heritage to a specific place. Five survey participants made reference to China more generally, while 16 survey participants specified that their parents or ancestors were from Moyen (also Moiyen, Moiyan, or Meixian) in Guangdong Province in southern China.

R8   Yes, both of my parents were Hakka from Meixian (Moiyen in Hakka), China.

R9   Yes, because my ancestors originated in Meixian (Moyen) and were Hakka.

R10   Yes, because my grandparents are from Meixian, China, and we have grown up in the Hakka culture.

R11   Yes. I am the third generation in Mauritius, meaning my paternal grandfather and grandmother are from Moyen, as well as my maternal grandfather.

<div align="right">(Anonymous survey responses)</div>

Moyen is by far not the only Hakka-majority place in mainland China, but it is the place from which virtually all Hakka Mauritians' ancestors came. It was so central to Hakka Mauritian narratives of origins that on a map in a small Chinese library in Chinatown, someone had drawn an arrow pointed toward Meizhou (the name of the city in which Moyen/Meixian is a district) to make it easier to find (see Figure 9). Moyen also happens to be considered the "Hakka homeland" (Lozada Jr. 2005, 92) and the place where the 'purest' Hakka is spoken according to a popular language ideology (based on the status of Meixian Hakka as the standard among Hakka varieties; see Lau 2005, 24). The connection

to Moyen therefore makes for an important factor in Hakka identity discourse, as a source of ancestry, origins, and dominant Hakka language variety.
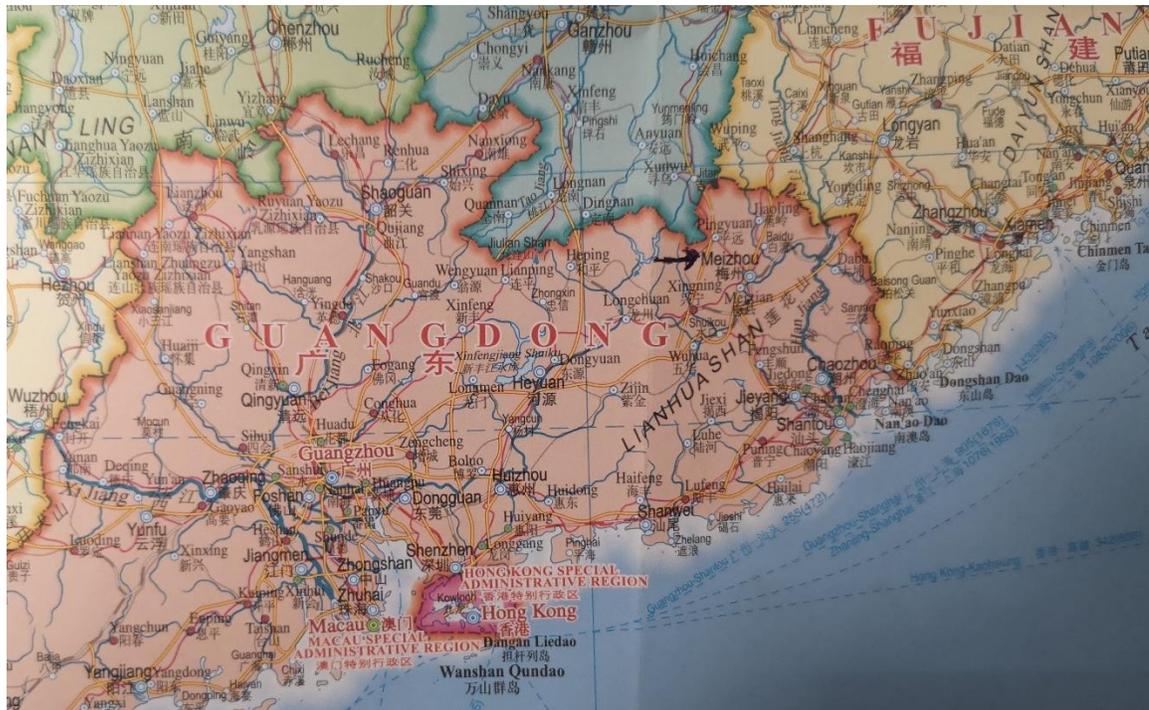
Figure 9: Photo of a PRC map showing Guangdong Province.

I do think it should be noted as well how respondent R11 not only made reference to Moyen but also Mauritius as a place in which they are considered third generation Hakka. Many people spoke of their degrees of immigration by numbering the generations that separated them from the first in their lineage to arrive in Mauritius, making Mauritius a central factor in *local* Hakka identity discourse. Generational differences were pointed out to me frequently: Certain generations were said to still speak Hakka or go to the pagoda, whereas other generations were said to no longer do this. This also brought active participation in Hakkaness into the discussion: In addition to statements about Hakka heritage being something that one inherited or that one was born with (specific references to birth were made by six respondents), some also considered Hakka identity to be something you had to actively *practice*. Three participants indicated this by saying they "followed" or "maintained" Hakka culture, traditions, or customs. Ten respondents more specifically tied

Hakka identity to *speaking* Hakka, including two participants who felt they could not (fully) claim Hakka status due to their lack of Hakka or 'Chinese' competency:

R12 Yes. My parents are from Meixian, Guangdong, China. I have visited my parents' home village and I speak fluent Hakka

R13 Because I speak Hakka.

R14 Both my parents were Hakka and I speak Hakka.

R15 Yes. Ancestors are Hakka and speak the language.

R16 Not Hakka, do not speak it.

R17 Yes and no. My parents are Mauritian Hakka, but I am born in Canada. I feel a bit out of touch with my heritage as I have little knowledge about my Chinese roots and do not speak the language.

(Anonymous survey responses)

The above responses imply that Hakka language may be a bit more controversial as an identity formation factor than ancestry and place of origins (cf. Lozada Jr. 2001, 183). Among those who do consider themselves Hakka (in part) because of the language, some said that they themselves speak Hakka, others, such as respondent R15, said that their ancestors and elders "speak the language". It thus may not be necessary to speak the language oneself to claim it as a contributing force in one's Hakka identity. On the other hand, respondents R16 and R17 indicated that their lack of Hakka speaking skills made them less Hakka (or not at all). Language ideologies about the centrality of Hakka language for Hakka identity claims thus diverge in different directions, making for discourses of tension in which Hakka people may express frustration, acceptance, or defiance regarding the language-identity relationship. The few survey contributions in which people expressed ambivalence about their Hakka identity also implied that Hakka identity was fluid. As the above response R17 shows, it is possible to be Hakka through parentage but not fully identify with it due to a lack of knowledge or practice. Other respondents echoed this sentiment:

R18 Yes. Because some of my ancestors are from that ethnic group. However, that's not a central part of my identity, it's been 4 generations ago that my ancestors left their country. I don't know much of that culture.

R19 Yes and no. Yes, because both of my parents and ancestors were Hakka; therefore, the Chinese culture that I was exposed to was Hakka. What I mean by that is the food, the language, the roots, the culture in which I grew up was related to the Hakka culture. If people ask me who I am related to the Chinese culture, I would mention that I am Hakka. When I meet Hakka people from

other countries, there is a certain connection. When I visited Meixian District in China twice for a few days at a time, I felt that I was Hakka and that it was "home". I met some family members there; I loved the Hakka food varieties; I could communicate a bit in Hakka with the people there. However, my attachment to Hakka culture is not absolute in the sense that I do not feel that I have to keep it at all costs. I have never mastered the language; therefore, I am limited in my communication in Hakka. I like the Hakka food but also like other types of food from other cultures. I see good things in the Hakka culture but also in other cultures.

(Anonymous survey responses)

I already discussed response R18 as part of Hakka ancestry discourse (R5). Response R19 acts as an expansion of that trope, as it were—the survey respondent stated that the Hakka-specific Chinese culture that they grew up with resonated with them, and that they felt a sense of belonging with other Hakka people ("there is a certain connection"; I felt that I was Hakka") as well as Moyen, which they called 'home' in quotation marks. On the other hand, they did not feel that their Hakka "attachment" was all-encompassing, as they did not feel the need to maintain cultural or linguistic practices "at all costs" or in a purist way, as they thought of Hakka as one of many valuable cultures in their life. I observed this sort of ambivalence in many of my interviews and informal conversations as well, in which some interlocutors stated that they felt 'Mauritian first' and then 'Chinese', rather than the other way round. Discourses of tension in which identities were ordered or ranked also had significant political connotations, as I was told in a few conversations with not only Sino-Mauritians but Mauritians of other backgrounds as well, that they were 'Mauritian first' and then something else, unlike, for instance, Muslim Mauritians who they often claimed were 'Muslim first and Mauritian second'.[18] This is, again, based in ideology rather than fact, as research shows dynamic and ambivalent national and social identities among Mauritian Muslims (cf. Auerbach, Blin, and Lallmahomed-Aumeerally 2020; Donath 2009; Eisenlohr 2006b) just like other Mauritian communities.

To recapitulate, my first survey question unwittingly provided me with a suitable overview of common Hakka identity tropes and glimpses into how Hakka people may negotiate their

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[18] I noted several instances of Islamophobic discourse among non-Muslim Mauritians, which likely contributed to this belief that Muslim Mauritians were most loyal to their ethno-religious community rather than the Mauritian nation.

belonging (or lack thereof) to the Mauritian Hakka community through ancestral links or maintenance of practices that were subsumed under the Hakka heritage umbrella. Not commonly named in surveys but sometimes addressed in interviews and conversations, there are other Hakka identity markers that I should briefly discuss as well. These include Hakka gender roles, migratory lifestyle, foodways and sustainability, scholarship and intellectualism, and entrepreneurship.

In terms of gender roles, a few interviewees mentioned the egalitarian outlook of the Hakka people. Hakka women were famously among the few Chinese women who did not bind their feet (Ardizzoni 2021, 41), and women often took charge of (economic) decisions in the household (Leo 2015, 311–12), although Hakka kinship and community structures were ultimately still patriarchal, with exogamous, patrilineal and virilocal marriage practices (Ardizzoni 2021, 34). In one group interview, participants Dominique Wong and Chantal Chung (both Hakka women in their 60s) went into more detail about the unique role of women in Hakka communities, regaling me with a series of tales of their mothers' crafts and thrifts. Dominique's mother would use old pieces of wood, rubber, and cloth to make wooden sandals, clothes, quilts, and doilies. Dominique related this to Hakka women's "imagination of letting nothing go to waste". Chantal chimed in and told us how her mother would make a dozen pairs of slippers in one night to sell in the shop the next day, and how she would make some extra money teaching people how to knit without "knowing a word of Kreol". These anecdotes of resourcefulness and frugality also matched the views of male research participants who spoke to me about the role of Hakka women in their lives. Regarding financial matters of the family, Philip Li Ching Hum (m, 70s, resides in Mauritius) concurred that Hakka women "owned the purse" and were to be considered the "backbone" of the Hakka family. The latter also translated into Hakka women's role in cultural transmission. Hakka mothers and grandmothers were typically acknowledged by many of my research participants as the ones who passed on Hakka cultural and linguistic practices in the home. Interviewee Maxime King (m, 60s, resides in Mauritius) called the classic Hakka mother the one who "gives on the culture […] [and] carries the torch". In another interview, Philip Ah-Chuen (m, 70s, resides in Mauritius) recalled that Hakka women were always "working behind the scenes" and were also "very traditional", adhering to Chinese traditions and practices more than other family members. Hakka

women being 'keepers' of Hakka culture, as it were, is a Hakka trope long acknowledged by scholars of Hakka studies. Sabrina Ardizzoni (2021, 41) compiled a comprehensive list of works that center women in the Hakka cultural domain; Nicole Constable is cited, among others, writing that Hakka women are "objectified as a symbol of Hakka identity, an embodiment of Hakka qualities" (1996b, 119). Dominique and Chantal's stories about their mothers' resourcefulness is, for instance, a quality that they later attributed to Hakka people as a whole:

> DW: You know, everything [my grandmother] had, like, from friends—she would make something out of it. Nothing went to waste.
>
> CC: Yeah, that's very Hakka.
>
> DW: Yeah, like she would dry things… (laughs)
>
> CC: (laughs) I can see my mother.
>
> DW: Pickle things (laughs)—being very resourceful.
>
> […]
>
> DW: You know, I guess that people, like, especially Hakka, they've been, like, uhm, travellers on the road, all the time. […] Meat, especially is quite scarce because they can't carry meat with them. So, [they] had to do with whatever they found on the road.
>
> JW: Whatever, yeah. They make do with whatever they have.
>
> DW: Yeah. So, they eat, you know, whatever they can. And, well, in Meixian also, they know how to preserve meat.
>
> CC: Dry meat.
>
> (Interview with Dominique Wong, f, 60s, resides in Rodrigues, Chantal Chung, f, 60s, resides in Mauritius, and Jacquelin Wong, m, 60s, resides in Rodrigues)

These descriptions of Hakka resourcefulness tie in with other tropes of Hakka cultural markers, namely migration and food. The idea of a sustained migratory lifestyle of the Hakka people stems from the historic migration ideologies of the Hakka people (see 2.2), which caused them to adapt many cultural practices to suit their new socioeconomic surroundings. In terms of more recent Hakka migration away from Mauritius, it should be recognized that Hakka Mauritians are not the only Mauritians emigrating from the island. In fact, emigration from Mauritius has been ongoing for many decades and resulted in the establishing of Mauritian diasporas (B. Schnepel 2018, 140). Nevertheless, "the migration narrative is pivotal for Hakka community awareness" (Ardizzoni 2021, 41) and has persisted as such. My research participants used many allegories and explanations for this migratory propensity:

[Hakka people] see where the cake is bigger. If the cake is bigger in the east, they go back to China (laughs). If the cake is bigger in the west, they go to Canada. As simple as that. So, that's how they see life.

(Interview with Maxime King, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

They are risk-takers, adventurers. And they are not afraid to overcome challenges and difficulties. So, these are Hakka traits, I think.

(Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

They are not afraid of leaving […] to get some more opportunities. […] I think these are strong qualities, so I'm proud to be from Hakka origin.

(Interview with Yune Vee Ah Sen, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)

Mostly the Hakka people, they are the nomads. Yeah, they move a lot.

(Interview with Lew See Yin, f, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

My wife used to call that "the itchy feet of the Hakkas".

(Anonymous interviewee, m, 40s, resides in the US)

The history of migration continues—it's in our genes.

(Interview with Kit Hau, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

I think it is in the blood of the Hakka people. Hakka means what? Hakka means 'guest'. They are nomadic. [They have the] blood of—the gene of nomads. Always moving.

(Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

These interview excerpts show how engrained the migration narrative is in imaginations of Hakka heritage. Explanations of the migratory lifestyle ranged from historical to biological, sometimes framed as resilience or strength in the wake of hardship (i.e. persecution, unrest, famines), other times as pragmatism and opportunism (i.e. seeking fortune, wealth, or improved lifestyles). Ultimately, decisions to migrate were seen as being in line with Hakka culture, and thus legitimized individual and collective Hakka heritage—"somewhat different from the other groups of Chinese" (G. Wang 2001, 223). The combination of Hakka migratory tendencies and Mauritian transcultural lived experience even transformed into a widespread idea of Hakka Mauritian cosmopolitanism:

> I see myself as a global citizen. I don't see whether I was born in Mauritius—I have a Mauritian passport, but, you know, we can fit in any environment. I think this is because we can speak English, French, and we've already lived in this multicultural society. For us, to fit in in any different context, for us, it's very easy. To adapt to these things. So, that's why it's—for me, it's quite easy. [We can go] wherever the opportunities are, or where… we can shift quite readily. And, also, because of this Hakka culture where we tend to move a lot […]. [T]hey moved around so much, so every place they've been, they picked up something and they left something as well (laughs). […] They also intermarried with the local and their cuisine, their languages, all—picked up all these different influences.

> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

The migration history of the Hakka has also led to unique foodways with an abundance of preserved meats and vegetables by pickling and salting, as well as the replacement of ingredients based on local availabilities. These foodways were also considered to be especially environmentally friendly and sustainable. These qualities of Hakka food were often brought up as a pillar of Hakka identity. Eating and cooking Hakka food were perhaps some of the most named practices when I asked what being Hakka meant to research participants, which represented the most significant effort in maintaining Hakka heritage. Hakka food, or Chinese food more generally, was also typically brought up as a connecting force in consolidating Hakkaness with Mauritianness.

Other popular topics of Hakka cultural aspects were education and economic savviness. Hakka people were seen as both politically revolutionary and intellectually insightful, and Hakka Mauritians prided themselves on their hard work in education and economic gains. In parts, this pride can be observed in the wider Chinese community not only in Mauritius but also in other diasporas. Benjamin Bailey and Sunny Lie, for instance, observe that

> Chinese Indonesians take pride in their relative economic success and attribute it to what they see as cultural values of frugality, hard work, and education. Seeing their economic success as culturally grounded encourages them to maintain a sense of proud cultural distinctiveness and thus to maintain ethnic boundaries between themselves and non-Chinese Indonesians. (2013, 30)

Similarly, Sino-Mauritian—and specifically Hakka Mauritian—economic successes constitute a contributing factor in the community's sense of communal distinctiveness in the Mauritian socioeconomic landscape. This is especially true considering their status as the smallest officially recognized Mauritian ethnic community, and the disproportionate number of successful and wealthy Sino-Mauritians (cf. Eriksen 1998, 81). To summarize

a controversial debate, various cultural markers may be thought to make or break Hakka identity. However, it is clear from the data I collected that senses of Hakkaness are more fluid and ambivalent than a simple checklist. Hakka Mauritians express their identities depending on personal experience, local contexts, and global influences. Nevertheless, the overall responses pointed toward a tendential decline of Hakka-specific (and even more generally Chinese) practices in the Sino-Mauritian community, often pointing towards ancestors and elders as the ones who were 'still very Hakka'.

4.3.3 The "Next Dodo": Hakka Mauritian Challenges of Decline

My closing question for the online survey asked for any additional comments the respondents thought were important to share. In this text field, nine respondents shared information about Hakka language use in Mauritius:

R20 For many reasons, the Hakka language/culture is slowly fading in Mauritius, which is a common trend around the world unfortunately.

R21 I don't know many people of my age group who speak Hakka and I worry that the dialect will die.

R22 Most of The younger generation do not speak Hakka and the culture is also depleting . But Mandarin is most spoken by those under 25 years .

R23 Unfortunately hakka is slowly disappearing bec. We dont speak hakka with our children

R24 Learning to speak Hakka is a important link. I never did although I understand Hakka. With my Dad Hakka , and my Mum Cantonese, Creole was spoken at home but I was exposed eventually more to Cantonese through HK media and eventually attained a basic proficiency through my wife's family.

R25 I believe that in 15 years or so hakka speaking Mauritians will only be a handful if not disappeared like our.dodo

R26 Both of my parents , close relative , my grand parents were fluent in Hakka speaking but at a very young age, I did not want to speak despite being teached, encourage to do so.

R27 In Mauritius, there are less and less chinese and the younger generation dont understand Hakka and it will be very sad if one day there will be no Hakka speakers in Mauritius!

R28 hakka speaking dialect will eventually disappear due to diaspora hakka acculturation to english, french in emigrating country, And due to Mandarin hegemony in China. The hakka cuisine may subsist though.

(Anonymous survey responses)

Note here the vocabulary that respondents use to talk about reduced speaker numbers; we have, firstly, the idea of language disappearance ("disappearing", "fading"), then language shift as the results of either personal and collective choices ("I did not want to speak", "we don't speak Hakka with our children") or external forces ("common trend around the world", "diaspora Hakka acculturation to English [and] French", "Mandarin hegemony in China"; see also 5.3), and lastly the notion of language death ("I worry that the dialect[19] will die"). This last category is also evoked in response R25 which compares the Hakka language to the extinct dodo. The dodo is nowadays often used as a symbol of Mauritius as a whole, which according to Burkhard and Cornelia Schepel (2011, 110) is somewhat of a rarity given that there are only few supra-ethnic, all-encompassing Mauritian emblems. I have noted during my fieldwork that the dodo was even sometimes used as an anthropomorphic stand-in for Mauritius, for instance in the depiction of the political 'friendship' between China and Mauritius, in which a panda and a dodo typically represented the two respective countries (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: A dodo and panda pair representing Mauritius and China, respectively, in depictions of the 'China-Mauritius Friendship'.

In the above survey response, we see that the dodo is not just a symbol of Mauritius but is here used specifically to illustrate the dire direction in which the Hakka community is presumed to be headed. During my fieldwork, Roland Tsang Kwai Kew was the first to

[19] I touch on the language/dialect status of Hakka in section 5.2.1.

introduce me to the turn of phrase "as dead as the dodo". He even used it in one of his newspaper articles entitled *Mauritians of Chinese Origin: Paradise Island's Next Dodo?* (2017). He elaborated on the idea of Sino-Mauritians being the 'next dodo' of Mauritius in our interview:

> My favourite pastime now is to collect the maximum of oral traditions in the Chinese community because with the demise of the first generation of the Chinese and the second generation, the third generation… In a few years' time, maybe in three decades, you will have an expression, which is known in Mauritius: Today, we say, "as dead as the dodo". Maybe in three decades, we will say, "as dead as the Mauritian Chinese" (laughs).
>
> (Interview with Roland Tsang Kwai Kew, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius and Canada)

The dodo is indeed a popular metaphor in Mauritius for phenomena on the decline. The phrase "as dead as the dodo" was, for instance, also used in correlation with the eradication of malaria in the 1970s (Haines 2021, 86). As Roland explains in the excerpt above, he has preoccupied himself with the documentation of Chinese oral practices because knowledgeable elders from the first few generations of immigrants are dying. The 'dodo' phenomenon is then not necessarily (only) a description of the physical death of human beings, but also that of linguistic and cultural practices in the community. This makes the dodo a key metaphor in discourses of tension in the Sino-Mauritian community, as it conveys a lack of (future) linguistic and cultural transmission. It is also important to understand this discontinuation of practices not merely in the context of an ageing community but also one that is facing additional challenges, such as emigration:

> Nowadays, the Chinese have become like dodos. They are extinct. They're on the verge of extinction. Most of the youngsters who go to study abroad, they take a one-way ticket. In each family, there must (clears throat)—there must be someone [abroad], eh, because in my family, [we] have two sons, one is already in Canada. So, there comes a time when you will find only a few remaining. You just walk in the street of Chinatown. Long ago, you have many Chinese. But today, you can't see anyone. Most of the youngsters, as soon as [they turn] 18 years old, they go...
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

Philip here imagines the dodo-like 'extinction' as resulting from the emigrating tendencies of the younger generations of Hakka Mauritians. They leave behind the few remaining 'dodos' and settle elsewhere, most commonly in Canada and Australia. The idea that "in each family", there is at least one person abroad was something I noted often in my fieldnotes, either because someone had said it to me or because I had yet again been told

of various family members living overseas. On many occasions people perked up when I mentioned having travelled from Canada and told me that their relative, friend, or they themselves were living or had lived in Canada, most often Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta. I even heard people quip a few times that there might now be more Hakka Mauritians in Toronto than there were left in Mauritius. Community estimates put the percentage of Sino-Mauritians in Mauritius at closer to 1-2% now than the oft-cited 3% (cf. Tsang Kwai Kew 2017). People also often cited this emigration trend as the reason why English and French education was so important to many families, and at the same time, why Hakka was being neglected as a community language (see 5.3.2). As such, concerns of language decline and identity erosion in the Hakka Mauritian community stemmed from two interrelated challenges: intergenerational discontinuation of communal practices and emigration, both of which limited the contexts in which Hakka identity would be salient.

4.3.4 "We are the 'Missing Link'": Intergenerational Tensions

In Roland's aforementioned newspaper article in Le Défi Media, he explores questions of Chinese heritage continuation in Mauritius: What is happening to the community and where is it headed? One paragraph stood out to me in which he addressed the intergenerational loss of Chinese identity:

> The Chinese community, in its majority, like other communities of our rainbow Nation, is facing a process of deculturalisation and the loss of ancestral values. The young Chinese are losing their "tongsin" (Chineseness), that is their Chinese identity. Many young Chinese have lost their benchmark. Is it their fault or that of their parents who have favoured their occidental education in a society where competition is privileged at the detriment of cultural values inspired by Confucius, whose way of teaching is based on the Chinese civilisation? Those ancestral values are: filial piety, respect of the elderly, the promise given to somebody, the respect of the law, the way to behave in society, the love to do one's work, etc. (Tsang Kwai Kew 2017)

Roland claims here that younger generations of Sino-Mauritians are losing their 'Chineseness' (defined by Confucian values), or as he calls it, *tongsin*. A few other research participants also used this term to refer to an intrinsic Chinese identity; however, I was unable to determine the spelling or literal meaning of the term. I interpret the term in two ways, both of which bear a similar outcome. The first interpretation is based on a spelling of tongsin as 唐心 (*tong² xim¹* in Hakka, *tángxīn* in Mandarin), meaning 'Chinese/Tang heart'. The closest reference I could trace was that of a Chinese patriotic song called *My*

Chinese Heart (我的中国心, *wǒ de Zhōngguó xīn*), in which the 'Chinese' part is designated by the use of 中国 (*Zhōngguó*), the political name of the PRC rather than 唐 (*tong²*) for the Tang Dynasty and common self-descriptor for Chinese populations like the Hakka and Cantonese (see 5.4.2). The song addresses a more politically charged identity, especially considering its composition (with Mandarin-language lyrics) in Hong Kong in 1982 amid negotiations between the UK and China over the colony's future (Y. Cheng 2015, 345). As such, despite the concepts' shared translation, their meanings are not one and the same. Naming Chinese identity or 'Chineseness' after the heart, however, may stem from the Chinese conceptualization of the heart as the place of both thought and emotions, as opposed to a Western distinction between the head or mind for thought and the heart for emotions (N. Yu 2009, 1–2). In this sense, another consideration is that *tongsin* may be spelled 同心 (*tung² xim¹* in Hakka, *tóngxīn* in Mandarin), which means 'to be of one mind'. The character 同, meaning 'same' or 'together', has been used to describe a Chinese sense of social cohesion in that it groups people who, for instance, speak the same variety or come from the same place (Cohen 1996, 79). In either of these interpretations, if we take *tongsin* to then mean a 'Chinese' way of thinking and feeling, this is what Roland claims is lost to many Sino-Mauritians of younger generations. Joseph Tsang Mang Kin (m, 80s, resides in Mauritius) had a similar comment on the state of young children's Hakka identity in our interview: While acknowledging the work cultural centers are doing for young Sino-Mauritians by teaching them 'traditional' dances or *tai qi*, he said he was afraid this was only for "the body, not the soul", distinguishing between a physical sense of Chineseness and a more internal, *tongsin*-like sense thereof.

Roland further questions whether it is their own fault or that of their parents for preferring the Mauritian "occidental education" over Chinese socialization (see also 5.2.2), among which he includes Confucian values such as filial piety, social manners, and a diligent work ethic. From my observations, conversations, and interviews, I got the impression that this was a central debate among Sino-Mauritians of all generations. Some blamed their parents, others themselves, others embedded the language shift in the context of Mauritian history and colonial and post-colonial education, the latter of which I will touch on more in Chapter 5. For the moment, I want to focus on the intergenerational tensions that emerged in this

discourse because it sheds light on the discontinuation of linguistic and cultural practices among Hakka Mauritians and different generational views on what this means for their identities. When I speak of generation, I do not mean a distinction by age, but, following the use of most of my research participants, by degrees of immigration. According to Clement Chan (2010, 244), Mauritius is home to at least four Hakka generations, with some longer-established families spanning five or six generations existing as well. Some of my research participants voiced uncertainty over what would constitute belonging to the first generation—first generation immigrant in Mauritius or first generation born in the country. Further confusion emerged over different immigration degrees on the paternal and maternal side, especially for those who were in a much younger generation, such as fifth or sixth. I typically asked them to use the term as they saw fit, as I intended less to define their exact generation and more to understand where they saw themselves in their family tree. To simplify matters for readers, however, I will follow the definition of 'second generation' that Susanne Wessendorf provides in her work on *Commonplace Diversity* in Switzerland:

> Although conceptualized as 'ethnic minority children' in the British context, continental European and North American researchers more often use the term 'second generation' in relation to the children of migrants. For the study presented here, I use the term 'second generation' when referring to the children of migrants born in Switzerland, as well as for Italian children who came to Switzerland before the age of five and went to school in Switzerland. (2016, 12)

I cross-checked this definition with that of Chan (2010, 244) and found them to be compatible, although Chan does not include a discussion about young children under the age of five. According to Wessendorf's definition, a second-generation Hakka Mauritian would be either someone who was born in Mauritius to parents who came from China or someone who came to Mauritius at such a young age that they would not have attended school in China. Only two of my participants were born in China but left before the age of three, meaning that none would be considered first-generation immigrants (although they may themselves consider as such, which it is not my intention to dispute). I did, per the above definition, meet many first-generation Hakka Mauritians but was often not able to get an interview with them due to either unavailability or language barriers (as their primary languages were often Hakka and/or Kreol). Most of my research participants thus belonged to the second, third, or fourth generation. Philip Li Ching Hum was one of the

two research participants who were born in China but came to Mauritius as an infant. In our interview, he reflected on family language policies and their impact on Hakka identity:

> We are 'yellow banana'. At home, we no longer—my generation, we can still speak Hakka. We are proud to speak Hakka because our parents forced us to speak Hakka at home. Because they don't understand Kreol, they don't understand. And they say that in the shop we speak Kreol, but inside the house no. We speak our language.
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

Many second-generation Hakka like Philip are still able to speak Hakka because their parents—first-generation Hakka—did not understand (or were just beginning to learn) Kreol, the *lingua franca* in Mauritius. At home, they would speak Hakka, or "our language", as Philip termed it, showing an ethnic group delineation by language use. With the advancing generations, however, Kreol (and multilingualism) became more and more common, and Hakka became optional because parental generations now had a broader linguistic repertoire. Eventually, Philip says, Hakka people in Mauritius ended up being 'yellow bananas'. I also heard the term 'banana' as a stand-alone, meaning the same thing: Someone who looks Chinese/'yellow' on the outside but is 'white' inside. In the Sino-Mauritian context, the inner 'white' part was taken to mean 'Westernized' (as a result of the French and British colonial influence in Mauritius). Another key metaphor in discourses of tension, the term 'banana' was sometimes used as a sarcastic joke, other times as an insult, and yet other times as a sincere stand-in for an identity crisis. In terms of raciolinguistic ideologies, this one is as obvious as they come: Appearance and linguistic behaviour should supposedly 'match', and if you do not act according to how you look, your inside and outside selves must be at odds. This juxtaposes the idea of a 'real' Chinese person with that of an 'imposter' (cf. A. Louie 2004, 186), looking the part but not fitting the role. Philip similarly elaborated on the 'banana' trope at another point in our interview: "We are losing our Chineseness." He told me that he crossed the border between Hong Kong and China sometime in the 1980s, and received some advice regarding language use:

> Somebody told me at that time that when you cross the borders, you must not speak Hakka. You most not speak Mandarin. You must speak English. When I [spoke] English, the immigration officer, in Hakka he was telling his colleague, he said, "Oh look at this gentleman, yellow banana. His mother tongue, he has forgotten. What a shame to him!" (laughs)
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

The blanket advice was likely given on the premise that Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong would pass judgment onto speakers of other Sinitic varieties (see also another interviewee's account of such a situation in 6.3.2). In this specific scenario, the immigration officers spoke Hakka themselves and judged Philip's use of English because they assumed he did not know any Sinitic variety. This, of course, may be even more jarring for someone whose language repertoire does actually not include any Chinese. Dominique Wong explained it as follows:

> We say we are Chinese Hakka, but if we go to a Chinese restaurant, where they still speak Chinese—whatever, Cantonese, Mandarin, or whatever—and we can't speak a word of it […], they won't treat you, like, Chinese, you know? (laughs) Just say, you know, "You're inferior, you are not a real Chinese", or whatever, because we can't speak. And, in fact, like, our generation, we are, like, sort of the missing link (laughs). The broken link of Chinese, you know? Because we didn't have, really, like, Chinese culture, and then we had nothing to pass on to our children.

<div align="center">(Interview with Dominique Wong, f, 60s, resides in Rodrigues)</div>

Dominique's parents were Mauritian-born, with her mother's family spanning more generations in Mauritius than her father's. This would place her in at least the third generation on her father's side of the family. Her paternal grandmother spoke mostly what Dominique called "broken Kreol" with her and did not use Dominique's Chinese name to address her. Not having grown up speaking Hakka or feeling embedded in Chinese cultural practices at home, this gave other people a sense of superiority, going as far as to question the "real Chinese" status of people like Dominique in a raciolinguistic ideology that equates language loss with a significant identity loss as well. As such, Dominique called her generation the "missing link" because they "had nothing to pass on" to future generations of Hakka Mauritians. In this view, Hakka cultural and linguistic practices gradually diminish until the 'missing link' generation is unable to transmit them. Following Laura Madokoro's argument that "without shared memories, diasporic solidarity is undermined" (2011, 18), the 'missing link' can be understood as a discursive marker of disruption and tension in the Hakka Mauritian diaspora. This has a series of implications for local Hakka identity. Philip Li Ching Hum, for instance, spoke of it in terms of communicative ability:

> FG: So, your parents spoke Hakka with you at home?
>
> PLCH: That's why I can go to Meixian. […] Because of my language. My relatives in Meixian told me that "Fortunately, you still retain your language, otherwise you would

have come here as a deaf [person]." […] You can't speak. Eh? The next generation, you see the death of Hakka language.

<div align="center">(Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

Philip's relatives in Meixian (or Moyen in Hakka) were relieved that he was able to speak Hakka because otherwise he would not have been able to communicate with them (equated here somewhat derogatorily with being deaf). This made it possible for Philip to travel to Moyen and get around. Similarly, one of my younger research participants in his 20s, David, told me that "if you dropped me in China, I wouldn't be able to survive". Although they used exaggerated expressions, both Philip and David thus implied that language barriers might cause (some) issues of motility, or: their "agency to be mobile and to choose whether to move or stay put" (Salazar 2018, 6). They thus perceived language skills or a lack thereof to be affording and constraining factors in their agency to (re-)connect with their Chinese and Hakka heritages. Hakka language is thus interpreted to play a key role in resolving identity tension.

Lastly, Philip said that in the "next generation, you see the death of Hakka language". Being a second-generation Hakka in Mauritius, still speaking some Hakka because his parents spoke it at home, he also defined the third generation onward as the one(s) in which the chain of linguistic practice would break. Rather than referring to it as a 'missing link', however, he used the afore-mentioned notion of death. Philip Ah-Chuen saw a similarly dire future for the Hakka community in Mauritius:

> FG: What do you think about the future of the Mauritian Hakka?
>
> PAC: We will die out.
>
> FG: Die out?
>
> PAC: Die out in terms of loss of language practice. […] Every language has to be spoken. When you have choices, especially here [in Mauritius], priority is English because English is the official language. And then it's spoken French as well, and Kreol. The Kreol is not written, but when it comes to written [languages], even the older generation—my dad used to write in Chinese as well, but after he passed away, nobody was [able to]. He used to write his orders in Chinese. Now it's all in English and French. This is the price we pay for industrialization, for democracy.

<div align="center">(Interview with Philip Ah-Chuen, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

It was interesting to see how Philip connected the issue of Hakka "loss of language practice" with multilingual choices rather than inevitable generational loss. He noted the

saliency of English, French, and Kreol in the typical Mauritian semiotic repertoire and how this would erode the use of other languages, both in spoken and written use. Philip also embedded these shifts in the contexts of industrialization and democracy, placing language policy firmly in the economic and political development of the Mauritian nation.

Death and extinction are, as I have already discussed, common discursive tropes in the Sino-Mauritian community. In wider Hakka discourse, this has also been termed a "'dehakkalisation' process, in which Hakka identity is gradually eroded and marginalized" (Leo 2015, 7). However, such a process may not always be linear, instead leaving room for complexity and reconnection. Dominique Wong, who had voiced the idea of the 'missing link', expressed, for instance, her hope that one of her daughters who studied abroad in China and was fluent in Mandarin would 're-link' their diasporic family:

> My daughter who studied in China—she went to Meixian, she went to spend her holidays there. She's, like, the sort of link that re-links the family, you know? Like, not only in China, but, uh, elsewhere in the world also. Because she can communicate, you know? Because she went to meet some family in Indonesia [and] she could speak Chinese to the elders and English to the youngers. She could communicate, you know? But we are the ones who broke the link somewhere.
>
> <div align="center">(Interview with Dominique Wong, f, 60s, resides in Rodrigues)</div>

As such, even with the tension and pressure of a 'broken link' in her generation, Dominique saw the potential for agency and restoration in future generations, following her daughter's efforts to study in China and connect with family in Moyen and Indonesia. While these exchanges may happen in Mandarin more than Hakka now, it still offers a shared basis for communication (see Chapter 5 for a full discussion of language shifts toward Mandarin). The effort to reconnect may of course be more of an individual choice, but I actually spoke with quite a few research participants from younger generations whose studies or employment abroad in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries made them feel closer to their Hakka and Chinese identities. Still, some felt that it was more difficult for them at first to connect with their Hakka identity because it had not formed part of their socialization as Sino-Mauritians. Consider, for instance, this exchange between sisters Daphnée and Cynthia:

> D: I learned that I was Hakka, maybe when I was, like, 10 or something like [that]. A bit late. I didn't know anything about, you know, Cantonese, Hakka, and all that. I think, Cynthia, she learned that yesterday (laughs).

C: Not yesterday, but, just like a few years back, when I was, like, interested [in], like, knowing who I am, where I come from, but otherwise I didn't know, like, my parents didn't tell us, like, who you are, where we come from…

D: They did not [tell] us where we come from. It's only—I know in history class, when we talked about how Chinese immigrants came to Mauritius, that's when we learned that, "Oh, okay, we come from Canton, and, like, we are Hakka." I mean, we knew that our grandparents talked Hakka, but […] it's like something that was meant to die with them (laughs). So it was that… (turns to Cynthia) Now, what's your opinion on that? You agree? (laughs)

C: (laughs) Yeah, I think it's—our parents, like, didn't tell us directly. Like, I should ask them, like, where we come from and what, like, ancestors... otherwise, I wouldn't know.

(Interview with Daphnée, f, 20s, and Cynthia, f, late teens, residing in Mauritius)

Over the course of my interview with Daphnée and Cynthia, it became very clear that, while they shared similar experiences of cultural and linguistic socialization in their family and at school, they also felt very differently about their respective identities. When asked about feeling Chinese, Daphnée responded that she had started embracing her Chinese identity due to her studies abroad in Malaysia, where she came to appreciate Asian culture more. Cynthia, on the other hand, said that she did not connect at all with her supposedly Chinese identity, feeling much more Mauritian, African, and Western. She went on to study in North America rather than Southeast Asia. Belonging to the same generation of Hakka immigrants (the exact degree of which they were not able to trace) in Mauritius, Daphnée and Cynthia are another example of how generation does not determine identity or a sense of belonging. It had more to do with their personal interests and migration trajectories. Furthermore, although Cynthia certainly expressed feeling more Mauritian, she did say in the above excerpt that she had some interest in knowing where she came from. Ultimately, however, she did not identify all that closely with the Chinese part of her background. Cynthia's friends even told her that she was "Chinese on the outside, Black on the inside", putting a twist on the 'banana' metaphor discussed above.

4.4 Global Resurgence: Renegotiating Hakka Practices

4.4.1 Transnational Hakka Connections and Hakka Disneyfication

A phrase I heard often in conversations and interviews was *Hakka ngin ci ga ngin* (客家人，自家人, *hag⁵ ga¹ ngin², ci² ga¹ ngin²*), meaning 'Hakka person/people, one of us/our

family'. Hakka speakers typically say this to each other upon meeting another Hakka person:

> When you meet somebody Chinese and you say, "I'm Hakka," […] they say, "Oh, we are family, we are the same."
>
> (Interview with Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the US)

> There is a saying in Hakka. We are not constrained by geopolitical boundaries. We see all the Hakka as one whole—one family. So, whether you are from the States, you are from Panama, you are from South Africa or Malaysia… we are all part of the family. So, this is actually one of our strengths […]. Because of these shared values and shared heritage, we can leverage this in ways that perhaps other groups might not.
>
> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

> The Cantonese, they flooded all the Chinatowns in the world. […] The Hakka owners or workers in those restaurants in Chinatown, they don't reveal their Hakka identity, eh? […] Many of us experience [this phrase], after a while, if they know that you're Hakka… we call it *ci ga ngin*. […] 'Our own people.'
>
> (Interview with Ng Cheong Tin Patrice Entse, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Ci ga ngin is thus a phrase of recognition of one's shared Hakka identity, which may have emerged in a context in which Hakka interactions needed to be inconspicuous. Nowadays, the phrase is used as a welcoming gesture, providing a sense of belonging and family or community beyond national borders. Hakka scholars have long stressed the importance of transnationalism in studying Hakka lived experiences. Jessieca Leo (2015, 2) for instance, uses the term 'global' Hakka rather than 'diasporic' or 'overseas', identifying transnational connections and the rise of digital technology as the driving factors of contemporary Hakka interconnection. Demographic estimates of the worldwide Hakka population vary, partly due to ambiguous ethnic classification (Lozada Jr. 2005, 95), but range from approximately 40 million (Leo 2015, 4–5) to 80 million people (C. C. Chang 2018, 427). The blurb for the 2021 Toronto Hakka Conference even stated that the Hakka are "the most diasporic of Chinese ethnic groups" (Toronto Hakka Conference 2022). While it is unclear how this superlative diasporic-ness was measured, claims such as this one can teach us much about global Hakka narratives. Migration is a central part of Hakka discourse, as it was the very process of (China-internal) migration that resulted in the "genesis" (Leo 2015, 8; Lozada Jr. 2005, 93) of a more distinct Hakka ethnicity. Further migration from China into various

parts of the world then shaped Hakka identities in a new way as they now had to be negotiated in diasporic, multicultural, and colonially policed contexts. This added transnational, transcultural, and translingual layers to the different local meanings of being Hakka—and yet a sense of intrinsic Hakka *tongsin* is still prevalent in contemporary discourse.

In this regard, it is worth examining the 'Hakka Conference' model more closely, as it serves as "a platform and arena for Hakka ethnic group identification as well as cultural production and creation" (J. Zhou 2007, 84). These conferences include the World Hakka Conference, which was first held in 1971, as well as others organized on the local level, such as the New York and Toronto Hakka Conferences. They are meant to provide a gathering place for Hakka people of various backgrounds and residences to connect and learn more about their heritage from one another. Moreover, encounters of and interactions with other Hakka people seem to hold a lot of emotional value. Take, for instance, the World Hakka Conference that was held in Toronto in 2000: Joseph Tsang Mang Kin, former Minister of Arts and Culture[20] (1995-2000) of Mauritius, observes in his keynote address that "it was a highly emotional event that enabled Hakkas from different parts of the World, to meet, reminisce and share their experiences. They were contemplating a past they did not want to forget" (2004, 1). Shaped by a collectively imagined and revisited shared past, such gatherings may strengthen not only transnational connections between Hakka people, but also senses of communal belonging and ethnic identity. At the conferences that I have attended—the New York Hakka Conference in 2018 and the virtual Toronto Hakka Conference in 2021—I noted the vast number of people who said they felt "proud to be Hakka" or to be part of the "Hakka family", which I heard many times in my interviews and other informal conversations as well. Conference attendance could also at times be a genealogical project of finding or reconnecting with long-lost family members. The welcoming, reassuring, and empowering atmosphere of these conference offered a space in which Hakka pride could grow and flourish. It is not surprising, then, that Hakka conferences seem to have provided a springboard for a movement of global Hakka identity

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[20] The ministry has since been renamed "Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage".

resurgence. This movement comes at a time when Hakka culture is simultaneously essentialized and commodified in mainland Chinese discourse and tourism:

> The museums and restored Hakka villages for cultural tourism will be the few places that offer 'Hakka culture' and experiences. Thus, commercialization and disneyfication of the Hakka identity will ensure the survival of Hakkaness as a cultural brand. (Leo 2015, 356)

The cultural 'brand' of a rural Hakka lifestyle is most tangible in the heritagization of Hakka architecture. I witnessed the commercialization of Hakka houses in southern China during a visit to the Hakka villages of Fujian province in 2018 (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Visit to the *tulou* of Gaobei Village, Yongding County, Fujian Province.

The so-called *tulou* (土樓, *tu³ lêu²* in Hakka, *tŭlóu* in Mandarin, 'earth buildings') became a heritage site in the eyes of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008. They were considered to be "a unique reflection of communal living and defensive needs, and in terms of their harmonious relationship with

their environment, an outstanding example of human settlement" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre n.d.). *Tulou* are round, oval, or square in shape (Lowe 2012, 2795–96), with a thick outer rammed earth wall and an inner courtyard that optimize lighting and defense against outsiders (Yelland 2013, 4910). The multi-story walls can house up to 800 people (UNESCO World Heritage Centre n.d.). My (non-Hakka) friend Qian accompanied me on the trip to the UNESCO *tulou*; a tour bus took us on a two-hour drive from Xiamen to the mountainous villages of Yongding County, where we were led through various *tulou* and encouraged to buy 'authentic' Hakka food, drinks, and souvenirs. Hakka people were sitting in booths selling goods while Mandarin-speaking tour guides ushered groups upon groups of visitors past them. It seemed that the Hakka vendors mostly served as props in our touristic journey that was laid out meticulously from start to finish: bus arrival, lunch at a restaurant, tours through several *tulou*, a tea tasting session, a walk through the adjacent town and countryside, bus departure. I regretted the commodifying tourist gaze through which I had to consider the *tulou* but found that the visit provided me with valuable insights into the treatment of Hakka heritage from a mainland Chinese and global perspective.

Apart from my 2018 visit, I realized that Leo's observation on the 'disneyfication' process of Hakka cultural branding took a literal turn when the live-action remake of Walt Disney Studios classic *Mulan* (Caro 2020) came out in 2020. Despite the legendary figure Hua Mulan living in northern China and not being of Hakka heritage, the filmmakers made the widely criticized decision to portray Mulan's home as a Hakka *tulou* (Geisinger 2020). The uniquely Hakka aesthetic served as a silent, uncontextualized backdrop to a classic Chinese story, commodifying *tulou* for a fictional trope. In a rightfully scathing review for *Observer*, a Hakka Taiwanese critic called it both a "western Orientalist fantasy" and a "Han supremacist fantasy that pushes for assimilation inside and outside of the nebulous ethnic category of 'Han'" (Wei Hsieh 2020). Her review centers around the discrepancy between Hakka culture and the portrayal of Mulan's community in the film, which she calls out as offensive in the context of Hakka cultural erosion in large part by Han government policies. Indeed, government authorities seek to sinicize the diverse population of mainland China by imposing the Han moniker as a homogenous, normative label for 'Chinese' people (cf. Chun 1996, 112).

Such 'disneyfication' can be detrimental to global Hakka identity in that it shows only one way of being Hakka—an exotified, commodified way—with which not everyone will be able to identify, while also engulfing Hakka culture under the wider Han umbrella. In a cynical twist, however, it also puts Hakka people on the map and (indirectly) advertises their heritage, giving them more of a platform to reclaim their identity in more varied ways. Hakka advocates could thus use this exceptionalist discourse (by way of the 'disneyfied' lens) to argue for Hakka heritage maintenance and the creation of public and academic networks dedicated to the study of Hakka culture. This newfound interest can also be contextualized within the changing perceptions of China and Chinese people on the global stage and over time:

> [T]he point precisely is to reveal how essentialist claims about Chinese identity and culture get made in specific moments. […] Each of these events signaled a shifting process, from a modernizing China in the system of empires, to a revolutionary China in the age of nation-states, and to a rising China in discourses of neoliberal capitalism. These major transitions gave rise to changing formulations of the Chinese diaspora, from a broker between East and West, to a threat to national modernity, and to an emblem of cosmopolitanism. […] In this view, Chinese culture had become a lost memory as a result of migration and settlement outside China, but one that could be recuperated. (Shelly Chan 2015, 110–11)

Given that Chinese identity has also been on the 'rise' in recent decades, this (finally) gives Hakka people the chance to express their Chinese and Hakka identities, even if in the context of neoliberalized cosmopolitanism. Chan's focus on diasporic communities and their relationship with the changing image of China also provides us with a lens through which we can understand "Hakkaness [a]s a quality that has no borders or limits and [that] can be claimed, disclaimed or reclaimed" (Leo 2015, 6). Furthermore, an emphasis on the fluidity and porosity of Hakka identity can help critique locally and globally (re-)produced ideas of monocultural cohesion. Mauritius is an interesting case study in this regard, as local discourses of tension reveal tendencies in two different directions: an all-Mauritian, blurred view of ethnic identity, and a view focused on distinct ethnolinguistic communities with continued 'ancestral' legacies. Hakka Mauritians are thus caught in the middle of various social fields of multicultural tensions. We have, on the one hand, the policing of Hakka identities from within China, promoting an exoticized, monolithic view of Hakkaness that does not reflect the lived experience of diversity and multiplicity in Hakka Chinese communities. On the other hand, in the diasporic context of Mauritius, there is

tension between the 'rainbow nation' trope and the reification of ethno-communal boundaries in day-to-day life. These tensions are intensified by both local and global raciolinguistic ideologies of the 'authentic' look and sound of Hakka, Chinese, Mauritian, and African people, overlooking the spectrum on which diverse Hakka identity arguably should exist. Hakka people respond to these tensions by agentively expressing and maintaining their heritages and identities through various cultural and linguistic practices.

4.4.2 "Everything is an Evolution": Hakka Ancestry-Tracing Revisited

A global resurgence of Hakka identity and the formation of transnational Hakka networks may constitute an exciting prospect for those who seek to (re-)establish their connection with their heritage. Some research participants, however, were more skeptical as to whether such a resurgence would prove sustainable:

> I think it's a little bit too late [to revive Hakka practices]. Because [of] the gap that's already happened, where people [from] my generation, we don't even speak anything Hakka. A lot of my friends don't even have Chinese names. My cousins won't even know what their Chinese name are.

> (Anonymous interview, m, 40s, resides in the US)

The interviewee here echoes the idea of a 'missing link' or a "gap", as he calls it. People of his generation were not typically conversant in Hakka and, notably, he brings up the topic of names to illustrate just how far removed his generation may be from their Hakka heritage. Whether they lack Chinese names or do not know what their names are, the research participant sees their Chinese namelessness as a hinderance to closing the gap of which he speaks. Naming was indeed one of the practices that was often either mentioned as something that may sustain a continuous Hakka heritage or as a tradition that was lost to the Hakka Mauritian community. Chinese names typically consist of two or three syllables: family name + (generation name) + personal name (Bauer 1959, 66–67; B. Zhu and Millward 1987, 8). The generation name is a component that is shared by relatives of the same generation (i.e. siblings and cousins) of the same gender, and these names may form phrases or poems along the lineage (Bauer 1959, 152; E. W. Louie 1998, 51–55; B. Zhu and Millward 1987, 14–15). Family and generation names thus carry genealogical information that can be useful in understanding relationships in a kin group (B. Zhu and Millward 1987, 20). As such, knowing one's own and relatives' Chinese names often

proves important not only culturally but also practically, as it could help people trace their genealogy back to China. Paula Williams Madison (2015, 127) describes in her autobiography how people at the Toronto Hakka Conference asked if she knew her grandfather's (whose relatives she was trying to find) Chinese or Hakka name. She did not, which complicated her—ultimately successful—search. In Mauritius, Chinese family names have transformed into what Clement Chan calls the "'colonised' surname" (2010, 293), (mis-)registered in various phonetic spelling attempts by colonial officers, and consisting of the first-generation immigrant father's full name in the above-mentioned order: family name + generation name + personal name. Research participants like Roland Tsang Kwai Kew thus have what they would call a "Christian" or "Western" name, followed by their Mauritian surname, which was also the full name of the first male ancestor in their lineage to arrive in Mauritius. While this long family name is seen by many as cumbersome, especially in matters of registration and international travel, prompting them to shorten it to just the original family name (if possible), others see it as a unique way to honour their family heritage. In many cases it also allows for easy identification of relation between different people, families, and lineages by asking for someone's full surname.

Tracing and honouring one's roots are, after all, considered by many Hakka Mauritians important steps to understanding not only one's personal family history, but also Hakka heritage more generally. A popular practice in this regard was a 'pilgrimage' of sorts to Moyen as the 'ancestral home', either as part of a group trip or as a solo journey:

> I've been to many times in China, but once in Moyen to go and look for my parents' ancestral home. I went there, I met a couple of relatives there, too. […] That was long time ago, so, maybe 16 years, 17 years ago, […] but, yeah, I did go there, I did go in their rooms and there was [someone to] explain, "That's where your parents lived, that's their room," et cetera, et cetera. So, it was quite a moving thing for me, eh, to go—a pilgrimage to go back and see it with my own eyes, you know?
>
> (Anonymous interviewee, m, 60s, resides in Canada)

Another interviewee, Charles, recalled how his mother's trip to Moyen changed her attitude toward sending remittances, as she started sending money to relatives in Moyen after her visit. Visiting Moyen thus offered Hakka Mauritians a chance to (re-)connect with their families and ancestry in China. Some research participants, such as Maxime King, were

even part of large transnational networks of family members who collected genealogical information and contemporary whereabouts and other status updates of their *xiang* (姓, *xiang[4]* in Hakka, '[name of] family or clan'). Maxime presented to (and kindly gifted) me a bound book of his relatives' findings, which was circulated among the transnational family. The book also contained a reference to the proverb discussed in the introduction (see 1.1), which claims that knowing the 'source' of one's heritage is a (if not *the*) pivotal component in one's identity. In my interview with Sister Cécile Leung, she shared insightful thoughts on the meaning of 'home' with me that, in parts, related to this idea:

> FG: Having lived in so many different places, what place would you call home? Or are there different places maybe?
>
> CL: (Pauses to think before replying.) I guess home is where your original nurturing milieu was. And home is where you get your family values. Home is... where you can speak your mother tongue. Home is where—I think home is not a geographic thing. When I go to China, and I have all these first cousins, and I feel... I missed home because I was not born there. And you go to the ancestral hall, and you see all the names, and that's home. But home is... home is... kind of inside yourself, where you're attached to this—my father is a 24th generation [descendent in his lineage] […] and you can retrace [his ancestry] back to 24 generations. That could be home. You're attached to that. So, home is...
>
> FG: Something that is familiar to you?
>
> CL: Home is inside you. Inside yourself. Your identity. You bring your identity wherever you are. […] Home is where everybody can understand everybody, and... I feel very much at home among my cousins. But at the same time, it's not my home, it's China (laughs). […] But... when I meet my cousins, and the Hakkaness, maybe home is the Hakkaness. Maybe home is linked to, uhm... something very ancient. Which came down to us.
>
> (Interview with Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the US)

Cécile's musings of 'home' stuck with me long after our interview. She framed it eloquently in ways that would allow for "home as a discursive space" (Boswell 2006, 135) to be connected to heritage and identity, while at the same time making it inclusive of diasporic experiences. She did this by saying "you bring your identity wherever you are" and "at the same time, it's not my home, it's China […], maybe home is the Hakkaness". This opens the idea of ancestral (re-)connection to those who may not have visited their 'ancestral home'. After all, 'pilgrimages' to Moyen are only possible as long as one has the relevant information to trace relatives' names or ancestors' original passage to Mauritius. For many younger generations of Hakka Mauritians, these details were no

longer available or accessible. While this could contribute to the intergenerational tensions discussed earlier in this chapter, some research participants also relativized the significance of heritage maintenance and cultural continuation. For instance, in my interview with teacher and school director Ah Noo, we spoke about the state of Chinatown and the decline of Hakka language learning. He offered the following thoughts:

> Everything is an evolution; we have to accept that. Things evolve in life. We don't just say, "Ah, it was better that time, oh, we lost that, we lost this." That's evolution. I'm neutral on that. Maybe somebody may say that I have lost my roots. Maybe. But for me it's okay.

(Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Ah Noo frames change as inevitable and natural, even saying that he is fine with others thinking that he may have "lost [his] roots". At the same time, as a teacher at a Chinese Saturday school (more on this in Chapter 5), he works in and contributes to an environment in which children can actively learn about 'Chinese' practices through language learning, music, dance, and visual arts. These, I found in my fieldwork, were the most common ways for young Sino-Mauritians to engage their heritage. Performance practices such as various martial arts, lion dance, dragon dance, or the Lunar Year Parade acts can function as "important vehicles for cultural renewal and the tracing of roots" (B. P. Wong 2013, 6). These practices—all offered to varying degrees in and around Port Louis—typically fell under a more general Chinese umbrella, but I also attended a few specific Hakka performances. One particular Hakka music genre pertains to the so-called 'mountain/hill songs', or *san go* (山歌, *san¹ go¹* in Hakka, *shāngē* in Mandarin), although Hakka popular music of course exists as well. Mountain songs are a genre of (romantic) folk songs which Hakka women and men would sing to each other in high-pitched melodies that would travel through the hilly and mountainous areas in which they lived (Leo 2015, 329). I saw only one rendition of a mountain song during my time in Mauritius, at an event for Hakka seniors involving a range of cultural performances. It was performed by a Hakka woman who had moved to Mauritius from China to marry a Hakka Mauritian. More modern Hakka music was featured a bit more frequently among younger Hakka Mauritian generations and children, for instance an upbeat pop song called *Ngai he Hakka ngin* (𠊎系客家人, *ngai²* *hi⁴ hag⁵ ga¹ ngin²*, 'I am [a] Hakka [person]'), which was playing a performance rehearsal with mostly younger Hakka Mauritians present. Another song was *Niat kwong kwong* (月

光光, *ngiad⁶ guong¹ guong¹*, 'bright moon'), a children's lullaby traditionally sung for the Mid-Autumn Festival, which was performed by Mauritian school children in a show telling the Mid-Autumn story of the Chinese moon deity Chang'e (see Stephen Ah Sen 2019 for the show recording on YouTube). The context of the story and the performance of the song in Hakka language made the show an educational exercise for the students that were involved.

The ways in which Hakka Mauritians engage with their Hakka ancestry have changed over time. Specific naming practices and pilgrimages to Moyen may no longer be feasible options for everyone; however, this does not necessarily mean that younger Hakka Mauritians have 'lost their roots' (or that this may pose a problem to their identity in the event that they have). They may well engage in activities that allow them to gain a deeper understanding of their Hakka and Chinese heritages, for instance in the many cultural performances that are organized through school programs or at community events. In Mauritius, such endeavours are often encouraged and supported not only as community-internal heritage practices, but also as representations of the diversity of Mauritian national heritage. For events such as those during the Lunar New Year, Mauritian news stations will often run stories and reports about the young Sino-Mauritian artists who are putting on shows or performing in the yearly parade, showcasing these events as instances of diverse Mauritian culture. This means that engagement in Hakka or Chinese performance practices is often also simultaneously be interpreted as performances of Mauritian nationhood. The Mauritian 'paradox' and tension of a nation united in diversity yet divided by reified difference thus plays an active role in maintenance *and* transformation of communal heritage. In a similar fashion, Kreol as a local *lingua franca*, and translanguaging as an all-Mauritian linguistic practice, have their roles to play in Hakka Mauritian identity expression.

4.4.3 Hakka But Not Hakka? The Roles of Kreol and Translanguaging

Some Hakka words are still frequently used among Hakka Mauritians, even when they speak Kreol for the most part. Gitanjali Pyndiah points out that Creole languages are, "by default, not monolingual" (2016, 492) as they emerged out of colonial contact and exploit.

Kreol morisien is mostly a French-lexifier Creole language with elements of West African Kwa, East African Bantu, and Malagasy (Guillemin 2011, 7) but is influenced by other locally and contemporarily used languages as well, for instance English, Hindi, and Bhojpuri (Fischer, Lehwald, and Michel 2016, 14). A list of Kreol vocabulary influences compiled by Philip Baker (1972, 63–68) also includes a few words derived from 'Chinese', Arabic, Portuguese, and Italian, although the latter three each account for only one word each. The 'Chinese' section lists four food terms. There surely are more; however, it may be hard to say which terms are mainly used by the Sino-Mauritian community and which are common among non-Chinese Mauritians as well. Regarding Hakka terms in the Sino-Mauritian community, I was offered a few examples by my research participants, mainly kinship terms that have remained firmly embedded in the Hakka Mauritian vocabulary due to use in the family, for example *popo* (婆婆, *po² po²*) and *gunggung* (公公, *gung¹ gung¹*) for 'grandmother' and 'grandfather', respectively.

Conversely, Hakka people also were influenced in their communication by Kreol and French terminology, and local Hakka expressions often included vocabulary from their Kreol surroundings. When Hakka immigrants in Mauritius needed words for something that did not exist back in China, they would create a Hakka version from the Kreol or French term, and other Kreol terms also made their way into the local Hakka vocabulary through frequent use in Hakka pronunciation. Ah Sen Hok Fen explored some of these words in a video on his YouTube channel where he did a challenge with young Hakka Mauritian guest Corinne (Stephen Ah Sen 2020). They each gave the other five Kreol-influenced Hakka words of which to guess the meaning. These words included:

(1) *see-mee-se* for 'shirt' (*simiz* in Kreol, *chemise* in French)

(2) *ya-sa* for the pickled vegetable dish known in Mauritius as *achard* (from अचार, *achaar* in Hindi, for 'pickle')

(3) *see-ma-nai* for 'cement', consisting of *sima* for 'cement' in Kreol and *nai²* (泥) for 'mud' or 'clay' in Hakka

(4) *put-put-cha* for 'motorcycle (*patpatwa* in Kreol)

(5) *lam-jiu* for 'rum', consisting of *rom* for 'rum' in Kreol and *jiu³* (酒) as a marker for alcoholic beverages in Hakka (i.e. 'beer' would be *bi¹ jiu³*; 啤酒)

(6) *bee-se-top* for 'bus stop' (*bistop* in Kreol, *bus stop* in English)

(7) *ba-sak* for 'bazaar' or 'market' (*bazar* in Kreol, بازار in Farsi)

(8) *so-da-sui* for 'soda water', consisting of *soda* in Kreol and *sui³* (水) for 'water' or as a general marker for liquids in Hakka

Most of these words were Hakka approximations for the pronunciation of the Kreol loanword, for instance *see-mee-se* and *bee-se-top*. Examples (3), (5) and (8), however, show a code-mixed use of vocabulary, where the Kreol root word is extended by a Sinitic syllable in Hakka pronunciation. In *lam-jiu* (5), this follows the exact pattern of how alcoholic beverages are constructed in Sinitic varieties: the specific alcohol first, followed by *jiu* as a marker for all alcoholic beverages. The Kreol word is just embedded in a Sinitic grammatical construction. Yune Vee Ah Sen observed that sometimes Hakka and Kreol words were just combined in a manner of repetition:

> I was in Hong Kong, I was buying some stuff and they asked me if I wanted a bag. They would say, "Do you want *doi* (袋, *doi⁶* in Cantonese, *toi⁴* in Hakka)? Like, *doi*. Uh... *doi*." Then, I understand that it would be 'bag' because in Hakka, they say toi (adds an *eh* sound following *toi*, as in *toi-eh*). So, it's a bit same, but in Mauritius, my dad, he will say *sak toi-eh*. The [Kreol] *sak* is the French *sac* ('bag'). [...] I come [back] to Mauritius, I say, "Why do you say *sak toi*, it's—the *sak* is not even a Hakka word, come on!" So, if you ask the Chinese Mauritian of Hakka origin, they mix some Kreol words in it now, and they turn it like it's a Hakka word, but it's not a Hakka word. It's like, they say, *lopital* (imitates the up and down tonality of Sinitic varieties). It's ['hospital' in Kreol and in] French but they do it with a Hakka accent, it's like, ooh, [now] it's a Hakka word. And we will understand you, the Hakka. So. But it helped me then at the time [in Hong Kong] (laughs).

(Interview with Yune Vee Ah Sen, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)

Yune Vee's account of her interaction in Hong Kong shows how someone who grows up among speakers of Mauritian Hakka may not realize that a certain word not only derives from Hakka but also forms part of a broader translanguaging repertoire. The use of *sak toi(-eh)* would then mark someone as specifically Hakka Mauritian. The combination of these words blurs the boundaries of what is Hakka and what is Kreol, or as Yune Vee puts it, "they turn it like it's a Hakka word, but it's not a Hakka word." What she describes here is the act of translanguaging, which creates new linguistic forms that may be hard to

understand for a monolingual speaker or speakers whose semiotic repertoire includes parts but not all of the resources used in the particular utterance (W. Li 2018, 12–13). This blurring of language boundaries prompted Sister Cécile Leung to speak of a "specific Sino-Mauritian Hakka":

> When I sit down with an elderly, (continues proudly) I speak my Hakka with my very good accent, I feel good about it. When we […] talk about all the expressions, very funny, and then (laughs) how our parents invented Chinese from vocabulary taken from Kreol. We speak Hakka, but there were words which have been invented, because we heard it and—because in China, there was no lorry, and *camion* ('lorry') is French—we make it Chinese *kam yong* […]. It's very specific Hakka. And this is Sino-Mauritian Hakka, which is so funny, it's so good. And you know when you are […] here [in Mauritius], people speak Hakka this side, people speak Kreol this side, there's something in you which has been touched. So, it's deep down there.
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the US)</div>

Sister Cécile shared her emotional connection with this local Hakka, feeling that it touched something "deep down" in her to hear Hakka and Kreol, as well as Sino-Mauritian Hakka, spoken around her. The practice of speaking both Hakka and Kreol, and translanguaging to "invent" new words, can thus be seen as a connection to Hakka Mauritian cultural identity. Paul Brendan Tjon Sie Fat (2002, 243) similarly notes that in Suriname, translingual practices serve as distinct markers of local Hakka ethnicity, as opposed to less mixed Hakka vernaculars. The same can be said of Mauritian Hakka.

Moreover, the practice of translanguaging is also a common feature in Kreol. Interviewee Guy Siew, a Hakka Mauritian residing in La Réunion, noted that the use of anglicisms was a somewhat distinctive feature of *Kreol morisien* vis-à-vis *Kréol rénioné* ('Reunionese Creole'). He used the example of the phrase *mo'nn stabilize* ('I fixed it') in *Kreol morisien*, which stems from the English verb 'to stabilize' rather than a French word. Guy inferred from this that you have to be knowledgeable in English on top of Kreol and French to communicate effectively in Mauritius, whereas *Kréol rénioné* typically excludes English as a semiotic resource due to its French colonial history. The linguistically diverse environment in Mauritius thus facilitates the creation of a 'translanguaging space' as coined by Li Wei (2011), in which speakers critically and creatively blur the boundaries between what may otherwise be considered distinct languages in their shared semiotic repertoire. As most Mauritians grow up multilingually, even if they speak mainly Kreol

with one another, other influences may be present in the shared translanguaging repertoire at their disposal. This translates, again, to the idea of '*briani* nation', in which individual language influences are the ingredients and the translanguaging space is the resulting flavour profile of the dish. At the same time, there is a sometimes unspoken, sometimes explicit assumption in Mauritius of language, cultural identity, and community as inherently tethered (Eriksen 1990, 3). This notion seemed to prompt many potential study participants to reject my inquiries by explaining that they would not be able to help me because they did not speak Hakka. My standard reply—"neither do I"—raised a few eyebrows: How could I study a Hakka community without speaking the language? While linguists and linguistic anthropologists have contested the previously unproblematized idea that equated grammar (as language) with culture (Duranti 2003, 325), it is still widely accepted and unquestioned in most public discourse. This tension between lived experience and ideology prompted me to interrogate the status of Hakka language in Hakka Mauritian identity formation and maintenance, especially in the wake of the increasing mainland Chinese presence and Mandarin-learning institutions in Mauritius (see Chapter 5).

I want to offer an interim conclusion here to take as the base premise for the following two chapters in which I discuss a) discourses of tension and raciolinguistic ideologies in heritage language learning, and b) the manifestation of such discourses and ideologies in Mauritian Chinatown as an audio-visual representation of Hakka Mauritian lived experiences. Hakka identity in Mauritius, as elsewhere, is not set in stone—Hakka Mauritians express their social positionalities and make use of certain discursive tropes to mark their Hakkaness, Chineseness, or Mauritianness in manifold ways. Paradoxically, Mauritius as a social environment provides tense contexts for both Hakka identification and disidentification processes. We have the national ideology of multicultural harmony and positive associations with cultural heritage on the one hand, and ethnolinguistic communalism and rigid community boundaries hindering this harmonious nation-building process on the other. In this sense, being Mauritian is a bit of a balancing act and can either support or diminish Hakka identification processes. Hakka Mauritians make use of discourses of tension to express such ambiguities and transculturality in their identities. As an added tension factor, Hakka discourse does not just happen in isolation on the local level but is further influenced by PRC-mediated narratives and transnational Hakka movements

that are offering reconnection with Hakka identity at the same time that they constrain and homogenize the meaning of Hakkaness. In the following discussion of heritage language shifts in the Hakka Mauritian community, I look at this balancing act in more detail in a particular social setting: the Mandarin language classroom.

Chapter 5

5 The 'Rise of China' in the Classroom: Heritage Language Shifts and the Role of Hakka in Mandarin Learning

5.1 A Twist of the Tongue: Mandarin Learning in Mauritius

It was a humid Saturday morning in October; fans were whirring over our heads as we gathered around a table in the big hall for our last Mandarin class of the year. Our teacher, or *laoshi* (老师, *lǎoshī*), had brought oranges for us. The act of giving oranges or tangerines is a common Chinese practice as these fruits are associated with good luck (G. Ma 2015, 197), and the word for 'tangerine' is similarly homophonous with that for 'gold' in Cantonese (DeBernardi 2010, 197). These oranges were for a special occasion. *Laoshi* was leaving Mauritius due to the end of her temporary work contract. She was from mainland China, a native Mandarin speaker, and had taught the class since March. For our last class together, she had brought a fun activity for us: Chinese tongue-twisters (see Appendix F). Some of them were quite tricky. Getting the tones right was especially difficult for me, but some of the other learners were struggling more with consonant pronunciation. *Laoshi* pointed out with a fond smile that some students were saying *sīfàn* instead of **ch**ī*fàn* (吃饭, 'to eat' or 'to have a meal'); they were mixing up the affricate [t͡ʂʰ] (spelt *ch* in *pinyin*) and the fricative [s] (*s* in *pinyin*). The next tongue twister contained many [ʂ] and [s] fricatives:

> 四是四，十是十，十四是十四，四十是四十，四十四是四十四。四十四只石狮子是死狮子。
>
> *Sì shì sì, shí shì shí, shísì shì shísì, sìshí shì sìshí, sìshísì shì sìshísì. Sìshísì zhǐ shí shīzi shì sǐ shīzi.*
>
> 4 is 4. 10 is 10, 14 is 14, 40 is 40, 44 is 44. 44 stone lions (statues) are dead lions.

An elderly student tried to get through the sentence, but it came out as *Sì sì sì, sí sì sí*, and so forth. *Laoshi* chuckled and corrected his pronunciation. After a few more attempts, the man and his wife explained that they had difficulties pronouncing the initial consonants because they were so used to Hakka, which does not have a [ʂ] fricative (W.-S. Lee and Zee 2009, 107; S. Wu and Z. Ma 2017, 62). It was not the tongue twister itself but the incongruence between Hakka and Mandarin pronunciation that caused the difficulty. This

brought to light the nuanced ways in which Hakka Mauritian learners brought knowledge and features from their heritage variety (spoken at home or elsewhere in the community) into standardized Mandarin classrooms.

The above class, henceforth Classroom A, I had learned of when I visited one of the prominent Hakka societies in Chinatown, which functioned as the host of the class and offered paid enrolment to members of the club. I joined the course first for a few weeks during my pilot study in 2018, then re-enrolled from June to October 2019 under the instruction of a different teacher. Both teachers were Mandarin-speaking Chinese women in their 20s, temporary residents from the People's Republic of China (PRC) who were sent to Mauritius by the Chinese government. Students in their beginner's and advanced classes were adult learners of different ages. In the 2019 beginner's class, the oldest learner was in her 80s. There were about ten regular attendees, but numbers fluctuated around the year and sometimes went up to about twenty students. Everyone except for me had a Hakka (or Cantonese) heritage background. Classes were offered yearly from March to October— October was typically the end date of PRC-sent teachers' contracts, and classes reopened after the annual festivities of the Lunar New Year were done.

Classroom B was situated in another Hakka club location in Chinatown, a smaller society whose membership was based mainly on belonging to the same Hakka clan. Many students from class A also started attending class B once it was offered in summer 2019, and I was invited by a fellow student to join them. Class B was different from class A in that it was taught by a local instructor. *Laoshi* in this class was a Hakka Mauritian man in his 60s who had studied Mandarin since he was a child. This class ran from July to December, and I was able to record a few sessions with the consent of the participants, as *laoshi* asked us to forward audio recordings to students who could not make it to class. Most class attendees were Hakka heritage students; however, we also had students who were not of Chinese descent join us for a few sessions. Attendance ranged from four to sixteen students.

Classroom C was the smallest Mandarin class with only about five regular participants. There was no overlap in attendees with class C and the other two classes. Participants were of mixed heritages (including non-Chinese), and, on average, much younger than in class

A and B, as a few students were in their twenties. The class was taught by Ah Noo, one of my Hakka Mauritian research participants. As the director of a Chinese Saturday school for children, he decided to offer an additional adult-learner Mandarin class. I was only able to attend a few sessions in November and December 2019, as classes were on break during the Lunar New Year period, and my research schedule and earlier-than-planned departure from Mauritius did not leave time for me to rejoin in 2020.

I had hoped to also attend ancestral language classes in Mauritian schools or courses offered by the Chinese government-affiliated Chinese Cultural Center (CCC) and Confucius Institute (CI), but scheduling turned out to be difficult as I had a few conflicts and was not able to attend night classes due to the unavailability of busses. Nevertheless, I visited the CCC and CI once each to speak to some representatives, spoke to students of their Mandarin classes, and attended various events organized by the two institutions. One PRC-led program in which I enrolled was a "Chinese Culture Land", a Guangzhou-based Chinese summer school that came to Mauritius for a week and a half in November 2019. I was placed in the adult learner class along with 39 other students of various backgrounds. Our instructors were all from the PRC and spoke little to no English, but local Mandarin teachers were assigned to each class to translate into Kreol.

My observations from Mandarin classrooms A–C, as well as the Chinese summer school, will form the basis of my analysis in this chapter. I delve into language shifts and their implications for Chinese linguistic heritage in Mauritius, as well as the significant influence from the PRC, with examples and excerpts from various educational contexts. I start with an overview of global Chinese language terms, policies and ideologies that have an impact on the way Sinitic varieties are used, taught, learned, or dismissed in Mauritius. I include here a discussion of PRC-influenced 'ideological education' and cultural transmission in 'Chinese' classes in Mauritius. I then situate such educational efforts within the Mauritian concept of 'ancestral languages' for ethnolinguistic community maintenance, illustrating how Hakka and Cantonese linguistic heritage have started shifting toward Mandarin in this local context. In the final section of the chapter, I explore the multilingual settings of three Mandarin classrooms I frequented, highlighting the translanguaging practices that are embedded in the teaching and learning journeys as well as the language ideologies that

surface in various classroom situations. Throughout this chapter, I argue that while there is palpable tension in the shift from Hakka to Mandarin teaching and learning in Mauritius and the homogenization of 'Chinese' language, Hakka continues to be part of heritage language classrooms even when it is not the (primary) target language anymore. These tensions are made explicit in discourses about the role that language plays in Mauritian identity formation. Mauritius, with its multilingual policies and ideologies of ethnolinguistic links to ancestral, diasporic culture, again emerges as a sociopolitical environment that is particularly conducive to raciolinguistic ideologies being perpetuated through translingual encounters. Chinese monolingual ideologies act as a counterforce within this dynamic, complicating Mauritian Chinese linguistic heritage and maintenance.

5.2 Ideological Education: Learning 'Chinese'

5.2.1 Chinese Language Standardization and the Rise of Mandarin

Different terms are used to describe Chinese language(s). The most widely spoken variety, *hanyu* (汉语, *hànyǔ*, 'Han language'), is internationally known as "Mandarin", originally a Portuguese term used to refer to Chinese officials in imperial court (Ganassin 2020, 15). A term that is often used in language-learning contexts is *zhongwen* (中文, *zhōngwén*, 'Chinese language'). Expectedly, this was also the word teachers used in the Mandarin classes I attended in Mauritius. *Zhongwen* originally meant 'written Chinese' but has become more or less synonymous with Mandarin or *hanyu* (Ganassin 2020, 12). Lastly, *putonghua* (普通话, *pǔtōnghuà*, 'common speech'), or Standard Modern Chinese, is the institutionalized form of the Northern (Mandarin) vernacular in Beijing pronunciation (Rohsenow 2004, 24; W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 156; Ganassin 2020, 15). State language planning has a long history in China. From the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.) and the simultaneously influential Confucianism emerged the concept of a united Han Chinese nation and language (M. Zhou and Ross 2004, 3), as "[i]mperial China considered the Han civilization to be superior and attempted to civilize or sinicize the frontier peoples by means of education in Confucian values and in the Han language" (M. Zhou 2012, 19). More formalized language reforms, first developed under the Qing dynasty at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, were meant to form an official national spoken standard

and a corresponding standard written style (Rohsenow 2004, 22). What is today known as Modern Chinese was "completed" (P. Chen 1999, 2) in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and phonology by the early Qing dynasty.

While terms like *hanyu*, *zhongwen*, and *putonghua* are sometimes used interchangeably, it is important to be aware of their semiotic nuances. Some scholars use the term *hanyu* to be inclusive of its script, *hanzi* (汉字, *hànzì*, 'Han script/characters') (Beckett and Postiglione 2012, 3), or to honour the preferences of scholars from Chinese ethnic minority backgrounds whose use of the term *hanyu* recognizes its use among the Han Chinese rather than their own communities (M. Zhou 2012, 28). While I recognize the inclusivity and specificity of *hanyu* in those cases, Hakka people are often considered to be Han or a sub-group of Han (Constable 1996a, 29), which makes the use of *hanyu* as a term potentially problematic. I will follow the language of my research participants, who all used the term Mandarin in Kreol, French, and English.

Despite the elevated status of Mandarin, linguists have generally found that "Chinese speaking communities are extremely multilingual and multicultural" (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 156). Mandarin itself is heterogeneous, encompassing several varieties of its own (Blum 2004, 123). Despite their mutual unintelligibility in most cases, many "speakers of [...] Sinitic languages believe that they speak Chinese or a dialect of Chinese" (M. Zhou and Ross 2004, 2; cf. W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 161). Some interviewees shared this view regarding Hakka, as evident in these anonymized excerpts:

(1) *Le Hakka, c'est un dialecte.* (<u>Translation:</u> Hakka is a dialect.) (Interviewee, f, 60s)

(2) I don't think you can get teachers [for Hakka]. Because Hakka is a dialect and, uh, I don't know how you teach Hakka. I don't know. (Interviewee, f, 70s)

(3) You can keep Hakka as your speaking dialect, but the writing wouldn't change [in comparison with Mandarin]. (Interviewee, m, 60s)

We can infer from these passages that the perception of Hakka as a dialect of *hanyu* has further implications as to its predisposition for teaching (example 2) or questions of literacy (example 3). Sinitic non-standard varieties are called *fangyan* (方言, *fāngyán*) in Mandarin. *Fangyan*, with its literal meaning 'regional/local speech', is often misleadingly translated as 'dialect' although a more neutral translation would be 'topolect' (Mair 1991, 7–8). I will

speak of Sinitic 'varieties' more broadly here to be more inclusive of different forms of spoken Chinese and to avoid invoking or reinforcing power dynamics between standardized and non-standardized forms. Depending on different classifications, there are seven to thirteen main groups of Sinitic varieties, of which Mandarin is the most widespread with about 850 million speakers (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 156). The early Chinese communities in Mauritius spoke mainly southern varieties: This includes Hokkien or Fukkien from the Min group (闽语, *mǐnyǔ*), Cantonese from the Yue varieties (粤语, *yuèyǔ*), and Hakka (客家语, *kèjiāyǔ*) (Ganassin 2020, 16). Paul Yang considers Hakka

> a spoken rather than a written language. It can be written in Chinese characters with the addition of certain locally invented characters, as it is in many textbooks and dictionaries for language students, but it has not been used as a literary medium. (1967, 321)

Hakka has about 48 million speakers worldwide and is officially counted as a language spoken in the Han ethnic group (Ganassin 2020, 17–18), although the internal ethnic diversity of Han people is complicated and most scholars see Hakka as an ethnicity or at least sub-ethnic category of its own right. As noted by the interviewee in example 3 above, the Chinese script can act as a unifying force for Sinitic varieties; as such, Hakka *can* be written but not necessarily distinguished from other varieties in writing except for the occasional Hakka-exclusive character.

The Chinese script has been standardized over time as well. Traditional Chinese writing was simplified in several stages between 1935 to 1986, forming the Simplified Chinese that is now used for all printed media in mainland China (Rohsenow 2004, 22). Unable to read *hanzi* without a transliteration, European missionaries have attempted to implement phoneticized writing for Sinitic varieties since the sixteenth century (P. Chen 1999, 164). The system of *hanyu pinyin* (汉语拼音, *hànyǔ pīnyīn*), officially approved in 1957 (M. Zhou 2012, 22), finally replaced earlier Romanization systems developed in the early twentieth century and became the commonly used Romanized spelling of *hanzi*. Although initially intended to supplant the Chinese writing system, it never did replace or even officially co-exist with the character-based script, "remain[ing] officially *only* a system for annotating and teaching the sounds of standard Putonghua and the characters which express them" (Rohsenow 2004, 23; emphasis in original).

Since the open-door policy reforms in 1978, the PRC opened up to foreign investment and trade (see 2.4.6), and started drawing "political legitimacy mainly from economic development, social stability and nationalism" (J. Qian 2014, 612). All three of these factors are also represented in the state's language policies and ideologies. Social stability and nationalism, for instance, are evoked in the idea that Mandarin is the unifying language variety of all Chinese people. A Common Language Law was introduced in 2000, ostensibly recognizing bilingualism and linguistic diversity in China (Blum 2004, 133), although in practice, "local cadres often refused to learn minority languages and deflected support for local language programs for reasons of contempt, mistrust and sheer ignorance" (A. M. Hill 2004, 336). The introduction of the Common Language Law thus does not necessarily redirect the general trend of China's nation and language planning gradually changing from a multilingual multi-nation concept to a monolingual mono-nation one during the Great Leap Forward in 1958–62 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966–1976 (M. Zhou 2012, 24). These policy changes were reinforced further after the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the government reoriented the Chinese economy from a Soviet communist model to a market-based economy (M. Zhou 2012, 25). Economic development has since become a core part of the global promotion of Mandarin as a market-relevant language, as it "has been made the language of 'opportunities'" (Beckett and Postiglione 2012, 4), transforming it "from a state-endorsed language to one that is endorsed by the state and empowered by the market" (M. Zhou 2012, 25). Such unifying efforts were modelled by Western nation-states and adopted by Chinese authorities (M. Zhou and Ross 2004, 3). In both European and Chinese contexts "[a]ttempts to enforce linguistic uniformity might be based on ideological justification, administrative convenience or political expediency" (K. Watson 1992, 105). The implementation and promotion of a uniformized 'Chinese' language are felt not only by the linguistic minorities of mainland China, but also in the diasporic Chinese communities around the world.

Linguists Li Wei and Zhu Hua (2010, 156) observe an increase in overseas Mandarin education starting approximately in the late 1980s and early 1990s, parallel to the economic and political 'rise of China'. In what can be called a "weak bilingual ideology" (M. Zhou 2012, 26), Mandarin is regarded to be the unifying, common language of all Chinese people, while minority languages serve as mere symbolic markers of linguistic diversity.

This essentially comes down to a recognition of linguistic diversity in theory, but not in practice, as Mandarin is the only language promoted in overseas programs. In a "dual effort to enhance the teaching of Chinese language abroad" (M. Zhou and Ross 2004, 16) as well as mainland China, the PRC started implementing its vision to make Mandarin the "second most important world language after English" (ibid.). CIs, CI-coordinated university courses, and CCCs around the world spearhead this endeavour. They co-exist in most countries with other foreign language institutions such as the Institut Français (French), the British Council (English), or the Goethe Institute (German).

Both the CI and CCC offer Mandarin classes in Mauritius, though Mandarin is taught in other Mauritian contexts as well. Mandarin-language programming, often including workshops in broader cultural practices, are open to anyone. However, for diasporic Chinese communities, their presence may be especially impactful, as they alter perceptions of what it means to 'be Chinese' globally and locally. Most diasporic Chinese communities historically hail from the coastal provinces Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan, which traditionally do not speak Mandarin but Cantonese, Hakka, and Fukkien/Hokkien (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 156; M. Zhou 2019, 250). Therefore, considering Chinese migration histories and trajectories, we find fewer long-established Mandarin-speaking communities in the diaspora, causing a discrepancy between mainland and diasporic Chinese communities. However, the PRC has increased its involvement in the diaspora in various stages since its open-door policy in 1978, going from viewing ethnic Chinese communities overseas as potential resources for domestic economic development to expecting them to "play a significant role in China's unification, the spread of Chinese culture, and facilitation of mutual understanding between China and other countries" (M. Zhou 2019, 266). In accordance with these goals, Chinese government presence in diasporic communities has increased significantly since the 1970s. Mandarin learning becomes instrumental in this endeavour, as Mandarin is ideologically constructed as the national language of all Chinese, residing in the mainland or elsewhere, to signify "linguistic citizenship" (M. Zhou 2012, 20) of China.

Considering the ideological "focus aimed at promoting a sense of Chinese-PRC identity through language teaching, language teaching itself becomes a political act" (Ganassin

2020, 27). The Chinese government assists this political act by donating textbooks and other classroom materials, sending teachers from the mainland, and providing training for these instructors (M. Zhou 2019, 266). Apart from language courses, Mandarin is also promoted in the diaspora via broadcasting services such as television or radio services (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 168). In Mauritius, for instance, Chinese-language newspapers previously produced by the local community have largely been taken over by PRC-affiliated news agencies. This serves the broader goal of the PRC to (re-)sinicize the diasporic community to ensure their "ethnic, cultural, and political identification with China" (M. Zhou 2019, 271).

5.2.2 'Red Songs' and 'Authentic Chineseness' in Mauritius

Shortly after my arrival in Mauritius in June 2019, I learned that the Chinese Embassy, China Cultural Centre, and Mauritius Broadcasting Company were organizing a Mandarin-language singing competition. The winner of the "Singing for Sino-Mauritian Friendship" competition would be rewarded with vocal training at the Tianjin Conservatory of Music. The advertisement for the competition reassured potential contestants that they did not have to know Mandarin, as they were offering special pronunciation courses for all candidates. I attended the final competition in July 2019, which featured songs of different genres sung by Mauritians of various ethnic backgrounds. The winning song among the adult contestants was called *I Love You, Snow at Saibei* (我爱你，塞北的雪, *Wǒ ài nǐ, Sàiběi de xuě*). This 1980 operatic piece praises the winter landscapes of Saibei, the area north of the Great Wall of China, in anticipation of spring. It constitutes one of the "[o]ne hundred patriotic songs recommended by 10 central departments, including the Department of Propaganda" (Mei 2018, 143–45) (cf. Y. Cheng 2015, 344). Songs with patriotic messages that are widely promoted by the government are known as 'red songs' (红歌, *hóng gē*). Traditionally signifying good luck and fortune, the colour red has in recent decades become a major symbol for China, its political history and its "ideological education" (Q. Wang 2013, 128) thereof. Red songs form part of a wider popular culture that is endorsed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (J. Qian 2014, 606), as its victory in 1949 started a new era in which "[t]he production, performance, and distribution of all forms of music were

nationalized" (A. F. Jones 1997, 13). As any ideological narrative, they are meant to uphold a utopian view of Chinese society (M. Zhou 2019, 25).

Red songs are typically interpreted as a form of 'brainwashing' from a Western perspective and as a celebration of Chinese leadership from a domestic perspective; however, they should also be critically assessed in light of the "national traumas of the Great Cultural Revolution" (J. Qian 2014, 607) that left the Chinese state authorities scrambling for ways to re-establish a dominant national identity and regain citizens' loyalty. More recently, in 2019, the 70th anniversary of the PRC and anti-PRC Hong Kong protests saw a return of red song distribution for the purposes of Chinese nation-building (S. Zou 2021, 48–49). This distribution was not limited to the Chinese mainland: A song that would become significant for my assessment of Chinese ideological education efforts in Mauritius was *My People, My Country* (我和我的祖國, *wǒ hé wǒ de zǔguó*, literally: 'Me and My Motherland'). Composed in the 1980s, it again is one of the 100 recommended patriotic songs (Mei 2018, 146), although it gained special importance during the PRC's 70th anniversary year in 2019, which marked its widespread revival in Chinese media (S. Zou 2021, 48–49). It surely is no coincidence that in November of the same year, I encountered this song during the PRC-organized summer school that I attended in Mauritius. The program's voice teacher had our singing class perform this song for the closing ceremony. *My People, My Country* shows distinct characteristics of 'new' red songs produced in the post-reform era (after 1978) in that its main theme more vaguely expresses patriotism rather than typical pre-reform praises of revolutionary events and figures (J. Qian 2014, 610). The first verse goes as follows:

> 我和我的祖国, 一刻也不能分割
> 无论我走到哪里, 都流出一首赞歌
> 我歌唱每一座高山, 我歌唱每一条河
> 袅袅炊烟, 小小村落, 路上一道辙
> 我最亲爱的祖国, 我永远紧依着你的心窝
> 你用你那母亲的脉搏和我诉说
>
> *Wǒ hé wǒ de zǔguó yīkè yě bùnéng fēngē*
> *wúlùn wǒ zǒu dào nǎlǐ dōu liúchū yī shǒu zàngē*

wǒ gēchàng měi yīzuò gāoshān wǒ gēchàng měi yītiáo hé

niǎoniǎo chuīyān xiǎo xiǎo cūnluò lùshàng yīdào zhé

wǒ zuì qīn'ài de zǔguó wǒ yǒngyuǎn jǐn yīzhe nǐ de xīnwō

nǐ yòng nǐ nà mǔqīn de màibó hé wǒ sùshuō

Me and my country can not [sic] be separated even for a moment

Wherever I go, a hymn comes out

I sing in praise of every mountain and every river

Curling smoke, small villages, rut on the road

My dearest motherland, I will always cling to your heart

You tell me with your mother's pulse.

(Rare Chinese Lyrics 2019; my emphasis)

During the week of the summer school, I sang the song a lot under my breath to memorize the lyrics. One afternoon in Mandarin Classroom B, *laoshi* heard me hum the tune and immediately recognized it as a "very famous Chinese song." He asked me to sing parts of it for the class, and we talked about the lyrics—something which had not happened at the summer school itself, where we had only received a translation of the title. In fact, we had not even been given the *pinyin* for the lyrics, instead sharing only a few copies of the sheet music in Chinese *jianpu* (简谱, *jiǎnpǔ*, 'simplified notation') notation and lyrics in Simplified Chinese characters (see Appendix G). Aware that most of us where not able to follow the lesson without being able to read the score or the lyrics, I looked up the *pinyin* for the song and wrote it on the board for everyone to read. The melody we memorized through repetition. However, the fact that the organizers and instructors of the summer school had not considered that a majority of their students would not be able to read Chinese characters or the *jianpu* sheet music, coupled with the urgency with which we were instructed to look proper for the stage show, seemed to imply that we were not really supposed to learn any 'Chinese' skills or retain information from the class, but rather performing an idealized version of Chinese education efforts abroad. Anthropologist Mingyuan Zhang similarly observed in her fieldwork in Madagascar that performances organized by the local CI

were prepared with the main goal of 'putting on a show' rather than encouraging participating students to learn. […] [S]tudents who sang Chinese songs on the stage

> remembered the tune, rhythm and the pronunciation of the lyrics, but had no idea what the songs were about, and, in fact, would forget the lyrics soon after the event […]. However, when covered by local Malagasy media and reported to the Confucius Institute headquarters, the event was held up as an affirmation of the teaching effectiveness of Confucius Institute instructors in the field. (2018, 114)

Contrasting these two state-led efforts of teaching songs to learners with the spontaneous information we received from our Sino-Mauritian instructor, the educational intentions seem to diverge. I do not mean to imply that teachers at Chinese government institutions do not put care or effort into their teaching (they certainly do), but that the government policies and aims changed the process and outcome of the teaching experience. The closing ceremony of the summer school during which we sang *My People, My Country* was filmed by local TV station teams, and representatives of Chinese government institutions attended (and likely reported on) the event. Their presence and the broadcasts changed the context of the song and its potential purpose, as it became an official representation of Chinese education efforts in the diaspora. We were not just a group of students singing a song we had learned in school; we became representatives of sorts of a Chinese-led summer school program that operated under an educational mandate to promote the PRC political project and influence in Mauritius, as summer schools are typically viewed as "cultural and patriotic immersion programs" (M. Zhou 2019, 266). Ideologies, after all, are not merely state impositions, but are also "negotiated and lived by active social members" (J. Qian 2014, 606). In this sense, red songs essentially "propagandize the shared cultural heritage of all ethnic nationalities in China and all Chinese people around the world" (Q. Wang 2013, 142), eroding the experiences of diverse heritages in diasporic communities. This bears implications for the messages overseas Chinese educational institutions and programs send about what it means to be Chinese in the diaspora. In other words, what role does the notion of shared 'Chineseness' play in ideological education?

Language learning does not happen in a cultural vacuum; rather, it often relies on "fixed discourses of culture as a real entity transmitted through teaching and extracurricular activities" (Ganassin 2020, 91). For Chinese community learning, Ganassin specifically lists practices such as calligraphy, dance, and music, all three of which were frequently used in Chinese educational contexts in Mauritius as well. As such, Mandarin classrooms play an essential role in (re-)sinicizing diasporic populations because "learning and using

Chinese is seen to underline the Chineseness of members of overseas Chinese communities" (M. Zhou 2019, 272). Wang further identifies 'Chineseness' as the embodiment of Chinese civilization as a source of nostalgia for people in diasporic communities (2013, 137), which may explain the willingness of many to endorse the shift from Hakka to Mandarin learning. 'Losing' Chineseness may be seen as a disconnect from what is imagined to be an ancient and glorious legacy. As such, members of diasporic communities may grapple with issues of authenticity when it comes to representing and performing their linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ganassin 2020, 137) and accept the version of authenticity that is offered by Chinese government institutions. Promoting "a return to 'roots' and resinicization, these organizations powerfully promote an essentialized version of Chinese cultural identity—a version, for example, that is characterized by speaking Mandarin and knowing about 'authentic' Chinese heritage" (Ang 2013, 27).

The Mauritian sociopolitical climate contributes to the necessity of 'authentic' heritage representation because, ideologically, "full membership in a Mauritian nation is achieved through the cultivation and public display of diasporic cultural and linguistic traditions" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 200). This emphasis on diasporic ties seemed to support the PRC government institutions' efforts to teach 'Chinese' language and culture in Mauritius; indeed, it seemed to me that they were commodifying the idea of local 'Chineseness' to legitimize their presence on the island. In other words, "[a]s long as the government aims to achieve the ultimate unification of Greater China, understandings of 'Chineseness' will be controversial and contradictory" (Q. Wang 2013, 137). Dominant discursive constructions of 'Chineseness' thus often perpetuate stereotypes (Ganassin 2020, 139) and offer an essentialist version of being Chinese that may feel foreign to Chinese people in the diaspora. Ah Noo, a Hakka Mauritian teacher and study participant, described this as Hakka culture in Mauritius "being eaten" by PRC-led Chinese performances:

> I will tell you the evolution and then see how the Hakka culture is being eaten—slowly and slowly being eaten […] For us, before, we had our show. We had our opportunity to show off our cultural link with the Chinese, with our roots. […] They tried to [co-operate] with the local people [in the 1990s]. "Okay... if we go to the show, we can make a show together, even [if] we are professional, and you are no professional." They had an open mind. "Okay. Doesn't matter. You can go and perform together on the same stage. You are professional *erhu* [two-string fiddle] player, we can put in our

yangqin [hammered dulcimer]." Doesn't matter if you play simple notes, if they can play more complicated notes, but we are on the same stage. But to encourage us to continue with our propagation of Chinese culture. That's also one way of encouraging the local Chinese descendants to upkeep their link with Chinese culture. But in 2010 and later, uh, the Chinese Embassy, because they have so much money, because they are so influential, they […] started to grasp the organization of [Lunar New Year shows]. By themselves. Normally, it's [all Chinese societies in Mauritius]. They recruit all the representatives of Chinese societies who had groups who might go on stage to perform something. You know? But they started [saying] that, "Okay... you have—no, no capacity, no... no..." (clicks tongue) I don't know. "Level wasn't good. You have to let us do it."—Chinese Embassy—"Let us do it." So, they started […] meeting with the Ministry of Arts and Culture directly. Without going through the Chinese community. But even […] this year or last year, it's 100% a collaboration between the Minister of Arts and Culture and the Chinese Embassy. […] And all the other cultural groups, […], they've all been sided out [sidelined]. So, it's not our show now. Uh, I would say that the show became more interesting. You know? More professional. But they have lost the link with the local people. […] That's why when they make the show, the hall is never, never full. Not before. Before, it was packed! […] That's one way of the Chinese Hakka culture and why we are, uhm, receding on the upkeeping of Chinese culture in Mauritius by the local people. […] Things are being organized by the Chinese. Automatically, we have no role. If we had the responsibility to organize things, then we have to organize ourselves. Now we don't have [to]! What do you want? Do you want a big show in ballet? Call them! (laughs)

(Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Ah Noo made it clear in this description of the increasing PRC involvement in Mauritian Hakka community performances that the shows had arguably become "more professional" but decidedly less "local". Slowly being limited to fewer and fewer performances, local artists and groups were told their acts were not of sufficient quality ("level wasn't good") to be considered for a Chinese show, asserting a version of 'authenticity' that ironically had nothing to do with diasporic reality. The Mauritian Ministry for Arts and Cultural Heritage (formerly the Ministry for Arts and Culture) seemed to endorse this essentialized display of 'Chineseness'. The same ministry also organized an ancestral language theatre competition series in 2019 in which the Chinese plays were performed in Mandarin, with most of the competing groups being led by PRC-affiliated institutions.

Li and Zhu observe a generational divide that boils down to different ideological understandings of Chineseness in diasporic communities: The adults in their study tended to adhere to an idea of Chineseness as fixed along the lines of ancestry, language and cultural practices, and the children they interviewed seemed to be more in favour of a "dynamic and fluid definition of Chineseness, which would defy the notion of a fixed

racial, linguistic and cultural content" (2010, 166). Evidently, questioning presupposed ideological beliefs led to a more agentive, less restrictive way of self-identification; 'Chineseness' was then mostly a matter of feeling Chinese rather than ticking off certain qualification items in order to be considered Chinese. Individual agency lies in the ways in which people "challenge stereotypical constructions of 'Chineseness' as a monolingual and monocultural force" (Ganassin 2020, 149). At the same time, however, these constructions are often reinforced in educational policies. In the Mauritian case, we need to understand the concept of 'ancestral languages' and their institutionalization to be able to contextualize local (language) ideologies of 'Chineseness' and related teaching and learning efforts of Hakka and/or Mandarin.

5.3 Ancestral Linguistic Heritage and Its Shifts in Mauritius

5.3.1 'Ancestral' Languages as Ethnic Markers in Mauritius

The language situation in Mauritius can be broadly separated into three categories: The *lingua franca* Kreol, the colonial languages English and French, and a broad spectrum of so-called 'ancestral' languages, associated mainly with the Indian and Chinese populations (Rajah-Carrim 2005, 320). As far as the total of languages officially recognized as spoken in Mauritius goes, there are some discrepancies in the literature. As Philip Baker (1972, 11) points out, establishing a consensus on the number of languages in Mauritius would also require precise agreement on a definition of language itself. Researchers have listed between ten to twenty-two languages in documenting Mauritian multilingualism (Biltoo 2006, 544; Bissoonauth 2011, 421–22; Eisenlohr 2018a, 192–93; B. Schnepel 2018, 138). Among the most mentioned are the following sixteen: Kreol, French, English, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Kutchi, Sindhi, Arabic, Mandarin, Hakka, and Cantonese. Some researchers have noted that while Arabic is included in census data as an ancestral language, its use is typically restricted to educational and religious contexts only (Biltoo 2006, 543–44; Bissoonauth 2011, 422). Neither Arabic nor Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, or Mandarin were typically used in the early Indian and Chinese communities of Mauritius (Eisenlohr 2018a, 193).

When asked which languages their teachers used as instructing languages in school, most Mauritians I met said either English, French, or both. The exceptions were those who had been educated in a Chinese school in either Hakka or Mandarin back when full-day Chinese schools were an option, or those who had young enough children to have experienced the introduction of Kreol as a schooling language as of 2012 (Eisenlohr 2018a, 194; Le Mauricien 2012). The predominant use of both English and French goes back to the development of an educational system under colonial rule, the result of a compromise between the two competing colonial groups in 1890 (Eisenlohr 2006a, 173, 183). The resistance to a policy shift toward Kreol is similarly motivated by colonial language ideologies, as Kreol is typically regarded as an inferior language—if considered a language at all and not just 'bad French' (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 11; Eriksen 1990, 4). Indeed, "the simultaneous devaluation of Creole and its subsumption under French can be read as a [Franco-Mauritian] response to the British attempts to anglicize Mauritius" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 181), and was reified in the widespread rejection of the 1982 proposal for Kreol as a national language (Prabhu 2007, 66). These colonial ideologies are still upheld today, as is evident in these anonymized interview and survey excerpts:

(1) […] our broken French, Kreol […] (Interviewee, m, 60s)

(2) They are starting to write [Kreol], but we Mauritians, we find it difficult. We're so used to reading good French and good English, we can't write Kreol. (Interviewee, m, 70s)

(3) […] mainly Kreol, which is not a language but a French dialect. (Survey respondent, m, 40s or 50s)

(4) Kreol is considered a bit low class. (Interviewee, m, 70s)

(5) My dad always wanted us to speak French and be more polite. […] And I hated that, so I spoke Kreol. (Interviewee, f, 20s)

(6) At that time, Kreol wasn't an official language yet. We didn't have dictionaries. I know now that Kreol is a language, but before, it was just a dialect. It was not considered a language, so it was banned from school in a sense. (Interviewee, f, 20s)

(7) They will all lie to you, but 99% of Mauritians speak Kreol at home. It's a national language, no doubt about it. (Interviewee, m, 50s)

These quotes show that the colonial devaluation of Kreol has had a long-lasting impact on the ideological views and language practices of Mauritians today: They may hesitate to use Kreol for reasons of social status (or use it precisely to subvert societal expectations, as in

example 5), deem it dialectical or 'broken' French, or consider it an oral language only. Example (6) shows a gradual acceptance of Kreol as a language that aligns with changes in policy and stages of standardization (i.e. Kreol gaining official language status, acquiring dictionaries, and being introduced into schools). Example (7), on the contrary, implies that Mauritians might conceal their use of Kreol despite it being a 'national' language. This is echoed by researchers of Mauritian census data like Aaliya Rajah-Carrim who notes an increase of Mauritians reporting home use of Kreol[21], but deems it "an underestimation of the actual extensive use of Kreol in the home" (2005, 327). In part, this can be explained by Mauritian politics of identity that link Kreol to the Creole community (B. Schnepel 2018, 139). Similarly, Rajah-Carrim (2005, 327) suspects an overestimation of ancestral language use in the home because of the associated implications of ethnic identity. The 'ancestral languages' (*lang ban anset* in Kreol and *langues ancestrales* in French) spoken of here are embedded in an ideological view of the Mauritian population as being multiethnic and multilingual: Each ethnolinguistic community is thought to have a shared 'homeland' outside of Mauritius and a shared language that their ancestors, the first of their community to land in Mauritius, brought with them (Eisenlohr 2006a, 188). This goes back to British colonial registration of arriving immigrants by "ethnic belonging" (Prabhu 2007, 55). Anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1990, 6) even proposes that the concept of ancestral languages may, in fact, have acted as a replacement for the ethnic membership category[22] in previous census data (cf. Rajah-Carrim 2005, 328). This is evident in the change in wording on the census itself from "mother tongue" to "ancestral language" (Prabhu 2007, 56).

Language thus plays a crucial role in the social construction of ethnic, cultural, and national identity in Mauritius. This was further institutionalized by introducing ancestral languages into the education system. Having been added into public school curricula as early as the 1940s (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 11), the first ancestral language to be formally taught in state schools in the 1950s were Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu, and

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[21] In the 2000 census, 69% of Mauritians reported using Kreol in the home (Rajah-Carrim 2005, 327) The percentage rose to 84% in 2011 (Owodally 2014, 19).
[22] Census questions pertaining to ethnic categories have been outlawed in Mauritius since 1982 (see 4.2.1).

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classes in these languages were mainly connected to Hindu and Muslim religious topics (Eisenlohr 2006a, 192). In 1984, seven languages—Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Urdu, Arabic, and Mandarin—were then proposed to be included in the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE), which would make the ancestral language curriculum relevant for the pre-requisites for secondary school admission (Eriksen 1990, 12). It is important to note here that Kreol, the *de facto* ancestral language of the Creole Mauritian population, was not included[23], which is further reinforced by their colloquial monikers 'Asian' or 'oriental languages' (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 11; Miles 2000, 218). The seven above-listed 'Asian' ancestral languages were added to the CPE in 1987, but it was not until "the CPE crisis of 1995" (Miles 2000, 227), in which ancestral languages were considered to count in students' exam ranking, that concerns over potential Indo-Mauritian advantages caused major political debate and dissatisfaction among the Mauritian population.

Sociopolitically, the "importance of these ancestral languages has been above all their role in shaping boundaries between what came to be known as ethnic communities and in providing ideological support for them as legitimate claimants of political rights and privileges" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 171). Although the CPE crisis showed that the political mobilization of ancestral languages had its limits, they nevertheless continue to hold an indexical function as symbols of ethno-communal belonging. The continued reification of ethnolinguistic 'groupness' not only affects the communities themselves, but also those who wish to distance themselves from these boundaries. As Anjali Prabhu puts it, "How can one begin to articulate a vocabulary of radical hybridity when the entire society is pervaded with one that is structured and universally understood along racial lines?" (2007, 60). This racially organized structure did not only have implications for perceptions of hybridity, or transculturality, but also for the practical implementation of the ancestral language curriculum in schools.

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[23] For an insightful discussion of the rejection of Kreol and the corresponding erasure of 'Africanness', see Prabhu 2007, 69–70. Anu Bissoonauth-Bedford (2019, 2–3) writes that the 2011 census counted twelve groups of ancestral languages, namely Arabic, Bhojpuri, "Chinese Languages", Kreol, English, French, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and "Other and not stated". Here, Kreol seemed to be included under the moniker of 'ancestral language'.

During a week-long Chinese summer school that I attended in Mauritius in 2019, I chatted with two non-Chinese Mauritian women, one Tamil and the other Muslim, who were both taking Mandarin classes as adults because they had not been able to learn Mandarin in school. Even though Mandarin is taught as part of the ancestral language curriculum and they were interested in the language, they were assigned to Tamil and Urdu classes, respectively. My Mauritian Chinese interviewees reported similar cases of not having a choice in their ancestral language elective. Christina, who at the time of our interview had just returned from working abroad in India, expressed to me that she had been interested in Indian culture since childhood, but was prevented from learning Hindi due to her parents' wishes:

> My parents would just say that I should learn Mandarin. Not only because I'm Chinese but also [because] it might be useful because China is gonna take over the world. That kind of thinking (laughs). Yeah. I used to watch Bollywood movies a lot, so I wanted to learn Hindi. But I wasn't allowed to.
>
> (Interview with Christina, f, 20s, resides in Mauritius)

Christina's parents' choice to put their daughter in Mandarin class was influenced by the political position China occupied in the world. I encountered the notion that China was going to take over the world many times in my research, and the increase of Mandarin learning in light of the 'rise of China' will be further explored in the following sections of this chapter. Christina's attendance of Mandarin classes was decided primarily by her parents; however, other interviewees indicated that not even their parents were consulted in the assignment of ancestral language classes. Christelle, for instance, recalled:

> C: You were asked to choose between, uhm, three languages, I think it's like Mandarin, Urdu, and, uh, Hindi. Yes. So… actually, you weren't asked to—I mean, they just [put me in Mandarin class] because I look like… (laughs). I mean, physically, I'm a Chinese, so they assumed. […]
>
> FG: Oh, really? No one asked you?
>
> C: No, no one asked me. No one asked my parents, too, at that time. […] Like, 1995. Yeah. No one asked me, actually. […] And what's most bizarre [is] that for the Catholics, which we now [call] Creoles, they were following the, uh, the religious class mostly (chuckles). So, they don't differentiate between language and religion. […] It's like, yeah, if you are a Hindu, you go to the Hindi class. If you are a Muslim, you go to the Urdu class. Yeah. But for the [Creoles], it was mainly religious [class].
>
> (Interview with Christelle, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)

Christelle was sorted into Mandarin class because she appears to be 'physically Chinese', therefore alluding to the racial structures of Mauritian society we saw Prabhu (2007, 60) criticize above. The ancestral language curriculum (of the 1990s, at least) thus functions on the premise of raciolinguistic ideologies that create a supposedly inherent link between racial appearance and target language. Both Christina and Christelle indicated a tension that arose from not being asked which class they would have liked to attend, rather being assigned to a class based on the widespread expectation that someone who is 'Chinese' must also want or need to learn 'Chinese'.

Apart from this "one-race-one-language norm" (W. Li 2021, 39) in the ancestral language curriculum, Christelle also observed that there seemed to be a conflation of language and religion. Mauritian Creole students, whose ancestral language would arguably be Kreol or an African language (see Prabhu 2007, 103 on the exclusion of African languages from ancestral language education), were put into Catholic religion classes instead. Charles, another interviewee in his 30s, confirmed this as well, though he deemed attendees of religious classes (instead of ancestral language classes) "Western" rather than "Catholic" or "Creole":

> In primary school, […] people from the Asian… Chinese background went to Chinese classes, but Indians went to the Indian classes. And people from Western [backgrounds], they just do, like, Christian classes—morality and stuff like that.
>
> (Interview with Charles, m, 30s, resides in Mauritius)

Evidently, there is a blurring of ethnic, religious, and linguistic classifications that reinforce colonial categorizations instead of transcending them. As discussed and critiqued in previous chapters, Mauritian society is officially divided into the ethno-communal categories Hindu/Indian, Muslim, Chinese, and 'General Population,' technically encompassing Afro-Mauritians (Creoles), white Franco-Mauritians, and those of mixed descent (*gens de couleur*) (Rajah-Carrim 2005, 318; B. Schnepel 2018, 138). While boundaries between these ethnolinguistic (and religious) communities are increasingly challenged by many Mauritians, the responses regarding the ancestral language curriculum shows that they still shape the way Mauritians perceive and classify one another. The difficulty in defining the 'general' population in particular shows in my interviewees' varying terminology of their affiliation, ranging from 'Creole' to 'Catholic' to 'Western'.

Being "defined negatively, as all those who did not come from Asia" (B. Schnepel 2018, 138), prevents them from being considered for 'Asian' or 'Oriental' ancestral language classes.

Having discussed the implementation and sociopolitical role of ancestral languages in the Mauritian education system, let me now turn to the languages that are not included in the curriculum. Languages with a long-standing history in their respective communities, such as Hakka and Cantonese (as well as Bhojpuri, Kutchi, and Gujarati, though I will focus on the ones that affect the Mauritian Chinese community specifically) have seen a decrease in numbers of speakers, "but ironically none of these languages is officially recognized and promoted as an ancestral language" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 31). In the next section, I focus on how the linguistic heritage of Hakka Mauritians is accordingly conceptualized and negotiated in the community.

5.3.2 "Why Don't You Speak Chinese?": Hakka Linguistic Heritage

In a joint interview with a mother and her son, I asked the son, David, whether he recalled a moment in his childhood in which he had learned that he was Hakka. He said that he had never really thought about it and turned to his mother, Lysebie. She did not remember whether she had ever specifically told David that he was Hakka, either, but it did prompt her to tell a story about David's brother realizing that their grandmother did not speak the same language that he was learning in Chinese school:

> L: When [my other son] started going to [Chinese Saturday school], he was only five years old. [...] And then—I remember he asked this question, because he said he heard from other people, and he asked the question, "What is Cantonese? What is Hakka? And why is it that *popo*—grandmother—when she talks, it's not like what I'm learning at school?"

> (Interview with Lysebie, f, 50s, and David, m, 20s, both residing in Mauritius)

For Lysebie's son, this must have been a moment of confusion: He was learning 'Chinese' at school and had a grandmother who spoke 'Chinese', so why were the two languages not the same? In Mauritius, despite the status of Mandarin as an 'ancestral' language, the Mauritian Chinese community historically consisted of Cantonese and Hakka (and Hokkien) speakers. These languages can still be regularly encountered in Mauritius, especially amongst older community members and in or around Chinatown, but are overall

decreasing in speakers. Non-majority languages whose speakers have limited linguistic competencies but historical and/or familial connections to the language are called 'heritage languages' (Valdés 2005, 411). Ofelia García points out that, despite the benefits of including heritage languages in multilingual students' education, the term bears hierarchical implications as "one language identity [is] reduced to that of *heritage*" (2005, 605; emphasis in original). This critique is embedded in the educational context of the US, which does not necessarily compare to the Mauritian situation with its heavy emphasis on ancestral language in questions of identity and nationhood. Rather, in Mauritius, the reduction manifests in the rigidity of raciolinguistic attachments of ancestral culture or heritage to *one* specific language. Mauritian educational policies thus support multilingualism from a paradoxically monolingual perspective.

This poses significant challenges for the recognition of diverse linguistic heritage. When speaking of Sinitic heritage languages, for instance, we need to take further specifications and the vast internal diversity of 'Chinese' into account, as there may be changes in variety or script, which may, in turn, lead to new paths for and re-evaluations of identity (A. W. He 2008, 3). The notion of ancestral language, as I have discussed, functions as ethnic symbolism in Mauritius. This holds true even if a language in question is not actively spoken by most in the respective community (Eriksen 1990, 4–5), which applies to both Cantonese and Hakka. Heritage language scholars have found that those who have or develop competencies in their heritage language may show increased confidence in expressing their (ethnic) identities (C. L. Brown 2009, 3). In the Mauritian case of Hakka and Cantonese, the incremental decrease in heritage language use may thus bear dire implications for a sense of communal identity.

Let us now take a closer look at these heritage language shifts and their impact on the Mauritian Chinese communities. Researchers of contemporary Mauritian communities seldom focus on the Mauritian Chinese; the ones who do rarely offer more than a glimpse into their complex language situation (cf. Lefort 2019, 1–2). In a discussion of linguistic diversity and national identity in Mauritius, anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen writes:

> In the tightly incorporated ethnic group of Sino-Mauritians (Mauritians of Chinese descent), a surprisingly high number state Kreol as their ancestral and currently spoken language alike. Indeed, Mandarin is possibly more widely read than Hindi, as there are two daily newspapers in Mandarin and none in Hindi currently appearing in Mauritius. (Of course, every major religious group has its occasional journal, but none is published exclusively in an ancestral language.) Why is this? Obviously, the Sino-Mauritian strategy is fundamentally different from that of the Hindus and Muslims. Numerically weak but economically strong, they under-communicate their ethnic identity in public, by claiming Kreol as a first language. In fact, this practice makes it virtually impossible to identify the Sino-Mauritian ethnic category in the census. Altogether, some 21,000 Mauritians state a Chinese language as their ancestral one; this amounts to only some 65 per cent of the Sino-Mauritians. The rest cannot be identified with reference to religion either, as they are Catholics like the general population. Clearly, the strategic option chosen by a growing number of Sino-Mauritians is Mauritian nationalism. As an economic elite, they have everything to lose in democratic communal competition. It is in their immediate interest that the recognition of the existence of ethnic groups be under-communicated; furthermore, the Sino-Mauritians fear the possible emergence of anti-Chinese sentiment. In a social context where national identity is more important than ethnic, nobody need pay attention to the fact that many of the nation's important businessmen are of Chinese descent. […] The strategy, then, is to remain as invisible as possible externally (to keep out of politics), and to reproduce ancestral culture and forms of organization intensely internally. The parallels to diaspora Jews are striking[.] (1990, 9–10)

Eriksen's assessment of Mauritian Chinese undercommunication of their ethnic identity has been criticized by Marina Carter and James Ng Foong Kwong (2009, 10), the latter Sino-Mauritian himself. Among other grievances with this argument, they pose the poignant question whether visible ethnic identity can truly be 'under-communicated', and further interrogate the idea that choices about ethnic markers such as religion and language can be considered purely strategic without considering other factors. While Eriksen makes a valid point about Sino-Mauritian caution regarding anti-Chinese sentiments as a minority group, I agree with Cartner and Ng Foong Kwong that his overall remark remains superficial. This is especially so since his assessment does not at all engage with the Mauritian Chinese relationship to China and the related history of Sinitic language learning in Mauritius. Part of the choices and changes many Sino-Mauritians made in their family- and community-internal language policies directly responded to the sociopolitical developments back in China. The initial inclusion of ancestral languages in Mauritian schools focused mainly on languages relevant to the Indo-Mauritian population (cf. Eisenlohr 2006a). Chinese ancestral language education, on the other hand, was handled primarily through community-internal schools in the early twentieth century, mainly in or in the vicinity of Chinatown. The decision to educate children at a Chinese school was tied

to the plan to stay in Mauritius only temporarily, as "loyalty to China and the idea of return was paramount, and the necessary renunciation of Chinese nationality in order to become a naturalised citizen of Mauritius prevented many immigrants from taking this drastic step" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 125). The first Chinese primary school, *Xin Fa* in Port Louis, was opened in 1912, and enrollment flourished. The introduction of the school came at a time when Sun Yat-sen's efforts to build strong political cohesion against the Qing Dynasty encouraged many diasporic communities to (again) identify more closely with China (M. Zhou 2019, 269). Chinese patriotic sentiments heightened further during the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, and by 1944, almost half of the Mauritian Chinese population of school age attended *Xin Fa* (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 185). However, the advent of the communist regime in mainland China at the end of the 1940s resulted in a rapid decline of Chinese school enrollment, as tensions between supporters of communists and nationalists intensified (2009, 187). The 'paramount' idea of returning to China vanished over the next decades. Consider the memories some older research participants shared with me:

> At the beginning, the Chinese came with only one idea: to go back to China. But the communists came and closed the door, so... they had to establish themselves for good.
>
> (Interview with Sister Cécile Leung, f, 70s, resides in the USA)

> Any Chinese people, [whether] they come from Guangdong, Meixian, when they came to Mauritius, at the back of their mind [they thought], "One day when I make money, I will go back to China." […] But then, when the 1960s came, the communists were still in power. So, it was... it was hard for them to go back, so it was time for them to find another way of living. So, they sent their children to higher school, to universities, things like that.
>
> (Interview with Jacquelin Wong, m, 60s, resides in Rodrigues)

> Back at that time, my parents always talked about "home". Home was Meixian. Everybody was in Mauritius for "some time", then [you] had to go back home. But then [you] have the civil war in China, you couldn't go back, et cetera. Reunion Island, same thing. So, my parents said, "We won't go back to China, no chance, so no need to learn Chinese. Learn English, French, mathematics, anything. But we don't want you to become a shopkeeper like us." So, we all tried the best to become a chartered accountant, a doctor, a barrister of law, I don't know...
>
> (Interview with Guy Siew, m, 70s, resides in La Réunion)

Evidently, the shift from Chinese to 'Western' education was not so much a strategy of Mauritian nationalism, but part of a life-changing decision to abandon all plans of returning home (see Yu-Sion 2005, 241–42, for similar developments in La Réunion). All three

interviewees detailed the persistent wish among the Mauritian Chinese to go back to China before the communists, in Cécile Leung's words, "closed the door" and left the overseas population to adjust to their newly permanent living arrangements. Jacquelin Wong addressed the fact that they wanted to make money before returning home, hinting at the lack of financial stability that is evident in Guy Siew's account of his parents not wanting their children to become shopkeepers like them. These stories in combination sketch the incremental shift in the Chinese community from China-oriented aspirations to more intentional planning of settlement in Mauritius (and La Réunion). This included the decision to withdraw children from Chinese classes and send them to government schools to learn colonial languages instead. As we have come to understand Mauritian identity and community formation as "a process of ideologically linking the island to sources of ethnolinguistic authenticity beyond Mauritius" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 169), we may have an idea of the ramifications that this shift in schooling may bring. The Creole population, for instance, is thought by many Mauritians to lack culture because they do not claim any ancestry outside of Mauritius (2006a, 200). In line with this train of thought, and in a general sense of wanting to preserve a valued practice, many Sino-Mauritians today regret that past generations did not insist on maintaining their heritage languages and other Chinese practices or values. This alludes to discourses of tensions between generations:

> Older generations have that [Hakka tradition], [they] find it hard to relate to the younger ones, because they feel it should be there, but then they can't—they don't understand why it's not. And they tend to blame the younger generation, they [tend to look at it] as, "Oh, how come you don't know your roots, blah blah," but then they don't self-analyze and go, "Well, maybe I didn't do a good job passing it on." Right? […] When I went to China and [they] go, "Oh! How come you don't speak Chinese?" I'm like, "You ask my dad how come he didn't [teach] me, like, Chinese?" […] And then, there's that expectation, "Oh, well, you're Chinese, you're a Hakka, you should be—" I'm like, "No, I'm Mauritian, so why should I be expected to? You guys are not very good at transmitting it, why should I expect—" You know what I mean? Sort of, like, there's not enough self-reflection from the older generation […]. [They just] go, "Oh, you should be more Hakka." Why should I be Hakka? You know? […] They practically convert their children to, let's say, Christianity, right? And then they go, "Wow, why don't you speak Chinese?"

> (Anonymous interviewee, m, 40s, resides in the USA)

This excerpt shows a range of frustrations that the older and younger generations grapple with, most a result of intergenerational gaps in transmission of cultural and linguistic practices. While blame may be passed from one generation to the other, we have already

seen that some of these shifts were seen as a necessary step to adjust to permanent life in Mauritius after plans to return to China were largely abandoned. The perceived loss of knowledge of one's roots manifests in the younger generations' lack of language skills in 'Chinese' ("Why don't you speak Chinese?") and is here rejected by positioning oneself as more Mauritian and less Hakka or Chinese ("No, I'm Mauritian […] Why should I be Hakka?"). This excerpt further connects the language and identity shifts to widespread religious conversion among the Mauritian Chinese. Religion indeed played a role in the language shifts. While enrolled in Chinese schools, children did not have to be baptized; however, to send them to colonial schools, Catholic conversion was necessary:

> When you stay in Mauritius and when you live in Mauritius, we have to integrate into the Mauritian society. How to integrate? You have to be among them—among them with a name easier to be called, and also to integrate in their religion because that will open many doors. That would open many doors even when you went to school. You know? When the Chinese went to school at that age of five, if he's a Catholic, it's easier to join the Catholic schools. If you're not Catholic, normally they will just [say], "Okay, you will be on the waiting list, if [we] have seats, you will join." If you are Catholic, automatically you are part of the group, then you will be given a seat. […] Some of the Chinese families, they started to baptize their children. They were Buddhist. They were normally Buddhist, but just to be able to thrive in the Mauritian context, they have to get a better education. They have to—they want to have a better education. One of the ways to do that is to make them Catholic. That's why we have many, many Catholics in the Chinese community.

> (Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

A Catholic baptism thus meant access to public education, which also entailed getting a Christian name "easier to be called" by others. The shift from education in Hakka and Cantonese heritage languages to colonial Christian schools thus also bore implications for naming practices and spiritual values. It was seen as a necessary means "to be able to thrive" as a minority group in Mauritius, a 'survival strategy', as many of my interviewees put it. Returning to Eriksen's (1990, 9–10) argument (see above), then, there is some evidence that the Mauritian Chinese community strategized to ensure their adjustment and integration in Mauritian society. However, I disagree that this stemmed from a wish to not be recognized as a distinct ethnic group or to 'under-communicate' their Chinese identities. Rather, their reorientation from a focus on China (in the sense of long-term migration plans, community schooling and heritage language maintenance) to a focus on Mauritius was embedded in historically and culturally specific factors such as the civil unrest in China,

the (post-)colonial entanglement of religion and education, and the wish to provide their children with a more financially sound future. These factors should not be neglected when considering why the linguistic heritage of the Mauritian Chinese community has shifted so significantly over the past century.

5.3.3 Heritage Language Shifts in Mauritius: Toward Mandarin

After shifting from Hakka and Cantonese community schooling to public education in colonial and postcolonial Mauritius, another shift starting in the late 1970s distanced many in the Mauritian Chinese community further from their heritage languages. Ah Noo, who went to a Chinese school as a child and now acts as the director of the same school, experienced this shift first-hand:

> FG: When you went to [Chinese school], did you learn Hakka? Or Mandarin already?
>
> AN: Hakka. That was a full-day Hakka-speaking school. Hakka. Hakka-speaking.
>
> FG: Yeah. So, when did they make the change to Mandarin here?
>
> AN: In the 1970s, when […] the primary [level was] getting lesser and lesser students, and they have to, say, "Ah, we can't continue with Hakka, we have to, uh, to, uh... go together with the government system only. We have to teach Mandarin because they are teaching Mandarin there. So, we shift to Mandarin in the 1970s. And we also, uhm, shift, uh, employed the people married to Mauritians who could speak Mandarin and asked them to become teachers in the [Chinese school] to teach Mandarin.
>
> (Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Concerned about the decreasing enrolment in their school, the school board at the time decided to discontinue their Hakka-language curriculum and adopt the *putonghua* policy that was modelled in the PRC. Ever since, the school (alongside a few other Chinese schools in Mauritius) has offered exclusively Mandarin classes for Mauritian children. Removing another layer of tension in the Mauritian education landscape, Chinese schools also switched from a full-day program to a Saturday school model. They do not compete with state schools anymore and now rather offer their Mandarin-language program in *addition* to week-day schooling. These changes also affected Hakka language maintenance on the family level, as mother and son Lysebie and David explained:

> FG: Did you pass on Hakka to your children?
>
> L: Ah, not really, because when I got married, my husband didn't speak Hakka. So, when they went to school, they learned English and French, and then [when they went to] school, it wasn't taught Hakka. They started teaching Modern Chinese. So he's the

generation—like his brother, my eldest son—who is fluent in Mandarin. And I cannot [speak Mandarin], because that's not my generation. So, slowly, the Hakka is going to disappear. But that is not only in Mauritius, even in Meixian, when I went last time, my cousin was telling me, she's a teacher, and she said, all the younger generations, they are learning Modern Chinese now. So, slowly, Hakka is going to disappear.

FG: And do you know why?

L: Because the new government, they want to standardize the language, so there won't be all these dialects.

D: It's the Chinese government policy.

L: Yeah.

D: To have a homogenous language, common tongue. Common tongue.

L: Modern Chinese.

D: Which is Mandarin.

(Interview with Lysebie, f, 50s, and David, m, 20s, both residing in Mauritius)

This conversation with Lysebie and David illustrates how a lack of Hakka exposure at school may result in a slow decrease of the language overall, not just in Mauritius, but, as Lysebie predicts, in Moyen/Meixian as well, causing intergenerational language barriers between those who were educated in Hakka versus those who were educated in Mandarin. Acknowledging tension in the ideological conceptualizations of Hakka and Mandarin, Lysebie and David both show an understanding of the PRC policies regarding *putonghua* and the goal it fulfills as a unifying language in the Chinese nation-building project.

Susan D. Blum asserts that the differences between *putonghua* and various *fangyan* are significant enough to account for diverse social meanings, writing that "[f]or anthropologists interested in the ideology of language, the interpretation of such differences also demonstrates a view of language and identity" (2004, 123). The case of the Mandarin turn in Mauritius is interesting because it incorporates two opposing language ideologies: that of multilingualism and monolingualism. While a multilingual ideology upholds the maintenance of various languages in public spheres, a monolingual ideology promotes the use of a single language for dominant use among speakers (M. Zhou 2019, 36). The Mauritian government's approach to its citizens' language repertoire is arguably based on a model of multilingual ideology, in which Mauritians are encouraged to learn and speak various languages. However, the reality of national language education efforts sometimes limits individual agency—i.e. lack of free choice in choosing ancestral language

classes or neglect of non-dominant varieties in the curriculum—and is heavily influenced by the (current) Chinese model of monolingualism, "based on the belief that a nation should be founded on one common language" (M. Zhou 2012, 21). As Eisenlohr observes, a

> crucial consequence of the politics of promoting ancestral languages and cultures is the privileging of standardized, homogenized views of such ancestral traditions. The institutionalization of ancestral languages and ancestral cultures is based on the erasure of the great diversity of regional origins, religious or sectarian affiliation, and linguistic diversity that characterized the original immigrants, who later were classified as belonging to the same community (2006a, 200).

Paradoxically, in encouraging nation-wide multilingualism, Mauritian education programs are enforcing foreign monolingual policies. This essentializes the ancestral cultural and linguistic practices that communities are hoping to preserve. Mandarin classes as part of the Mauritian ancestral language curriculum are now provided in a joint effort of Mauritian and Chinese state-sent teachers. Outside of the ancestral language program, the China Cultural Center (CCC), established in 1988, and the CI, added to the University Mauritius in 2016, are offering additional Mandarin courses for adult learners. These two institutions are part of a wider strategy through which "China is [..] investing to enhance its linguistic and cultural visibility in Africa" (Diallo 2016, 197). However, such visibility is not necessarily a reflection of Chinese diversity. With the sole focus on Mandarin even in places like Mauritius with long-established local Chinese communities, "Putonghua is taking over as the politically and economically dominant language, and regional language varieties such as Cantonese, Hakka, and Hokkien, are losing their place to Putonghua" (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 170). This can be a painful experience. For instance, when I asked one interviewee which of the languages that he knew he felt least comfortable speaking, he expressed shame at having to name Hakka:

> FG: And which language would be the least comfortable?
>
> I: Hakka (laughs). I feel so ashamed.
>
> FG: No, I mean, I'm the same with my Italian, my Italian is very bad. But, uhm…
>
> I: Yeah, but you are not fighting, like, a lost cause, you know?
>
> FG: That's true.
>
> I: For us, Hakka is different, you know? Because—well, at least in Mauritius, but in other countries it's not as bad. Because, uh, my view of the situation in Mauritius then, we are so few, we don't have a critical mass, and so many factors are against us. So that it's just a matter of time, it's going to—and I think if you observe, like, it's a

natural thing, I mean, how languages die, like, people stop talking. Either the speakers die themselves or they—the people—they don't die, but they switch, kind of, the language. Yeah. So, throughout history, you've seen this, this pattern. So, it's a natural thing because, okay, you learn Hakka. What for? When people normally speak a language, they have a use for it. Right? […] You know, what's the point, what's the use of speaking this language? And you don't even think about it, you're losing it, you know? Like, at some point, I was like, "Oh, we have to do something about it." I was really feeling kind of distressed, you know? I say, "Oh, it's so sad, we're losing our language." And—but Chinese is—we have a revival, but not Hakka, unfortunately. It's Mandarin. Because, uh, the government has introduced Mandarin many years ago for the young Chinese to learn Mandarin. But for me, I've learned some Mandarin, a few years, but it's not the same, you know? It's not the same.

FG: So you think Hakka classes would be better?

I: Hakka class would be better, but I would say this is sentimental. It doesn't make economic sense. What—what will you do with this? I mean, okay, Hakka—good for you. I mean, you can speak with your granddad, your grandmom, and that's it. There's not much use, and—because it takes so much time and effort to learn a language, you won't put so much effort to learn a dying language. I mean, at least in your country. If I was living in Singapore or in Malaysia, Hakka is still very spoken, you know? Because there's big population of speakers there, so...

(Anonymous interviewee, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Not wanting to make him feel judged for his discomfort with Hakka, I empathized by bringing up my own limitations in Italian. Misplaced as my attempt was, it prompted him to go into more detail about why the tension between the gradual loss of Hakka and the rise of Mandarin in Mauritius was so significant. He spoke of it in terms of life and death— both literally, in the sense that elders who still spoke Hakka were passing away, and metaphorically, as he considered Hakka to be 'dying' and referenced a Chinese (though Mandarin-focused) 'revival'. The discursive framing of life and death in Hakka language, community hubs (i.e. Chinatown), and collective identities was a recurring point research participants made in their interviews (see also Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). It emphasizes the direness of the situation, and shows how Hakka Mauritians may use discourses of tension to process language loss and shifts.

Despite this urgency, Hakka classes are generally not available in Mauritius[24] and their potential reintroduction is widely believed to be nonsensical. The anonymous interviewee

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[24] A Cantonese class for adult learners, taught by a teacher from Hong Kong who lives in Mauritius, is offered by one of the Cantonese organizations in Chinatown. I refer to it briefly in 6.3.2 due to the significance of spoken Cantonese in Chinatowns.

above referred to it as "sentimental", a wish borne out of nostalgia rather than practicality. He argued that Hakka was not of much use outside of the home and that it did not make "economic sense". This was, again, a recurring belief among participants. Chinese diasporas worldwide are witnessing "the rising economic power of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the related opportunities, and the arrival of new groups of Mandarin-speaking migrants" (Ganassin 2020, 27). This, in turn, makes Mandarin an attractive language for local business and tourism, the Chinese job market, as well as diasporic community education efforts (both local and PRC-governed). The economic advantages of learning Mandarin are thus often juxtaposed with the 'sentimental', more personal advantages of learning Hakka. Discourses of tension tend to go in one of two general directions here: While the subsequent loss of Hakka may cause some people distress, others reframe it by viewing the similarities between Mandarin and Hakka as a steppingstone to learning either language:

> There is no Hakka course. So, people will take Mandarin course if they want to learn Chinese. And Chinese is again seen from a practical point of view as being more useful in terms of job search, career prospects, so, this is fine. I don't think we should see that it's a matter of choosing between—I think, because of the special relations between Mandarin and Hakka, it's the same script—for me actually, when I learn Mandarin, I improve my Hakka.

> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Kwang, seeing Mandarin as an asset—or linguistic capital—for Mauritian Chinese career aspirations, found himself questioning the boundaries between Hakka and Mandarin on the basis of their shared script. This also was a recurring notion in interviews and informal conversations. In Kwang's view, learning Mandarin would improve his heritage language Hakka, which goes to show that "the written language still gives a sense of historical continuity to Chinese people all over the world" (Ganassin 2020, 20). We can understand such continuity as an instance of translanguaging, as the separation of Hakka and Mandarin is challenged by the use of the same script. This argument was also brought forth by then-opposition leader Paul Bérenger in a parliamentary debate in 2011, in which the 'Chinese Speaking Union' was to be introduced among other 'Speaking Unions' in Mauritius. Bérenger stated that

> there is only one written form of the Chinese language, but different speaking forms. I won't call them dialects, but different speaking forms, including Mandarin,

> Cantonais ['Cantonese'], Hakka. Therefore, it's good that we have changed the appellation—the content rather—of what was the Mandarin-Speaking Union into a Chinese language Speaking Union (Mauritius National Assembly 2011, 116).

The fact that this issue was addressed in a political forum shows how engrained matters of linguistic diversity are in the Mauritian nation-building project. The name of the Speaking Union from previously focused on Mandarin but was to include a more translingual recognition of different "speaking forms" by calling it the "Chinese (language) Speaking Union". In a follow-up comment, Speaker K. Li Kwong Wing alluded to the tension that accompanied the initial proposition of the Mandarin Speaking Union Bill by saying that he "felt most ill at ease, I felt even so to speak speechless, like excluded, because in Mauritius, we are mainly of Hakka and Cantonese culture […] [and] only a handful of people speak Mandarin" (Mauritius National Assembly 2011, 126). He stated that he was grateful for the support that the name change received because it more accurately reflected the language situation in the Sino-Mauritian community and later mentioned, as Kwang did above, the Chinese script as the connector of the varieties spoken or learned in Mauritius. Tensions of Hakka loss in light of a Mandarin rise may thus be resolved by treating the script as a unifying force. Accordingly, researchers have found that Chinese diasporic communities often consider literacy of Chinese characters being of the utmost importance:

> The emphasis on literacy is one of the most consistent findings in all the studies of children's language development among the Chinese diasporas worldwide […] because of the strong belief amongst the Chinese people that there are intricate cultural values inherent in the written Chinese characters that cannot be conveyed in any other way. (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 159)

I did sometimes address Chinese characters with my research participants, though only few responded that they knew how to read and write them. Most of these conversations were limited to the topic of names and naming, either personal names or place names. Being at least able to read and write one's own name was important to some, others said they regretted not being able to do so.

> The only thing I remember is how to write my surname. I learned it by heart, basically—they made me do it hundred times so that I can do it by heart, [they said], "Sometimes, you know, some people will ask you your family. You have to be able to write it at least." (laughs) That's the only thing that I can write in Chinese, my surname.

> (Anonymous interviewee, m, 40s, resides in the USA)

The importance of the written surname was here demonstrated by the family's insistence on practicing the character enough to write it by heart. In the case of Chinese names, Li and Zhu's above-cited explanation about inherent cultural values comes into play, as additional meanings are often woven into a name through the use of specific characters or character elements (Bauer 1959, 57; R. Jones 1959, 15–16; Kałużyńska 2016, 166–67). However, while Li and Zhu found an emphasis on literacy of the Chinese script to be one of the most consistent findings in Chinese diasporic education, in the Mandarin classrooms I frequented, writing often took the backseat. Apart from a few lessons in typical stroke order, copying characters from vocabulary lists on the board, and some calligraphy demonstrations, Mandarin teachers focused on our speaking and listening skills. In interviews and informal conversations, I also did not find Chinese script literacy to be an essential component of people's identity formation. This may be a local circumstance in a country where the national *lingua franca* was only recently—and not without debate—standardized, or it could be attributed to the time and history of migration of the Mauritian Chinese community. Some Sino-Mauritian immigrants may not have been literate when they arrived in Mauritius, perhaps decreasing the importance they placed on their descendants' Chinese literacy education outside of China, especially considering that heritage language learning overall received incrementally decreasing support from Mauritian Chinese families over the next century. However, while *literacy* did not seem to be as important in the Mauritian Chinese context as other researchers found in their fields, the Chinese *script* itself did still play a role. Whether they could read it or not, interviewees were often well-informed about the cultural and spiritual importance of *hanzi*, and many Mauritian Chinese households had Chinese calligraphy on display (as did participants in the study conducted by W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 163). It would also be unthinkable to walk through Chinatown in Port Louis and not see any Chinese characters (see Chapter 6).

Considering all of these nuances when it comes to the Mandarin turn in Mauritius since the late 1970s, it may be problematic to suggest that the Hakka community has abandoned all heritage language learning efforts. While Hakka language learning is no longer available locally and Mandarin courses are widespread in its stead, there are factors that point toward a continuation of heritage maintenance through Mandarin. On the other hand, implying that the two languages are similar enough for the shift to be irrelevant would be wrong,

especially considering the pain and distress the loss of Hakka has caused for some in the community. Consider, for instance, these three possible scenarios for Chinese heritage language learners whose home variety is unintelligible with Mandarin:

> classroom script same as home script (i.e., both use traditional and/or simplified scripts)
>
> classroom script different from home script (i.e., traditional in class, simplified at home, or vise versa)
>
> no home literacy in Chinese (A. W. He 2008, 3)

The fact that all three of these scenarios were possibilities for Hakka language learners in Mauritian Mandarin classrooms points to a need for a nuanced understanding of the Hakka-Mandarin relationship, and also the idea of Sinitic varieties as heritage languages overall. Education researcher Sara Ganassin (2020, 19) uses the term 'Chinese community schools' rather than 'heritage language schools' to account for linguistic diversity and minorities in the terminology. While her reasoning is certainly sound, I would argue that the terms may not be mutually exclusive, depending on local contexts and discourses. In the early stages of my research in Mauritius, I was surprised to learn that local Hakka revitalization was practically nonexistant. Nevertheless, both 'Chinese community learning' and 'heritage language learning' fit the scope of what is happening in Mauritius: The former is certainly more inclusive, but the latter still applies considering how some research participants viewed Mandarin learning as a way to maintain and even improve (some elements of) Hakka. I have thus begun to think of the Mandarin turn as a 'heritage language shift', which encompasses the idea that Mandarin-learning could function as a new way to connect with one's Hakka roots while also acknowledging that Hakka and Mandarin are not the same. This also helps us understand the 'in-between' positionality that Hakka Mauritians may feel as they express transculturality in their identities. Hakka and Mandarin learning are consolidated in ways that goes *between* named varieties and *beyond* them by including them in the same semiotic repertoire of the community's linguistic heritage. However, despite the variety of reasons for accepting or even welcoming this heritage language shift from Hakka to Mandarin, the underlying political changes and policies render it a controversial development (cf. Ganassin 2020, 71). In the section that follows, I present observations from three Mandarin classrooms, in which Hakka still played a major role for heritage language learners.

5.4   Learning Mandarin in Translingual Classrooms

5.4.1 Negotiating Languages of Instruction: Learning Multilingually

"Have you learned any Hakka yet?" asked a fellow dancer in my Monday night line dancing class. I was new to the class and answering questions about my research. I shook my head and replied, "I wish. I haven't found any Hakka classes in Mauritius so far." The other women nodded—it was hard to find Hakka teachers, and there was little demand for Hakka classes. "We should speak Hakka to you during practice," one of them suggested. I asked the group if they spoke Hakka. This sparked a discussion. Of course they spoke *some* Hakka, most women said, but not fluently. Various women replied that they were learning Mandarin instead of Hakka. Our line dancing teacher was about to start a Mandarin course at the CCC the next day. Someone asked her, "Is it just speaking or writing, too?" Our teacher confirmed that it was both, and another woman said, awed, "Speaking is not so bad, but writing the characters is hard!" Our teacher agreed: "Yes, you need to practice every day to get it right. Just like line dancing! Let's begin."

I found myself in conversations just like this one frequently. Learning Mandarin alongside Hakka heritage speakers gave me insights into the heritage language shift from Hakka to Mandarin, the advantages and difficulties students expressed in learning Mandarin with a Hakka background, and the transmission of cultural elements in Mandarin language learning. Mandarin classes, I learned, were seen by many as a steppingstone to reconnecting with Hakka. In turn, Hakka often formed part of the classroom's collective semiotic repertoire. While Mandarin may be at the center of the national project of the PRC ideologically, I found that the teachers in the Mandarin classes I attended did not perpetuate this view and rather encouraged learners to access their full semiotic repertoire, including Hakka. They thus made the classroom a "a space for the act of translanguaging as well as a space created through translanguaging" (W. Li 2011, 1223), meaning a space in which multilingual learners' repertoires are not artificially separated into distinct languages but viewed as a unitary whole. In many other classrooms, language ideologies are realized through "language policies, and specifically through language-in-education policy" (Y. Liu 2022, 3). Studies on Mandarin learning in the UK found that many schools are policing language use in the classroom, asking students to "speak Chinese only" (Ganassin

2020, 23), which fits the monolingual ideology embedded within the PRC's conceptualization of the relationship between nation and language. I observed the opposite in the Mandarin classes I attended in Mauritius, which makes sense given the Mauritian government's encouragement of multilingualism. Classroom A featured the most Mandarin because the teachers came from the PRC. While the two teachers had different comfort levels communicating in English, French, or even Kreol, they both made use of these semiotic resources whenever necessary—most often during new vocabulary introduction or for more complicated explanations that would be too difficult for us to understand in monolingual Mandarin. In one session, I noticed a student who seemed a bit impatient with the pace of the class and translated vocabulary in Kreol when others took too long to respond for her liking.
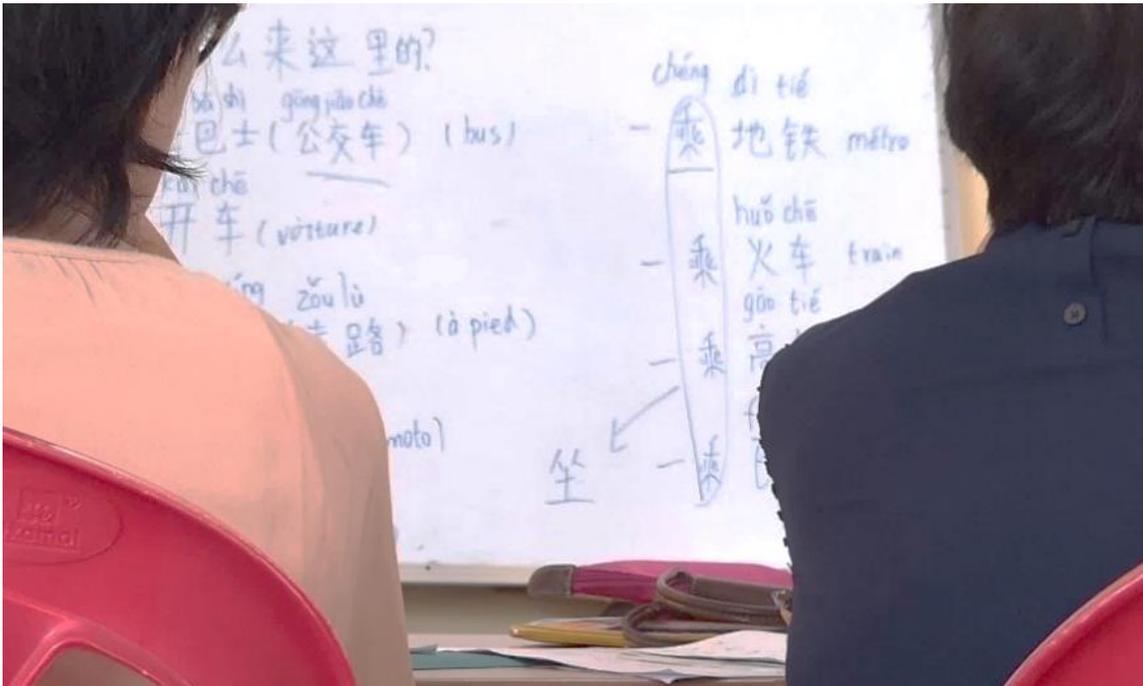
Figure 12: Learning Mandarin vocabulary for vehicles and public transport in Classroom A.

In another lesson, we learned words related to public transport (see Figure 12), and *laoshi* had difficulties explaining the difference between a metro and a train to a participant. To Mauritians, whose entire island can be crossed from north to south and east to west in about two hours by car, the teacher's explanation that a train connects different cities within a

country while a metro is used within the city did not suffice, especially considering that the then-not-inaugurated metro system in Mauritius was to connect different cities within the country as well. While she typically stuck to Mandarin as the language of instruction, *laoshi* then used a mix of Mandarin, French and English to describe the two transportation methods more efficiently.

Language barriers, of course, arise often in language classes taught by native speakers of the target language. They were less frequent in classrooms B and C, where the teachers were conversant in Mandarin, Kreol, French, English, and Hakka as well. Both made use of a variety of languages to teach Mandarin and explain cultural contexts. In classroom B, the language of instruction was explicitly discussed a few times. My presence as a non-Mauritian was acknowledged when I was asked if I would be able to follow Kreol and French explanations, which I confirmed. A couple of sessions later, we were joined by a new student and the language(s) of instruction had to be renegotiated:

> We are now sixteen students in the class, including a woman who is from Vietnam. [Her husband] told *laoshi* to maybe translate into English every now and then so that she could follow more. *Laoshi* said he'd do class in Kreol, French and English. Then he looked over to two elderly ladies and asked if French was okay. One of them said French worked. He looked at the other lady, who smiled and said, "Hakka." He laughed in response—four instruction languages to learn Mandarin! *Laoshi* would have to constantly switch… but how great for me to see how classes can just very flexibly be made multilingual in Mauritius.

> <div align="right">(Fieldnotes from Classroom B, August 22, 2019)</div>

My last remark in this fieldnote excerpt was a point I returned to a few times during my participant observations in classroom B. I intended to pay "explicit attention to the multilingual, multicultural, multiliterate classroom and community contexts in which language learning, teaching and use take place, and [the] methodological rich points here [that] have to do with typicality and heterogeneity of sites or cases" (Hornberger 2013, 109). While most of the learners were of Hakka heritage backgrounds, their different ages made for diverse semiotic repertoires. The two elderly ladies *laoshi* had addressed while discussing the language of instruction, for instance, did not speak much English. I will call them Clémence and Madeleine here. When Clémence and Madeleine spoke with each other, they used Hakka and Kreol to varying degrees:

> Clémence and Madeleine next to me talked in fast code-mixed Hakka and Kreol. Clémence spoke a bit less Hakka than Madeleine, who started the conversation in Hakka and then added a "[…] *kifer*?" ("[…] why?") in Kreol at the end of her sentence. Clémence responded in some Hakka and then switched to Kreol, at which point they almost exclusively spoke Kreol.

(Fieldnotes from Classroom B, August 10, 2019)

This exchange made me realize that students of Mandarin may come to class to learn Mandarin but would be exposed to a variety of languages depending on the repertoires of fellow learners. As such, Hakka was still an integral part of the Mandarin classroom, especially in informal conversations with elders. In classroom C, for instance, Hakka references were rare. It was the smallest classroom out of the three I frequented, with both the fewest learners overall and heritage language learners in particular. The average age was also lower, and as a result, there were no elder Hakka speakers present in class C. In classroom B, on the other hand, many learners still spoke (some) Hakka and asked questions, often in Kreol, about differences between Hakka and Mandarin language or about various cultural practices. The flexibility with which students adapted to multilingual references and discussions indicated a general sense of comfort with various languages in the larger Mauritian repertoire. While colonial authorities in the 1961 Meade report expressed concerns over the "seriously deficient" (Eisenlohr 2006a, 197) Mauritian education concept that demanded students learn multiple languages as early as primary school, Mauritians today seem to be at ease in multilingual situations. After all, as Daniel Baggioni (1992, 97) argues in an analysis of the Mauritian language situation, Mauritius is a community of multilingual speakers rather than a multilingual society comprised of more or less monolingual speakers. Although many Mauritian homes are monolingual in practice, their children are socialized into "school-mediated multilingualism" (Owodally 2014, 17) early on. Owodally (2014, 28) notes, for instance, that pre-school teachers introduce children to new English words by speaking French and then repeating the key word or phrase in English. I recorded similar instances in Mandarin classroom B:

Original

LAOSHI: Alors, on va commencer avec les *new words*, les nouveaux mots. Attention, *new words*, en Mandarin, ça dit *shēngcí* (生词). […] Nouveaux mots.

(There is some class chatter.)

LAOSHI: En Mandarin, ça dit, (slowly:) *shēngcí*. *Shēngcí*. Okay? *New words*. Alors, les nouveaux mots se trouvent là. Okay? […]

Translation

LAOSHI: <u>Alright, we will begin with the</u> *new words*, <u>the new words. Attention</u>, *new words*, <u>in Mandarin, it says</u> *shēngcí* (生词). […] <u>New words.</u>

(There is some class chatter.)

LAOSHI: <u>In Mandarin, it says,</u> (slowly:) *shēngcí*. *Shēngcí*. Okay? *New words*. <u>Alright, you can find the new words there.</u> Okay? […]

(Excerpt from Classroom B, August 29, 2019)

Original

LAOSHI: Alors, le mot *xiānsheng* (先生), une petite explication: On dit *husband*. Le deuxième mot, regardez: *mister, gentleman*. You see again: *xiānsheng*. Right? Donc, ces deux mots-là, deux caractères, pareil, mais: two different meanings. *Husband*, *mister*, and *gentleman*. So, one is family relationship, in a couple, and the second one is a title, mister or gentleman. Right? So, when you say—the lady says, *wǒ de* (我的) *xiānsheng*, what does she mean?

STUDENT: *My husband*.

LAOSHI. *My husband*. It's not *my gentleman*. It's *my husband*.

Translation

LAOSHI: <u>Alright, the word</u> *xiānsheng* (先生), <u>a little explanation</u>: We say *husband*. <u>The second word, look</u>: *mister, gentleman*. You see again: *xiānsheng*. Right? <u>So, these two words, two characters, similar, but</u>: two different meanings. *Husband*, *mister*, and *gentleman*. So, one is family relationship, in a couple, and the second one is a title, mister or gentleman. Right? So, when you say—the lady says, *wǒ de xiānsheng*, what does she mean?

STUDENT: *My husband*.

LAOSHI. *My husband*. It's not *my gentleman*. It's *my husband*.

(Excerpt from Classroom B, November 19, 2019)

The approach is criticized by Owodally for essentially teaching a language as a form of direct translation, "rather than as an independent meaning-making code" (2014, 28). This is a valid point, though I am less concerned here with the effectiveness of the teaching practice and more with the multilingual repertoires activated in these exchanges. I am unsure whether *laoshi* consciously used such repetitions as a teaching practice or not, but in any case, I imagine that it likely provided learners with a sense of familiarity, either by invoking a common Mauritian multilingual teaching practice or by including various languages of the classroom's collective semiotic repertoire. The reader may notice, for

instance, that the first excerpt with only few English references was recorded shortly after a new student in need of English translation joined the class (see above). A few months later, in the November excerpt, English had become more prominent as a language of instruction. Teaching class multilingually was not only a necessity due to various language backgrounds among learners; *laoshi* had also told me at the beginning of the course in July that he had attended Chinese school as a child when they were still teaching Hakka, but that he had disliked their monolingual use of Hakka as a language of instruction because he had found it difficult to understand anything. His language teaching policy to include multiple languages in his instruction was thus at least partly a result of childhood experiences and personal preferences.

While the multilingual instruction in classrooms B and C was the result of shared multilingual repertoires of the teachers and students, multilingual interactions in classroom A were in most cases limited to vocabulary or, if necessary, explanations of concepts or practices. More than once, when these moments occurred, I observed that the dynamics between *laoshi* and the learners shifted. During a lesson in July 2019, *laoshi* translated the Mandarin word *yǎnyuán* (演员, 'actor') as *acteur/se*, indicating the feminine form following the slash. A participant corrected her translation, saying that it should be *acteur/actrice*. I noted this as a moment of mutual learning, as *laoshi* was learning French. A year prior, under the instruction of another Mandarin-speaking teacher in the advanced class, I had observed that the students were able to hold conversations in Mandarin quite easily. Some of them had substantial knowledge of Hakka, and a few times, *laoshi* asked them about some of the differences between Hakka and Mandarin to gain some knowledge of the other variety herself. A reciprocal learning relationship thus developed in classroom A, where the two *laoshi* were in learning positions themselves.[25] Multilingual learning in the three Mandarin classrooms in which I participated thus accomplished different goals depending on the identities and language repertoires of the teachers and learners.

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[25] Of course, gender or age dynamics and ideologies may have played a role in the development of these mutual learner relationships as well, as the two teachers in classroom A of 2018 and 2019, respectively, were both young women in their 20s, whereas the teachers of classroom B and C were men in their 60s.

5.4.2 Translanguaging: Polyglossic Heritages and Identities

In classrooms A and B, where a number of class participants spoke Hakka as a heritage language, I observed a few instances in which Hakka use was actively inserted into class conversations, sometimes by accident and other times on purpose. In one exercise in classroom B, *laoshi* asked us each to come up with a sentence that included the new vocabulary. As he went around the room one by one, the following exchange occurred:

Original

STUDENT A: *Wǒ hē chá* (我喝茶, 'I drink tea').

LAOSHI: *Wǒ hē chá*, très bien.

STUDENT B: *Ngai²* (𠊎/我, 'I') [...]²⁶

[*Laoshi* and class laugh.]

FG: [to another student] C'était Hakka?

STUDENT C: [confirms] Hakka.

LAOSHI: [proceeds to explain a few different phrases in Mandarin and Hakka]

Translation

STUDENT A: *Wǒ hē chá* (我喝茶, 'I drink tea').

LAOSHI: *Wǒ hē chá*, <u>very good</u>.

STUDENT B: *Ngai²* (𠊎/我, 'I') [...]

[*Laoshi* and class laugh.]

FG: [to another student] <u>Was that Hakka?</u>

STUDENT C: [confirms] Hakka.

LAOSHI: [proceeds to explain a few different phrases in Mandarin and Hakka]

(Excerpt from Classroom B, November 14, 2019)

Student B's accidental use of Hakka set off not only a round of good-natured laughter among those who immediately recognized the words; it also prompted *laoshi* to give the class a quick overview of different phrases in Hakka and Mandarin. He thus used the student's instinctive use of their heritage language as the basis for a new teaching moment.

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²⁶ I have not been able to transcribe or translate the rest of this phrase, as my Hakka is too limited. The first character, 𠊎, is unique to the Hakka variety and "an important word in the Hakka psyche and language" (Leo 2015, 160), as it not only means 'I' or 'me', but is also a term that Hakka people would use to describe themselves as a group. Jessieca Leo (2015, 161–62) notes that the character also adorns the entrance wall of the Hakka Museum in Meizhou.

Laoshi being aware of the learners' Hakka backgrounds helped him anticipate certain pronunciation difficulties, such as the difference between [t͡ʂʰ] and [s], which had also been addressed in classroom A during the tongue twister exercise (see 5.1). Sometimes the differences were subtle and needed to be repeated a few times:

> LAOSHI: *Hǎo* (好, 'good'). [reads from book:] *Wǒ bù shì lǎoshī. Wǒ shì péngyou* (我不是老师。我是朋友。) [laughs]. I'm not your teacher. I'm your friend [laughs].
> STUDENT: *Pên² yu¹*. Friend.
> LAOSHI: *Péngyou*.
> STUDENT: *Pên² yu¹. Pên² yu¹*.
> LAOSHI: Non, ah. Hakka, *pên² yu¹*. Mandarin, *péngyou*. [Slowly:] *Péngyou*. Okay?
> STUDENT: *Péngyou*.
>
> (Excerpt from Classroom B, November 14, 2019)

Unaware of their Hakka pronunciation initially, the student repeated the word and translated it to commit it to memory. *Laoshi* countered the student's pronunciation with his own until he realized the student was saying it in Hakka. Slowly sounding it out for the student, *laoshi* was then able to convey the slight difference in pronunciation and tonality. Here, Hakka seemed to function as a 'bridge' to the target language, Mandarin. The pronunciation of a word in Hakka was thus a jumping-off point for learning the same word, pronounced differently but close enough to be recognizable, in Mandarin.

The idea of 'bridging' the heritage languages made me reconsider how I had conceptualized the heritage language shift from Hakka to Mandarin in my mind. To me, the shift presented a significant rupture, and some interviewees indeed expressed their regret that Hakka classes had been replaced with Mandarin classes. However, I had initially not anticipated how many research participants viewed the shift as beneficial due to the prospective economic and social mobility of future generations of Mandarin learners. Additionally, they considered the rise of Mandarin a natural process and often emphasized that the script at least remained the same. I thus stopped to consider a more translingual perspective on Hakka and Mandarin learning:

> Minoritized languages must be protected and developed if that is the wish of people. But it is important to understand that the linguistic features that make up that minoritized language cannot be totally isolated from others because they are generally part of the linguistic competence of bilinguals. Bilingual education cannot maintain

> minoritized languages as if they were autonomous museum pieces; instead it can only help sustain and develop them in functional interrelationship within the communicative context in which they are used by bilingual speakers. (García and Lin 2016, 11)

A lack of Hakka classes can thus be regrettable and brought about by an ideological promotion of Mandarin as the sole 'Chinese' language, but that does not necessarily mean that learning Mandarin is inherently a replacement of Hakka learning. Instead, Sinitic heritage language learners may consider the two varieties in correlation, and the use of the same script for most varieties can present itself as an advantage in their learning journey. Learners may think of this process as learning the same base language, as character literacy makes it possible for them to read signs, texts, or subtitles in either variety (Ganassin 2020, 21). Accordingly, I noticed that some elderly learners in our Mandarin classes disregarded the *pinyin* and focused on the characters. Madeleine, whose mixed use of Hakka and Kreol in a conversation with a classmate I addressed earlier, always wrote the date of each lesson in Chinese characters at the top of her notes. Another woman in classroom A was assigned to read a dialogue with me, but I had trouble understanding her Mandarin. Glancing over to her copy of the dialogue, thinking that she may be on the wrong page, I realized that she seemed to be reading the characters without using the *pinyin* as an aid, which may have caused her to pronounce some of the words in Hakka. Not having access to the same semiotic repertoire as her, I was not able to follow, but I imagine that the dialogue would have been easier for someone who shared her Hakka knowledge.

The above incident happened in classroom A, where *laoshi* did not have a Hakka background either. She thus sometimes had difficulties understanding learners' pronunciations as well. Learners also refrained from Hakka references or clarifications, unless prompted. In classroom B, however, *laoshi* understood most of the classic Hakka Mauritian repertoire, including Kreol, French, English, and Hakka. This was evident during a lesson in which *laoshi* told us about the Tang Dynasty:

Original

LAOSHI: La musique de la periode Tang est très jolie, hein? Ce sont des instruments anciens, mais ce sont des orchestres complets. Right? Donc, Tang: très important. Alors—

STUDENT: *Tong² ngin²*-**la**? (唐人-**la**) ("The Tang people?") […]

LAOSHI: Oui. Ce sont—ça veut dire **bann dimounn ki sorti** […] de la dynastie Tang. […] En Mandarin, *tángrén*. Le mot *rén*, en Hakka: *ngin²*. *Tong²*, c'est *táng*.

Translation

LAOSHI: <u>The music of the Tang period is very pretty, eh? Those are ancient instruments, but they are complete orchestras.</u> Right? <u>So, Tang: very important. Alright</u>—

STUDENT: *Tong² ngin²*-**la**? (唐人-**la**) ("The Tang people?") […]

LAOSHI: <u>Yes. They are</u>—<u>it means **people who come** […] from the Tang dynasty</u>. […] In Mandarin, *tángrén*. The word *rén*, in Hakka: *ngin²*. *Tong²* is *táng*.

(Excerpt from Classroom B, October 31, 2019)

As *laoshi* was talking about the Tang period's music, a student interjected to ask whether he was talking about the "Tang people". The Tang Dynasty (618 to 907 BCE), to which the term refers, is famously considered China's golden age (Leung and M.-H. Wu 2012, 133; W. Li 2015, 4). People in southern China identified with this dynasty in a way that distinguished them from the northern Han:

> The Cantonese who migrated overseas described themselves colloquially as *Tong Yun* (*Hong Yun* in Hoisan dialect), "People of the Tang dynasty," in contrast to terms such as *hanren* (漢人) "People of the Han," commonly used in northern provinces […]. When referring to the country from which they had come, they used the name *Tong San* (唐山) "Tang Mountain," and they considered themselves "natives" (*Punti* – 本地人) of that land in the context of historical conflicts with the Hakka (客家) in Guangdong province. […] Despite their strong identification with regional dialects and the ethnic divisions between overseas migrants from different counties, Cantonese migrants to Gold Mountain created an imaginary that managed to envelop them all, even the Hakka, […] in contrast to the "Northern Chinese" (*Buk Fong Yun* – 北方人) who spoke the unintelligible Mandarin dialect. (H. Yu 2019, 43; emphasis in original)

Despite the classification of Hakka ethnicity under the Han umbrella, the Cantonese included the Hakka in the imagined community of Tang people from Tang Mountain in direct contrast to Mandarin-speaking Han people from northern China. This also puts into context the student's question; not only did they ask a question about Tang people in the first place, showing familiarity with the term, but they also used Hakka pronunciation (*tong² ngin²*), which suggests that this may be a common term in the local Hakka community. Moreover, the student added "**-la**" after *tong² ngin²*, which is the typical suffix formula for creating a noun with a definite article in Kreol (Fischer, Lehwald, and Michel 2016, 29). In his confirmative response, *laoshi* then also used the Kreol (bolded) and French phrase "**bann dimounn ki sorti** de la dynastie Tang". While class was usually

taught multilingually, this exchange featured faster intrasentential switches (switches within phrases or sentences) between various languages from the collective class repertoire than most. What we see here is an instance of translanguaging: an act of going both *between* and *beyond* linguistic structures that are ideologically perceived to be separate entities (H. Zhu and W. Li 2020, 236). While I outlined the Hakka-Mandarin relationship as translingual above, we also need to consider other resources in learners' semiotic repertoire as part of the classroom, especially given the multilingual set-up of many Mandarin classrooms in Mauritius. Translingual speakers possess "performative competence" (Canagarajah 2013, 174) that allows them to quickly adjust to highly diverse and frequently changing language contexts. As such, actors in the classroom (both teachers and students) may use translanguaging as a way to express or perform their identities (Ganassin 2020, 120). In a fieldnote excerpt in classroom A, where use of Kreol was typically limited to the students, as *laoshi* did not speak (much), I noticed a learner expressing her identity as a Hakka speaker in Kreol:

> There was one moment where people were trying to guess vocabulary and one woman joked, in Kreol, "*Mo koz Hakka.*" ("I speak Hakka.") I am not exactly sure whether she meant, "I speak Hakka, so I don't know this word," or whether it was a comment about accidentally having used Hakka vocabulary in Mandarin class.
>
> (Fieldnotes from Classroom A, June 29, 2019)

The student in this excerpt, consciously or not, asserted multiple identities as someone who is and speaks Hakka, but also as a Mauritian who speaks Kreol as she ironically uttered the phrase "I speak Hakka" in Kreol. It illustrates the pervasiveness of Kreol in the Mauritian Hakka community, especially as use of Hakka decreases. Moreover, the comment was likely not meant to be a class contribution, as I imagine that *laoshi* would have understood neither Hakka nor Kreol. Rather, it was an in-group reference, and as such the student positioned herself as part of the Mauritian Hakka community.

These classrooms, despite their focus on Mandarin, became important sites for Hakka identity exploration and expression through translingual practices. This observation does not only relate to linguistic competencies but also to cultural transmission, as we have seen, for instance, in classroom B when *laoshi* discussed the importance of the Tang dynasty. In this chapter, I have argued that Hakka remains a central part of the Mandarin classroom

despite the tensions that arise from the PRC's ideological education and resinicization efforts in diasporic communities such as the Mauritian Hakka. I have explored the discourses of tension in Mauritian ancestral language education based on raciolinguistic ideologies that equate Chinese heritage with an inherent need to learn and speak 'Chinese'. The teachers in the classrooms I visited diffused such tensions—intentionally and unintentionally—by allowing learners to draw freely from their translanguaging repertoires. As part of this chapter, I have also discussed the homogenization processes that cultural transmissions of 'Chineseness' have undergone in light of the 'rise of China' in the classroom. I elaborate more on these tensions in raciolinguistic conceptualizations of 'Chineseness' in the following chapter on Mauritian Chinatown, as the ideologies I have identified in the dissertation thus far manifest physically in the semiotic landscape of this historical Sino-Mauritian hub.

Chapter 6

6 Re-Imagining "Ghost Chinatown": Semiotic Landscapes and Language Ideologies

6.1 A "Trip down Memory Lane" in Port Louis' Chinatown

On a quiet Saturday afternoon in Chinatown in Port Louis, Roland Tsang Kwai Kew took me on what I called a 'walking interview' (see 3.2.3 and Figure 13) and what he called a "trip down memory lane". Chinatown, after all, was filled with memories of his childhood. I asked him to show me some of the places he would frequent as a child, and he led the way to Chan Stadium, which used to house a basketball court and served as a venue for many cultural activities in the Chinese community (cf. Siew 2016, 108). The property was not open when we stopped there, but peeking through the iron security gate, I could see the big courtyard. Roland recalled having celebrated the Double Ten holiday there as a young boy, a festivity to commemorate the beginning of the 1911 Revolution which led to the end of the Qing Dynasty, the last imperial rulers of China (see 2.4.6). He witnessed political campaigns, funfairs, and film nights at Chan Stadium, as well as fundraisers to help a famine-plagued China in the late 1950s. On the way to another location, Roland stopped in his tracks every now and then, pointing at a building or street to tell me a story. He mentioned visiting Chinese barbershops with his cousin, accompanying his father to buy steamed buns, called *bao* or *baozi* (包子, *bāozi*), and consulting pharmacists in Chinatown for any sort of ailment. Smiling and laughing at his memories, Roland said that he was happy to participate in this research activity: "Because for me, it's history!" Envisioning the past of Chinatown while walking through its present was invaluable not only for Roland as someone who had vivid memories of the place, but also for me as someone who had *not* been a part of this history. Walking interviews and other accompanied walks showed me new sides and angles of Chinatown and allowed me glimpses into what life used to be like in this Sino-Mauritian community hub. The picture that Roland and other research participants painted of the Chinatown of their childhoods was one of a bustling place full of Chinese businesses, family outings, and lively chatter. The more recent state of Chinatown, however, seemed to tell a different story.

Figure 13: Roland Tsang Kwai Kew on a walking interview through Chinatown.

In August 2019, I attended a press conference during which Chinatown was dubbed "Ghost Chinatown" by a Hakka Mauritian speaker. Though this was said jokingly, the comment also alluded to the discourses of tension surrounding intergenerational gaps and perceived losses of cultural and linguistic 'Chineseness' (see Chapter 4 and 5) reflected in Chinatown as the community hub. As such, my analysis of the semiotic landscape[27] of Chinatown in this chapter presents a 'window' into the Mauritian Chinese community and its treatment and perception by the community itself, the Mauritian and Chinese governments as well as tourists visiting the area. Throughout the chapter, I highlight how raciolinguistic ideologies of what 'Chinese' is perceived to look and sound like influence the ongoing development of Mauritian Chinatown. These ideologies manifest visually and aurally in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown. They are accessible not only to the Mauritian Chinese community, but also the wider Mauritian public and tourist visitors, which renders Chinatown a place of transcultural ideological discourse, identity policing, and perpetuation of different notions of 'Chineseness'. I contrast this with the significant

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[27] I would like to thank Dr. Mingyuan Zhang and Ah Sen Hok Fen for assisting me with Mandarin and Kreol translations in this chapter, respectively.

historical and emotional meanings that Chinatown holds for many members of the Sino-Mauritian community. To fully be able to understand the centrality of Chinatown in Chinese diasporic communities, I must first contextualize the emergence of Chinatown not only in Mauritius, but around the world.

6.2 Chinatown as a Sino-Mauritian Community Hub

6.2.1 Contextualizing Chinatown(s) in Mauritius and Beyond

In one of the Mandarin classes that I attended, a student asked *laoshi* whether the term *tangren*—or *tong² ngin²* in Hakka—for southern Chinese people had anything to do with the Tang Dynasty (see 5.4.2 for my account of the situation). *Laoshi* confirmed this. I raised my hand to ask a follow-up question. I wanted to know whether the term *tangren* was the same that as the first part of the word for "Chinatown": *tangrenjie* (唐人街, *tángrén jiē*). I had heard the term before but did not exactly know what each syllable meant. *Laoshi* confirmed that *tangren jie* referred to the Tang people. Translating to "Tang people's street", it alludes to the fact that it was historically southern Chinese groups like the Cantonese, Fukkien, and Hakka who emigrated and established Chinese residences in other places (Leung and M.-H. Wu 2012, 133).[28]

The English term 'Chinatown' was first used to refer to the Chinese quarters of San Francisco and New York City (Ganassin 2020, 28). Although at first glance the name may seem somewhat self-explanatory, there is some ambiguity to the term because it denotes both a geographical location and a communal space (E. X. Li and P. S. Li 2011, 7) to the point that it is impossible to find a universally applicable definition (B. P. Wong 2013, 4).[29] At its core, the concept of a Chinatown is simply that of "'Chinese enclaves' outside China" (Ang 2020, 1372) (cf. Lai 1988, 3). However, these enclaves were born out of colonial, racist contexts, which indicates that we need to

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[28] An alternate term for *tangren jie* is *huabu* (华埠, *huábù*, 'Chinese port') (Lai 1988, 4; B. P. Wong 2013, 2).

[29] For this reason, Wong suggests using local terminology wherever appropriate; however, everyone in Mauritius with whom I spoke either called the area "Chinatown" or, less frequently, by its French equivalent "*quartier Chinois*".

> […] adopt a different point of departure to the study of Chinatown, one that does not rely upon a discrete "Chineseness" as an implicit explanatory principle. "Chinatown" is not "Chinatown" only because the "Chinese," whether by choice or constraint live there. Rather, one might argue that Chinatown is a social construction with a cultural history and a tradition of imagery and institutional practice that has given it a cognitive and material reality in and for the West. (K. J. Anderson 1987, 581)

Evidently politically charged, the terminology around 'Chinatown' reveals not only the relationship between Chinese inhabitants and a given 'host' society, but also the racial ideologies that inform this relationship, giving it the 'material reality' that Anderson describes. Chinatowns are places which non-Chinese locals generally attribute to a foreign 'Other' (Ang 2020, 1372). Essentially, "Chinatown represented a geographical articulation of a racial ideology to which the Chinese had to adapt" (E. X. Li and P. S. Li 2011, 8).

The perception of the Chinese 'Other' changed over time, which, in turn, impacted the development of Chinatown(s). It is therefore useful to differentiate between 'traditional'— or 'old'—and 'new' Chinatowns (Lai 1988, 4; B. P. Wong 2013, 3). Scholars have not quite found a consensus in terms of a clear cut-off point for differentiation between the two: Lai (1988, 4) positions it around the time of World War II (WWII), whereas Wong (2013, 3) speaks of the 1960s. These two decades marked the end of Chinese exclusion in North America (both Canada and the US) in the 1940s and further ease of immigration regulations in the 1960s (E. X. Li and P. S. Li 2011, 13; McKeown 1999, 73–74). I would add to this relevant events such as the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, its increasing political recognition by heads of states in the 1960s[30] and 1970s, and its subsequent economic venture onto the global stage (see also 2.4.6). Not only would this solidify both suggested timelines, it also offers a gradual starting point for the rebranding and reorientation of Chinatowns in light of the 'rise of China' (cf. Ang 2016, 2020). As such, prior to roughly the mid-twentieth century, Chinatowns were established primarily as residential areas alongside Chinese organizations and private businesses (Lai 1988, 4). They were perceived by colonial authorities to be negligible, unsanitary areas with the sole purpose of housing a community thought to be racially inferior (E. X. Li and P. S. Li 2011,

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[30] See, for instance, Albert Manke's (2018, 9–10) discussion of how Fidel Castro's 1960 proclamation of Cuban diplomatic relations with the PRC, despite lasting only a few years, changed the sociopolitical landscape of Havana's Chinatown.

8–9). While these views persist and frequently re-emerge, especially during times of crisis, such as the SARS and COVID-19 epidemics (Eichelberger 2007, 1292; Zhang 2021, 4), 'new' Chinatowns typically enjoy a better image overall, as they were established, reimagined or expanded in the second half of the 20th century to serve more commercial functions (Lai 1988, 4).

The turning point of the mid-twentieth century also loosely coincides with many host countries' implementation of multicultural policies (see again 2.4.6), in which Chinatowns were starting to be considered "a symbol of difference to be protected rather than censured" (K. J. Anderson 1990, 137). Although this was a significant step away from earlier, pejorative designations of Chinatowns as isolated enclaves for marginalized Chinese communities, this development also needs to be critically reviewed as part of capitalist strategies to commodify and exploit such difference. After all, economically successful Chinatowns have since become status symbols for internationally oriented cities (Ang 2020, 1384). As Anderson (1990, 142) further argues, the change in attitude towards Chinatown and Chinese communities still operated on the persistent belief that Chinese people were inherently 'different'. The now diversity-focused discourse shifted racialized connotations of 'Chineseness' from pejorative to exploitative, ultimately rendering Chinatowns "spatial manifestations of European constructs of, and practices towards[,] the Chinese" (1990, 151). These constructs turn stereotypical Chinese iconography into cultural commodities for touristic purposes (Umbach and Wishnoff 2008, 234).

Most of the above-cited literature assumes a focus on Chinatowns either in countries of the Global North or on an international, crosscultural scale. None discuss Chinatowns in Africa—much less Mauritius—and while it is necessary to understand the global conceptualizations and developments of Chinatowns, scholars also emphasize the importance of local contexts in discussing a particular Chinatown (Ang 2020, 1384; B. P. Wong 2013, 5). Moreover, examining African Chinatowns is useful to refocus "the global field of contestation over Chineseness away from Western societies" (Huynh 2015, 99). In this regard, it is also interesting to note that in Mauritius' neighbouring island La Réunion, which is an overseas French department, Chinese migrants settled around the same time under similar conditions but without organizing their communities around a

central hub such as Chinatown in Port Louis (cf. Wong-Hee-Kam 1996, 78). We thus need to recognize that a Chinatown did not inevitably emerge alongside a diasporic Chinese community. In Mauritius, it did. In the following, I provide a brief historical sketch of Chinatown in Port Louis and its importance for the Mauritian Chinese community.

6.2.2 "It All Started in Chinatown": A Brief Historical Sketch
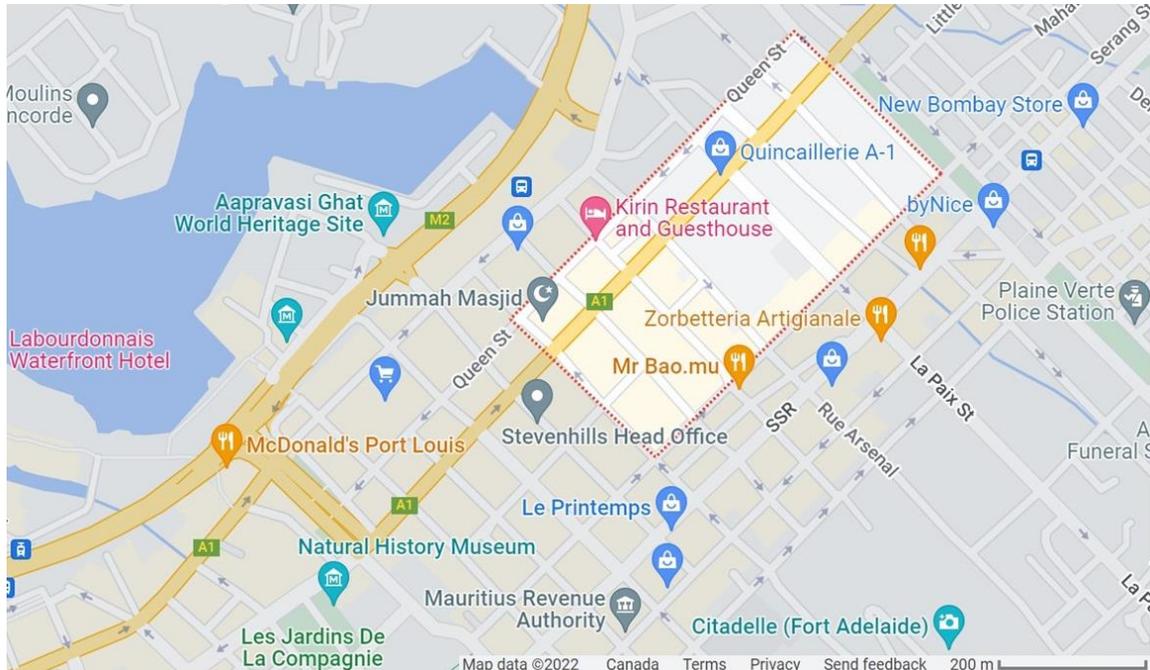
Figure 14: Map of Chinatown (highlighted) and surrounding areas in Port Louis (Google Maps 2022a).

Chinatown is located in a central area of Port Louis, nestled in between the east end of the historical harbourfront, the Muslim quarter Plaine Verte, and a nineteenth-century British citadel called Fort Adelaide. Although the area today fits into the typical Mauritian multicultural mosaic, evident for instance in the proximity of the western Chinatown gate and the influential Jummah Mosque just across the street, it once was the polar opposite: During French colonization up until the British takeover in 1810, the inner city of Port Louis was reserved for white European settlers only (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 121). Outside of 'White Town' (*ville blanche*), as traveller Auguste Billiard (1822, 42) called these inner districts, there were other 'camps' in the east and west connected by the central *Rue Royale* ('Royal Road'): 'Free Camp' in the west was inhabited by *gens de*

couleurs ('people of colour') and *Camp des Noirs Libres* ('Camp of the Free Blacks') by former slaves, whereas in the east you would find the *Camp des Malabars* ('Camp of the Malabars[31]/Indians from the Malabar region'), *Camp Yoloff*, and *Camp des Noirs de l'Etat* ('Camp of the Blacks of the State') housing the indentured Indian, Muslim, and enslaved Black population, respectively (Siew 2016, 22; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 121–22). The Chinese are missing from this list, as they did not yet have a designated quarter at the time and were likely categorized as Black, "the term *noir* being, at this time, a catch-all term for any person who could not be classified as 'white', the top tier of the population" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 24; my emphasis). Billiard mentions a *Camp des Chinois* but characterizes it as "not very extensive" (Billiard 1822, 42; my translation). Generally, the Chinese lived in the sixth division of Port Louis, comprising *Camp des Malabars*, *Camp Yoloff*, and *Camp des Noirs de l'Etat*, and "commuted to town as hawkers" (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 122). The founding of Chinatown marked a new beginning: In my interview with mother-and-son pair Lysebie and David, David said that for him, even though you could find Chinese culture elsewhere in Mauritius, Chinatown remained the "focal point." Lysebie agreed: "It all started in Chinatown."

Figure 15: Remnants of the first Chinatown shop, established by Hayme.

In Figure 15, we can see one of the buildings Roland Tsang Kwai Kew pointed out to me on our walking interview. He explained that it was the remainder of the very first Chinese

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[31] The term *malbar* is still used today to refer to Hindu Mauritians in a derogatory way (Eriksen 1998, 8).

shop in what is now Chinatown. This shop was built on *Rue Royale* just inside the formerly off-limits 'White Town', which made its establishment all the more significant (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 122; Siew 2016, 23–24). The shop owner, a well-off Fukkien merchant called Hayme (also known, among other spellings, as Hahime or Log Choïsanne), is generally regarded as the catalyst of the early Mauritian Chinese community. Establishing himself in Mauritius a few years after British colonization in 1810 (Siew 2016, 23; M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 50), he was granted permission by the British colonial government in 1821 to vouch for more Chinese immigrants to come to the colony at his own cost (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 351), giving way to processes of "chain migration" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 53). This role led to him obtaining an official title as 'captain' (see 2.4.5) of the Chinese community (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 321; M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 51).

The first shops lining *Rue Royale* made up the initial Fukkien section of Chinatown, though no more than "10 shop licenses had been issued to the community by 1937" (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 56). When waves of Cantonese immigrants joined them from 1840 onward, they built shops in the adjacent area, expanding Chinatown with a new Cantonese section (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 123–24). The Fukkien and Cantonese were joined—and later outnumbered—by Hakka immigrants. Another Chinatown section, occupied by the new Hakka arrivals, emerged to the west of the Fukkien and Cantonese blocks. As such, the geographic expansion of Chinatown from the eastern limits of former 'White Town' closer to its centre in the west directly paralleled the changing make-up of the Sino-Mauritian community (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 84; Siew 2016, 52). With the arrival of the Hakka, Chinatown expanded not only in size but also in variety. Hakka vendors sold "a broader array of goods than the Cantonese retailers—haberdashery, perfume, shoes, cutlery, crockery, glassware, ornaments and fancy merchandise" (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 352). They also brought with them different food and foodways to add to the Sino-Mauritian cuisine, as well as the addition of Hakka to the Sinitic language varieties spoken in Chinatown (Siew 2016, 33). The Hakka influence in Chinatown was moreover felt in the increasing development of communal, solidarity-based business planning and financing:

> Commercial association was to provide the community with a stable means of subsistence while awaiting the availability of financial resources which would permit the realisation of more ambitious projects. The patience, assiduity and sense of solidarity that the carrying out of such agreements necessitated, were important business characteristics demonstrated by such Chinese hawkers in 19th century Mauritius. Later, clan associations would reinforce and extend the possibilities for such contractual arrangements as particularly shown by the new Hakka immigrant stream post 1860. (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 56–57)

Such clan houses, so-called *kwons*[32], also served to accommodate traders who lived in other parts of the island but frequently came to Chinatown to refill their stock, store their goods, eat, and stay the night. A particularly prominent Hakka *kwon*, Heen Foh Lee Kwon Society (or Heen Foh for short), was instrumental in organizing Hakka immigration and helping Hakka newcomers getting settled, quickly elevating their numbers in Mauritius (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 126). Interviewee Philip Li Ching Hum recalled:

> Chinatown is a gateway to [the] Chinese diaspora. Most of the Chinese when they came to Mauritius, they must stop over, they must get acclimatized to the system here, and they live in *kwon*.
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

Kwons, and Chinatown more broadly, were thus the first port of call for Chinese newcomers to Mauritius. Nowadays, *kwons* have lost this particular function, but are used as communal hubs. Heen Foh, for instance, is somewhat of a Hakka center in Chinatown, hosting a series of activities and events in the society's gathering halls. Once essential for the community's survival, settlement, and initial business, *kwons* now offer leisure and social networks for those who still come to Chinatown regularly.

The Hakka development of Chinatown was not welcomed by all. Cantonese residents soon found themselves at an impasse, losing business to the new Hakka arrivals, resulting in their further emigration to places like Madagascar, where they set up *kwons* that specifically hindered Hakka traders from immigrating (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 127). This is why the local Chinese communities in Mauritius, Madagascar, and La

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[32] *Kwon* seems to be the Hakka shorthand for 會館 or 会馆 (traditional and simplified spelling, pronounced *huìguǎn* in Mandarin), loosely translating to 'clubhouse' or 'association building'. It was common for diasporic Chinese communities to organize themselves in such associations, typically along social structures like shared origin in China, kinship and clans, language variety, or business (B. P. Wong 2002, 15).

Réunion are all connected but differently structured (cf. Guccini and Zhang 2021). Cantonese people with whom I spoke in Mauritius estimated that they accounted for approximately 10% of the Sino-Mauritian population. Nevertheless, the Cantonese influence has left its trace in the center of Chinatown, with the large Nam Shun[33] Fooy Koon Heritage Court (offering a Cantonese center similar to that of Heen Foh in the Hakka community), the Fock Diack rooftop pagoda overlooking Port Louis, and the Cantonese cuisine's popularity in Mauritius. Apart from tensions between the Hakka and Cantonese residents, Chinatown was also affected by other conflicts and tragedies. After a cyclone destroyed much of the capital in 1892, local Chinese residents provided free rice to affected Port Louisians (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 209, citing Twain 1897, 628). The 1949 struggle for power in China divided the Mauritian Chinese community into pro-Nationalist and pro-Communist political camps (Clement Chan 2010, 264). Mauritian Independence two decades later, on March 12, 1968, was preceded by violent riots. Although these clashes were mainly between the Muslim and Creole population (Miles 1999, 215), Chinatown had to adhere to a strict curfew, which had a significant impact on business and social activities in the area (Siew 2016, 180). Moreover, two Chinatown fires in 1993 and 1999 resulted in multiple casualties and the destruction of a large amount of community heritage, houses, shops, and the popular gambling house L'Amicale (Siew 2016, 182–85). The fires have left emotional and physical holes in the Chinatown cityscape, as the destroyed sites now house parking lots. Chinatown never quite recovered from this loss; in the next section, I explore the notion of 'Ghost Chinatown' and how Sino-Mauritians are fighting this development with heritagization and revival efforts.

6.2.3 Preventing "Ghost Chinatown": Heritagization & Revival

> Just walk the streets of Chinatown. Long ago, you have many Chinese. But today, you can't see anyone. And there's no nightlife—in the past, it was the pulsating heart of Port Louis. You have all the activities. But nowadays, it is dying.
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

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[33] Many Sino-Mauritians used the term 'Nam Shun' (or 'Nam Sun') instead of 'Cantonese'. 'Nam Shun' is compounded from the village names Nam Hoi and Shun Tak, respectively, which were the ancestral homes of most of the Mauritian Cantonese population (cf. Nam Shun Fooy Koon n.d.; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo 1998, 354).

This was how Philip Li Ching Hum responded when I asked him what he thought of today's Chinatown. Essentially, he suggested that the area was in decline. Philip was not the only one using life and death metaphors for Chinatown; other interviewees spoke of Chinatown as a living (and dying) thing as well. This is not a unique development for a Chinatown. Geographer David Chuenyan Lai (1988, 5–8) created a development stage model for Chinatowns in Canada, including a 'withering stage' in which the area diminishes in terms of its economy, business owners, residents, and cultural engagement. Indeed, "many Chinatowns have become more or less detached from the communities that historically sustained them" (Ang 2020, 1378–79) once residents move to other neighbourhoods and leave their businesses for other opportunities. Following the 'withering stage', Lai (Lai 1988, 7–8) foresees two possibilities: Either Chinatown will succumb to the decline, or people will invest in its revival. The second option is largely dependent on initiative and support from individual or institutional actors (Ang 2020, 1379). In Mauritius, the 'emptiness' of Chinatown indeed prompted a series of rejuvenation efforts by different groups, most prominently in the form of murals and other decorations by local artists and organizations, as well as large-scale cultural activities, often in collaboration with Chinese government institutions. Lai elaborates on the desired outcomes of such operations:

> A revitalized Chinatown will attract new businesses and investments, and its property values will rise rapidly. It will consist of several congested streets full of restaurants and stores, and sidewalk displays of foodstuff, dry goods, and other merchandise, catering not only to the Chinese community but also to the people of other ethnic groups. The image of Chinatown then varies, as it is simultaneously considered a tourist attraction, a vibrant inner-city neighbourhood, a historic district, an emblem of Chinese heritage, and/or the root of Chinese Canadians in the multi-ethnic society of Canada. (1988, 8)

Substituting Canada for Mauritius here—both with ethnically diverse populations—it is possible that Chinatown in Mauritius may follow the trajectory that Lai sketches here. At its current stage, revival and heritage maintenance efforts are certainly present. Plans have been made for both, as Sino-Mauritians are taking initiative to turn Chinatown into an official heritage site as well as give it a makeover for a new beginning, with new restaurants and tourist-focused corners being introduced. However, the economic rise of the area remains to be determined. Currently, many non-food business owners in Chinatown are manufacturers and wholesalers, and few sell souvenirs, clothes, or other goods that may

attract casual shopper locals or tourists. This does not necessarily mean that Lai's development stage model is imprecise, nor is it a safe guarantee for the future of Chinatown in Port Louis. It is rather a model that applies to many, but not all, local contexts of Chinatowns around the world. In Ang's words, "[d]iverse forms of local Chinese activism can generate quite different trajectories for traditional Chinatowns" (Ang 2020, 1384).

The biggest obstacle in preventing the advent (or progression) of 'Ghost Chinatown' is curbed development due to an official heritage site in the area. Not far from Chinatown, the harbourfront at the bay of Trou Fanfaron houses the historical site of Aapravasi Ghat (आप्रवासी घाट, *Āpravāsī Ghāta* in Hindi), meaning 'immigration depot', where indentured labourers first landed in Mauritius. Established in 1849 and ceasing activity in 1923, Aapravasi Ghat has been a UNESCO heritage site since 2006 (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2006). The preservation of the site includes two so-called 'buffer zones', which regulate development in the area (Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, 5). Chinatown is located in the second, outer buffer zone; as such, development in the area has to be approved by the city following formal applications. A speaker at the press conference I attended (where the term 'Ghost Chinatown' was mentioned), suggested that "a good portion of Port Louis is paralyzed" due to the buffer zones. Kwang Poon, who leads the East Meets West Association as well as efforts to make Chinatown a national heritage site of its own right, explained the issue to me in our interview:

> There are some planning policy guidelines, which govern the development around the buffer zone. Chinatown is actually in the buffer zone of the Aapravasi Ghat. So, we are somewhat constrained by these [regulations]. I have suggested that Chinatown be placed under its own heritage status, so that is has its own planning policy guidelines […] to reactualize its value in terms of the current context, this touristic value, and its heritage, [and] historical value.
>
> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

Of course, even without official heritage status, Chinatown can continue to maintain cultural and linguistic heritage through school education, social activities, and cultural festivities (cf. B. P. Wong 2013, 14–15) but what Kwang is proposing is the official recognition of Chinatown's value not only for the Chinese community but for Mauritius and its tourist sector. Such "active showcasing of the place as valuable cultural heritage to appreciative outsiders" would help Sino-Mauritians position themselves as "the cultural

'owners' of Chinatown" (Ang 2016, 262). Kwang also emphasizes this heritagization process not as a preservation of the past but an effort that looks toward future development. In his conversations with me, he spoke of rejuvenation and *renaissance*. This fits theoretical approaches to the concept of heritage as well; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995), for instance, defines it as a cultural process with both past and present ties. This framing of heritage as a process with multi-chronological significance is something to keep in mind when examining the semiotic landscape of Chinatown. Such an analysis is useful to understand place-making processes and the raciolinguistic ideologies that may inform them, but it can also paint an oversimplified picture if the processual nature of cultural and linguistic heritages is not properly acknowledged.

6.3   The Semiotic Landscape of Chinatown in Port Louis

As a brief prelude to this section, let me introduce the concept of the 'semiotic landscape' and its connection with the analysis of raciolinguistic ideologies and discourses of tension. Instances of language and meaning in social spaces are often considered under the premise of the 'linguistic landscape'. 'Landscape' is typically understood as that which is visible in one's surroundings, while non-visual sensory experiences of the landscape are often neglected (Porteous 1990, 5). The 'linguistic landscape' similarly typically refers to "publicly *visible* bits of written language: billboards, roads and safety signs, shop signs, graffiti and all sorts of other inscriptions in public space" (Blommaert 2013, 1; my emphasis). While linguistic inscriptions do play a major role in my analysis of the Chinatown landscape, I also pay attention to other semiotic cues, such as "the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment" (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010, 2). This allows me to incorporate translanguaging into the landscape analysis: As Li Wei points out, translanguaging is a practice and research perspective that does not just break down imagined boundaries between named languages, but also bridges and transcends "the traditional divides between language and non-language cognitive and semiotic systems" (2016, 5). Rather than merely examining the language(s) of Chinatown, I thus look at its landscape from a translanguaging, semiotic perspective that seeks to understand how meaning is discursively created and communicated through public semiotic signage.

Crucially, this is where the concept of the semiotic landscape intersects with those of raciolinguistic ideologies and discourses of tension: Understanding the semiotic processes of meaning-making and meaning-communicating as inherently ideological—informed by preconceived expectations of what a 'Chinatown' is supposed to be, look, sound, smell, or feel like—can help us understand the signage of Chinatown through the lenses of those who inscribe and those who interpret it. Another part of this approach is understanding 'geosemiotics', which focus our gaze to how language and social meaning are laid out along the landscape, and where and how people interact with these semiotic inscriptions and with each other as semiotic signs as well (R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon 2010, 2). After all, "humans are part of the landscape, not its detached observers" (Upton 2007, 24). An often overlooked aspect of human participation in landscapes is the digital component of today's interactive city spaces. In this regard, Ico Maly and Jan Blommaert suggest to view "the landscape as multi-layered historically and socially constructed space on the online/offline nexus" (2019, 18). They take into account, for instance, the social media presences and 'Googleability' of local businesses, as well as reviews customers have left to describe their experience.

In a more meta-analytical process, we can therefore examine the way people talk (offline and online) about being in and being part of Chinatown, which may bring forth discourses of tension as they reconcile their ideas of Chinatown and themselves in it with their experience of the place and its frequenters. I think that this experience is best approached by heeding Douglas Porteous' call for multisensory "landscapes of the mind" (1990, 17). In my approach to the semiotic landscape of Chinatown, this includes a classic linguistic landscape analysis of written language, an account of the soundscape—sonic cues such as music, noise, speech, etc. (cf. Upton 2007, 26)—of Chinatown, digital representations of local spaces, and other semiotic cues such as artwork and colours, aesthetics and decoration, music, non-linguistic sensory experiences, emotions, and the process of 'walking the landscape', as it were. It is with such a walking experience that I start my analysis of written signage in and around Chinatown.

6.3.1 Reading Chinatown: Language Ideologies in Written Signage

Today's Chinatown stretches out over a few blocks, an official total of 135,750 m^2 (Siew 2016, 59). As many other Chinatowns, it is spatially demarcated by two archways called *pailou* (牌楼 *páilou*, 'decorated arch') or *paifang* (牌坊, *páifāng*, 'memorial arch'). Such ornamental gates were common in ancient Chinese architecture but not anymore from the end of the nineteenth century onward (J. W. Lee and Lou 2019, 191). They have, however, been popular additions to Chinatowns since the 1970s, the first one having been built in Chinatown in San Francisco in 1970 (Ang 2020, 1378). *Paifang* serve a multitude of functions from general symbols of 'Chineseness' to tourist attractions to indicators of governmental benevolence (Allen-Kim 2013, 69). Port Louis' 'Friendship Gates' were donated by its twin city Foshan in Guangdong Province (Siew 2016, 59). The gates read "China Town" in English and 唐人街 (*tángrén jiē*) in *hanzi* (Figure 16).

Figure 16: The two 'Friendship Gates' demarcating Port Louis' Chinatown.

The southwest *paifang* across from Jummah Mosque is visible from a long distance when walking up *Rue Royale* from downtown Port Louis. I walked this street (Figure 17 and Figure 18) at least twice a week to get to classes or other events in Chinatown. Passing the Place d'Armes—a historical square and boulevard lined with palm trees, renamed Place Sookdeo Bissoodoyal after a Hindu politician (Hookoomsing 2009, 19)—to my left and the colonial-style government house to my right, I shared the pedestrian walkways with a crowd of commuters, local shoppers, and tourists.

Figure 17: Overlooking Royal Road from the perspective of the southwest *paifang*.

Figure 18: The 2020 Lunar New Year Parade on Royal Road.

In the hot sun on the valley of Port Louis, multiple banks housed in high-rise buildings provided a much-needed stretch of shade as I continued on Royal Road. A long Mauritian rainbow flag warped itself around the Bank of Mauritius, whose name was etched onto the building wall underneath the flag. Traffic and parking signs displayed information in English as well. The well-maintained sidewalks in front of the banks quickly turned into massive cobblestone and brittle cement. On days with heavy rainfall, the large street gutters accompanying the sidewalk would flood, making crossing the street as a pedestrian difficult at times. Meanwhile, the buildings turned from skyscrapers to shorter structures with a colonial facade: tall window shutters, long balconies with decorated railings, and awnings casting shade over the storefronts on the ground floor. The storefronts would range from completely shut with security blinds to showcasing shirts and dresses on clotheshangers and mannequins on the sidewalk. Vendors would advertise their stores and services in multiple languages. Most store signs featured at least some information, if not all, in English. French signs existed as well, though less frequently and often in connection with more specialized wholesalers or hardware shops (*quincailleries*). However, French was often present in handwritten information on products, store windows and doors, as well as flyers or posters on the street. The closer I would get to Chinatown, the more I would spot Chinese names on businesses and shops, as well as Chinese script on signs, indicating how Chinatown stretched out on *Rue Royale* without being spatially confined until the *paifang* were erected. The gate reads, as mentioned earlier, *tangren jie* in Chinese script as well as *China Town* in English. Generally, English seemed to be used as a universal medium for written formalities in multilingual Mauritian settings. French was sometimes used in this way as well, although less often so. *Hanzi*, both in traditional and simplified form, were also a major part of the semiotic landscape in and around Chinatown. They typically occurred in multilingual settings as well. Very rarely would I encounter information *only* in Chinese (either *hanzi* or Romanized *pinyin* without the tone indication). Such exclusivity would typically be limited to smaller objects such as Chinese newspapers, magazines, or books, and only occasionally appear on larger items in the semiotic landscape such as store signs or murals. By merely looking at pictures of the streets and sites, one might assume that Mandarin is widely spoken in the area. There are two misleading layers here: One is the false equivalency that evidence of written language

means an equal amount of spoken use; the other is that Chinese inscription signifies a specific language when, in fact, the scriptscape could be read in different ways by Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin speakers.

Semiotic landscapes are made by and for people. As an anthropologist, I focused not on the communicated information itself, but its indexicality: What could a storefront tell me about the cultural context of Chinatown and the people who live and work in the area? How do raciolinguistic ideologies and identity discourses manifest in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown? Semiotic landscape analysis of collective identity can be especially fruitful "in multicultural societies as it signals particularisms—regional, ethnic or religious—differing from the all-societal identity which may play significant roles in social life" (Ben-Rafael 2009, 46–47). I agree that it is helpful to use insights from the semiotic landscape to better understand, perhaps even reveal, certain group dynamics or delineations. I would be cautious, however, to draw a *direct* line between semiotic landscapes and collective identity. Consider, for instance, this discussion of Chinese identity in Kuala Lumpur:

> During British colonial rule, Chinese-English bilingual signage became the common practice in KL's Chinatown. In these bilingual signs, Chinese was often the dominant language, appearing above English and written in a bigger font […]. This shows that the local Chinese community during the colonial period had a very strong Chinese identity. By highlighting Chinese scripts on their signs, they conveyed the message to the public that they were Chinese first. (X. Wang et al. 2015, 191)

This interpretation strikes me as too speculative. The font of the Chinese characters could be bigger so as to read them more easily from afar (given the high variation of *hanzi* as opposed to the limited number of letters in Roman alphabets). If they are made bigger to indicate an emphasis on Chineseness, which of course very well may be, this does not necessarily translate directly to being 'Chinese first'. In fact, the idea that aspects of one's identity can objectively be ordered in such ways precludes the existence of mutable, transcultural identities. Many of the signs I photographed for my semiotic landscape analysis of Chinatown use similar sizes for both Roman and Sinitic scripts, others tended to use a larger font for the Roman script. I cannot gauge whether this is a coincidence or intentional design choice, nor would I have any context for such decisions, which is why I think it is best to view multicultural collective identities through various lenses. My main

goal here is to use the semiotic landscape approach to show how language practices and linguistic ideologies—which in turn do inform and are informed by identity formation processes—manifest on public signage in Chinatown.

The most common type of signage I found in Port Louis' Chinatown would show the business owners' surname (or full name of the first-generation immigrant; see 4.4.2) in Romanized letters on their store signs. The names are often followed by a description of the service domain or provided goods in either English or French. Although the owner's name (often with the addition of "& Co" or "Trading", etc.) here arguably functions as the overall name of the store, most businesses have an additional line in Chinese script that offers an alternate title. Figure 19, for instance, shows the sign of *Ng Cheng Hin & Co.*, which has a Chinese line at the top reading 源源隆公司 (*yuányuán lóng gōngsī*). *Gongsi* means 'company' and is typically preceded by the name of the business. Although I cannot guarantee accuracy for my translation of *yuanyuan long*, which I determined to mean something along the lines of 'prosperous source', it certainly does not read Ng Cheng Hin. As we will see in further examples in this chapter, this discrepancy between the store name in Chinese script and in Romanized letters is not uncommon in Port Louis' Chinatown. I will come back to the importance of store names written in *hanzi* but let us first discuss the significance of personal names in Romanized signage.

Figure 19: A sign in Chinatown showing the store name.

I hesitate to call one store name the 'Chinese' store name and the other the 'non-Chinese' or 'English' store name: Although "& Co." reflects an English business-naming practice, the family name itself still indicates Chineseness—and Mauritian Chineseness due to culturally specific naming practices (see 4.4.2). I would rather deem the middle line in Romanized letters the translingually accessible name of the store, as it is legible to Sino-Mauritian as well as non-Chinese Mauritian passers-by. In the historically and contemporary multilingual settings of Port Louis, the customer base of *labutik sinwa* ('Chinese corner shops') would be far from homogenous. Store signs in exclusive *hanzi* would likely stand in the way of flourishing business. *Ng Cheng Hin & Co.*, in fact, played a significant role in establishing multilingual (speaking) practices in Chinese stores:

> Ng Cheng Hin had arrived in Mauritius around 1870, as an 18 year old. […] [H]e opened his own shop in 1880[34] in Rue Bourbon, close to the central market in the capital. Eight years later he returned to China, leaving his premises with his brother, Mr Ng Chung Hin, who had arrived in 1884 […]. The shop kept its original name, and prospered under Mr Ng Chung Hin, who obtained British citizenship in [sic] 22 June 1903. This gave him the right to purchase land, and in 1904 a new premises was [sic] acquired at 19 Royal Road. He offered a wide range of products for sale, from wine to shoes, Chinese porcelain and perfumes. The importation of goods from China and Europe was overseen by his assistant Adrien Konfortion, who was fluent in English and French, making it the first Chinese shop where English and French speaking customers could use their languages. (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 84–86)

In the shop's century-long tradition, multilingual practices were evidently essential in building the business. An old photo of the store (Siew 2016, 80) confirms that the Romanized name *Ng Cheng Hin* was displayed on the building as early as 1910 (the letters of which are partly visible on the wall above the sign in Figure 19). In terms of *hanzi* signage, another photo from 1910 (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 85) shows the storefront with several banners in Chinese script. Aside from that, Ng Chung Hin introduced the printing of Chinese newspapers in the store starting sometime around 1910 (Siew 2016, 81), and Ng Cheng Hin was one of the founding supporters of the Chinese-language primary school *Xin Fa* (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 184)[35] opening in 1912. Of course, I would have known none of this just from my own picture in Figure 19,

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[34] Other sources claim that he opened the shop in 1898 and do not mention his brother regarding the move to Royal Road in 1904 (Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 128).
[35] Pascale Siew (2016, 81) credits his brother Ng Chung Hin for this.

which supports my argument above that visual documentation of the semiotic landscape alone does not have enough contextual cues for us to make sweeping statements about people's (collective) identities.

Indeed, we need ethnographic context to make sense of signs in the semiotic landscape (cf. Maly and Blommaert 2019, 2–5). Chinatown was (and continues to be) built by various ethnic Chinese communities coming to Mauritius at different points in time. Clan names, I knew from conversations with Sino-Mauritians, sometimes indicated whether someone was Hakka or Cantonese. I wondered whether this could also be deduced from store signs. Wang et al. (2015, 188) argue, for instance, that differences in dialectical *pinyin* were instrumental in their understanding of different occupations in Chinatown, as they found that Hakka transcription was underrepresented in certain domains dominated by Fukkien and Cantonese businesses. In Mauritius, businesses in Chinatown display mainly the owners' surnames in Romanized letters. The colonial history of how these names were (mis-)transcribed (see 4.4.2) hinders us from applying a similar lens here, as Cantonese (and sometimes gallicized) spelling were used even for Hakka names. This is true of *Ng Cheng Hin* as well: Ng could either refer to the 吳 clan (*wú* in Mandarin, ng^4 in Cantonese, n^2 in Hakka) or that of 伍 (*wǔ* in Mandarin, ng^5 in Cantonese, n^3 in Hakka).[36] As such, what we see on the semiotic landscape might lead us to believe this is a Cantonese store, when in fact, the founders were Hakka and the store premises are found in the Hakka section of Chinatown (M. Carter and Ng Foong Kwong 2009, 84; Ly Tio Fane-Pineo and Lim Fat 2008, 127). The Ng example also highlights the importance of the Chinese script, as the Romanized letters alone do not allow us to identify the written character. As such, we can learn a lot from analyzing *hanzi* signage in Chinatown. Consider, for instance, Figure 20, in which we see a Chinatown storefront with three businesses. Although they were all closed on the day I took the picture, evident in the shut blinds and security gates in front of the doors, the passer-by can retrieve information about the businesses from the signs painted onto the upper wall above the doors and windows.

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[36] I consulted the website "Hakka Mauritians 客家" (Cheung n.d.) to identify the possible Chinese characters behind the Ng surname.

Figure 20: A storefront of three businesses in Chinatown, Port Louis.

From left to right, the first store is described in French as *Marché Commun* ('Common Market'). The second business sign reads *Lucky Dragon* in English, accompanied by a red-and-white logo of two small diagonal stripes and a longer, curved stripe, which reads *Aile*, potentially meant to be the French word for 'wing', though I was not able to identify any company by looking up the name or logo. A restaurant called *Weilai* ('future' or 'tomorrow') is the third establishment on the picture. The words *Restaurant*, *Ex*, and *Tel* are the only non-Chinese language bits, though *Weilai* is also written in Romanized spelling. *Ex* is followed by the name of previous restaurant in the building, *Foung Shing*, again in Roman letters. *Tel* indicates the phone number of the place, which is also written on the wall (as is custom for multiple stores in Chinatown and Mauritius generally). Apart from signage in Roman letters, all three store/restaurant signs also include writing in Chinese characters, and interestingly, each makes use of a different reading direction. In fact, "Chinese can be written and read horizontally rightwards, vertically downwards, and horizontally leftwards, although the third usage is limited to newspaper headings and store signs" (J. Pan, Ming Yan, and S.-L. Yeh 2022, 3).

The sign for *Marché Commun* shows this rare form of Chinese reading direction from right to left. The sign reads—rightward here—大有公司(*dàyǒu gōngsī*, 'having a lot/abundance company/incorporated'). *Gongsi* indicates that the preceding word is the name of the shop; hence, we can identify this store as something along the lines of "Abundance Inc.". Evidently, the Chinese signage does not directly correspond to the French *Marché Commun*, as it is not a word-for-word translation. Audiences who are literate in Chinese script and those literate in French may thus perceive the store and its purpose in different ways.

The middle store's name in Chinese characters is spelled rightwards and reads 彩龍公司 (*cǎilóng gōngsī*, 'colourful dragon company/incorporated'). Notably, this sign uses traditional characters, or at least one traditional character (as the other three characters are spelt the same in Traditional and Simplified Chinese): *long*, meaning 'dragon', which either may imply that the store is older, from a time when most people in the Sino-Mauritian community still used traditional writing, or it could an intentional choice in terms of auspicious naming practices (more on this below). The Chinese script here also corresponds directly with the English store name, which also incorporates the word *dragon*. Moreover, while *cai* translates to 'colourful' or 'brightly coloured', it is also part of the word 'lottery', 彩票 (*cǎipiào*, 'colourful paper/ticket'), which could potentially be the reason behind the translation to 'lucky'.

Lastly, the Chinese characters on the sign for the restaurant on the far right of the picture have to be read vertically downward in two columns from right to left, starting with the top right character: 未来酒家 (*wèilái jiǔjiā*, 'Future Restaurant'). This store's signage thus addresses various audiences in different languages: Mandarin, English, and French. We can infer from the Romanized *pinyin* spelling of *Weilai* that the script is meant to be read in Mandarin. The name is not further translated for non-Chinese passers-by but the word 'restaurant' with a possible reading in both French and English established the purpose of the place.

This example shows that there is no universal way in which business owners advertise their services in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown. In fact, these three side-by-side

storefronts could not be more different, from the three variants of reading directions in the Sinitic script to the varying degrees of direct translations and divergent meanings to the utilization of English and/or French for non-Chinese audiences. These clues can also serve as a loose timeline of developments in the semiotic landscape, as they can reflect local language shifts and policies. The adoption of English as an official language during British colonization in Malaysia, for instance, had lasting affects on the linguistic landscape in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown as English gradually made its way onto the local signage (X. Wang et al. 2015, 186). Older storefronts could thus be identified through their use of monolingual Chinese script, whereas stores with bilingual signs and sometimes inclusion of (dialectical) *pinyin*[37] would be more recent. In the Figure 20 example from Mauritian Chinatown, the exclusive use of French translation may similarly indicate that *Marché Commun* is the oldest store of the three. Although it is not uncommon to see French signage in Chinatown (or elsewhere), the use of English in Mauritius is rapidly gaining traction, especially since the advent of new technologies (cf. Rajah-Carrim 2009, 493). Moreover, the rare horizontal leftward writing in the Chinese script connotes more traditional texts (J. Pan, Ming Yan, and S.-L. Yeh 2022, 3; X. Wang et al. 2015, 184), thus potentially dating the store further. *Weilai Restaurant*, on the other hand, includes information about a previous establishment in the building and, more importantly, uses an unequivocally Mandarin name without offering a translation, making it likely the most recent addition to this storefront. After all, Mandarin was not widely spoken as a Sinitic variety in diasporic Chinese communities until its widespread promotion through Chinese governmental influence (see Chapter 5). When I passed this place during my walking interview with Ah Sen Hok Fen, he briefly stopped to chat with the owner exclusively in Mandarin. I asked Fen afterwards whether it was a "Chinese Chinese" place (as opposed to "Mauritian Chinese"), and he confirmed, explaining that they serve spicy, Sichuan-style food, which is different from the typical Hakka and Cantonese cuisine.

The varied ways these business owners communicate to potential customers of course also rely on their linguistic repertoires, and they reach specific audiences based on said

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[37] As I have already argued above, this cannot always be applied to the Mauritian case, as names were often Cantonese-ified and gallicized.

repertoires. One could imagine, for instance, that someone speaking more French than English would seek out shops that include French in their signage, or vice versa. If they are able to read the Chinese script, they may make a different choice altogether, perhaps also depending on the translation or dual messaging of multilingual signs. Their interpretations of these signs may create expectations about whom or what to find inside the store. Another consideration to be made in analyzing multilingual signage in Chinatown is that the Chinese script carries information beyond its literal meaning. This is crucial in related processes such as auspicious naming practices: Studies have shown that Chinese brand naming follows similar norms and beliefs as choosing a person's given name in that the names are given based on their auspicious and propitious qualities (H.-H. Li, Hsieh, and W. L. Chang 2016, 227). These qualities are often inherently tied to the Chinese script. After all, "[t]he common ideology within the community is that language is the symbol of Chinese identity and represents the core of Chinese culture" (X. Wang et al. 2015, 194). Brand naming practices form part of these core values. Business owners may even outsource this process to experts, such as numerologists, who can determine the auspiciousness of a name by considering the number of total strokes for the characters or the yin-yang principle of balance (H.-H. Li, Hsieh, and W. L. Chang 2016, 228–29). Considering the importance of *hanzi* writing in these naming practices, it is not surprising that the increase of English (and French) signage rarely happens at the complete expense of Chinese writing (cf. X. Wang et al. 2015, 193).

In addition to the writing itself, it is also common for brand names to contain verbal references to auspicious qualities. In Mauritian Chinatown, for instance, one of the most well-known restaurants is called *Fortune Eight* in English (with the logo using the numeral: *Fortune 8*; see Figure 21). The name is likely not only an obvious reference to good fortune in English, but also an example of a translanguaging naming practice: Not only do the English words "fortune" and "eight" come together to create the adjective "fortunate" (although I am unsure whether this was part of the intention), the name also includes a play on the word and number "eight". Eight is considered a lucky number in Chinese numerology because 八 (*bā*, 'eight') sounds very similar to the first syllable of 發財 (*fācái*), which means 'to get rich' (cf. T. Chen et al. 2020, 735). The name *Fortune Eight* therefore

works in more than one language, with a hidden meaning for those who are versed in Chinese cultural and linguistic practices.

Figure 21: Lion dancers perform in front of Fortune Eight Restaurant.

Fortune Eight also became an important venue for an initiative that is seeking to change the landscape of Chinatown (to be discussed later in this chapter). The *Reinventing Chinatown* project celebrated the completion of its first stage in July 2018, hosting a dinner at the restaurant. In Figure 21, we see a lion dance performance in front of representatives of the project and the Mauritian government with the restaurant entrance behind them. A large red sign reads: *Fortune Eight Restaurant*, as well as the Chinese characters (rightward here but leftward in Figure 21) 華天大酒家 (*huátiān dà jiǔjiā*). Notably, this is not a translation of the English restaurant name, but an alternate title, meaning something along the lines of 'China/Chinese Empire Restaurant'. Joining the sign above the restaurant entrance are two banners framing it. The vertical downward writing reads 天京大名家 (*tiān jīng dàmíng jiā*) and 華宴珍饌酒 (*huá yàn zhēn zhuàn jiǔ*), roughly translating to 'a

renowned restaurant in the capital' and 'splendid banquet with delicacies and fine liquor', respectively. Two-part phrases using banners as a medium are known as a form of poetry called *duilian* (對聯, *duìlián*), or opposing couplets. They typically consist of "two counterbalanced phrases with matching semantic and phonic properties" (Trémon 2018, 50) and equal metrical length. *Duilian* typically appear as vertically written calligraphy on paper, cloth or wood banners outside doorways and/or in relation to festivities or events (Delahaye 2002, 41–42; Trémon 2018, 57). Patricia Thornton considers these "doorway limericks […] a vital part of public culture in reform-era China" (2002, 611)—and they evidently hold value in diasporic communities as well. *Duilian* are typically addressed to the general public, providing them with contextual information about or simply advertising an event (Delahaye 2002, 42). In this diasporic setting, we do need to consider that most community members are not actually able to read Chinese characters (although there were also some guests from mainland China present at the ceremony). Be that as it may, *hanzi* often retain value as "Chinese cultural symbols in the overseas diasporas" (W. Li and H. Zhu 2010, 163). Moreover, similarly to the naming practices discussed above, *duilian* also carry auspicious qualities as their presence at important events and places is meant to portend prosperity and good fortune (Trémon 2018, 58). As such, the *Fortune Eight* example shows the continued symbolic and spiritual importance of written Chinese and related practices in the Sino-Mauritian community.

As I discussed earlier, the drawback of linguistic landscape approaches is that they often focus *only* on written language. The case of Chinatown in Port Louis is a prime example for why an overemphasis of visually accessible inscription could lead to false assumptions. It is evident that Chinese script, English and French feature heavily in the written semiotic landscape, but a language that is missing from most official and often even informal signage is Kreol, despite it being a primary *lingua franca* in Chinatown.[38] There are, of course, exceptions; Sino-Mauritian food items often bear Kreol names (see 4.2.3), such as

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[38] Of course, this is to some extent true for Mauritius in general, since Kreol is only starting to officially be used as a written language in recent years. Hence, I would argue that the soundscape is an integral part of most linguistic landscapes, but especially the ones in which there are languages involved that are predominantly spoken rather than written.

bol ranverse ('upside-down bowl') or *mine/minn bwi* ('boiled noodles') and *mine/minn frir* ('fried noodles'). On a larger scale, however, I found Kreol terms to be used only sporadically in writing. Even more pertinent is the fact that the same Chinese script is used for all Chinese language varieties (with minor occasional variations), which adds an extra layer to the issue of focusing only on written signage. There are some semiotic clues that can inform the reader of the intended spoken equivalent, such as chronological hints in Traditional vs. Simplified script or the reading direction, as well the use of variety-specific Romanized spellings, but in most cases, it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether the writer speaks Hakka, Cantonese, or Mandarin. The variation in pronunciation can also be challenging to navigate when different Chinese speaker communities meet. In my interview with Ah Noo, he mentioned that he had created a Chinese map of Mauritius (see Figure 22), in which the linguistic variation of 'Chinese' in Mauritius became a hurdle:

> AN: I had to put the Chinese name [of Port Louis]. Now I had a problem. What to put there? […] What's the Chinese name for Port Louis? In Hakka, it's *Porlwi* [as in Kreol]. […] But when all the Chinese tourists come here, it's, uh, *Luyigang* (路易港, *Lùyìgǎng*, 'easy road port'/'Louis Port').

> FG: Oh, 'port' is *gang* [and *luyi* sounds like "Louis"].

> AN: *Wi* [Kreol for 'yes'], *dui* [Mandarin for 'correct']. It's *Luyigang*. Nobody will say *Porlwi*. Why [do] we Hakka say like that? Because when the Hakka people, when they were living in Mauritius, in the 1950s, 60s, you know? They have to translate the places phonetically. They have no choice, because when they travel by bus, the conductor won't know [Hakka or Mandarin]. "Where are you going?" – "*Luyigang*." They will never understand. Uhm… Rose Hill. You can't say *Meiguishan* (玫瑰山, *méiguīshān*, 'rose hill/ mountain'). You can't say that. They would never understand. You have to say, *Hochin* (荷精, in Hakka pronunciation—*Hejing* in Mandarin), in the Chinese accent. […] Even Grand Baie. Grand Baie is—they call it *Dawan* (大湾, *dàwān,* 'big bay').

> FG: Oh, like a 'grand bay'? (laughs)

> AN: *Wi*, Grand Baie. They translate. *Da. Wan*. […] In Hakka, we would write 庚北. This is the phonetic way of *gēng běi* (Mandarin). Pronounce it in Hakka, it's *gang*[1] *bêd*[5].

> FG: […] So, this [Mandarin pronunciation] is how Chinese tourists would call...?

> AN: They would, yeah, yeah. […] We, in Mauritius, when you read newspaper, when we are talking of Port Louis, we always [say *Porlwi*]. […] Because it was written by the Hakka people. And for the Hakka people! (laughs) […] We have hotel names, pronounced in a Hakka way. And when the Chinese tourists come to Mauritius, they call it in a different way. But when you read newspaper in Mandarin, uhm... phonetic—it becomes strange for us.

> (Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

The different pronunciations of Mauritian place names again carry a certain historicity. Due to the early establishment of the Hakka community in Mauritius, and its entanglement with local languages, Hakka names for Mauritian places would naturally become a phonetic approximation of the Kreol, French and English names. To complicate matters further, Mauritian place names often use English vocabulary but French or Kreol pronunciation: Rose Hill, for instance, is pronounced [ʁozil], and Phoenix is pronounced [feniks]. As such, Mauritian place-naming typically involves translanguaging and requires frequenters to access the common local semiotic repertoire. In Mandarin, however, a language whose speakers were not historically connected to Mauritius until recent decades, place names follow a different pattern, where recognizable vocabulary—such as 'rose', 'port' and 'baie'—is translated literally and proper names are approached phonetically, similarly to Hakka Mauritian place-naming. The prime example for both cases is Port Louis, in which 'port' is translated to *gang* (港, *gǎng*) but *luyi* (路易, *lùyì*) means 'easy road' and is chosen because of its phonetical similarity to 'Louis'.
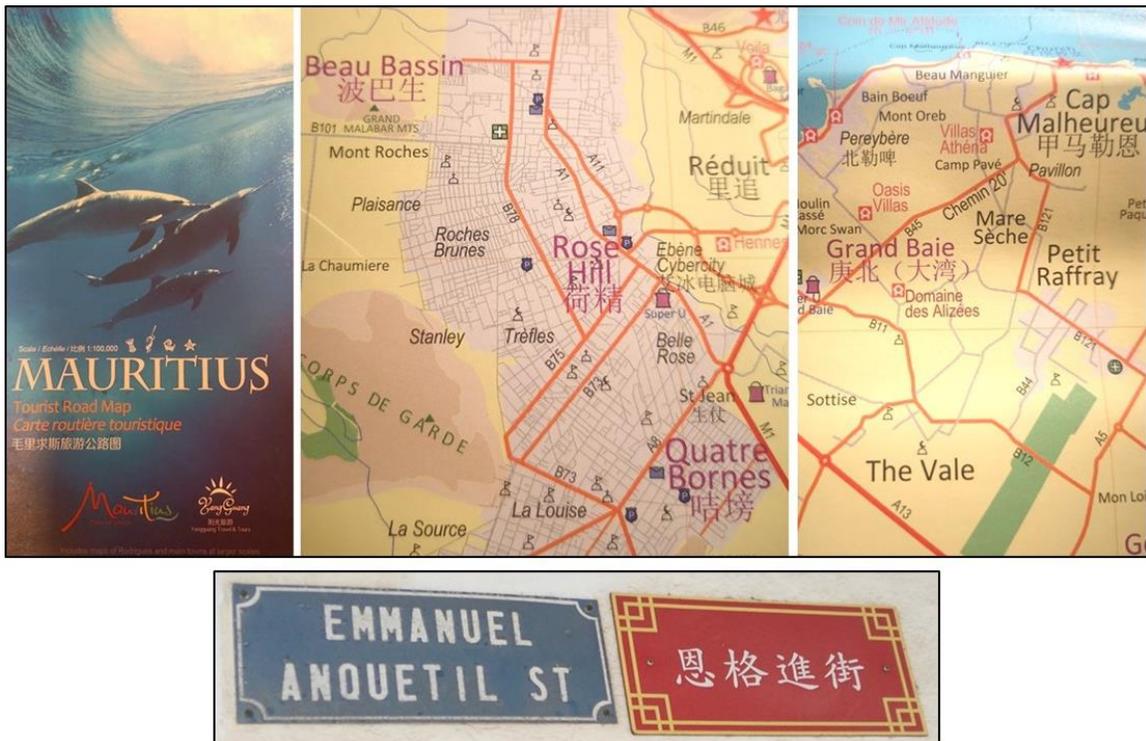

Figure 22: Photographs of sections from Ah Noo's map (top) and a street name sign in Chinatown (bottom).

Conversely, this means that the Chinese script can sometimes refer to more local vocabulary in phonetic approximation. This is also the case, for instance, on translated streets signs in Chinatown, such as the one of Emmanuel Anquetil Street (see Figure 22), which in Chinese script reads 恩格進街 (*ēngéjìn jiē*). Here, *jie* is the translation for 'street' but *engejin* is the phonetic approximation for 'Anquetil'. As such, discrepancies in written signage and spoken language use in Chinatown are important to consider in analyzing its semiotic landscape. We have to include the soundscape of Chinatown to broaden our understanding of linguistic variation in Chinatown. After all, the divide of spoken and written language use begs the question: Which purposes do different languages serve in Mauritian communities and how do they contribute to the plurivocal place-making of Chinatown?

6.3.2 Sounding Chinatown: Plurivocal Place-Making and Belonging

At the event that included the dinner at *Fortune Eight* (see Figure 21), I took note not only of written language but also of spoken use of languages. In stark contrast to the written signage at the event, Chinese spoken languages were virtually absent. The ceremony started at the southwestern *paifang*, where a plaque set into the right pillar of the gate was unveiled and speeches were held to commemorate the completion of the first stage of the *Reinventing Chinatown* project. During one speech, a *muezzin*'s (مُؤَذِّن) call to prayer (أَذَان, *adhan/azan*) resounded from Jummah Mosque across the street. This "sonic Islamic practice" (Eisenlohr 2018b, 98) filled the soundscape of Chinatown with Arabic, which is likely not a language most people would associate with a Chinese part of town (although Muslim Chinese communities of course exist and do make use of Arabic; see Stroup 2022, 73–74). The call to prayer continued through the introduction of the next speaker, who was none other than Paramavisum Pillay Vyapoory, the then-acting president of the Republic of Mauritius. He had been introduced in English but delivered his speech in a mix of Kreol and French (italicized):

> **Original:**
>
> Nou ena *la* sans a Moris, avek nou nasion arkansiel, ki nou ena enn *communauté chinoise* ki li *très active* e ki pe valoriz *la culture chinoise* a Moris. E sa, li anrisi *la culture mauricienne*. Depi dizwitiem *siècle*, bann imigran *chinois de la Chine* finn instal zot dan Moris e sirtu *dans la region de la capitale à Port Louis*. Zot finn

konsantre isi e zot finn konstrir sa ki nou apel Chinatown. Nou *en plain* dan Chinatown kot nou ete. Me li vre osi ki depi boukou *années*, finn ena *un petit peu de recul et c'est ça* ki *l'équipe de Mr. Jean Paul Lam à travers le New Chinatown Foundation* pe anvi *redresser*. E li pa pou enn kitsos zis pou *la communauté chinoise* me li pou enn zwaye *pour toute la nation mauricienne*. *Et c'est pour ça* ki pou mwa li enn *très grand honneur*—li enn *très grand plaisir*—pou mo asosye mwa e mo donn tu mo sipor a sa proze-la.

Translation:

We have the chance in Mauritius, with our rainbow nation, that we have a Chinese community who is very active and who values the Chinese culture in Mauritius. And this enriches the Mauritian culture. From the eighteenth century, Chinese immigrants from China established themselves in Mauritius and especially in the region of the capital of Port Louis. They concentrated here and they built that which we call Chinatown. We are right in Chinatown where we are [today]. But it is also true that since many years, there has been a bit of a regression, and this is what Mr. Jean Paul Lam's team through the New Chinatown Foundation is wanting to recover. And this will not be something just for the Chinese community but it will be a happy [joy?] for the entire Mauritian nation. And this is why, for me, it is a great honour—it is a great pleasure—to associate myself and to give all of my support to this project.

(Excerpt from Paramavisum Vyapoory's speech, July 21, 2018)

What stood out to me here was the framing of the Chinese community as part of the Mauritian 'rainbow nation' (*nasion arkansiel*), in that their presence in and dedication to Chinatown enriched Mauritian national culture. Linguistically, Vyapoory delivered this train of thought mostly in Kreol (with some translanguaging). Although this could have been an arbitrary choice on his part, I believe that the use of Kreol underpins the pan-Mauritian framework of his speech, making Chinatown a place relevant to *all* Mauritians just like Kreol is considered the language that connects the entire nation and transcends ethnolinguistic boundaries. The language choice in combination with the recognition of Chinatown as a historical and central part of Port Louis create a sense of belonging of the Chinese community to Mauritius. I observed this type of speech often; speakers would usually acknowledge that the Chinese had contributed a lot to the island nation economically as well as culturally to legitimize their social status in Mauritius.

Kreol, mostly absent from the scriptscape apart from food items on menus, thus has a more central role to play in the soundscape. French and English feature regularly in both, though English is used more in written than spoken form and French vice versa. Sinitic language varieties, as mentioned above, are represented mostly in writing. For instance, the unveiled plaque, arguably the centerpiece of the ceremony, displayed a text in both English and

hanzi. Considering the *duilian* at *Fortune Eight* discussed in the previous section as well, the use of written Chinese often seems to carry a symbolic function.[39] Spoken Chinese varieties might not have been featured at the *Reinventing Chinatown* celebration, but this does not mean they are completely absent from Mauritian Chinatown as a whole. Although Kreol is certainly more widely represented in the day-to-day soundscape of Chinatown, you can also hear a lot of Cantonese, Hakka, and Mandarin. Mandarin is taught in various classrooms around Chinatown (see Chapter 5); Hakka and Cantonese are often spoken among elders and families living in the area and among employees in restaurant kitchens or pharmacies, and occasionally among people meeting on the street. There even is a Cantonese class at the Nam Shun Fooy Koon Heritage Court. Having asked around for Hakka classes for a long time and always come up empty, I was intrigued by the existence of Cantonese lessons. I was granted permission to audit the class for a session and ask the teacher (教師, *gaau³ si¹* in Cantonese) and the learners a few questions. My visit sparked a fruitful discussion about the significance of language in place-making. One student told me that "everywhere in Chinatown, they speak Cantonese". At first, I thought that they meant Chinatown in Mauritius specifically, but realized quickly thereafter that they meant Chinatowns everywhere. *Gaau si* and the other learners agreed, adding that many Chinatown restaurants serve Cantonese cuisine. Indeed, the histories of Chinatowns around the world confirms that early migrant communities were predominantly Cantonese-speaking (cf. Ang 2020, 1375; Y. Chen 2011, 193; Ley 2010, 33). This significance of Cantonese in Chinatown history, alongside the fact that Cantonese is officially spoken in Hong Kong, gives its heritage language speakers and learners an edge over those with Hakka linguistic heritage. Moreover, some of my research participants reported being looked down upon when speaking Hakka among Cantonese speakers. Kit Hau recalled a

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[39] This could, incidentally, be compared with the Islamic call to prayer that was heard over some of the speeches at the *paifang*. Arabic is not widely spoken in Mauritius but plays a pivotal role as ethnoreligious markers (Eisenlohr 2018b, 24). There are spiritual connotations in both the use of (written and spoken) Arabic and the display of *hanzi* in the linguistic landscape. There is a slight difference, however, in the use of Arabic and the Sinitic varieties Hakka and Cantonese. Hakka and Cantonese were—and continue to be—spoken by Chinese immigrants and their descendants. The use of Arabic in Mauritius more closely resembles the use of Mandarin, which was not the original heritage language of the 'old' Sino-Mauritian community but has become engrained in the ancestral language curriculum (as Arabic has; see Eisenlohr 2006a, 200–201).

few interactions with Cantonese speakers in various Chinatowns that he had visited outside of Mauritius:

> I remember, each time when they would greet me in Cantonese, I would say, "Sorry, I don't speak Chinese." And they weren't very happy, you could see [it] on their face, you know? Like, just like, well—they [make a] strange face. Or sometimes, they just turn on their heels, you know? They just go away. Yeah, yeah. So, you could feel that already you don't feel welcome. Alright? Don't know if you're being snobbed or they feel that you're snobbing them. […] And sometimes, like, when you tell them that, "Okay, I don't speak Cantonese, but I speak Hakka." Woah, that's even worse! Later on, I came to learn that in some parts of the world, for instance in Hong Kong, Hakka is not very well considered.
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Kit Hau, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

Kit was not the only person with such an experience among Cantonese speakers. Some people told me that they did not disclose their Hakka identity when they went to places like Hong Kong or even nearby Madagascar, where the diasporic community is predominantly Cantonese (Yu-Sion 1998a, 349). These seem to be remnants of the old Cantonese-Hakka rivalries, which seem to have transformed into, at least in part, language ideologies of superiority versus inferiority of speaking (and being) Cantonese or Hakka. Even more strikingly, in Kit's story, speaking Hakka seemed to be perceived as worse than not speaking any Chinese at all. These are all factors that might explain the ready availability of a Cantonese class over a Hakka class. However, despite the existence of this one Cantonese class, Cantonese and Hakka speakers face similar challenges in Mauritius. Both of their languages being replaced by Mandarin as the official 'ancestral language' of the Sino-Mauritian community, language shifts and family language policies have caused the local use of both languages to be in decline. Sinitic heritage languages are thus "in constant competition with the dominant language/s of the local community" (Ganassin 2020, 51), which, in this case, are mainly Kreol, French, and English. In the semiotic landscape of Chinatown, we see this manifested mainly in the soundscape, as the scriptscape still incorporates Chinese characters for a variety of purposes, even when other languages are increasingly present as well. The soundscape, however, has changed a lot over time. Ah Noo was born in Chinatown into a Hakka-speaking family:

> I grew up in a big family [with] numerous brothers and sisters, cousins. So, we lived together in an extended family, and the language we spoke is—was—Hakka. Fully Hakka. 100% Hakka. […] That's why we had some difficulty at that time to switch to English and French, because our accent is so—so anchored in Chinese and Hakka,

uhm, we did have some difficulty to speak Kreol, even Kreol, because we live in a group in the middle of Chinatown. When you go out, you meet Chinese, they all speak Hakka. You know? So, for us, Hakka is—was—the standard. No need to learn English or French or Kreol because we don't mix with them. We are in the surrounding of Chinatown where we meet almost only Hakka-speaking people.

(Interview with Ah Noo, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Ah Noo caught himself twice using present tense for his language situation before correcting it to past tense, indicating that things had changed in the meantime. Hakka *was* but is the standard no longer for him and his family. Although he grew up in a "100% Hakka" environment where everyone he interacted with also knew the language, language shifts had introduced more multilingual practices in Chinatown over time. Chinatown seemed to play a central role in the early Hakka maintenance, as this was a place (and arguably the only place) in Mauritius where so many Chinese people lived in one spot.[40] Few of my research participants reported having spoken (much) Hakka at home as a child, but the ones who did typically grew up in or near Chinatown or had relatives who lived in the area. Of course, it is worthwhile in this regard to not only acknowledge the language shifts that caused Hakka to be spoken less frequently, but also the emigration from Chinatown into other parts of the city or country. Kwang Poon contextualized this move:

Chinatown now unfortunately has been going downhill over the past few decades. This also has to be seen in the context of the development of the Mauritian economy. Before, Mauritius was a monocrop economy based on sugarcane. […]. The Chinese would have a shop in every corner of the island [to service the residents by the farmlands]. So they would—every now and then, every week or every month, they would come to Port Louis to do their procurement, their purchase in bulk. […] There were a lot of clan houses, clan societies in the Chinatown, back then. Those clan societies acted as a hostel, basically. So, let's say I'm from the Lee clan. So, I will go to the Lee clan society. So, I could just meet my fellow clan members, some of them would also be shopkeepers, so we discuss: What are the trends, where to get the best prices for goods? And things like that. […] I could stay there overnight as well, of course for a small fee, and there was somebody to cook the food and everything, and then next day I get my ox-driven cart back to my village. […] But now, with the evolution of the economy, […] some have moved to Port Louis, become wholesalers, and they supply to supermarkets now. […] The need to come to Chinatown, to stay and to play mah-jong and meet with your friends... that need is no longer there. […] And people no longer stayed in Chinatown and [even if] they had their shop there, they migrated to suburbs, you know? They moved to Beau Bassin, some Chinese

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[40] Another area of Mauritius where many Chinese people live is that of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (cf. Couacaud, Sookrajowa, and Narsoo 2020, 7).

> moved to Baie du Tombeau […]. So, there are suburbs, they're like ten, fifteen minutes from Port Louis. This is, I think, why Chinatown is no longer as busy as it was before.
>
> (Interview with Kwang Poon, m, 50s, resides in Mauritius)

The point that Kwang (and many other interviewees) made is that Chinatown used to be a hub not only for the people who lived there or in other parts of Port Louis, but for the Chinese community across the entire island who maintained shops and restocked their goods in Chinatown. They would spend the night at their clan house, socialize, and frequent localities in Chinatown. The shopkeeper system thus ensured the lively hustle and bustle of Chinatown that so many said they missed these days. As shopkeepers stopped having to spend the night in Chinatown and stopped having to come to Chinatown for goods altogether, the set-up of Chinatown changed, and slowly but surely, people moved away. This steady move out of Chinatown in turn limited the previously frequent interactions between Sino-Mauritians and contributed to the language shift.

The shifting ground of linguistic heritage in Chinatown reflects the changes in Mauritian nation-building and language ideology as well. Starting from an ethnocommunal premise with rigid boundaries (in terms of place, socialization, and language), communities soon started to interact more frequently and adopted shared practices for communication, such as the establishment of Kreol as the *lingua franca*. At the same time, the colonial languages French and English gained traction as written languages, used mostly for formal affairs. Eventually, the recognition of communities' 'ancestral languages' brought about a renewed appreciation for ethnolinguistic backgrounds—but also standardization processes that would erode some linguistic heritage and privilege new varieties, such as Mandarin in the Sino-Mauritian case. Chinatown as a place provides us with a 'window', as it were, into these changes and challenges. The Sino-Mauritian community, the Mauritian national community at large, as well as global Chinese communities, have influenced the semiotic landscape of the area and actively contributed to the plurivocal and translingual place-making of Chinatown in Port Louis. The most recent additions to the streets of Chinatown are testament to the ever-changing nature of (trans-)languaging and the role it plays in these place-making processes.

6.3.3 New Chinatown: Changing the Semiotic Landscape

Language and ideology are in constant flux, and semiotic landscapes change accordingly. As Jan Blommaert puts it, a sociolinguistic system is "always dynamic, never finished, never bounded, and never completely and definitively describable either. By the time we have finished our description, the system will have changed" (2013, 10). This is, of course, especially noticeable in fieldwork that spans a longer time frame. Between my first impression of Mauritian Chinatown in June 2018 and my last visit in March 2020, buildings and walls sported new murals, restaurants and shops closed, opened, or reopened with a new look, banners and flyers advertised new, regular, or acute events. Now, more than two years after my last visit, things will have changed even further. As such, I am not framing changes in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown as surprising, novel, or permanent. I rather view them as manifestations of equally fast-paced changes in language practices, ideologies, and policies. In the previous two sections, I mainly addressed the scriptscape and soundscape of Chinatown as it pertained to the linguistic heritage of the 'old' Sino-Mauritian community. Now, I would like to redirect that attention to the more recent 'rise of China' that has introduced changes that are a bit more comparable with those in other Chinatowns around the world.

Upon 'entering' Chinatown through the southwestern *paifang*, a large mural to the left (see Figure 23), spread out over almost the entire side of a building, may catch the visitor's attention. This central piece of art was created by Chinese muralist Wenna for the 2016 second annual *Porlwi by Light*, a festival to showcase and celebrate contemporary urban art in the capital. Wenna turned a previously monochrome façade flanking a parking lot into a colourful display of Chinese mythology, naming the piece *Hundred Immortals Showing off Their Skills* (cf. Y. Zhou 2020, 434). The artist being Chinese, it is unsurprising that the mural features *hanzi* without any accompanying Romanized or non-Chinese signage. For Mauritian Chinatown, however, this exclusive use of Chinese characters was a rare occurrence until street art began to pop up in the streets.

Figure 23: Mural *Hundred Immortals Showing off their Skills* in Chinatown.

Figure 24: Murals showing Chinese political figures Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai as well as philosopher Confucius.

Apart from the contributions from artists to *Porlwi by Light*, most of the murals were created or commissioned by the New Chinatown Foundation. Another Chinese artist, Wang Jian, also known as Tom, was behind a series of white-and-blue murals of Chinese historical figures (see Figure 24). The part of the mural showing Confucius contains an informational text about his life and work. The information is displayed in *hanzi*. When I first happened upon murals like these, I wondered whether they were meant to be understood by passers-by. I asked many of my research participants whether they were able to read Chinese signs in Chinatown; most of them said they could identify some individual characters but would not understand everything. I have already discussed how *hanzi* serve purposes beyond the literal content, such as the ensuring of prosperity and good fortune. Here, I would argue that they function as symbolic markers of 'Chineseness'. Audiences are not meant to be able to read or understand the content but merely expected to recognize the presence of Chinese characters as symbolic indicators of an inherently 'Chinese' space.

In this context, it is also interesting to note the influx of political representation through street art. In the example above (Figure 24), we see not only Chinese philosopher Confucius but also politicians Zhou Enlai (the PRC's first Premier from 1949–1976) and Deng Xiaoping (Chairman of several commissions and economical reformist from 1978–1992). Other political figures, such as Mao Zedong and Sun Yat-sen feature in more murals down the street. With the exception of Sun Yat-sen (whose role in the 1911 revolution was celebrated in both mainland China and Taiwan; see Tung 1968, 106–107), these figures are famously associated with the PRC's key politics. Indeed, various street art pieces in Chinatown seem to engage with PRC-influenced discourses of what being Chinese means. These pieces explicitly reflect a standardized and uniform idea of Chinese theming. As we have seen, the impact of the local Cantonese and Hakka populations on the establishment of and developments in Chinatowns around the world show the importance of recognizing heterogeneity in diasporic Chinese communities. However, there is a counterforce in place that is promoting a more "symbolic identification of a homogenized Chineseness at the expense of the diverse local heritages" (Ang 2020, 1386). My observations in Mauritius similarly show that Chinatown has undergone some changes that align the interests of the local community more with that of the PRC as the producer of dominant 'Chineseness'

narratives. This happens most explicitly in the mural in Figure 25. The New Chinatown Foundation painted it in 2019 as a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the PRC.

Figure 25: A Chinatown mural celebrating the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

The mural shows part of the Great Wall of China as iconic imagery of the Chinese mainland. Amid white clouds in a blue sky, the number 70 appears in big red digits. The inner circle of the zero contains, in yellow, the five stars of the Chinese national flag, the skyline of the Forbidden City in Beijing, and the dates 1949–2019; this is the logo of the PRC's 70th anniversary promotion. The head and tail of a dragon are depicted as well, turning into three-dimensional dragon scales made from plastic bottles on top of the wall.[41] The mural very clearly is a celebration of the PRC. Unlike many other PRC anniversary celebrations in Mauritius that year, this was not primarily organized by a Chinese government institution but a local Sino-Mauritian organization, which shows a diasporic investment in maintaining (or re-establishing) a symbolic closeness to the Chinese mainland. Ien Ang calls this phenomenon "local manifestations of 'global China'" (2020,

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[41] This forms part of a Chinatown-wide art piece called *Tang Loon, the Biggest Dragon of Africa*, initiated by the *New Chinatown Foundation* to combine an awareness for the environment with a Chinese aesthetic.

1375), aptly capturing how the PRC's globally promoted national policies impact diasporic communities on the local level. Using Chinese iconography is then also a way to forge symbolic, commercial and even political ties with the Chinese state (see also Huynh 2015, 99, for similar developments in South Africa).

The increase of Chinese script signage in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown plays a role in this development as well. After all, the language ideology that Chinese people are united by one national language, whether in the more or less shared script or in the global promotion of Mandarin, contributes to "an inattention to multiple Chineses [which] has activated processes of erasure" (Leung and M.-H. Wu 2011, 51). Such processes have been well-documented in Chinatowns around the world (cf. Ang 2020; Leung and M.-H. Wu 2012); however, I would be remiss not to note that they are sometimes refuted by local communities. 'Mandarinization' is therefore not a universal or inevitable development, and has become the subject of discourses of tension in many places. There is, for instance, the prominent case of Chinatown in Vancouver, Canada, which has seen a number of protests "in defence of the 'Canto-sphere'" (Ang 2020, 1384). The resistance to Mandarin uniformization in Vancouver's Chinatown receives institutional support, such as that of the University of British Columbia, which has refused to house the Confucius Institute on its campus for Mandarin courses, instead introducing a Cantonese curriculum (Ang 2020, 1384). As such, we need to be mindful of the portrayal of Chinatowns and their local Chinese populations as passive witnesses to the 'rise of China'. I would rather highlight the discourses of tension through which Chinese diasporic communities and their individual members make agentive choices about how to represent themselves. Of course, such choices are often informed by broader ideological structures. In Sherry B. Ortner's words, everyone is "always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed" (2006, 130). The recognition of *multiple* social factors and structures is especially vital in cultural contexts that emphasize multicultural and multilingual diversity. In this regard, it is important to consider the various Mauritian elements that artists include in their Chinatown art. Consider Shanghai artist Yan Jian's mural in Figure 26:

Figure 26: A mural depicting a Mauritian version of Kung Fu Panda (photographed by research participant Ah Sen Hok Fen).

At first glance, this mural of a panda punching through a wall seems to be just a standard depiction of the *DreamWorks* animated movie character Po, the anthropomorphic protagonist of *Kung Fu Panda*. However, while the movie draws on classic Chinese martial art action movies, this mural version of *Kung Fu Panda* adds various Mauritian elements. Po is wearing a headband with the colours of the Mauritian flag, and the backdrop, visible from where he punched through the wall, shows a rather Mauritian scenery of a beach with palm trees. More explicitly, the light grey writing on the left-hand side of the mural reads (from top left to bottom right): 天堂熊猫 (*tiāntáng xióngmāo*). The English translation (in downward writing) lets us know that this is 'Heaven Panda', which connects the panda to Mauritian paradisiac canon (see 4.2.1). The idea of Mauritius being the original heaven has been commodified for the touristic image of the island. Fittingly, *tiantang* not only means 'heaven' but also 'paradise': One of Mauritius' many nicknames is 'paradise island' in reference to Mark Twain's alleged view of Mauritius (B. W. Carroll and T. Carroll 2000, 25) (see again 4.2.1). A plaque informing visitors about the artwork reads, among other information, "[T]he caring bear [is] watching over Chinatown. It will certainly come down to Paradise Earth if you need its help (or if he smells the delicious Chinese food)." We see this idea of 'Paradise Earth' further reflected here in the beach scenery and the use of the Mauritian 'rainbow' flag as symbols of Mauritian paradisaic and harmonic lifestyles. Yan

Jian, the artist of *Heaven Panda* thus uses a mix of (American) Chinese and Mauritian visual and textual elements, making this mural character a Sino-Mauritian conglomerate and offering a counterpoint to more homogenized Chinese iconography in Chinatown.

Figure 27: Campaign flyers for independent candidate Mohammad Aubdoolah.

Similarly, Chinese script has been instrumentalized by some to make a point about Mauritian transculturality rather than essentialized Chinese identity. Take Figure 27 as an example: In November 2019, during national election time, I noticed flyers advertising the political campaign of independent candidate Mohammad Aubdoolah around Chinatown. They were printed in Chinese characters, except for his name. I spotted more of his flyers just a few blocks outside of Chinatown, this time in French. A news report interviewed Aubdoolah about this language-specific campaign strategy. He elaborated:

Original:

«Je compte en coller d'autres [flyers] à Chinatown. L'idée, c'est d'attirer les gens. Et ça marche. Car beaucoup de Sino-Mauriciens m'ont dit qu'eux-mêmes ne comprennent pas le mandarin. Mais, en somme, l'idée est bien accueillie par les gens. […] Faire comprendre que je ne suis pas communal», affirme Mohammad Aubdoollah […].

Translation:

"I am planning to put up more [flyers] around Chinatown. The idea is to attract people. And it works. Because many Sino-Mauritians have told me that they don't understand

Mandarin themselves. But, all things considered, the idea is well-received among people. […] It shows that I am not communal", declares Mohammad Aubdoollah.

(Luckoo 2019)

Aubdoolah's reasoning is a striking example of the instrumentalization of language in nation-building practices. Not only was he well-aware that Sino-Mauritians do not typically speak Mandarin. He was also very transparent about his intention in putting up the flyers, anyway, expecting that it would speak to his lack of communalist thinking and emphasize his transcultural identity. We can identify the specific language ideology that Mandarin, represented here by the Chinese script, is supposedly symbolic of Chinese people as a homogenous whole. Another language ideology specific to the Mauritian context is the imagined inherent relationship between an 'ancestral language' and its corresponding ethnolinguistic community, which Aubdoolah seems to utilize and refute at the same time. Moreover, there is broader underlying language ideology at play, namely that of languages being a resource to employ for social and political gains.

It is also interesting to note that Aubdoolah did not merely print multilingual flyers and distributed them across town. Instead, he limited the distribution of *hanzi* flyers to Chinatown, as further evidenced by my finding another one his flyers in French just a few blocks southwest on Royal Road. Bernard Wong calls this the "'bridging' function performed by Chinatowns" (2013, 15), meaning that Chinatown often acts as a site of exchange and interaction between Chinese and non-Chinese communities. Such exchanges can showcase the perceptions actors hold of the local Chinese community. In this case, we see a discrepancy between the expectation and the social reality of language use among Sino-Mauritians. We can also again gauge the symbolic and political power of the Sinitic script, here as an indicator of inclusive, non-communalist messaging. The 'bridging' function of Chinatown can then be utilized to subvert or play into ideological constructions of Chinatown and languages in its semiotic landscape. In the following section, I explore how Chinatown is imagined by its various frequenters, and how they police, leverage, or subvert ideologies and identity expectations in the imaginative process.

6.4   Imagining Chinatown: Leveraging Identity and Ideology

6.4.1 The "Worst Chinatown"? Tourist Imaginations of Chinatown

About a week after the celebration of the first completed phase in the *Reinventing Chinatown* project, Roland Tsang Kwai Kew and I reflected upon the event and discussed the initiative's accomplishments. I addressed my observation that many of the 'reinvented' spots in Chinatowns seemed to be murals displaying Chinese script exclusively, despite the lack of *hanzi* literacy among the local community. "In fact," Roland added, "they should have added English translations for the tourists." Surprised, I asked, "But do you think Chinatown is for the tourists? Or for the Mauritian Chinese?" This was a possible interpretation that had not crossed my mind. Roland shrugged. "It's mostly for the tourists now," he said. "Only few Chinese still live in Chinatown."

The latter part of Roland's statement, of course, echoes the 'ghost town' narrative of Mauritian Chinatown. Could Chinatown be in the process of transforming from a long-standing Sino-Mauritian hub into mainly a tourist destination? I had seen tourists around the area (albeit not many), but it had not occurred to me to consider Chinatown from their perspective. I decided to explore some visitor experiences through Tripadvisor, a travel website with a user-generated review system, which turned out to be remarkably helpful in understanding the above-mentioned 'bridging' function of Chinatown. I began to understand how tourists participate in the semiotic landscape of Chinatown and add to local meaning-making by sharing their experiences with other potential visitors. Although these reviews are ostensibly "invisible in the linguistic landscape" (Maly and Blommaert 2019, 12) of Chinatown itself, the Tripadvisor website may be tourists' first impression of and interaction with Mauritian Chinatown before they have even landed on the island. Documenting and coding 310 reviews that were posted between 2012 and 2020, I identified a wide range of tourist discourses about Mauritian Chinatown and Chinatowns more generally. Among the most common review narratives were statements on how average or uninteresting Mauritian Chinatown seemed, as well as there not being much to do or see in the area. In comparisons with other Chinatowns around the world (which were frequent among routine travellers and Tripadvisor users), three reviewers even ranked Chinatown in Port Louis the "worst Chinatown" of all. I compared the numerical ratings of Chinatowns

in different parts of the world with that of Mauritius. Mauritian Chinatown landed an average rating of 3/5, which, as far as my search let on, was on par with those in Hawaii and Washington, D.C., and only surpassed by Vancouver's Chinatown (2.5/5). The comparative aspect and the complaints about lack of sights or activities show how there is an expectation of Chinatown as a tourist commodity—"a branded urban form and idea" (Ang 2020, 1388), as it were—rather than sites of historical importance as hubs for trade, shelter, and social support in the Chinese diasporic community.
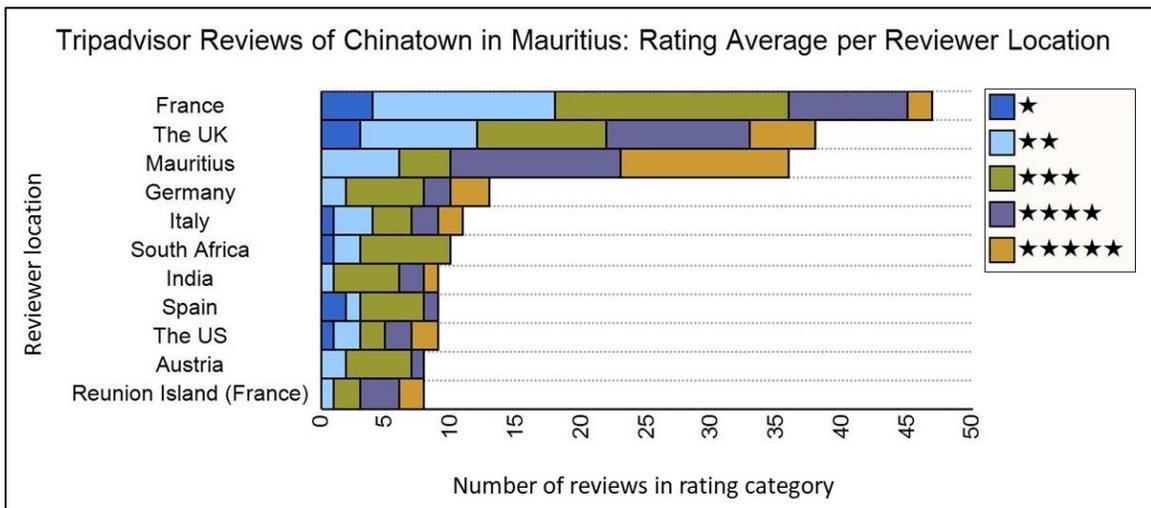
Figure 28: Tripadvisor reviews of Chinatown in Mauritius (NVivo chart).

The importance of such context became abundantly clear when I looked at the locations from which Tripadvisor users had posted their reviews (Figure 28). The largest number of four-star and five-star ratings were given by Mauritians, followed by visitors from the UK. Although some Mauritians also rated Chinatown two stars, none selected one star, with reviews from neighbouring La Réunion showing the same pattern. Reviewers from France and the UK not only posted the majority of reviews but also gave the most ratings on the lower end from three stars to one star. Tripadvisor users from South Africa did not rate Mauritian Chinatown any higher than three stars. We can thus see in this statistic that people with a close geographic and cultural attachment to Mauritian Chinatown from the Mascarene islands Mauritius and La Réunion had a more favourable view of the area than visitors from further abroad. Their contextual experience of Chinatown seemed to reflect a more enhanced understanding of the area's history and importance to the Sino-Mauritian

community, as some reviewers from both locations would mention Chinese immigration history in Mauritius, Chinatown's historical function as a Sino-Mauritian hub and heritage site, specific points of interests, and the issue of small Chinese shops being increasingly run out of business by larger shopping centres in Mauritius.

Travellers from other areas likely visit Chinatown with a completely different premise, namely expectations of purely 'Chinese' authenticity. This is not only consistent with scholarship of Chinatowns (cf. K. J. Anderson 1990; Ang 2020; Umbach and Wishnoff 2008) but was also tangible from the reviews alluding to the perceived 'Chineseness' of the area. Some reviewers connected Chinatown mainly with food and dining, often with the undertones of wanting to experience 'exotic' or 'authentic' Chinese tastes. Indeed, cultural and national cuisines are commonly ideologized in terms of their 'authenticity'. Lisa Heldke calls this quest for cuisine purity "cultural food colonialism" (2001, 77). In this vein, 'Chinese' cuisine has played a major role in the commodification of Chinatowns (cf. K. J. Anderson 1990, 142). Authenticity expectations were also present in reviews of Mauritian Chinatown that postulated the idea that one should feel like being in China when visiting the area—with a total of eleven positive and two negative experiences, respectively. When I addressed this in an interview with Christelle (f, 30s, resides in Mauritius), she laughed, responding, "Supposed to feel in China? Then, I would say that they probably should go to China." Another research participant eloquently related the idea of Chinatown as a cultural spectacle to British colonialism in Mauritius:

> All our politics, all our constitutions—everything, thanks to the English—encourage [us] to stay and foster our own culture. It's good for tourism. Because once we become like one nation without any difference, people would find it less interesting. […] [As long as] we still have a Chinatown, with Chinese-looking people, it's okay for the tourists.
>
> (Interview with Ng Cheong Tin Patrice Entse, m, 60s, resides in Mauritius)

Entse draws a connection between tourist attractiveness based on "difference" and the British dogma 'divide and rule', which has "not only divided territories and populations along racial, religious and linguistic lines but has also divided communities into a collaborating ruling elite and a resisting mass" (Xypolia 2016, 230–31). Entse just views Mauritian narratives of multiculturalism and 'difference' as rooted in this deliberate colonial premise. Post-colonial diversity, in this sense, is intentionally commodified for the

tourist gaze. It follows in this logic that Chinatown needs to be as 'different'—read: as 'Chinese'—as possible to keep tourists interested. A Chinatown with "Chinese-looking people" is Entse's definition of the tourist expectation, which is echoed in some of the reviewer comments:

> Port Louis has many varied areas and the waterfront is a really good place for a relaxing drink,this area called Chinatown is neither relaxing nor charming, it is a very rundown part and didn't seem to be inhabited by many Orientals, it had a feeling of being unsafe[42] somehow.
>
> <div align="right">(Tripadvisor three-star review from a UK-based user)</div>
>
> *Come tutte le città dove è passata la comunità cinese, esiste China Town... uno dei punti più caotici per il traffico e le persone che attraversano le strade.... Ma anche tanti indiani per la strada ....*
>
> (Translation: <u>Like all cities where the Chinese community has passed, there is China Town ... one of the most chaotic points for traffic and people crossing the streets .... But also many Indians on the street ....</u>)
>
> <div align="right">(Tripadvisor 4-star review from an Italy-based user)</div>

Both reviewers seemed to have racial expectations of people in Chinatown that were not met, as one reviewer bemoaned the lack of 'Orientals' and the other seemed surprised to see 'Indians' in the area. The term 'Oriental', though not commonly used in the USA following Asian American activists raising awareness for its problematic connotations, has continued to be applied even in official settings in the UK (D. Yeh 2014, 1199). While this potentially explains the choice of words, the overall negative context of the review still alludes to its derogatory intention. The other reviewer's observation that there were "many Indians on the street" showed an ignorance of the makings of the national Mauritian and local Port Louisian population: Not only are Hindu and Muslim Indo-Mauritians the vast majority of the country, Chinatown in the capital is also flanked by several districts which have long-standing Indo-Mauritian histories. The Tripadvisor users both operated on an unspoken understanding that Chinese people's racial appearance should meet certain criteria (which they evaluated as not having been met). This was not only the expectation for people in Chinatown, but the buildings as well. Accordingly, a Tripadvisor reviewer

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[42] Other reviewers likewise questioned the safety as well as the cleanliness of the area, which bears the sinister trace of early conceptualizations of Chinatowns as dangerous "'sinks of iniquity', to use a common phrase of journalists" (K. J. Anderson 1990, 141) (see also Lai 1988, 5).

observed that Chinatown in Port Louis had "more of a poor African atmosphere", while another missed the "feel of real China" (both two-star reviews from the UK). Both statements dismiss that Mauritius is, in fact, an African country and *not* China. The perceived 'African' feel of Chinatown in Mauritius thus counteracts the ideology that Chinatowns are supposed to make the tourist feel like they are in China. On that same note, a Tripadvisor user from Ireland gave a two-star review saying that "it's a bit ambitious to call it a china town". Another from Spain left a one-star review suggesting it should be called "China Street" because the area was so small—which is, ironically, a closer translation of *tangrenjie* ('Tang people's street') than 'Chinatown'. These comments showed a literal interpretation or misunderstanding of 'Chinatown' as a town designed to be of fixed, stagnating Chinese heritage for the tourist gaze, rather than areas which served as social hubs and starting points for early migrant communities from southern China. We can thus observe a stark contrast between tourists' expectations of Chinatown (and Chinese identity) and the transcultural realities which they encounter during their visit.

The Tripadvisor review section showed clearly that tourists engage in, and perhaps amplify, the discourses of tension in which Sino-Mauritian identity formation processes are already firmly embedded. After all, the Sino-Mauritian community is, of course, aware of tourists' expectations and evaluations. This was, for instance, evidenced by Ng Cheong Tin Patrice Entse's above account of the commodification of cultural 'difference' in the Mauritian tourist sector. This tourist expectation can also have an impact on the self-marketing of people residing or working in Chinatown, as Ien Ang's study of Chinatown in Sydney, Australia shows: She observes that Korean and Thai people have created designated areas for themselves in the area of Chinatown, investing in "the neoliberal appeal of commodifying ethnicity for marketing purposes" (2016, 263) in the hopes that they may profit from this deliberate cultural distinction. Discourses of tension may thus result in efforts to profit from expectations rather than subverting them, and there have indeed been initiatives to enhance the tourist market value of Mauritian Chinatown. Some happen on the small-scale, individual level, such as local shops offering more touristic services (such as having one's name written in Chinese characters) or adding souvenirs to their inventory. Others are larger-scale projects, such as the initiative to make Chinatown a national heritage site (see 6.2.3), renovations of old buildings, and the addition of murals

and other decorations to the streetscape of Chinatown. This is not a development that is unique to Mauritian Chinatown. Anderson observed that "[m]aking the area more 'Chinese', seemed to mean making the area appear more consistent with the architectural motifs and symbols of ancient China" (1990, 150) in Australian Chinatowns. Umbach and Wishnoff similarly speak of an "association of orientalist architecture with tourism" (2008, 219). In a more modern development, elements from East Asian popular culture have been utilized for this purpose in Mauritian Chinatown as well. The Kung Fu Panda mural comes to mind; however, after my departure in 2020, a whole "Manga Street" was introduced in which the buildings' walls now showcase popular *manga* and *anime*[43] characters.

Motivations for such beautification processes vary; some Hakka Mauritians said they hoped that the new splashes of colour in the streets might invite more tourists into the area. In this way, it seems that the commodification of cultural differences and Chinese stereotypes might be used as a form of "strategic self-orientalizing" (Umbach and Wishnoff 2008, 215) in which Chinatowns are re-modeled to accommodate the broader societal discourse and ideology (B. P. Wong 2013, 8). Crucially, "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said 1978, 11). The emergence of Chinatowns as oriental emblems thus needs to be understood as an Occidental cultural and ideological production. I do, however, believe that genuine expressions and actions of communal nostalgia are also major factors in endeavours to remodel Chinatown in Port Louis. It seemed to me that at the heart of these efforts Sino-Mauritians are hoping to return Chinatown to its former liveliness, or an approximation thereof. Of course, tourism would help the area receive more attention—and tourists police Chinese identities through raciolinguistic expectations and experiences of global Chinatowns. Efforts to attract tourists with stereotypical colours, images, script, and architectural elements thus needs to also be understood as a form of

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[43] *Manga* (漫画) refers to Japanese comics and graphic novels, whereas *anime* (アニメ) is the Japanese shorthand term for 'animation' (Macwilliams 2015, 3).

agency that leverages the ideological construct of Chinatown. On the other hand, while such initiatives to 'revive' Chinatown have undoubtedly received a lot of attention, some people are skeptical that it truly will—to stay with the metaphor—bring the area back to life:

> It's not because you paint red things everywhere that you will revive Chinatown because there are no… *il n'y a pas d'âme* [translation: <u>there is no soul</u>]. Chinatown is life, it's everyday life. Nobody lives there (laughs). So you can paint [it] all in red, so what? So, maybe for tourists, it takes one photo. There's no life. At five o'clock, there's nothing.

> (Interview with Guy Siew, m, 70s, resides in La Réunion)

Guy's words were telling in that they juxtaposed the 'revival' of Chinatown through paint and symbolism with a sense of heritage performativity that may make Chinatown more appealing but would not quite sustain it in the long run. He was also very specific about the choice of colour: Red, as a symbol of good fortune and China as a whole (see 5.2.2), is indeed an oft-used colour in the new murals. As other scholars have noted, "frequent use of red color […] revealed the root of Chinese culture in the linguistic landscape" (X. Wang et al. 2015, 190), though the correlation between the colour red and China is not inherent but constructed and narrated (J. W. Lee and Lou 2019, 193). In a study on Mauritian ethnoreligious colour-coding, Leo Couacaud (2016, 177–79) did note that red was the colour of Chinese decorations both in the wake of festivities like the Spring Festival (i.e. banners or lanterns) and in the aesthetic of Sino-Mauritian residences, for instance fences or doors painted in red.[44] It thus fits with the idea that the area is made more 'Chinese' by keeping with Chinese tropes and symbolism. Guy sees this as a futile effort because the 'soul' and 'life' that made Chinatown what it was in the past are gone, which cannot be rectified by tourists flocking to the area to take pictures. However, I came to understand that many research participants saw tourism as a means to an end—a way to use tourist attention in the community's best interest. Chinatown 'revival' for the community and Chinatown 'Sinification' for the tourists do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive processes. Instead, tourism and related raciolinguistic ideologies of 'Chinese' authenticity

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[44] The same study finds that Northern Hindus are represented by red as well but also frequently use orange. Yellow is mostly associated with Tamils, green with Muslims, and blue with Creoles or Christianity more broadly (Couacaud 2016, 189).

may be leveraged to raise awareness for the importance of the area. In the next section, I therefore take a closer look at long-term goals and visions for Chinatown and the Hakka Mauritian community.

6.4.2 Visions for Chinatown and the Sino-Mauritian Community

Among the reviews of Chinatown on Tripadvisor, two visitors from Mauritius and from the USA, respectively, gave a two-star rating because they deemed the area a "ghost town". This, of course, not only echoes the sentiments of some of my research participants that Chinatown was practically deserted, but also the wording of the speaker at the press conference I attended regarding Chinatown's heritage status. He had jokingly spoken of a "Ghost Chinatown". Despite the lighthearted nature of the quip, it had a sincere undertone, as the heritage status of Chinatown was of great importance to the panelists. I want to do this serious issue justice: Chinatown's decline is a major concern for the community, and official heritage recognition could help protect and rebuild the area. I have also not personally experienced Chinatown in the way my participants have over their courses of life, which limits my observations to a very specific period in time, during which rejuvenation efforts of the area were already underway. I would, however, be remiss not to offer a bit of an antithesis to the 'Ghost Chinatown' narrative. I do not think I would do today's Chinatown justice if I did not address some of the many celebrations and events that are generally highly anticipated and well-attended. One particularly well-received celebration is the Lunar New Year Parade, which is even more important considering that Mauritius is the only African country in which the Lunar New Year is a statutory public holiday (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Mauritius 2019). The parade is thus framed as a national event, in which Mauritians of all backgrounds participate. Other celebrations taking place in Chinatown include the annual Chinese Food Festival, various clan societies' annual dinners, Mahjong competitions, and public music performances. One of my research participants, Ah Sen Hok Fen, organized a flashmob in 2018, for which he received lots of praise. While I was in Mauritius, Fen and his dance group S-Crew also shot a music video in various iconic places in Chinatown (Figure 29).

Figure 29: S-Crew shooting a music video on the streets and roofs of Chinatown.

Some of the backgrounds the group chose for their photoshoots are the very murals I already discussed in this chapter, showing that they do not only enrich the tourism sector but hold value for Sino-Mauritian youths as well. The younger generations are bringing activity back into Chinatown, even if their practices do not necessarily resemble those of the past. Additionally, although the streets may not always be crowded, many daily and weekly activities take place behind the scenes inside the buildings, whether it be line-dancing or language classes, *tai qi* sessions or shared lunches and dinners. On my walking interview with Fen, he led me to a building which was busy with people playing *Mahjong* and card games. Chinatown was and still very much may be a hub for the Mauritian Chinese community. Although it was evident from most of my interviews and observations that Chinatown is certainly not as lively as it used to be, I think it is worth recognizing that it is not life*less*. Christelle, for instance, said that

> Chinatown without the Chinese community is not Chinatown. It would be just buildings with Chinese writings, so… yeah. It's all the community that makes the place a living space, right? Certainly, when you see the decline in the Chinese population in Mauritius, then you may ask yourself the question, like, "What would happen to Chinatown?'"

(Interview with Christelle, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)

I should unpack the layers of this statement. Christelle obviously understands Chinatown to be a place that cannot exist without the people who built it. The idea that Chinatown without its community would be "just buildings with Chinese writings" is interesting especially considering the semiotic landscape analysis that preceded this section in the chapter. The semiotic landscape of Chinatown, just like Chinatown itself, was made by and for people, specifically the Sino-Mauritian community with its vast language repertoire and various ethnic backgrounds. The place is embedded in social context, as it is the community who invested into *making* the place and making it lively (or a "living space"), for that matter. Lastly, Christelle brings up the possibility that Chinatown is in a precarious state because the community itself is declining. The two are intricately linked: As the Mauritian Chinese population migrates, as some linguistic and cultural practices fade out of use and others are introduced, potentially affecting Mauritian Chinese identity and heritage, these changes are reflected in Chinatown. Essentially, the question of Chinatown becoming a 'ghost town', or 'dying' and needing a 'revival', is more of an issue of community dispersal and (dis-)continued cultural and linguistic practices (see also 4.3.3). As such, I think it is important to discuss not only Sino-Mauritians' visions for the future of Chinatown, but also their imaginations and expectations of the community's future. Again, the two are inextricably linked, as Christina shared her hope that

> As long as there's Chinatown, and even if the whole Chinese community will blend with other cultures [in Mauritius], I think we will still remember [our traditions].
>
> (Interview with Christina, f, 20s, resides in Mauritius)

Chinatown thus also functions as an anchor, a place to which Sino-Mauritians can go to keep in touch with communal practices. It remains, as David said, a local Chinese "focal point". Christina also brought up the (multi-)cultural "blend" in Mauritius, which has increased over the years with intercommunal marriages. Interviewees in La Réunion and Rodrigues reported that everyone feels somewhat 'mixed' and Creole on their islands, whereas Mauritius still harbours communalist notions that sees Creole Mauritians as a distinct ethnic group (Boswell 2005, 215–16; Eriksen 1998, 89). It is then almost paradoxical that Chinatown is increasingly made more distinctly 'Chinese' due to the commodification of such cultural differences while the younger Mauritian Chinese generations are starting to emphasize transcultural identities over ancestral heritage. I have

discussed in previous chapters the tension between Mauritian multiculturalism and ethno-communal particularism; this is tangible in Chinatown's semiotic landscape as well. As a 'window' into the Mauritian Chinese community's discourses of tension, the multilingual and translingual written and oral practices in Chinatown highlight how Sino-Mauritians position themselves as Mauritian, Chinese, and Mauritian Chinese, as well as Hakka or Cantonese more specifically. While their identities are increasingly policed by outside forces, such as Mauritian and Chinese political developments, or global tourist expectations of what a 'Chinese' should look or sound like, they leverage these raciolinguistic ideologies to their advantage. Tourist evaluations show that prejudiced and ignorant attitudes towards Chinatown(s) continue to prevail, but they also offer a roadmap of sorts for strategic innovation to put Chinatown on local, national, and even global radars. Discursive expressions of tension thus not only play a role in personal identity formation, but also in the transcultural positionality of the wider Sino-Mauritian community. Through creative Chinatown heritagization and 'revival' efforts, local Chinatown activists are making it known that Chinatown, as well as their community, not only have a vibrant past, but also a colourful future in Mauritius.

<center>Chapter 7</center>

7 Conclusion

7.1 "Pulling You on the Other Side": Discourses of Tension

Interviewees in my research expressed various levels of agency when it came to negotiations of their identities in Mauritian society. Prior to my interview with Christelle, she had alluded to some conflicting forces in her self-identity and that which other Mauritians ascribed to her. Intrigued, I picked this topic back up in the interview:

> FG: Earlier you said something, like, there was a gap in your identities…?
>
> C: Yeah, yeah. I kind of feel lost where I am now. Like... pretty much, in Mauritius, […] when you feel and you *want* to feel Mauritian […], but when people still consider you Chinese or [to be] from your ethnic background, then it's like pulling you on the other side, like, okay, you have to stay Chinese, you can't be Mauritian (laughs). Yeah.
>
> FG: Right, right, right. So, how do you... like, how do you manage that?
>
> C: Uh, I just—just carry on. Yeah. Just carry on. I think it's the only way. […] [It's] just a waste of time (laughs) to battle with something like that. You just have to carry on and find ways to live how you want to live, I think. Yeah. That's pretty much it.
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Christelle, f, 30s, resides in Mauritius)</div>

Christelle found that no matter how much she felt that she was Mauritian, others still considered her to be Chinese. This made her feel that she could not ever be fully Mauritian, which sheds a paradoxical light on the idea of Mauritian nationhood as inherently multicultural: If citizens' ethnolinguistic and ethnonational backgrounds such as 'Chinese' constantly take precedence, is there room for them to be just Mauritian? Christelle described this as a "pulling" force—a tension that permeates Mauritian identity negotiations. Mauritians understand themselves simultaneously as Mauritian nationals and as descendants of immigrants in their diasporic communities. This may be an easy conglomerate of identities for some, while for others it proves more difficult. Christelle did not have a problem with the multicultural aspect of Mauritian national self-image but with the idea that she *had* to be Chinese in order to fit into the raciolinguistic image that other Mauritians may have of her. What she is asking for then is room in Mauritian nation-building for emergent identities that are not defined solely by 'ancestral' heritage. As my research shows, she is not the only one who is hoping for a more *trans*cultural than *multi*cultural outlook on Mauritian identity in the future. Think back, for instance, to

Kwang Poon's vision of a future '*briani* nation' (see 4.2.3) in which different ingredients come together to create a new, rich flavour profile. This imagination of Mauritian nationhood has arguably not quite yet become a social reality, if the many versions of the popular phrase "The colours of the rainbows touch but do not mix" (see 4.2.2) are any indication. When I asked Christelle how she navigated this tension that she felt, she replied that she would "just carry on" and that it was not worth her time to "battle with something like that". She has thus accepted this tension as part of Mauritian life. Although we spoke about it in the interview, her assertion that it was best to carry on and "finding ways to live how you want to live" shows that tension often goes unaddressed. Indeed, participants in Thomas Hylland Eriksen's (1998, 47–48) research named avoidance as a key strategy in keeping the peace in Mauritius. Raciolinguistic stereotyping and name-calling, assignment to language classes based on one's community background, ticking boxes to specify one's belonging to one of the four official population groups—all of these occurrences aim at defining Mauritians by their raciolinguistically and ethnolinguistically assumed identity, imposing constraints on their agency to position themselves as primarily Mauritian or anything other than 'Hakka' or 'Chinese'.

I have argued in this dissertation that 'discourses of tension' are central to transcultural identity formation because they make tangible in-between positionalities and transcendence of perceived boundaries. Using Mauritius as a case study, I have shown how tensions, based on contrastive raciolinguistic ideologies, have played a key role in Mauritian national discourse. In conversations with the Hakka Mauritian participants I consulted during my research, tensions were addressed when they spoke about being more than 'just' Chinese, or Hakka, or Mauritian, despite the expectations that other Mauritians had of them based on their ostensibly 'Chinese' features or mannerisms. Some participants joked that they were different from other Sino-Mauritians because their closest friends were not Chinese, referring to a Mauritian stereotype that Sino-Mauritians were supposedly 'clannish' and mostly stuck to their own community. Others emphasized their Mauritianness by claiming that they did not partake in any 'Chinese' practices, for instance going to the pagoda or frequenting Chinatown. Chinatown was similarly subjected to expectations, especially by international tourists coming to the area to experience the 'feel of real China' but voicing their disappointment in what some termed the 'worst Chinatown'

(see 6.4.1). These assertions pointed towards a potential distancing from 'Chineseness' in the community. At the same time, many interviewees stated that they felt significant attachments to their ancestral heritage and wanted to preserve it. Mauritian identities that increasingly emphasize a more transcultural element bear implications for the continuation of diasporic practices—or, rather, a lack thereof. Hakka Mauritians, especially of older generations, expressed concerns that Hakka heritage may be on the decline (see 5.3.2), even comparing their community to the extinct dodo (see 4.3.3). Linguistically, we see this in the decreasing number of Hakka speakers, although Hakka arguably still has its place in the Mauritian semiotic landscape, most of all Chinatown (see 6.3). Mandarin, however, has emerged as a new heritage language in the Chinese community, a shift driven both by employment prospects in the global economy and Chinese language policies and ideologies that position Mandarin as the national language of all *huaren* (see 5.2.1 and 5.3.3). Tension is palpable here again, as Mauritian discourse emphasizes the importance of maintaining ancestral languages while Chinese discourse pushes for the promotion of Mandarin instead of Hakka as the original heritage language of Hakka Mauritians. While this represents, on the one hand, a gradual erosion of specifically Hakka practices in the community, on the other hand many Hakka Mauritians also see this as an opportunity to align themselves with 'rising' China and treat the learning of Mandarin as a translingual way to also practice Hakka (i.e. through the shared script of both varieties or similar vocabulary). As such, tension may be discursively acknowledged, sometimes critiqued, but ultimately also accepted as a part of Mauritian transcultural encounters. Being Hakka Mauritian or Chinese Mauritian manifests as "in-between-ness, both in terms of social relationships and discursive categories" (Tetreault 2015, 17). My thesis is thus testament to the agency in Hakka Mauritian identity negotiations that emerges from the affordances and constraints of raciolinguistic expectations in Mauritian transcultural encounters.

I introduced my research in Chapter 1, outlining my theoretical framework around discourses of tension, transcultural identity, translanguaging, and raciolinguistic ideologies. In Chapter 2, I delved into the rich ethnographic background of the Hakka Mauritian community by connecting histories of Hakka migrations, Chinese diasporic community formations in the Indian Ocean World, and Mauritian colonial and post-colonial multicultural nation-building. I explored the latter more in the two chapters that

followed: First as part of my methodological approach to doing ethnography in a 'rainbow nation' such as Mauritius in Chapter 3, and second in the context of Hakka identity formation processes within Mauritian discourses of tension in contrastive ideologies of 'unity in diversity' versus reified ties to ethnolinguistic diasporic community in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 was the first of three contexts within which I considered the interplay of discourses of tension and Hakka Mauritian identity negotiation. Specifically, I examined Mauritian ethnolinguistic communalism against the backdrop of the country's multicultural nation-building discourses and potential transculturation avenues. I discussed how these two complementary-yet-opposing forces result in paradoxical raciolinguistic expectations of what it means to be Hakka and Chinese Mauritian. I then took a closer look at Hakka Mauritian identity negotiation by assessing first how participants defined their Hakkaness and second the communal challenges of intergenerational cultural and linguistic transmission that participants had shared with me. I contrasted this with emerging global Hakka identity resurgence movements and Hakka Mauritians' renewed interest in ancestral 'root'-tracing and veneration practices, which I showed resulted in new local forms of expressing Hakka Mauritianness, for instance in the form of translanguaging.

Chapter 5 explored the 'rise of China' in Sino-Mauritian heritage language classrooms. I showed how multiple language shifts—from Hakka to local languages in everyday use as well as from Hakka to Mandarin in terms of 'ancestral' linguistic heritage—have impacted expectations of what it means to be Chinese, and particularly Hakka, in Mauritius. Mandarin is typically privileged over Hakka for ideological reasons, enabled by Chinese language policies regarding national monolingualism and topolect stratification. At the same time, Hakka has not necessarily left the classroom; in fact, it still plays a constitutive role in the Mandarin-learning process through translanguaging practices. Depending on the teachers' and learners' semiotic repertoires, Mauritian classrooms may be co-constructed as translingual rather than exclusively focused on the target language, allowing learners to experience their linguistic heritage as polyglossic. Mauritian multilingual ideologies thus meet Chinese monolingual ideologies in the Mandarin classroom, intersecting in compatible, yet contrastive ways. This chapter showed that tension does not always pose a threat to transcultural identities but can enrich or even strengthen them.

In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how raciolinguistic ideologies concerning a 'typical' Chinese look or sound have influenced the semiotic landscape of Chinatowns globally and locally. In Mauritius, the local impact can be felt in the scriptscape (written language) and the soundscape (spoken language), as well as the general visual construction of a more 'colourful' 'rejuvenated' Chinatown. I examined how language ideologies are present in these three instances, for instance in the naming of places, the content of murals, and spoken interactions. I then contrasted two views and ideas of Chinatown: first that of tourists, many of whom deemed Mauritian Chinatown the "worst Chinatown" they had ever visited, and then that of Sino-Mauritians, for whom Chinatown has continued significance as a historical community hub and as a potentially revived hub for the future of the Chinese presence in Mauritius. Tensions between these visions of Chinatown co-exist and intersect, the discourse of which reveals the multifaceted ways in which 'Chineseness' is imagined and experienced in the Hakka Mauritian community.

7.2 Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions

My thesis admittedly follows in the large footsteps of a rich legacy of sociocultural and linguistic anthropological research on Mauritian nation-building, ethno-communalism, language ideologies, and identity formation. Within this existing scholarship, I found a niche in what is now the first large-scale ethnographic study to focus on Hakka Chinese Mauritian identity formation and raciolinguistic ideologies in Mauritius. I owe this work to the research participants who have shared their profound knowledge with me, as well as the Sino-Mauritian authors who have written such detailed accounts about local Chinese history and archival records. Drawing on their work as well as anthropological scholarship on Hakka studies, I have accumulated a wide array of sources to bring together the connected histories and entangled ethnographies that make up the social, cultural, and linguistic context of Mauritius.

Apart from my ethnographic contribution, I add to existing anthropological theorization of identity and raciolinguistic ideologies a conceptualization of 'discourses of tension' which bring to light the agency of Hakka Mauritians negotiating their identities across ambiguities, contrastive raciolinguistic expectations, as well as transcultural and translingual practices. My findings show that raciolinguistic expectations permeate

Mauritian discourse about national, cultural, and ethnolinguistic identities, especially in the form of communalist boundaries, racialized stereotypization, and officially promoted 'ancestral' culture and languages. The latter, paired with political cooperation, have made for an increasing presence of mainland Chinese policies and ideologies in Mauritius, which further complicates such discursively constructed identities and causes them to shift. It is therefore difficult to avoid preconceived ideas of what being Hakka, Chinese, or Mauritian looks and sounds like. Hakka Mauritians express and perform their identities according to these belief systems, positioning and re-positioning themselves continuously against raciolinguistic expectations that are often curiously at odds with one another.

It is my hope that this study will be as valuable to Hakka people (Mauritian or otherwise), as well as Mauritians of non-Hakka backgrounds, as it may be to the academic community. The more data-driven Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 address particular contexts— Mauritian ethnolinguistic identity formation, Mandarin classrooms, and Chinatown, respectively—that are entangled in sociopolitical realities such as the continuous reification of rigid communalism in Mauritius, the potential emergence of a transcultural interpretation of Mauritian nationhood, maintenance of Sino-Mauritian linguistic heritage, and the proposed national heritage status of Chinatown with ongoing alterations of the area's semiotic landscape. I hope that my ethnographic findings and anthropological analysis can be of use in related causes promoted by Hakka Mauritian community members.

To be sure, I faced a series of constraints in my research. Doing fieldwork in a community of multilingual practice, I was limited as a researcher in what I could do as one person with a specific language repertoire. Although I got by with English and French and tried to learn as much Kreol and Mandarin as possible during my fieldwork, I was unable to converse fluently in all of the languages that were salient in my research participants' lives. Interviewees, for instance, typically spoke English or French with me, but group interviews showed that conversations among them that were not aimed at me would typically occur in Kreol. I was unable to interview community elders who only spoke Hakka and some Kreol as I decided to not use interpreters in my research; however, this did not exclude a large number of potential participants as most Mauritians speak multiple languages that

overlapped with my repertoire (see 3.2.1). While I had a good understanding of Kreol, Hakka resources were more difficult to come by as there were no Hakka classes in Mauritius. Instead, I learned Mandarin alongside Hakka heritage language learners to get a sense of the increasing language shift from Hakka to Mandarin both locally and in global Hakka communities, and to be a participant observer in a context where this shift impacted classroom practices. My analysis of the semiotic landscape of Chinatown was similarly affected by my limited literacy in the Sinitic script. Although this posed a challenge, I managed to identify characters and translate passages that I needed for my assessments and got help from Mauritian and Chinese friends to further my understanding of written and spoken language in Chinatown (and beyond). I also want to acknowledge that my write-up of this research in English further adds to a monolingual bias toward English in academic spaces as well as potential accessibility issues in the communities to whom the research is dedicated. Other limitations were more related to place and immersion, as the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic cut short my fieldwork in Mauritius and prohibited me from continuing in-person research activities in Canada as I had previously planned. Instead, I interviewed some Hakka Mauritians (in Mauritius and Canada) who had become permanent residents and citizens of Canada, but these interviews remained isolated cases without the context of local community immersion.

Out of these constraints, however, arise some ideas for future research needs and directions. Had I been able to do more research in the Canadian context, I would have liked to explore the similarities and differences between Mauritian and Canadian (and potentially Australian) nation-building and language policies, as well as whether and how this may affect the recently increasing trend of Sino-Mauritians emigrating to Canada (and Australia). I also got the sense that Kreol language practices were decreasing in Mauritian diasporic communities in Canada; it would be beneficial to analyze the parallels between Kreol and Hakka linguistic heritage in the Hakka Mauritian Canadian community to understand the social functions of these languages in identity and community formation. Furthermore, discourses of tension may manifest differently in Canadian (against the backdrop of Mauritian) transcultural contexts. Hakka Mauritians in Canada could be said to be part of a diaspora within another diaspora, in the sense that they were already part of a diasporic community in Mauritius—in a context where diasporic ties are highly valued,

at that—and now may form a new, doubly diasporic community in Canada. At the same time, as my preliminary data of such cases shows, they may not be recognized as Africans, Mauritians or specifically Hakka due to raciolinguistic expectations, and rather 'read' as Chinese or (South) East Asian due to appearance or perhaps French due to their accents. An exploration of how the erasure of national and diasporic dynamics impacts overall Mauritian Canadian identity negotiation would contribute to a better understanding of lived experiences of heightened 'superdiversity' (cf. Vertovec 2007) in transcultural contexts like that of Canada. On a more applicable level, awareness of raciolinguistic ideologies and phenomena or practices that expose them, such as heritage language shifts and translanguaging, would allow government officials, policy makers, educators, and other people who work in migration contexts, to understand their addressees' experiences and needs better. As such, disseminating research that challenges raciolinguistic expectations could, in the long run, lead to more sensible policies regarding migrant accommodation and cultural and linguistic heritage education efforts.

7.3 The Fate of the Dodo? Concluding Remarks

In Chapter 4, I introduced concerns among Sino-Mauritians regarding their future in Mauritius and elsewhere. A popular saying among community members predicts that they may soon be "as dead as the dodo". I am, of course, unable to predict the future of an entire community, but I would like to offer a few concluding remarks that, to me, mark creative shifts rather than a decline. When I spoke with Philip Li Ching Hum about the state of Mauritian Chinatown, he used the dodo metaphor:

> Unfortunately, Chinatown is dying. A slow death. Maybe because the dodos have left (laughs). Most of them, they have left. Hm? And there's no nightlife—in the past, it was the pulsating heart of Port Louis. You have all the activities. But nowadays, it is dying.
>
> (Interview with Philip Li Ching Hum, m, 70s, resides in Mauritius)

While I already discussed the idea of a dying Chinatown in Chapter 6, and how it reflected the concerns of the community at large, I think it is worth noting here the differentiation between people (or dodos) and place. Philip applies death to Chinatown but not, notably, to the dodo. The dodos—a stand-in for the former Sino-Mauritian residents of Chinatown—"have left". He may be talking of the gradual move of (Sino-)Mauritians out

of Port Louis into suburbs and other parts of the country, leaving most of Chinatown and the surrounding city a "ghost town" at night, or he may be referring to the larger-scale emigration taking place from Mauritius to places such as Canada and Australia. Whatever the case, he does not speak of an overall decline of the community but of a move. Popular among many of my research participants, social media pages, groups, and chats between Hakka Mauritians (and Mauritians more generally) offer vast global interconnections of people with shared diasporic ties. They put in touch people who have resided in Mauritius all of their life, those who have emigrated or commute between countries, and those who have Mauritian parents or grandparents but did not grow up on the island themselves. Drawing a full circle back to the introduction to this dissertation, a prominent proverb stemming from Confucian ideology tells Chinese people to "remember the source" when they "drink water". I noted as part of the metaphor that one could also ask where the flow of the water is leading them. The flow of the water across the Indian Ocean World brought Hakka Chinese emigrants from China to Mauritius long ago. Perhaps it is now flowing to new shores, but I see persisting and renewed interest in staying connected across distances—despite tensions.

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Appendices

Appendix A: REB Approval for Pilot Study 2018.

Western Research

Date: 25 May 2018

To: Dr. Karen Pennesi

Project ID: 111400

Study Title: Linguistic Practices and Identities among the Hakka in Mauritius

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 01/Jun/2018

Date Approval Issued: 25/May/2018 16:48

REB Approval Expiry Date: 25/May/2019

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Dear Dr. Karen Pennesi

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Focus-Group-Interview-Guide	Focus Group(s) Guide	20/Mar/2018	1
Individual-Interview-Guide	Interview Guide	20/Mar/2018	1
LOI-and-Consent-changes-clean	Written Consent/Assent	22/May/2018	3
Online-Survey-Layout-changes-clean	Online Survey	22/May/2018	3
Participant-Observation-Guide	Participant Observation Guide	20/Mar/2018	1
Photographic-Release-Form	Written Consent/Assent	20/Mar/2018	1
Recruitment-Email	Recruitment Materials	20/Mar/2018	1
Recruitment-In-Person	Oral Script	20/Mar/2018	1
Survey_LOI-and-Consent-clean	Implied Consent/Assent	22/May/2018	3
Videographic-Release-Form	Written Consent/Assent	20/Mar/2018	1
Walking-Interview-Guide	Other Data Collection Instruments	20/Mar/2018	1

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix B: REB Approval for Field Study 2019-2020.

Western Research

Date: 3 May 2019

To: Dr. Karen Pennesi

Project ID: 113857

Study Title: Linguistic Practices and Identities among the Hakka in Mauritius

Short Title: Mauritian Hakka Identity

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: June 7 2019

Date Approval Issued: 03/May/2019

REB Approval Expiry Date: 03/May/2020

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Dear Dr. Karen Pennesi

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Focus-Group-Interview-Guide	Focus Group(s) Guide	19/Mar/2019	1
Individual-Interview-Guide	Interview Guide	19/Mar/2019	1
LOI-and-Consent-changes-clean	Written Consent/Assent	30/Apr/2019	2
LOI-and-Consent-verbal-changes-clean	Verbal Consent/Assent	30/Apr/2019	2
Online-Survey-Layout-changes-clean	Online Survey	29/Apr/2019	2
Participant-Observation-Guide	Participant Observation Guide	19/Mar/2019	1
Photographic-Release-Form	Written Consent/Assent	19/Mar/2019	1
Recruitment-Email	Recruitment Materials	19/Mar/2019	1
Recruitment-In-Person	Oral Script	19/Mar/2019	1
Videographic-Release-Form	Written Consent/Assent	19/Mar/2019	1
Walking-Interview-Guide	Other Data Collection Instruments	19/Mar/2019	1

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

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Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix C: REB Approval for Amendment to Continue Research Virtually during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Western Research

Date: 1 April 2020

To: Dr. Karen Pennesi

Project ID: 113857

Study Title: Linguistic Practices and Identities among Hakka Mauritians

Application Type: NMREB Amendment Form

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: May 1 2020

Date Approval Issued: 01/Apr/2020

REB Approval Expiry Date: 03/May/2020

_____

Dear Dr. Karen Pennesi,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the amendment, as of the date noted above.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Facebook-Script	Recruiting Advertisements	30/Mar/2020	1
LOI-and-Consent	Written Consent/Assent	30/Mar/2020	1
LOI-and-Consent-verbal	Verbal Consent/Assent	30/Mar/2020	1

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix D: Interview Guide (Version March 2019).

Individual Interview Guide

"Linguistic Practices and Identities among the Hakka in Mauritius"

This is a guide for the type of questions and topics that will be addressed in individual interviews. Any and all of these are subject to change as I see fit within the context of my emergent research. I will adhere to the TCPS II articles 6.15 and 10.5 that state immediate consultation with the REB should be sought if the emergent research points to any ethical concerns or potentially harmful consequences for the participants.

Questions:
- Can you tell me something about your childhood in Mauritius, growing up as Hakka?
- How would you describe your cultural background to others? What are the most important details for others to know about you?
- What does being Hakka mean to you? Do you feel different from other Chinese Mauritians?
- Which place would you label your home?
- Which language(s) did or do you speak at home, with your family?
- Which language(s) did or do you speak outside of your home, in school, in university, at work, with friends, while buying groceries…?
- Can you tell me something about the language you feel most comfortable with?
- Can you tell me something about the language you feel least comfortable with?
- What language(s) do you speak with your children? / If you had children, what language(s) do you think you would speak with them?
- Who gave you your name? What does your name mean to you?

Other topics:
- Food (Chinese, Hakka, Mauritian, …)
- Music (same as above)
- Hakka history and Hakka migration (if applicable; some might not feel knowledgeable in this regard)
- Life in Mauritius – cultures, languages, national particularities, religions, tourism
- Life in the Indian Ocean World (e.g. connection to other islands, such as Reunion, Madagascar, Diego Garcia, Seychelles…)
- Chinatown in Port Louis (associations, memories, frequency of visits)
- Hakka cultural centers in Mauritius, community involvement

Appendix E: Qualtrics Online Survey (Distributed 2019-2020).

Mauritian Hakka Languages and Identities

Mauritian Hakka Languages and Identities

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. It is part of my anthropological PhD research about language use and identities in the Hakka Mauritian community. I hope that my research will contribute to a better understanding of Hakka identity both in Mauritius and globally, as this might be of interest to you and your community.

It will take about 15-20 minutes to answer the questions and submit the survey responses. Participation in this survey is anonymous, so your information cannot be linked to your identity.

Accessing the survey and submitting responses is voluntary. There will not be any influence on anyone to participate. Do not submit any responses if you feel you were coerced into participating.

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study, nor do you waive any legal rights by participating.

By submitting your responses, you consent to their use in the study's data analysis, as well as subsequent presentations and publications. Data will be stored indefinitely, for a minimum of 7 years. It is not accessible to third parties. Only the student researcher and the PI will have access to your data. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical

Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Please feel free to contact the researcher at █████████ if you have any questions or concerns.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics at Western University via phone ████████████ or email ████████████. You can also use the toll free phone number ██ ████████.

○ I have read and understood the letter of information and consent. I agree to participate in the study under the above-clarified conditions. (1)

Skip To: End of Survey If Mauritian Hakka Languages and Identities   Researcher (PhD Candidate): Federica Guccini Departmen... =

End of Block: Letter of Information and Consent

Start of Block: Survey Questions: Mauritian Hakka

Q1 Do you consider yourself to be Hakka? Why or why not?

_____

Q2 What is your gender?

_____

Q3 How old are you?

○ 18 to 24 (1)

○ 25 to 34 (2)

○ 35 to 44 (3)

○ 45 to 54 (4)

○ 55 to 64 (5)

○ 65 to 74 (6)

○ 75 to 84 (7)

○ 85+ (8)

Page Break ———————————————————————————————

Q4 Were you born in Mauritius?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Display This Question:
If Were you born in Mauritius? = No

Q5 If no, please specify your place of birth:

_____

Q6 Were your parents born in Mauritius?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Only one parent was born in Mauritius. (3)

Q7 If both or one of your parents were not born in Mauritius, please specify their place(s) of birth:

_____

Q8 In which country (or countries, if you move regularly) do you live now?

_____

Page Break ———

Q9 How many languages have you learned throughout your life?

○ 1 (1)

○ 2 (2)

○ 2-5 (3)

○ 5+ (4)

Q10 Please list the language(s):

_____

Q11 Of these, which languages did you know before the age of 10?

_____

Q12 Of these, which languages do you use with Hakka people?

_____

Q13 What is the language you feel most comfortable using, and why?

_____

Q14 What is the language you feel least comfortable using, and why?

_____

Page Break ───

Q15 Whether you speak it or not, what is the language that you feel most accurately represents your cultural background, and why?

_____

Q16 Which of these words do you usually use to describe your cultural background? Check all that apply.

☐　Hakka (1)

☐　Chinese (2)

☐　Mauritian (3)

☐　African (4)

☐　Cosmopolitan (5)

☐　None of these (6)

☐　Other(s): (7) _____

Q17 Why do you use the words that you selected? What do they mean to you?

_____

Page Break ——

Q18 Are you involved in any Hakka organizations or centres in Mauritius?

○ Yes, because: (1) _____

○ No, because: (2) _____

○ No, but I plan to because: (3)
_____

○ I used to but not anymore because: (4)
_____

○ Other: (5) _____

Page Break ——

Q19 Please feel free to add any other comments you think are important:

_____

End of Block: Survey Questions: Mauritian Hakka

Appendix F: Sheet with Mandarin Tongue Twisters (Classroom A).

TONGUE TWISTERS (ràokǒulìng)

Xī Shī sǐ shí sì shí sì.

Xi Shi died at 44.

Lǎo shī shì bú shi sì shí sì de?

The teacher is or is not 44?

Mā mā qí mǎ. Mǎ màn, mā mā mà mǎ.

Mother rides a horse. The horse is slow, mother scolds the horse.

Sì shì sì, shí shì shí, shísì shì shísì, sìshí shì sìshí, sìshísì shì sìshísì, Sìshísì zhǐ shí shīzi shì sǐ shīzi

4 is 4, 10 is 10, 14 is 14, 40 is 40, 44 is 44. 44 stone lions are dead lions

Fěnhóng qiáng shàng, huà fènghuáng.
Hóng fēng huáng, fěn fènghuáng,
fěnhóng fènghuáng, huā fènghuáng.

On the pink wall draw phoenix. Red phoenix, pink phoenix, pink phoenix and colourful phoenix.

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Appendix G: Sheet Music, Lyrics, and Translation for the 'Red Song' *Wo he wo de zuguo*.

Lyrics and translation (compiled from Rare Chinese Lyrics 2019; my emphasis):

我和我的祖国, 一刻也不能分割

无论我走到哪里, 都流出一首赞歌

我歌唱每一座高山, 我歌唱每一条河

袅袅炊烟, 小小村落, 路上一道辙

我最亲爱的祖国, 我永远紧依着你的心窝

你用你那母亲的脉搏和我诉说

我的祖国和我像海和浪花一朵

浪是海的赤子, 海是那浪的依托

每当大海在微笑, 我就是笑的旋涡

我分担着, 海的忧愁, 分享海的欢乐

我最亲爱的祖国, 你是大海永不干涸

永远给我碧浪清波心中的歌

Wǒ hé wǒ de zǔguó yīkè yě bùnéng fēngē

wúlùn wǒ zǒu dào nǎlǐ dōu liúchū yī shǒu zàngē

wǒ gēchàng měi yīzuò gāoshān wǒ gēchàng měi yītiáo hé

niǎoniǎo chuīyān xiǎo xiǎo cūnluò lùshàng yīdào zhé

wǒ zuì qīn'ài de zǔguó wǒ yǒngyuǎn jǐn yīzhe nǐ de xīnwō

nǐ yòng nǐ nà mǔqīn de màibó hé wǒ sùshuō

wǒ de zǔguó hé wǒ xiàng hai hé lànghuā yī duǒ

làng shì hǎi de chìzǐ hǎi shì nà làng de yītuō

měi dāng dàhǎi zài wéixiào wǒ jiùshì xiào de xuánwō

wǒ fēndānzhe hǎi de yōuchóu fēnxiǎng hǎi de huānlè

wǒ zuì qīn'ài de zǔguó nǐ shì dàhǎi yǒng bù gānhé

yǒngyuǎn gěi wǒ bì làng qīng bō xīnzhōng de gē

Me and my country cannot be separated even for a moment

Wherever I go, a hymn comes out

I sing in praise of every mountain and every river

Curling smoke, small villages, rut on the road

My dearest motherland, I will always cling to your heart

You tell me with your mother's pulse.

My motherland and I are like a sea and the wave

Wave is the sea's child, and the sea is the support of the wave

Whenever the sea smiles, I am the whirlpool of laughter

I share the sorrow of the sea and the joy of the sea

My dearest motherland, you are the sea, you will never dry up

Always give me the clear waves of the sea, song in the heart.

Curriculum Vitae

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Publications:

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