

Legacies of Trade and Empire

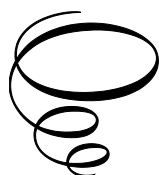
Legacies of Trade and Empire:

Breaking Silences

Edited by

Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya
and Beheroze Shroff

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Disclaimer: Although the editors assessed the arguments in relation to contemporary scholarship, we do recognise that there is a diversity of opinion within academic discourse. Consequently, the specific arguments reflect the views of the contributors rather than a unified view of the book's editors. The language used in the narratives of the contributing authors reflects their own positionalities. Each chapter is the responsibility of the respective author. The editors are not responsible for the research and scholarship within those chapters.

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Speakers hailed from Canada, Germany, India, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States of America and I am grateful to my colleagues who meticulously worked on their papers over the last year and contributed chapters to this book. Editing this book with Beheroze Shroff (University of California, Irvine), who made insightful and valuable comments on the chapters, has been a pleasure.

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Marie-Christine Parent earned doctorates in ethnomusicology from both the *Université de Montréal* (Canada) and the *Université Côte d’Azur* (France) respectively, during which she studied intangible heritage and identity issues related to *moutya*, a musical genre and practice from the Seychelles islands (Indian Ocean). For this research, she developed partnerships with the Seychelles’ Ministry of Culture and local institutions.

Her research focuses on postcolonial societies' cultures, creolisation processes, cultural policies, and artistic creativity in relation to tradition, performance, musicians' professionalisation, cultural tourism and creative industries. Marie-Christine received a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship for her PhD research. She has published numerous articles in academic journals, such as *MUSICultures*, *Les Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie*, *COLLeGIUM – Studies Across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences* and *African Music*, and has presented her work at various conferences. After almost three years of working as a Cultural Advisor in Music for the *Conseil des arts de Montréal*, she currently occupies the position of Program Officer at the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec* since July 2020.

Beheroze Shroff teaches in the Department of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Irvine. A long-time scholar of Siddis, Indians of African descent in Gujarat, Shroff has published widely in several journals and anthologies, and documented on film the different aspects of contemporary Siddi life, in Gujarat. Most recently, in 2020, Shroff co-edited a three-volume publication titled *Afro-South Asia in the Global African Diaspora*, which explores the ways in which Africans and people of African descent have shaped and have been shaped by histories, cultures, and societies of South Asia. Her documentaries have been shown in public and academic venues: as inauguration film at *Monsoons and Migrations: Unleashing Dhow Synergies*, Conference in Association with the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF); *The African Diaspora in Asia* conference (TADIA) Goa; *Samosa Arts and Culture Festival* (Nairobi); Max Planck Institute (Halle); School of Oriental and African Studies and Institute of Commonwealth Studies University of London; Gayton Library (Harrow, Middlesex); Schomburg Library and Museum of Black Culture (New York); Malcolm X Library (San Diego, California); Pan African Film Festivals (Los Angeles), among others. She won the Dorothy Arzner Award for documentary film (USA) and the Kurnitz Award for Creative Writing Award (USA).

PREFACE

SHIHAN DE SILVA JAYASURIYA
AND BEHEROZE SHROFF

Empire is about configurations of power which caused the violent and brutal displacement and dispersal of enslaved peoples as a major legacy. Trade and empire building across the globe created distinctive diasporic communities. Historical conditions in diverse geographies created contact zones, shaping complex cultural interactions and encounters across the oceans, which impacted on the coloniser and the colonised. What did colonial interventions mean for, deterritorialised, disenfranchised peoples' lives, livelihoods and environments? How did communities adapt as subjects of the empire?

Commercial networks moved people across the globe, necessitating complex intercultural interactions within diasporic communities. These communities have facilitated our research through voluntarily participating in interviews and feeding us with oral histories about their ancestors and their own lived experiences. We both have witnessed afterlives of communities affected by an imperial past. This book presents a multiplicity of scenarios which give a glimpse into the nuances of the complexity of the histories of colonialism. Legacies of commerce and the imperial nexus in shaping the lives of contemporary communities is of paramount significance in reflecting on the past in the present. Recovering silenced narratives of subaltern communities has been part of our research agenda. What are the historical conditions that have created resilient diasporic communities? What are their cultural and creative contributions in different geographies? How did the synergy of intercultural interactions change the cultural landscapes of postcolonial territories? These questions remain relevant in reviewing the past in the present which inevitably shapes futures.

This book is an organic progression of a conference held at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, on April 21, 2021, in order to address problematic histories. The global network of scholars and delegates shared and discussed experiences, through a cross-section of empires viewed through multiple lenses. Crossing

geographic and cultural boundaries in postcolonial spaces, the contributing authors combine theoretical frameworks with archival work, recording oral histories through narrative interviews and participant-observations in various parts of the world. They engage with the concept of silence imposed in different spatial and temporal frames, posing questions of what it means to break the silence around the colonial enterprise through the prisms of literature, language, music, knowledge transfers, foodways and assertions of agency that are creative acts of resistance that emerge in everyday life. We envisage that *Legacies of Trade and Empire* will engage scholars in interdisciplinary dialogues within the growing scholarship of Indian Ocean World studies and opens up conversations with the Atlantic Ocean World. Silences on legacies of empire are broken by the critical enquiries in this book which give voice to the nuances of new subject positions.

INTRODUCTION

ON LEGACIES OF TRADE AND EMPIRE

SHIHAN DE SILVA JAYASURIYA

Seven authors, from diverse ethnic and academic backgrounds, contribute to breaking the silence on legacies of trade and empire, across transversal themes, viewed from multiple perspectives. Incorporating multiethnic authorial voices, the chapters eschew the colonial gaze. Cultural mixing, diasporas and foodscapes, epistemologies and knowledge transfers, colonialism and resistance, afterlives and living together form the discourse, illuminating the complex web of relations entangled in long distance international trade, followed by empire building. Contributing authors write about diverse effects of empire, both on the lives of the coloniser and colonised, blurring boundaries through case studies since empire itself is a problematic concept.

Three themes - Creolisation and Créolité, Creativity in Diaspora and Epistemes of Empire - are brought together through seven chapters. Bi-directional epistemological and linguistic transfers, creolisation in music, diasporic memories in cuisine, afterlives of Afrodescendants and aftermath of colonialism form the discourses of the chapters. Creolisation, hybridisation and mestisation are among the concepts utilised to describe both biological and cultural admixtures emanating from encounters. Miscegenation is built on the assumption that cultural and racial purity exists “an idea redolent with the preconceptions carried by the colonial newcomers” (Bosma and Ruben, 2008, xv). Hybridisation has been a tool of analysis for the state of in-between-ness – hybridity – and articulated by postcolonial theorist, Homi Bhabha (2004). Ulbe Bosma and Remco Ruben (2008, xv) view creolisation as “a process of ongoing change and removal of social and cultural patterns”.

The first theme concerns the process of Creolisation and the state of Créolité, two connected phenomena (Hall, 2015). As cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1989) indicates, cultural identities in the present are “subject to the continuous “play” of history ... as ‘framed’ by two vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of

difference and rupture ... identities have to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes ... some continuity with the past ... [and] the experience of a profound discontinuity.” In Chapter 1 (this book) “Legacies of Creolisation: Utopian Moments in Ethics of Living Together”, Ute Fendler (University of Bayreuth, Germany) compares the Martinican writer, philosopher, and literary critic, Edouard Glissant’s (2008) concept of creolisation, influenced by his experience of living within legacies of enslavement, with the Mauritian poet, filmmaker and cultural theorist, Khal Torabully’s (Carter and Torabully, 2003) concept of coolitude, coined by his experience of indentured labourers in Mauritius. Torabully’s notion of “coral identity” built on a symbiotic egalitarian relationship, unlike the fixed binary of coloniser-colonised, operates within a milieu of unequal power dynamics. Inclusivity and living together with all ethnic groups is a worthy utopian ideal.

The studies in this book concern trade encounters and colonisation which began in the sixteenth century, with European traders competing for the same commodities and global market shares. Violent conditions of the global trade in enslaved Africans ruptured African and European cultural borders due to brutal displacements of people, which formed new cultural forms. Marie-Christine Parent (Montreal, Canada) in “Creole Music in the South-Western Indian Ocean Islands: The Case of the *Sega-Moutya* in the Seychelles” (Chapter 2, this book), describes musicscapes resulting from French and British empires which moved Africans and Asians in various directions in the Indian Ocean region. Historiographies of empire and imperialism focus on political and economic developments but cultural influences operate independently (Freitag and von Oppen, 2010) and are often overlooked. Parent’s chapter is a paradigm of the dynamics of creolisation, not dampened by nation-building and responding to the nudge of modernity, as illustrated through the musical genre *sega-moutya* popularised through the band *Fek Arive*.

The next theme – “Creativity in Diaspora” – concerns the Portuguese and Dutch empires. As Martin Page (2006, 30) remarks in *The First Global Village*: “The role of the Portuguese has not been as conquerors, let alone the conquered, but as a pivot, a conduit, by means of which ideas, knowledge and technologies have moved through Europe, and the world”. The voyage spearheaded by Vasco da Gama reached Calicut on May 21, 1498 starting a new era of East-West contact operated within the process of long distance trading and direct maritime contact with trading partners. “The Portuguese were pioneers in the process that led to the transition to a true global system of cultural and commercial exchange” (Rodrigues and Devezas, 2017). The success of a small country on the

Atlantic which turned the giant Indian Ocean into a Portuguese lake during the sixteenth century was challenged by the Dutch, French, Danes and British who competed for the same goods – spices, gems, cloth and exotic animals (de Silva Jayasuriya, 2008). The economic and political significance of the processes that brought the Portuguese in contact with three continents moving goods and people globally are well recognised. Cultural traits which are of less economic significance receive scant references with the exception of Catholicism. Nevertheless, missionary activities were a key feature in the Portuguese overseas territories, and religion is an unavoidable theme in the encounters.

The dominant view of associating the Portuguese with proselytising is dispelled in Chapter 3 (this book) where Fred Noronha (Goa, India) writes on “Not by the Cross Alone: Understanding the Role of Asia’s First Printing Press”. The printing press, established in 1556, enhanced global epistemologies through knowledge transfers from West to East and East to West. Whilst Goa’s centrality was felt throughout Portuguese Asia in the past, Goa is relegated to the periphery by contemporary scholarship. Linguistic imperialism dictates that the Anglo-American scholars marginalise Goa despite its importance as a port in South Asia. As Ernestine Carreira (2014, 13) remarks “We all bear responsibility for the sad decline of Indo-Portuguese studies in Asia, and also for the tendency to tackle the history from an increasingly Eurocentric angle in our Western research centres”. Goa was the “Rome of the Orient” and the headquarters of the *Estado da Índia* (State of India), assuming a twin role in directing political and religious affairs. Noronha reveals the centrality of Goa in enhancing epistemologies, not merely of Roman Catholicism but also on Asian languages, drugs and medicinal substances in India as documented by the physician, herbalist and naturalist, Garcia da Orta (1500-1568) and published in 1563, at Goa, in his *Coloquios dos Simples e Drogas e Cousas Medicinays da Índia* (‘Conversations on the Simples, Drugs and Medicinal Substances of India’) (Noronha, this book) also translated as ‘Colloquies of the Simples & Drugs of India’ (Markham, 1913). Da Orta’s *Coloquios*, the first treatise on tropical medicine, established the foundations of modern phytotherapy and pharmacology (Silva, 2011, 35).

Sociologist António Manuel Hespanha (2019), in his book *Filhos da Terra* (‘Sons of the Land’), draws attention to the peripheries of empire. New diasporic communities resulted from Portuguese trade expansion globally. Africans were displaced by the Portuguese in the easterly direction to turn the wheels of empire. Historical narratives deny the agency to subjects who fall outside the imperial gaze. Voices of their descendants that have been muted are heard in “Afterlives of Siddis of Karnataka: Assertion

of Agency by Indians of African descent” (Shroff, Chapter 4, this book). Beheroze Shroff (University of California, Irvine) writes on enslaved Africans who resisted subservience and violence, running away from Portuguese Goa to the neighbouring forests in the state of Karnataka. Ancestors of the Siddi communities in Karnataka are believed to be enslaved Africans who ran away from Portuguese Goa (Pinto, 2019, 171). The consequences of the easterly movement of Africans have been peripheral to the history of the slave trade due to its long duration, wide geographical spread, varied demands for Africans, assimilation and integration. The colonial era does not cease with the end of imperial rule. Shroff brings to the fore Siddi forest dwellers, marginalised peoples, whose plight is a legacy of colonial rule and regulations, intertwined with local bureaucracies through which they attempt to negotiate their rights and entitlements. Nevertheless, agency of the Siddis is also highlighted. The Special Area Games (SAG) programme which selected Siddis for training in order to nurture their talents in sports, and to maximise the number of Indian medalists at international games, has now ended. Siddis are also struggling with the post-covid-19 pandemic effects.

The Portuguese space of dominance in the Indian Ocean was challenged by the entry of the Dutch and the British. Unlike the Portuguese model which operated around *feitorias* (“trading posts”) and *fortalezas* (“fortresses”), both the Dutch and the British established trading companies: the VOC – *Vereenigde-Oostindische Compagnie* (United East India Company) and East India Company (EIC). Whilst the state was involved in the Portuguese voyages to the East, the VOC and the EIC were private companies with state backing (Subrahmanyam, 2012, 48). Trade and empire-building gave rise to diasporas, agents of cultural diffusion, elaborately documented by Tom Hoogervorst (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Netherlands) in “Gastronomy under Duress: Connected “Indonesian” Food Practices in Suriname, Sri Lanka and South Africa” (Chapter 5, this book). Hoogervorst deploys his expertise in historical linguistics and Insular Southeast Asia to discuss global colonial connections and culturesscapes through lexicon and history recognising human agency. Creativity of diasporists is attested through the innovations in cuisine adapted to the new and unfamiliar conditions which were often out of their control as forced migrants.

The final theme – Epistemes of Empire – concerns the British empire which governed a quarter of the world’s population (Ferguson, 2003, xi). Although the British did not overtly pursue an aggressive policy of cultural colonisation, today the English language is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. Colonial continuities in language and

literature concern the next two chapters. Literature is “an interesting platform for discussing globalisation and the ‘heritages’ of colonialism in a way that may not be possible within other areas of knowledge through metaphors and (imagined) life stories” (Pöysä, 2014, 8). Even in contemporary times of independence, colonial literature enables the former coloniser to enter the post-independent subject’s mind. Thus an independent nation can never be free of the colonial mind set. Colonial literature is a means of influencing minds and pulling the colonised towards the centre, whilst maintaining the local cultures in the periphery. The coloniser cannot be washed off when postcolonial nations continue to acquire knowledge within a system of education and language installed by the colonial regime. Traditional systems of education are perceived as inadequate for operating within modernity. The colonial education system, nevertheless, is also socio-politically problematic and independent nations need to grapple with finding a suitable medium through which to conduct formal education.

The two literary works discussed in this book are atypical. The coloniser-colonised binary is disrupted through the impassioned work of British writer Leonard Woolf, posted as a colonial civil servant to Ceylon in the early twentieth century. Chapter 6 (this book) “Leonard’s Woolf’s Code for Decolonisation: Reflections on Ceylon (Sri Lanka) through *The Village in the Jungle*” by Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (University of London) concerns an iconic novel older than better known works, such as E.M. Forster’s *Passage to India*, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*. Whilst scholars of English literature have recognised the value of Woolf’s novel, his mastery of Sinhala, the language of the people whom he administered in the southern province, has not been acknowledged adequately. Given the asymmetric power relations, diffusion of cultural traits and linguistic items from the colonised to the coloniser are rare. De Silva Jayasuriya deploys her proficiency in Sinhala and argues that the hybridity of the novel, including Sinhala words and speech patterns, not only indigenises the novel but also speaks to the empathy of an Englishman, who understood the mind of the oppressed. Woolf’s portrayal of Silindu, the main character who lived in a “jungle village”, unperturbed by colonial rule and western ideology, is an unusual protagonist. The interconnected nature of trade, imbalance of power and inequities in economic systems which underpin Woolf’s thinking, surface in *The Village in the Jungle* (1913). Acknowledging the ancient civilisation and self-government of Ceylon, Woolf subtly advocated decolonisation by drawing attention to the absurdity of colonial rule through the novel. Woolf’s experiences in Ceylon initiated his distaste for empire and his early silent call for change was strongly articulated almost fifty years later by the Martinican psychiatrist,

Frantz Fanon (1961) in *Les Damnés de la Terre* ('Wretched of the Earth') who saw colonialism as violence. Given the spectrum of geographical areas which were affected by colonialism, and the number of actors involved, decolonisation was nuanced over time and space. International relations which concern the interactions of nation states and non-governmental organisations is of paramount importance in a divided postcolonial world. Thus Leonard Woolf's (1916) authoritative *International Government*, which includes two reports to the Fabian Society is an influential work. In *Mandates and Empire*, Leonard Woolf (1920) states that "Under the imperialist system which we have been considering the German colonies and the territory of the Ottoman Empire would have become the prize of the conquerors. But by Article 22 the victorious powers have pledged themselves to apply to these African and Asiatic territories a system, the mandatory system, which is entirely different from, is in fact the opposite of, imperialism" (Woolf, 1920, 6-7).

Chapter 7 (this book) on "Aesthetics of Silence in M.N. Philip's *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence*", by Xin Li (University of Bayreuth, Germany) illustrates Tobago-born Canadian novelist Philip's resistance to colonialism and the desire to deconstruct the binary relationship. Women have been excluded from imperial narratives, and this postcolonial imaginary shift in the power dynamic penned by a female writer, speaks from a space of double marginalisation and silence. Her work conveys the frustration of silencing mechanisms imposed on the colonised subject. Philip tears apart the letters in "silence", and re-assembles them, rejecting the imposition of the coloniser, building anagrams and establishing her visceral response and disgust of subjugation. Li (this book) considers "how silence functions as a parodic device the narrative uses in its problematisation of the colonial discourse" and also critiques "how silence, as a critical and an aesthetic category, informs the narrative's literary effort to say the unsayable while problematising language and its essentialising propensities." An imaginary reconstruction of the famous English traveller and physician Dr David Livingstone, by a woman of Afrodescent, is powerful. Nourbese Philip reduces Livingstone to a helpless child, dependent on an imaginary mother – the narrator. The dialogic engagement through the porosity of power relationships is a silent rebuttal to subversion enacted through colonial authority. Philip's novel (1991) is a paradigm of a subaltern woman's imaginary journey into the past through which she shatters the binary of coloniser-colonised. Subaltern woman as subject of history was brought to the fore by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994) in her groundbreaking work "Can the subaltern speak?"

As Shashi Tharoor (2002, 4), senior United Nations official describes:

We will not create a better world in the twenty-first century by forgetting what happened in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. This is not to say that our responses of the dangers emerging from the legacies of the past must be rooted in the past.

In his authoritative book on *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said (1993) states that:

Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps.

Addressing the historiography of colonialism is a necessary part of lessening the inequity and facing up to the injustices of the world. The importance of looking at the lives of those stigmatised as descendants of enslaved and indentured and racialised due to their alterity cannot be undermined. The manifold manifestations of empire are vividly portrayed in *Legacies of Trade and Empire*, which problematises the notion of empire. Voices of those erased from historiographies need to be brought to the fore in order to break the silence of past injustices. The chapters in this book are proposing a creative way forward in our struggles of living together in a harmonious world. The processes of diasporic subjects as social actors of cultural legacies involve continuities, discontinuities, adaptations and transformations. Even those who operated within the colonial machinery perceived themselves as complicit and subtly advocated self-rule. Muted voices need to be heard if we are to alleviate the inequities posed by the aftermath of colonialism exacerbated by the current post-Covid-19 pandemic effects.

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CREOLISATION AND CRÉOLITÉ

CHAPTER 1

LEGACIES OF CREOLISATION: UTOPIAN MOMENTS IN ETHICS OF LIVING TOGETHER

UTE FENDLER

The title of this book “Legacies of Trade and Empire” is an invitation to think about the legacies of the philosophical stance on contact zones in the context of colonial empires. In spite of the fact that it is a history of violent and imbalanced encounters over centuries in most cases, there is some reflection on the coming into being of new cultures based on these long lasting contacts that go beyond the description of mixed and syncretic cultural forms due to the direct exchange between various cultural practices. The islands in the Caribbean, but also in the Indian Ocean, are spaces where proximity seems to have intensified the contacts that had impacts on the respective groups in ongoing processes of mutual influence in cultural practices. Scholars have tried to describe these phenomena with concepts such as “métissage” (for example René Depestre, 1998), transculturation (Fernando Ortiz, 1963), hybridisation (Canclini, 1995), or creolisation (Glissant, 1996). Transculturation can be traced back to the writings of Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz who suggested overcoming binary oppositions by the notion of transcultural processes, which describe the creation of something new that goes beyond the practices that contributed to new forms of cultural phenomena. However, for my approach, the concept of Creolisation developed by Édouard Glissant is helpful as it refers back to the concept of Créolité (“Creoleness”) suggested by the linguist Jean Bernabé and the two co-authors and writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant – who are all from Martinique. In response to Aimé Césaire’s writings on Négritude and Glissant’s writings on “Antillanité” (“Antillian identity”), Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant (1993) published an essay on “Créolité” highlighting the contact of languages and cultures in the Caribbean islands and how a Creole identity developed over the centuries that drew on all cultures that were in contact. Glissant then

developed this concept further by highlighting that it is an ongoing process of interaction between various cultural groups, so that creolisation can take place everywhere as no cultural communication evolves without contacts or influences.

All these concepts describe and try to perceive the nature of contact zones. However, most phenomena are the result of violent encounters that occurred with the loss and oppression of African cultural practices and the imposing of European practices in the context of colonial history of Europe and former colonies. The supposed superiority of the oppressors did not succeed in the absolute dominance of European cultures, but it was rather a process of contact of diverse elements bringing up varying combinations of cultural fragments. In the context of the former French colonial empire, the Négritude movement was a major turning point in the conceptualisation of the contacts between African/Afrodescendant and French culture, as the main thinkers, namely the Senegalese writer Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire, turned the violent history and the disdainful treatment of Afrodescendant persons into a movement that would valorise the experience, the cultural heritage and productions of Black people. Following in the footsteps of Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant developed the reflections on the impact of slavery and colonialism on Caribbean culture that came out of the plantation system. With his poetics on relation and creolisation, he focused on an ongoing process of changing contacts, so that he succeeded in taking the historical constellation of the Caribbean contact zone as a starting point to reflect on the meaning of living together in continuously changing constellations. Inspired by the ideas of Glissant, other writers suggested concepts that also imply utopian moments in which they project an ethical understanding of living together in the future which goes far beyond the works that tried to describe and to conceptualise emerging cultural practices out of contacts between various groups of different cultural settings.

There is abundant literature on contact zones trying to describe the new phenomenon as hybrid, syncretic, mixed or transcultural (Hall, 2003, Kuortti and Nyman, 2007, Prabhu, 2007, Cooke and Denney, 2021, Waseem and Nosheen, 2022). Nevertheless, the objective of this chapter is not to give an overview of the wide range of concepts and theories that have been developed over the last decades, but to focus on the utopian moments, which we can find in Glissant's writings that find their echoes in the reflections by Mauritian writer Khal Torabully and by Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau. I will give a short introduction on the first steps towards the concept of creolisation, developed by Glissant in the 1980s. The ongoing exchange in the development of these concepts evolves in

transcontinental dialogues across the oceans, as some responses can be found in the ideas of Coolitude and the concept of “coral identity” by Khal Torabully. I will conclude by returning to Martinique with Patrick Chamoiseau’s most recent writings that are partly a response to Glissant’s works. All these concepts tried and still try to orientate reflections on contacts of cultures towards an ethics of living together.



World Map by Gunindu Abeysekera

Glissant: “The All-World” and the “Relation”

The writer and philosopher from Martinique, Édouard Glissant - one of the most influential figures on Caribbean and postcolonial thought - started his reflections on the socio-political and historical settings of Martinique 40 years ago with his study on the history of the French Caribbean islands focusing on the plantation system and its aftermaths in *Le discours antillais* (“The Antillean Discourse”, 1981). In describing the impact of the violent encounter between European and African cultures, he mainly focused on the very specific context of the slave trade and its reverberations in contemporary societies. In 1989, three writers from Martinique, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant and Jean Bernabé, published the manifesto *Éloge de la Créolité* (“In Praise of Creoleness”, 1989) suggesting a more integral vision of the world of ongoing encounters. They also took into