School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry

Magic, Modernity, and Race in Seychelles: The Situation of *Grigri* in the Modern Creole Order

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014.

The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number **#HR 208/2014**

Michael Palmyre
March 2023

Abstract

In 1977, a *coup d'etat* established a one-party socialist state in Seychelles. What followed was the development of a Creole nationalism underpinned by an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and pro-African agenda. One specific aspect of Creoleness – witchcraft, or *'grigri'* - was excluded from the Creole canon during this era of nationalistic development. This research focuses on understanding *grigri's* contested positions in relation to Creoleness, how the concept of *grigri* has been situated and engaged with by Creole people, and what ideas about modernity and race have to do with the positioning of *grigri*. The scant literature on *grigri* has been dominated by white non-Seychellois perspectives from the 20th century who stereotyped *grigri* in racist terms. This project explores characterisations of *grigri* from a Creole standpoint within a political order emphatically concerned with questions of race and colonialism to assess the currency and logic of *grigri's* marginalisation.

Through ethnographic fieldwork and critical engagement with the literature on modernity, race, and witchcraft, this work discusses how modern Creoleness has relied upon the abjection of *grigri* as a signifier of a pre-modern blackness, but also how Creole people have responded to the deployment of this logic. Using *grigri* as a lens through which to examine modernity and race in Seychelles reveals the racial logic of *grigri's* marginalisation and contributes to the ways in which race, modernity, and witchcraft can be connected but also seen as discursively constructed and co-constitutive.

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Motivation

Creoleness is our primitive soup and our continuation, our primeval chaos and our mangrove swamp of virtualities. We bend toward it, enriched by all kinds of mistakes and confident of the necessity of accepting ourselves as complex. For complexity is the very principle of our identity. (Bernabé et al. 1990, 892)

As an expression of groups which experience brutal exploitation, creolization reflects an ethos of resistance. (Vergès 2015, 44)

In 1977, a coup d'état in the small African country of Seychelles established a one-party socialist government, headed by President France-Albert René. Political instability ensued in the decades that followed, including attempted coups and political violence, quite literally, at the doorstep of our family home in Seychelles. Driven by these factors, my parents made the decision to leave Seychelles in the late eighties. Unbeknownst to us, we were first accepted into Canada but suspected that the Seychelles government withheld our papers as part of a broader attempt to stop Seychellois leaving the country. We eventually moved to a small regional town in Western Australia. Here, there was another sort of tension: our blackness was out of place, our existence was unsettling. We went back to Seychelles every two or three years, and the difference was tangible: it was and still is common to see black power fists on shirts, flags of Africa in red, gold, and green, tam-tams full of dreadlocks and a vibrant Rastafari counterculture, and music booming from cars and at beach parties that ranged from local sega music to Caribbean reggae and dancehall. In regional Australia, blackness was matter out of place. In Seychelles, the place was overflowing with black expressions. Indeed, the coup d'état of '77 was explicitly centred on racialised ideas about Seychellois identity, both positive and negative, which ushered in an era of Creole nationalism underpinned by an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and pro-African agenda. René's SPUP/SPPF[1] institutionalised Creoleness and rooted this cultural identity in African heritage, but, as this thesis explores, the specific racialised conception of Creole nationalism was not without its contradictions.

[1] The Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) seized state power in 1977 in the *coup d'état*, and was later renamed to the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF). The conjoined acronym 'SPUP/SPPF' has been used to collectively refer to the main parties led by René throughout this era, in which the SPUP/SPPF changed its name several times (Mathiot 2016). This pairing has been chosen for ease of reference, but also to avoid obfuscating the common political figures, particularly René, who remained at the helm of each permutation.

Being a Seychellois growing up in Australia meant that race and racism were things that I lived, not academic topics that I could choose to pay attention to. The juxtaposition of being black in Seychelles and being black in Australia was made further interesting when I began to experience, as time passed and I travelled elsewhere in Australia, that I was racialised differently, by different people, at different times. My family and I knew that we were undeniably black, regardless of where we were or who was looking at us. However, what appeared most salient to me was that race was a complex and non-objective topic. We were black because we were African, had African heritage, identified as black and were racialised as black. First Nations peoples in Australia have also been racialised as black and identified as black, but not (all) as Africans or as people of African heritage[2]. The complexity and ambiguity surrounding racialisation, and how I experienced this differently in Seychelles and within Australia, sparked my interest in better understanding race and how it operates, particularly in relation to Creoleness and blackness. My doctoral research stems from my interest in the racially contested with a focus on how Creoleness and blackness are constituted and constituting.

Prior to applying for a doctoral degree, I engaged in personal research to understand the various complexities of my Creole heritage. My initial insights were arrived at through my own experience as a Seychellois, in discussions with my Creole family and friends, and by engaging various culture and heritage experts in Seychelles. I met figures like Jean-Claude Mahoune and the late Patrick Prosper, who shared insights with me about Creole heritage, music, and artforms. I learnt that the Creole *bonm* and Brazilian *berimbau* were related to the indigenous musical bow, popular throughout the African region; how *tinge* – a Seychellois martial art, song, and dance form – and *capoeira* – a Brazilian dance and martial art that I had trained in for many years – were related to the Madagascan *moraingy* and *moringue* or *batay kreol* in Reunion; and how the Seychellois *moutya* song and dance form was likely derived from the word *mutcira*, the name of a dance of the Makhuwa[3] of northern Mozambique (Baker 1996, 115; 1993a, 145), and connected to *sega* in Mauritius and *maloya* in Reunion. I was fascinated by how these things that were so alike, but found in such disparate sites of Africa and the African diaspora, were so intricately connected to Creole identity in Seychelles.

[2] For more on the contours, intersections, and complexities of bla(c)kness, black power, and indigeneity in Australia, see Aboagye (2018) and Watego (2021).

[3] Most enslaved Africans in Indian Ocean colonies were likely transported from Mozambique, some of which may have been Makhuwa (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 124–25; Mahoune 1987, 2) This ethnic and geographic linkage may also be suggested in the racially derogatory Creole terms *makwa* and *mazanbik*.

Given my interest in these connections, I applied to conduct research on Creoleness as part of a doctoral degree under the rubric of traditional music and ritual in Seychelles. I initially selected a few areas within that rubric: *tinge, moutya,* and *grigri*, all of which seemed to have little written about them and all of which were described as disappearing practices. As Choppy notes, *moutya* was formally banned in nineteen thirty-five (2017, 119), but the 1977 *coup d'état* gave it formal recognition and ushered in a cultural revival. *Moutya*, at least, was considered part of the Creole canon. I considered *tinge* given my personal interest in *capoeira*, and the supposed likeness, but *tinge* was also promoted as part of Creole heritage, in part due to Jean-Claude Mahoune and a local group called *Ting Kapela's*[4] efforts. *Grigri*, on the other hand, was a much more contentious topic. It was shunned, taboo, and illegal to practice or be influenced by. I only found negative sentiments concerning *grigri* in the Seychelles Museum and literature, which were reflected in the views of Seychellois friends and family. *Grigri* was reduced to descriptions such as 'local black magic' or 'voodoo', and associated with zombies, sorcerers, and charlatans. And while *tinge* and *moutya* were promoted as Creole practices of African heritage, *grigri's* place and history in Seychelles appeared to be much more heavily disputed. Some considered it to be Creole, others considered it to be a 'relic' of Seychelles' African heritage but not a contemporary Creole practice, while others still entirely rejected any suggestion that *grigri* was Creole, instead insisting that *grigri* only existed in contemporary Seychelles due to the influences of mainland Africans and Madagascans.

The post-coup era saw the revival and institutionalisation of Seychelles' ostensibly 'African' heritage, including the *bonm*, *moutya*, the Creole language, and a range of other practices described as aspects of Seychelles' African heritage. *Grigri*, however, not only continued to remain illegal under Penal Code Section 303 (Seychelles Government 2014; Twomey 2017, 185–86), but was also explicitly targeted by the SPUP/SPPF as laid out in their own policy statement soon after the 1977 coup:

> *A socialist society does not accept superstitious beliefs and practices and the Front will work towards their complete eradication.* (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1978, 32)

[4] A local practitioner and member of the '*Ting Kapela'* explained to me that the name referred to both *tinge* – '*Ting'* – and capoeira – *'Kapela'*. This creative name represents, in its own way, a creolisation that brings together African practices that, hundreds of years earlier, left the African mainland with enslaved Africans who were taken across the Atlantic to Brazil, and throughout the various islands of the Indian Ocean.

This was not an immaterial reference but a declaration of intent. While the Penal Code concerning *grigri's* prohibition was made decades earlier under British administration, *grigri* was subjected to renewed repudiation by the SPUP/SPPF – and the immediacy of the announcement suggests that the SPUP/SPPF saw the eradication of witchcraft as a matter of priority. I chose to focus on *grigri* for this research due to, amongst other things, its violently contested racial status and disputed place in Creole culture. As Chapter 2 will show, many of the stories I had heard from friends and family were consistent with the existing literature on *grigri*, even though most of that literature was written by white non-Seychellois producing popular fiction and travel writing throughout the 20th century. These stories have remained relatively consistent in the literature from the 1930s to the 1980s. Key themes about *grigri's* qualities were reified in stories I heard throughout the 1990s and the explanations that continued into the 2000s, until at least the completion of my fieldwork in early 2018.

The topic of *grigri* has presented key conflicts and contradictions for Creoleness in Seychelles: first, *grigri's* racialised position in Creole culture has been contested, yet the existence of *grigri* – as an idea and a 'practice' – has been maintained for a significant part of Seychelles' history; second, *grigri* has been considered quintessentially African while simultaneously being rejected from the Creole canon, including by the SPUP/SPPF, whose agenda emphasised the importance of celebrating Seychelles' African heritage; and finally, *grigri* has not been passively dismissed but actively targeted for eradication in campaigns that began in at least the early 1900s, were formalised in the Penal Code of 1958, and were continued by the SPUP/SPPF from 1977. *Grigri* has experienced negative, violent, and racialised contestations for at least the last century, and I was motivated to understand why.

As this thesis shows, understanding the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness is no simple task. This is, in large part, because *grigri* cannot be approached as a singular object of study of the kind that a defined community of practice might offer. Instead, I have approached *grigri* as a myriad of racialised ideas concerning people, place, and practice. In doing so, this thesis seeks to avoid the trap of focusing on *grigri* as a practice, or even a collection of practices, and instead explores the discourse concerning *grigri* as a primary site of investigation. This approach allows for an understanding of the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness, but also allows *grigri* to be used as a lens through which to examine what is seen to constitute modern Creoleness in Seychelles, and how modern Creoleness might be seen as constituted by contradictory ideas about blackness, Africanness, and modernness. In exploring how *grigri* through these lenses, this thesis also offers ways to extend existing thinking about modernity, magic, and race.

Importantly, despite the complexities of using the term *grigri* to refer to a defined or bounded concept, this thesis uses *grigri* to describe alternative practices in broad terms, including all forms of magic and herbalism, as has been done in popular discourse. While I considered aligning with the specific ways that some practitioners used the term *grigri* – which Chapter 5 explores as, for some, limited to a particularly nefarious and harmful kind of magic – I decided against this for simplicity and to reflect colloquial usage. This seemed appropriate given that even alternative practitioners used the term *grigri* in ambiguous and contrasting ways when referring to healing and occult practices. The choice to use *grigri* as a catchall in this way has also allowed me to better grapple with *grigri* as a broader discursive concept and, more saliently, to focus on the discourse concerning *grigri,* even where that discourse has rarely reflected any actually existing practices that I came across.

While this thesis explores how *grigri* might be viewed as a discursively constructed concept that has been racialised in terms of Africanness, it only represents one way of viewing the pluralistic and dynamic topic of *grigri*. Many aspects of *grigri* remain unexplored by this thesis, and this study does not attempt to characterise *grigri* definitively. This thesis does at times adopt reductionist language given, as this thesis argues, *grigri* is discursively produced in racially reductionist terms. The racialisation of *grigri* argued to be present in Seychelles occurs in positive and negative ways, sometimes simultaneously and contradictorily, and this frequently results in slippage. While this thesis considers how and why this occurs in mainstream discourse and among research participants it also, at times, surfaces in the analysis presented in the chapters contained herein. Grappling with this duality is complicated because, as this study suggests, what is deemed regressive and negative about *grigri* by some is simultaneously embraced as positive by others. This thesis is not immune from a tendency to racialise *grigri* in terms of Africanness or, similarly, of equating criticisms of *grigri* with anti-blackness/Africanness. Thus, while at times this means speaking about *grigri* in a racialised way, primacy is given to the task of understanding where, how, and why *grigri* is racialised at all, and specifically in terms of Africanness. And while there is a focus on Africanness, implying, perhaps, a central focus on the African mainland, the starting point for this work reaches to the African diaspora in the Americas and Caribbean given the connections made in the literature and discourse, which are discussed further in Chapter 2. The history of Seychelles and the literature surveyed for this thesis suggested that these connections were predominantly with the French and English-speaking world, such that the scope of this thesis was shaped accordingly. This thesis has been motivated by the need to understand how and why all these complexities and connections intersect.

1.2 Research Questions

My research questions stem from my own motivations regarding the complexities of race and racism and have progressed into focus given the complex and racialised engagements with the topic of *grigri*. The question at the core of this research asks: what has influenced *grigri's* contested positions in Creole culture, and how has *grigri* been situated and engaged with by Creole people?

As Chapter 2 will show, this research cannot be undertaken without acknowledging the prevalent themes of modernity, race, and magic, which provide the necessary framework for answering these questions. Bringing key questions together with the key themes leads to the following specific research questions:

1. What is being referred to when the term *'grigri'* is used?
2. How is *grigri* situated in Creole culture? And what can theories of modernity, magic, and race offer in furthering this understanding?
3. And finally, what might answers to these questions reveal about the category of Creoleness and the construction and operation of modernity itself?

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured in a way that answers these research questions from various Creole standpoints in relation to relevant theoretical groundings. In the next section of Chapter 1, I provide a historical and political overview of Seychelles from the time of its establishment as a colony to the current post-socialist and post-SPUP/SPPF era. In Chapter 2 I provide a comprehensive overview of the relevant literature and key theoretical concepts necessary for making sense of *grigri's* situation in modern Creole Seychelles. Chapter 3 lays out my research approach and the necessity of conducting 'ethnography on an awkward scale' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 282) to understand the place of *grigri* in Seychelles and the world. In Chapter 4, I discuss the views of non-practitioner participants, followed by Chapter 5's focus on the accounts of practitioner participants. Chapter 6 moves to the situation of *grigri* as a concept in relation to the political discourse of the SPUP/SPPF and the establishment of modern Creole subjects. In Chapter 7, I bring the themes of previous chapters together to discuss *grigri* and/as decoloniality. Finally, in Chapter 8, I provide an overview of the key findings of this thesis in response to my research questions and analysis chapters and point to implications and opportunities arising from this research in relation to Creoleness and race/modernity studies more broadly.

1.4 Places and Races: A Historical and Political Overview

1.4.1 Seychelles, the Colony

As Burton Benedict notes, 'history is particularly important' in an account of Seychellois as, with any peoples, '[t]heir past is not dead; it informs present attitudes and present social arrangements.' (1982, 115) As will be shown in Chapter 2, *grigri* is often discussed as a waning historical artefact inherited from its African antecedents, a claim that is used to position *grigri* as foreign to Seychellois Creoleness. This thesis seeks to understand why this distinction occurs, the purpose and validity of this claim, and how this claim, and the concept of *grigri*, is engaged and utilised by Seychellois. This section provides a brief historical overview of Seychelles with a focus on its discursive contexts to establish the appropriate setting from which these questions can be answered.

Seychelles was a British colony prior to independence in 1976 (Scarr 2000, 191–92) and, before that, a French colony between being established as a permanent slave colony in the 1770s and its formal acquisition in 1814 with the Treaty of Paris (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 116–20). As a nation, Seychelles came into existence as a colony of modern Europe that was first populated by non-white peoples from Africa and South Asia who were enslaved to white landowners (1982; Scarr 2000, 4–8). This moment buttresses the discursive construction of Creole identity as an event inextricably concerned with race, coloniality, and modernity, or what Benedict describes as 'ideologies of racial inequality, capitalism, and imperialism' that articulated social orders based on 'race, power, and wealth' (1982, 103). Indeed, as O'Gorman contends, Creole people are 'quintessentially modern' because they are 'a new kind of person' that emerged from the interfacing of colonised and coloniser (O'Gorman 2019, 27–28), and as such are a product of modernity/coloniality.

These raced beginnings are reflected in contemporary Seychellois discourse. White slave masters, plantation owners, land owners, and employers are still referred to almost synonymously using the term *bourzwa* – which can mean employer, master, or simply 'boss' (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 56–57) – and more selectively as *gran blan* – literally 'big white, reserved for the white propertied upper class (Choppy 2017, 132), defined simply as 'landowner', and generally used pejoratively in contemporary settings (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 134). The terms *gran blan* and *bourzwa*, with its linguistic connection to *bourgeois*, imply a class distinction that has been based on, and historically determined by, whiteness. These terms exist in stark contrast to *gran nwar* or *grannwanr* – literally 'big black' – which hold positive connotations but have been used irrespective of perceived race or skin colour (Choppy 2017, 110–14), often to simply mean 'adult man' (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982,

134–35). *Gran nwar* has been used positively to refer to respected figures like *grigri* practitioner Charles Zialor, who was 'of black origins', to the socialist President France Albert René, who was 'of white origins', in both instances reflecting the view that a *gran nwar* is 'powerful or invincible' (Choppy 2017, 111–14). The fluid and ostensibly universalising use of *gran nwar* compared to the historically more specific application of *gran blan* highlights the complicated discourses on race, class, and identity in Seychelles.

There is general agreement that the first peoples to permanently settle in Seychelles were, variously put, 15 whites from other French colonies in the Indian Ocean – such as modern-day Mauritius and Reunion – along with 13 people who have been referred to collectively as African and Asian slaves, or have sometimes been distinguished as a black woman, 5 South Indians, and seven African slaves (Thomas 1968, 48; B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 117; Scarr 2000, 8; Mahoune 2002). As Benedict (1982) notes, enslaved peoples were 'passed through many hands; tribal and place names were confused and variously spelled, and accurate records were not kept (1982, 124). A range of views exist on the composition and origins of the hundreds of thousands of enslaved peoples displaced throughout French and British colonies in the Indian Ocean in the 17th to 20th centuries (Filliot 1974; Allen 2001; Mahoune 2002; B. Benedict and Benedict 1982; Scarr 2000). Records from Mauritius and Reunion are often used as models for the composition of enslaved peoples in Seychelles. These typically suggest that enslaved peoples were predominantly taken from Madagascar and Mozambique[5], but also in significant amounts from across South Asia, particularly around the Bay of Bengal and along the Malabar Coast[6], and in smaller amounts from West Africa (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 124; Mahoune 1987; Filliot 1974; Noble 1793; D'Unienville 1838). Yet even these locations are reductive, having been derived from often inaccurate records with confused and variously spelled tribal and place names (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 124–25), while also commonly referencing sites from which enslaved and indentured subjects were exported as opposed to their ancestral homelands. The commonly ascribed national and racial identities are 'ones for our times' as the Indian Ocean world 'was a site of encounters and

[5] Mozambique is the etymological root of the pejorative '*mazanbik'* in Seychellois Creole, used as a general insult but also to refer to anyone deemed to possess stereotyped features that are perceived as more 'African'. See Choppy (2020, 60) and D'Offay & Lionnet (1982, 262).

[6] Similar to the lineage of '*mazanbik*', *'malbar'* is linked to 'Malabar', which is used to refer, in a similarly objectifying and pejorative sense, to all Indians, especially Indian shopkeepers and labourers, presumably with historical linkages to enslaved and indentured labourers from the Malabar Coast, though *'malbar'* has also been defined, specifically, as an Indo-Portuguese term for '*Indien non musulman'*, or 'non-Muslim Indians' (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 252)

exchange' between diverse groups of people 'long before the arrival of Europeans in 1948' (Vergès 2007, 135–38).

Any attempt to outline the origins of Seychellois becomes further complicated following the abolition of slavery in 1835, when other forms of labour arrived in colonies like Mauritius and Seychelles to fill the labour gap. This included indentured labourers from Asia, and in the case of Seychelles especially, 'liberated Africans' who were contracted by the British to former slave masters as apprentices, or economically bound to plantation owners under the *moitié* system where formerly enslaved peoples provided their labour to *bourzwa* in return for land access, but no pay (Thomas 1968, 52–53; Mahoune 2002; Allen 2001; B. Benedict 1966). What is apparent from these accounts is that accurately and completely tracing the cultural and racial lineages of Seychellois is inherently difficult and at best a partial narrative. In the lead up to Seychelles' independence, various attempts were made to resolve the tensions around what constituted a Seychellois Creole, and what Seychelles ought to be. James Mancham and France-Albert René were key figures in this regard. Both played an influential role in the discursive construction of what I term the 'modern Creole order' and 'modern Creole subjects', and both had much to say about race in Seychelles that was heavily borrowed from and influenced by race discourse in Europe and the Americas.

1.4.2 The Birth of a Nation

In the fervour of the decolonisation and black rights movements of the sixties, the first two Creole political parties were formed: the pro-British Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) and the pro-republic Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP). James Mancham, a lawyer and pro-Western politician, became president of the newly independent republic under the SDP. France-Albert René was a lawyer in the SPUP opposition party. Mancham and René were key political figures whose contrasting politics were notable in the lead up to Seychelles' independence in 1976. René campaigned on a pro-independence, socialist-styled agenda while Mancham promoted free trade capitalist policies and campaigned for Seychelles to be integrated with Britain similar to the relationship that La Reunion retained with France (Scarr 2000, 164–94). Where Mancham advocated for the construction of an airport, tourism, ties to Britain, and the removal of capital gains tax, René focused on housing, education, and elderly care (ibid., 176). In fact, René was associated with incitement to violence aimed at 'foreigners whom developing was bringing in – and rising social inequalities with them', trends that he associated with Mancham (ibid., 186–87) and the presence of tourists who his party 'accuse[d] of destroying their country' (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 55).

René, who represented the SPUP, campaigned for independence using the term ‘birth of a nation’ (Seychelles People’s Progressive Front 1981, 71). Though in isolation, the phrase ‘birth of a nation’ may seem neutral and appropriate for this situation, it is useful to view the phrase as a window through which the racialised political history of Seychelles could be discursively linked to its global contexts. Considering the American movie, *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915), is a useful starting point, which was a film preoccupied with white anxieties regarding ‘racial mixing’, a core criterion upon which Creoleness has been defined. The movie helped legitimise the idea of ‘black political exclusion [as] necessary for national preservation’ (Olund 2013, 926). This was done in response to perceived threats posed by ‘racially mixed’ mulattoes who ‘might incite racial unrest, like the mixed-race leaders of the Haitian revolution’ while otherwise causing racial degeneration (Schaefer 2008, 150–51). In its own use of the phrase ‘birth of a nation’, the SPUP was advocating for national independence while appealing to a Creole voter base, but it remains useful to consider the phrase in relation to its white nationalist trappings given the shared topics of concern: mixed-race peoples and national preservation.

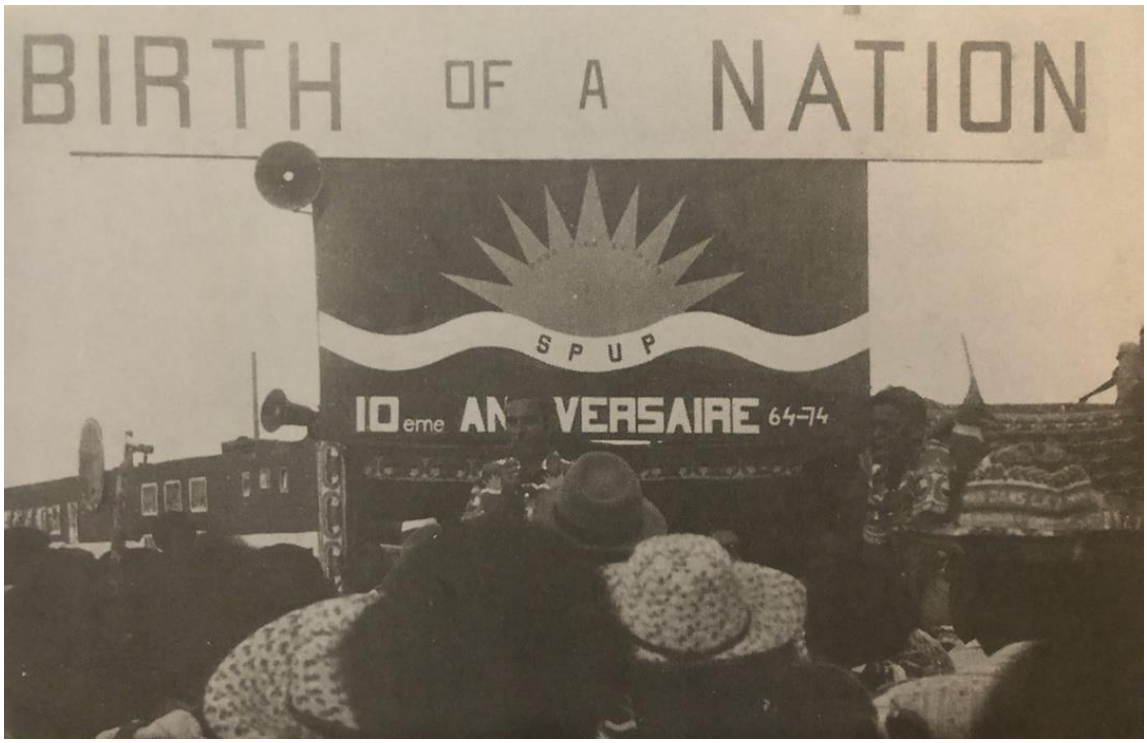

Figure 1. René campaigning under a ‘Birth of a Nation’ banner (Seychelles People’s Progressive Front, 1981, p. 71)

These discursive simulacrum were not the only ways in which the lingering inspirations and anxieties surrounding white nationalism and the Haitian revolution might have shaped socio-political relations in Seychelles. In 1852, Adolphe Loizeau, antagonist of the ‘white élite’s church’ and the son of a formerly enslaved Indian, called for ‘coloured people in Seychelles to follow the example of Haitian slaves so many years before, and unsheathe daggers’, which concerned the

British administration (Scarr 2000, 58, 65–67). Almost a century later – in the 1930s – a lobby group for the landed class called the Taxpayers' Association 'canvassed the necessity for a 'Ku Klux Klan', arguing that the blacks were being roused against the whites just as they had been in Haiti' (Waugh 1951, 174–76), reflecting the concerns aroused in *Birth of a Nation* about Haitian Creole revolutionaries (Griffith 1915). The Taxpayers' Association would later evolve into the first political party: the Seychelles Taxpayers' and Producers' Association (STPA). The STPA represented the interests of *gran blan* and in the country's first election in 1948 campaigned on the basis of their being '100 percent Seychellois', emphasising the need to preserve Seychellois customs and traditions, and pushing to increase the teaching of French in schools (Scarr 2000, 152–53). While 'Seychellois' has become the demonym for people of Seychelles, synonymous with the term Creole (Bueger and Wivel 2018; Choppy 2020, 59–60), white people in Seychelles historically identified as Seychellois to distinguish themselves from Creoles, a term which was reserved for black people alone (Scarr 2000, 5, 29).

René's SPUP, formed in the 1960s in response to STPA's political dominance, reified the STPA's values. Comprised of many *gran blan* family members, the SPUP established a platform for Seychellois nationalism that aligned with the objectives of the STPA by reintroducing French in schools, eventually making French a national language, and instituting the preservation of Seychellois heritage that acknowledged the African heritage of Seychellois but showed a particular fondness for 'our French language and heritage' (Scarr 2000, 164–203). Indeed, the SPUP also privileged the use of 'Seychellois' as a demonym over 'Creole', and in political speeches tended to limit the use of the term 'Creole' to describe the Seychellois Creole language, rather than a collective self-reference to Creole people (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1981; 1982).

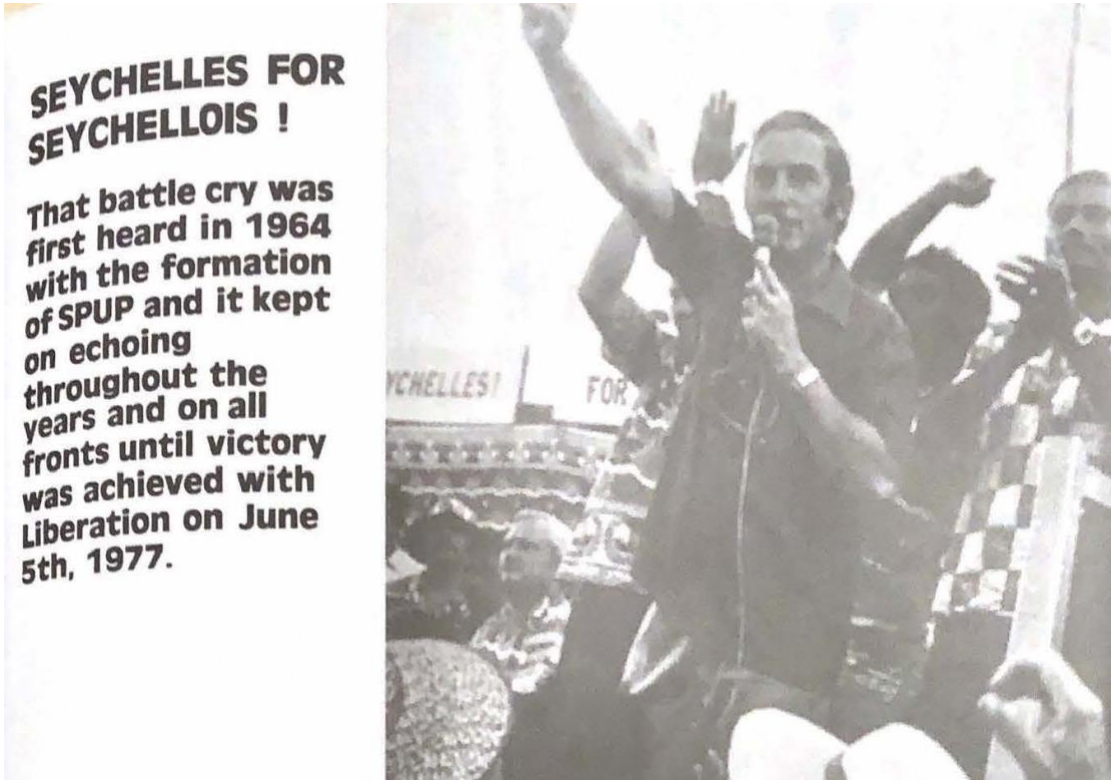

Figure 2. René's nationalist catchphrase: 'Seychelles for Seychellois' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front, 1981, p. 65)

Mancham was instated as President when Seychelles was granted independence from Britain in 1976. To usher in this new era, Mancham provided a new narrative about Creole identity in a poem that attempted to erase racial difference by generalising Creoleness to the position of the universal human. This poem positioned Creoleness as a 'blend' of races, a representative of 'all cultures', 'all colours', 'every civilisation', and indeed as 'a sample of the world to come.' (Scarr 2000, 1) As I discuss in Chapter 2, Mancham's proclamations have influenced the Creole consciousness in a way that attempts to increase Seychelles' proximity to Europe, which in this sense reflected his politics.

1.4.3 The 1977 Coup D'état

On June 5th, 1977, only a year following independence, a successful *coup d'état* established a revolutionary socialist state[7] with France-Albert René at its helm (Scarr 2000, 194–97). While this was an important event in its own right, it is of special relevance to the discourse on *grigri*. For René, independence showed the British that Seychellois were not inferior and could govern themselves (Scarr 2000, 186, 196), demonstrating an implicit desire to prove that Seychellois were at least equivalent to Europeans in terms of their competence. Chapter 6 of this dissertation explores

[7] The political party that led the coup and subsequently held power was the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP), which later renamed to the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF). The SPUP/SPPF changed name and hands since seizing power but did not relinquish control of political power until being voted out in late 2020, 43 years later.

how René's anti-colonial and anti-capitalist revolutionary juncture could be understood as having recapitulated the colonial terms of reference used to describe and assess *grigri* and Africanness. Most notable is how, as a socialist President, René positioned *grigri* and proxies of Africanness in his political speeches throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1978; 1981; 1982). René's wrenching of power from Mancham was part of a campaign to establish a break with a past that he associated with colonialism, disorder, and tradition, aggressively asserting a need to destroy the 'old' to make way for the 'new'. Throughout this rhetoric, René referred to *grigri*, superstition, and stereotypes about Creoles to rationalise the need and urgency for his plans to be put into effect using militant means (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982; 1981). Such decrees sought to put 'an end to drunkenness and absenteeism' which, as Scarr suggested, were objectives sought by earlier colonialists using 'means that were less extreme' (2000, 196). René's reconstruction of Seychellois history, heritage, and purpose positioned the 1977 coup as central to liberation for Seychellois and avoided the making of Seychellois into 'slaves of the capitalist and of foreign countries' due to Mancham's policies (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 3). Choppy (2017) contends that this was a view shared more widely, citing research on Seychellois memories of slavery where most informants considered the socialist and post-independence era of the 'Second Republic[8] to have liberated the Seychellois people from slavery' (2017, 24–25).

In the years following the coup, René reified a particular Creole origin story, which held that in '1770, when our first ancestors landed in Seychelles, there were white European masters and black African slaves'. As time passed, René's story went, 'some black servants' managed 'to get a piece of land' and 'some white masters' became 'poor and had to resort to becoming workers', and over time Seychelles saw the arrival of 'merchants, mainly Asians'. René proclaimed that 'Seychellois are of different colours' and 'a mixture of races' due to these social changes, which were seen to have blurred the lines of racial stratification and segregation (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 47–48). René's simplified account suggests a view of Creole identity presented as dichotomies of white and black, master and slave, Europe and Africa, where the figure of the Creole emerged from the arrival of enslaved Africans in Seychelles and the subsequent mixture of these previously separate racial categories. Garraway (2006) has discussed the idea of the 'Creole myth of

[8] The various phases of Seychelles' pre- and post-independence have been described in French revolution-esque terms. 'Second Republic' has been used to refer to the period between 1977 and 1991 – the era of the socialist one-party state – as opposed to the short-lived 'First Republic' under James Mancham, and the 'Third Republic' that emerged following the Soviet Union's dissolution and the sudden establishment of a multi-party state in Seychelles.

origin' with a focus on Patrick Chamoiseau, whose influential work *In Praise of Creoleness* (1990) is discussed in Chapter 2**.** For Garraway, Chamoiseau positioned slavery as the genesis of Creoleness and cultural production in the Caribbean despite his indictment of singular foundation myths (Garraway 2006, 152).

The power of 'the myth of origin' lies in its ability to 'justify the presence of a people in its natural environment' and create a collective identity that is grounded – a task made difficult for peoples forcibly removed from one land to another as property through the violence of slavery (Garraway 2006, 151). Developing a myth of origin for Creole peoples, then, requires a kind of epistemic violence (Woldeyes 2020) in which the past is interpreted through an imposed colonial history, which is what Glissant (1989, 62–63) claimed Caribbean peoples have had to do. Similar to how René's Creole origin story marks the settlement of enslaved Africans in Seychelles as its singular beginning with no account of the prior histories of those peoples, Garraway argued that the *Créolité* thesis in *In Praise of Creoleness* (Bernabé et al. 1990) constructed an imagined community of Creoles. This conception, Garraway contended, relied on slavery as its nexus due to the irreducible diversity of Creole peoples that would otherwise make a single origin myth impossible (Garraway 2006, 162). It is important to consider how this aspect of Creole consciousness has played a role in the discursive construction of Creoleness and nationalism in Seychelles. Despite their political differences, René and Mancham exhibited common objectives and narratives in their positioning of Creoleness as a catalyst for the erasure of racial difference and their forward-looking fixation on newness. I expand on Mancham's framing of Creoleness in Chapter 2, and further theorise René's discourse on developing a modern Creole nation in Chapter 6. As this thesis will suggest, René and Mancham's shared characterisation of Creoleness and focus on modernness features prominently in the discursive construction of Creoleness in Seychelles and, as such, is centrally relevant to an understanding of the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness.

1.4.4 The Post-Socialist Era

On the fourth of December nineteen ninety-one, only fourteen years after the 1977 coup, President René announced a multi-party system, and the constitution was formally amended on the twenty seventh of that same month. Some have made this out to be the result of pressure from Europe and the United States (Seychelles Nation 2017; Scarr 2000, 199), but such an assertion oversimplifies the place of Seychelles in the world-system. The Ukraine independence referendum marked the final stage of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the first of December, nineteen ninety-one (Nohlen and Stöver 2010, 1976). Gorbachev, the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, left the Kremlin on the twenty fifth of December (Hunt 2016, 323–24). On the twenty sixth

of December, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved (Carlisle and Golson 2008, 111). That socialism in Seychelles ended in the remaining days of that same year demonstrates how Seychelles is a fully integrated component of the capitalist world-system.

René stepped down as President in 2004 to hand the presidency to Vice-President James Michel, who was part of the group who enacted the 1977 coup that put René in power almost 30 years earlier. René's time in power was characterised by turbulent nation-building campaigns that segued from an emphatically socialist one-party state marked by various countercoup attempts to a post-socialist multi-party system following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Scarr 2000, 164–202). Michel remained President until shortly after 2014, following which the presidency was once again handed to the previous Vice President, Danny Faure. René maintained a political office in the ruling party's headquarters until the time of his death in 2019, and is remembered as, among other things, an authoritarian ruler (A. Robinson 2019). It was not until October 2020 that the final manifestation of the SPUP/SPPF lost power in an election won by Wavel Ramkalawan, the President at the time of writing.

If theories about witchcraft being a response to political turbulence are true (Moore and Sanders 2001), then the turbulence of the René-Michel era would provide a strong basis for such claims regarding the sustained existence of *grigri* in Seychelles. A more intriguing starting point for the purposes of this thesis concerns René's positioning himself as the 'voice of Afro-Creole dissent and disaffection with the colonial order' (O'Gorman 2019, 68) and the force behind 'the Seychellois cultural and political revolution' that would foment a nationalist Creole pride rooted in its Afro-Creole heritage (Choppy 2017, 117–20). René would do this through the promotion of cultural artefacts associated with enslaved Africans such as the *moutya*, which Choppy contends was used as a political tool by the SPUP/SPPF (2017, 118–20). *Grigri* has carried a long historical association with slavery and Africanness that in this sense is not dissimilar to *moutya*. Yet, unlike *moutya*, *grigri* commonly featured in the speeches of the SPUP/SPPF as a repudiated relic loaded with proxies for the figure of the enslaved African (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982). The SPUP/SPPF era even saw police 'raids on gris-gris houses' that intended to continue until [the country [was] rid of it], an elimination strategy that was seen by the then Police Commissioner James Pillay as having limited success due to the 'economic power of the practitioners and the widespread belief in magic' (Franda 1982). This thesis pays close attention to Seychellois Creoleness' contradictions, where some aspects of perceived Africanness are embraced, such as Afro-Creole music, cuisine, and language, while other semblances of Africanness, like *grigri*, are targeted for eradication.

Chapter 2. Modernity, Magic, Race: A Survey of the Literature and Theory

2.1 Introduction

Making sense of the situation of *grigri* in Seychelles requires both *grigri* and Seychelles, both of which are characterised by complexity, to be situated. Instead of tracing a disciplinary lineage, I outline the historical situation and discursive contexts of Seychelles in relation to key themes of interest and append this with the theoretical framework that underpins my key arguments. This thesis focuses on the situation of the taboo and repudiated topic of witchcraft within a modern political order emphatically concerned with questions of race and colonialism. My literature review and theoretical framework, then, necessarily focuses on issues that relate to modernity, race, and magic. Those terms are, in and of themselves, problematised and debated in a range of disciplines including Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, and Political Economy. As such, these terms have meanings and understandings attributed to them that require interrogation when they are linked to the context of Seychelles. Importantly, this chapter covers ground that does not necessarily represent a consensus view within the respective domains being discussed. The literature and theory discussed herein represent important and influential discussions and theories for the formation of this thesis. Specific discussions are referenced in thematically grouped sections that I have used to think through issues relating to modernity, race, and magic, but these groupings do not necessarily suggest or reflect agreement in these domains, nor a disciplinary taxonomy.

Before discussing key concepts related to modernity, race, and magic, I offer abjection theory in section 2.2 as a useful analytical tool with which to make sense of themes discussed later as well as the substance discussed throughout this thesis. Following this survey of the broad concepts and theoretical framework that I use in this thesis, I move into concepts that deal, more specifically but no less importantly, with issues grappled with in the context of Seychelles. Building on the historical context discussed in Chapter 1, I will discuss the tension that exists concerning what constitutes Creoleness, and the ways in which this tension in Seychelles has been shaped by extralocal influences that have structured and discursively contributed to its notions of Creoleness. These ideas, in turn, are inextricable from ideas about race and modernity. Finally, section 2.5 discusses the key literature available on *grigri* in Seychelles. It is immediately apparent that few of these works exist, and fewer still take *grigri* seriously. Coupling the scarcity of this literature with its prevailing superficiality highlights the urgency of the work I seek to undertake in this study. The key concepts of modernity, race, and magic that I lay out in the beginning of this chapter set the

stage to fill the gaps and unspoken themes that are observable in the literature on Seychelles, and it is for this reason that I offer them as appropriate models with which to conduct a sufficient analysis of *grigri*. The themes, narratives, and gaps in these works highlight the need to examine *grigri* on different terms to the ways in which it has been discussed to date. Using the themes of modernity, magic, and race, I provide important links that have been insufficiently established in existing analyses of *grigri*.

2.2 Abject Others

Even the pure light of science seems unable to shine but on the dark background of ignorance (Marx 2019, 633–34)

Although the term 'abjection' has not been used by most thinkers in the fields of Anthropology, Sociology, cultural theory, feminist theory, and political economy to refer to the dynamics I am about to discuss, abjection can be applied usefully to refer to their collective analyses. Arya (2014) has suggested that despite the varied interpretations of abjection theorists, all speak to abjection as a logic that underpins social life. This, Arya continues, makes abjection a useful analytical tool with which to explain how exclusionary forces have marginalised and disenfranchised certain groups and peoples, but also how those same people(s) have resisted and responded to such forces by reasserting themselves. The flexibly broadened scope of abjection, Arya concludes, has a valuable and important role to play beyond its historical application in Anthropology, politics, film, and health (2014, 415).

Following this approach, I suggest that a theory of abjection can build upon discussions concerning a range of exclusionary dynamics that intersectionally relate to race, class, and the nation state (Lentin and Lentin 2006; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), gender and sexuality (Kristeva 1982; Butler 1993; Schiwy 2007; Collins 2000), migration and identity (Wodak 2011; Jones and Krzyzanowski 2011; Lazaridis 2015), and as a central and capitalistic logic of Europe/modernity (Ikeotuonye 2006; C. Robinson 2000; Kamali 2011; Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2019). These related themes underpin my discussion of other key concepts in this chapter as well as the overall theoretical framework used in this thesis.

In feminist theory, the concept of abjection offers a way to discuss how antagonistic logics establish structures of hierarchical domination. Broadly speaking, abjection theory refers to the process of casting out abject qualities – associated with defilement and the Other – that threaten the constitution of the subject domain – associated with purity and the Self (Kristeva 1982; Arya 2014;

Butler 1993; Bataille 1957). Kristeva's application of 'abjection' describes a domain of rejected qualities and entities that disrupt and disturb the logic of social order (1982, 64), which may arise from 'what disturbs identity, system, order' and 'does not respect borders, positions, rules', presenting as the 'in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' (1982, p. 4). The abject, Kristeva describes, can be located in various spatial and bodily negotiations, ranging from the human corpse to the skin on milk. These are taboo elements that have been transformed from acceptable to unacceptable. The subject is threatened by the abject because the abject represents a disordering infection that seeks entry to a contained and ordered site with permeable boundaries. In this sense, the abject is not a quality from elsewhere; it emerges within the subject domain as an internal threat and as such must be excluded, cast off, and prohibited to avoid the defilement of the subject. In this process of abjection lies a conflicted relationship with one's own identity, which in Kristeva's example is the figure of the mother. To Kristeva, the logic of exclusion is what causes the existence of the abject, and stems from the subject's fear that their identity will irreversibly be absorbed into the figure of the mother. This exclusive logic of prohibition not only promulgates the abject but also, through the production of the abject, constitutes social order.

Butler (1993) uses the concept of the abject to discuss how queer *qua* abject bodies are situated against, and used to render, heteronormative *qua* subject bodies. Abjection, Butler explains, 'literally means to cast off, away, or out' (1993, 243). '[T]he notion of *abjection* designates a degraded or cast out status within the terms of sociality' that risks causing the 'dissolution of the subject itself' and that 'a subject fantasizes as threatening its own integrity' (ibid.). In Butler's articulation, subjects are formed through an 'exclusionary matrix' that requires the 'simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside' (1993, 3). This 'constitutive outside' 'represents the defining limit of the subject's domain', where 'the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection' despite this 'abjected outside' actually being '"inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation', 'a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge' (ibid). Put another way, while the abject is designated as the subject's threatening spectre, the subject's very existence depends on the reflexive and discursive construction and repudiation of the abject.

Butler's progression of Kristeva expands abjection theory in important ways. However, while Kristeva considered abjection to be a universal phenomenon (1982, 68), the theory has been criticised as not only Eurocentric in origin, but as reifying views that are colonial and Eurocentric in relation to Kristeva's own positions and suggestions (J. James 2021; Ibrahim 2018). As such, building on abjection theory requires further considerations, particularly in relation to race.

Lazaridis (2015) begins to do this in dialogue with inclusion/exclusion dialectics to theorise 'abjectification'. Through an examination of how migrants to Europe are 'transformed by law and through law' from 'legal subjects' to 'legal abjects', Lazaridis notes that abjectification is constantly moving and mutating along with the construction of racialised Others. While there are differences in the conceptualisation of 'abjection' theories, it is the use of 'abjection' with reference to antagonistic relationships between discursively constituted 'insides' and 'outsides' that I find useful for the purposes of this thesis. Indeed, the term 'abjection' is only sometimes used to describe this dynamic, but this section discusses how abjection theory might be connected and extended, particularly in relation to the topic of race.

A theory of abjection, I suggest, can connect with and expand upon ideas about purity and order. For example, Douglas (1966) put forward used dirt and defilement to describe how cultural systems of classification are used to establish order. Positioning dirt as 'matter out of place', Douglas suggests, has the effect of denoting 'a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order.' Dirt is recognised by Douglas as 'the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter', noting that 'ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements' (1966, 36). Hall described the maintenance of racial order through the designation of non-white elements as insubordinate, out of place, and disordering, and in doing so linked white/black binaries of race to other cultural antagonisms like inside/outside and barbarian/civilised (Jhally and Hall 1996, 3). In contrast, race is almost absent from Douglas' (1966) work despite racialised matters being discussed throughout. 'Primitives' are a key focus for Douglas, whose work was premised on fundamental differences between 'primitive cultures' and 'our contemporary European ideas' on the subject of dirt and defilement. In Douglas' assessment, dirt avoidance among 'primitives' is a matter of superstition and cosmology, while dirt avoidance among Europeans is a matter of scientific knowledge of pathogens: 'our practices are solidly based on hygiene; theirs are symbolic: we kill germs, they ward off spirits' (1966, 33). Such racialised distinctions make it difficult to usefully apply Douglas' examples without reifying ideas about racial ordering in the process. Key ideas, however, remain useful, including the idea that dirt, as a defiling substance, must be understood as a by-product of ordering, which locates dirt in a constitutive outside to the subject. Defilement occurs through contact, and purity is attained by maintaining separations between subjects and defiling substances. Hall's (1996) foregrounding of race in the constitution of antagonistic orders provides a necessary extension to discussions about abjection, purity, and order. Other theorists of race establish similar connections that I discuss further in section 2.3.

Another theory that I suggest abjection can be connected to is universalism, where binary antagonisms are both exclusionary and co-constitutive. Wallerstein (2004) positions universalism as a prominent theme of the modern capitalist world-system as it plays 'a major social-psychological role' that justifies and legitimises supremacy and political order as manifestations of a fair, moral, and meritocratic system. The positive norm of universalism – typified by equality – is conceptualised in opposition to anti-universalism – typified by racism and sexism – but in reality, the two exist as an 'antinomic duo'. This is because anti-universalism functions as a mode of *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*, its objective being to assimilate inferior figures to subordinate ranks. For Wallerstein, the belief in universalism is necessary because it obfuscates the functioning of anti-universalism, and the 'simultaneous existence, propagation, and practice of both universalism and anti-universalism' is a 'central, basic feature' of 'the modern world-system'(2004, 38–40). Balibar (1994) has similarly argued that universalism and racism determine each other despite the tendency to situate them as oppositional. This antagonism has been seen to characterise the universal human in terms of white Europeanness in contrast with non-white non-Europeanness (Lentin and Lentin 2006, 6). In the antinomic duo of universalism and anti-universalism resides an exclusionary, gendered, and racialised matrix in which the superiority of a subject domain is defined by – and indeed requires the existence of – an abject domain.

Federici's (2014) work on how witch hunts figure into capitalist expansion also describes a dynamic of abjection, in which distance is sought between various qualities of a whole to rationalise power. Federici argues that an obsession with the body was central to western intellectual discourse because it reflected a fear that the ruling class had of the proletariat, where the human body and social body alike were seen as threats to the interests of the mind and the master (2014, pp. 137–138). The physical body, described as a mechanical tool for the mind to operate, was viewed as analogous to political subjects – particularly the proletariat – and such conflations have shaped western thought and political order. The ruling classes were terrified by the inescapable reality that they – as objective and rational minds – could not exist without the proletariat – the irrational bodies atop of which political heads rested and within which intellectual minds were encased. Aristotle (2009) conceptualised relations of power in a similar way. To Aristotle, 'the slave' was 'a part of the master, as if he were an animated part of his body' and functioned only as 'a living instrument of the good life' and existed only for the state (2009, 14,35). For Federici (2014), the rise of 'Mechanical Philosophy', defined by Hobbesian and Cartesian logic, helped rationalise the subordination of the enslaved and proletariat alike to ruling classes for capitalist interests.

These theoretical avenues provide key reference points for this thesis but are also discussed here to suggest how abjection can be connected to various exclusionary dynamics. On the one hand, the abject might be seen as a thing from elsewhere that the subject attempts to maintain as distinct, such as the figure of the migrant attempting to come into the subject's domain. On the other hand, the abject can be seen to exist within the subject itself – as an internal threat – that the subject tries to expunge. This is the unclean and infectious substance that needs to be mitigated, kept at bay, or eradicated. I have suggested that abjection can provide a meta-analytical tool due to its flexible application, but also acknowledge that its Eurocentric origins and contexts need to be problematised. Extending abjection theory to make sense of race and coloniality should be done in a way that is mindful of this, and in using abjection to make sense of the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness, it is necessary to connect it with modernity/coloniality and race. I use the terms 'abject' and 'abjection' throughout this thesis as a shortcut to describe what are seen as undesirable qualities – such as *grigri* – that have experienced contestation and exclusion from a subject domain – such as that of modern Creoleness – but also occupy the place of a target upon which the subject domain is rendered.

2.3 Modernity and Race

2.3.1 Capitalist Modernity

This section moves from a theory of abjection to the subject of modernity, in which I suggest an antagonistic process of abjection can also be observed. As Habermas notes, the term 'modern' first appeared in the 5th century in its Latin form *'modernus'* to distinguish the Christian present from a Romanic pagan past (1981, 3). Here, the initial use of the term 'modern' is used to delineate not just between a past and a present, but to designate particularly non-Christian elements to a bygone era. That the 5th century is not modern by contemporaneous standards already reveals the temporal subjectivities of the term 'modern'. Habermas cites Hegel as 'the first philosopher to develop a clear concept of modernity' as constituted by a 'new' and 'modern age' of European encounters of the '"new world"', in which the beginning of the present is dated 'from the break that the Enlightenment and the French Revolution signified' (Habermas 1987, 4–7). The new and modern world, Habermas continues, 'is distinguished from the old' through a constant self-rendering that requires the present to 'recapitulate the break brought about with the past as a *continuous renewal*.' (Habermas 1987, 7). In other words, the modern age is subject to ongoing re-definition.

Based in this temporal quality of the modern is a conception of 'modernity' as a historical category. Though contested, modernity as a period is broadly seen to emerge around the 16th and 17th

centuries where specific characteristics attributed to 'modern society' were developed (Habermas and Ben-Habib 1981; Habermas 1987). For Giddens, modernity is shorthand for modern industrial civilisation that, due to its particular characteristics, 'lives in the future rather than in the past.' (1990, p. 94). These characteristics are grounded in capitalist rationalisations of life, economy, and order; a rejection of 'tradition'; industrialisation and technological progress; individualism; and nation-states (Giddens and Pierson 1998; Foucault 1977). Giddens posits that modernity emerged from Europe and through Europe's activities came to have a worldwide influence (1990, 1–7). For Giddens (ibid., pp. 55–63), there are four distinctive institutional dimensions of modernity:

1. Capitalism: An economic system centred on the production of commodities and the relations between private owners of capital and 'propertyless wage labour'
2. Surveillance: The construction of systems to control information and subject populations
3. Military power: The monopoly control of the means of violence
4. Industrialism: The productive transformation of the natural world and subsequent organisation of social life

Such a theory of modernity suggests that modernity is contingent on institutional formations that are capitalist, panoptical, and industry-driven, and which interface with nation-states that monopolise violence. Indeed, as Robinson (2000, 27) asserts, the 'emergence of nationalism was again neither accidental nor unrelated to the character that European capitalism had assumed historically.' The co-constitution of the nation state and capitalist modernity is particularly relevant to a study of *grigri* in a socialist and postcolonial context, so it is worth paying particular attention to the topic of capitalism itself, as I do in the next section.

As noted in Chapter 1, nationalism in the Seychelles postcolony was shaped by an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist politics, which the SPUP/SPPF characterised as the enslavement of Creole people by the British that continued from post-abolition to national independence. Given this position, it is useful to draw out not only how capitalism has been described, but also how capitalism and colonialism have been relationally discussed. Marx (1887) defined capitalism in terms of wage labour contracts and positioned slave labour as a legacy of pre-capitalist modes of production that was peripheral to capitalist development. As Giddens (1990) explains, the emergence of capitalism was seen as tied to the establishment of capitalistic labour contracts in opposition to 'the servitude of the "whole person" (slavery)', marking the capitalist labour contract as distinct and central because it 'does not rest upon the direct possession of the means of violence' and 'is nominally free' (Giddens, 1990, p. 62). Marx considered the 'free worker' to be 'impelled by his wants' and as such made 'a much better worker' 'in contrast to the slave… [who] works only under the spur of

external fear' (Marx 1887, I:1031–32). '[T]he urban English worker', Marx continues, '*learns to control himself, in contrast to the slave*, who needs a master' and it is on this basis that the capitalist wage labourer represents a 'transformation from serf or slave into free worker', which comes to define the capitalist mode of production (1887, I:1033–34). Such social evolutionist assessments of capitalist development suggest that slavery was not a defining feature of capitalism, and even contend that capitalism is defined in opposition to slavery.

The minimisation of the role of slavery to capitalist development is reflected in ideas about colonialism being peripheral to, or a minor aspect of, the emergence of capitalist modernity. As put by Giddens (1990, 69), the 'colonial administration of distant lands may in some situations have helped to consolidate economic expansion, but it was never the main basis of the spread of capitalistic enterprise globally.' Marx similarly held the colonial conquest of India, the Americas, and 'the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins' as activities that marked the 'dawn of the era of capitalist production' (1887, I:915). In Marx's view, this stage was one of primitive accumulation, where common resources – including labour – were enclosed, privatised, and commoditised. For Marx, this process occurred in the colonies just as it did in England and Europe more generally during the 16th and 17th centuries, both of which generally marked a departure from feudalist modes of production to capitalist modes of production (Marx 1887, I:873–940). While Marx did note that slavery was 'an economic category of the highest importance' (1971, 188), Black theorists (C. Robinson 2000; Cox 1964) have emphasised the lack of emphasis Marx gave to capitalism's fundamental reliance on race and slavery. The enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Indigenous peoples over several centuries – spanning the entire capitalist era, rather than a mere aspect of its dawn – warrants further sufficient attention in such analyses. Europe's colonies were often positioned as brief, peripheral, and even dismissible aspects of the development of capitalism as a world-system, and the position of Europe at its centre is obfuscated in the process. Indeed, as Habermas notes, the emergence of theories of modernisation have disassociated modernity from its European basis and into a 'spatio-temporally neutral model for processes of social development in general', rendering the possibility of 'automatically continuing processes of modernization' (1987, 2–3). The tendency to disassociate modernisation from Europe is discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to the SPUP/SPPF's own ideas about modernity.

2.3.2 Racialised Modernity

[M]odernity is, properly speaking, the globalization of Europe (Serequeberhan 2006, 89)

The suggestion that slavery and colonialism have not been central to capitalist development has been challenged by scholars of race and modernity studies. The idea that modernity represents a neutral and objective process of modernisation, too, does not tally with its historical development being contingent on the construction of whiteness and non-whiteness as categories through which to racially order the world. Understanding this is necessary to develop a sufficient understanding of how *grigri* has been situated within modern Creole Seychelles, but also how forces and discourses of modernity have shaped Seychelles itself. This section foregrounds the racial and colonial character of modernity using the key concepts of racialised modernity, racial capitalism, and modernity/coloniality to emphasise modernity's requisite establishment of antagonistic relations.

Numerous modernity/coloniality researchers have described colonialism as, broadly speaking, the socio-political domination of the globe by Europe, particularly the violent establishment of colonies and enterprises throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas (Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2020; Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2019). This is contrasted with temporal notions of 'decolonisation' and 'postcolonial', which characterise former colonies of Europe as no longer colonised by Europe. The related concept of coloniality, or the colonial matrix of power, refers to structures established during this period and endured beyond it. Mignolo (2007) and Quijano (2007; 2000) describe the domains of coloniality in terms reflecting the institutional dimensions of modernity referred to earlier in this chapter, namely the established control of: land, labour, and resources; authority; gender and sexuality; subjectivity and knowledge. Modernity/coloniality theory holds that how these domains are governed is also particularly European in its conception.

The idea that modernity is, or is still, an exclusively European project has been challenged in modernity studies with the claim that there is not one modernity but numerous 'modernities' (Ching 2011; Gaonkar 2001; B. Anderson 1983; Appadurai 1996). Such positions acknowledge the roles of non-European actors in establishing such a world-system, but also how 'modernity' unfolds and proceeds in diverse settings, with different starting points and outcomes. The suggestion generally remains that the West has been positioned as the governing centre of modernity, which is in part due to the promotion of the Eurocentric myth in which modernity is an exclusively Western project. The post-coup era of Seychelles provides a corollary to modernity co-optation theories, but I focus on how Europeanness remained an encoded and fundamental attribute of even Seychelles' anti-colonial project. Three positions of modernity/coloniality discourse are particularly important for

my intersecting of race, colonialism, and modernity: the first is that modernity is an essentially European phenomenon, which is consistent with the early claims of European theorists (Dussel 1993); the second is that 'race' was the cornerstone of the Eurocentric coloniality of power (Quijano 2007, 168–71), through which the world was colonised and partitioned according to European interests and racial hierarchies (Mignolo 2011b; Rodríguez and Tate 2015); the third is that Europe was itself constituted through this process, which was contingent on an antagonistic relationship with a non-European alterity who were deemed barbarian and primitive so as to position the violence of the process as not just warranted and inevitable but also moral and emancipatory (Dussel 1993). These are not, importantly, forces and processes that ceased to exist in the postcolonial era but, conversely, formed the constraints within which colonised peoples could construct responses to colonial power and, as such, the bases upon which colonial trajectories were maintained (D. Scott 1995). Put another way, infrastructures of European interests endured beyond the so-called colonial era and subsequently structured and enabled the continuation of Europe's structures of dominance in the postcolony, even where such colonies were no longer, legislatively, under European rule. As Kelley (2000a, 27) proclaimed, 'while colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state has not' despite 'the presence of black faces' at the helm. In reference to Fanon (1963) and Césaire (2000b) warning 'the colored world not to follow Europe's footsteps', Kelley (2000a, 27) notes how colonial domination structured colonised thought to define and measure progress and positive qualities in terms of Europeanness. I adopt these premises for this thesis and in doing so foreground modernity's racial, violent, and antagonistic character while also acknowledging the complexities of referring to modernity in the singular.

The process of constructing Europe and modernity can be understood as entangled with the formation of whiteness and race as social categories. This process can also, and perhaps more importantly, be seen as concomitant with the discursive construction of a racial Other. Lentin (2020), for example, has described race as a technology of power that is not a biological category but a mechanism through which human difference is constructed and managed for the purposes of producing, reproducing, and maintaining 'white supremacy on both a local and a planetary scale' (2020, pp. 4–5). Adopting this position, I move past the idea that race is based in biology but acknowledge too that race is a work of fact and fiction (M'Charek 2013) and that, as Lentin explains, dismissing race as 'only' a socially constructed fiction denies the fact that racial fictions are used to enact racial rule (2020, 34). Or, to put it another way, the application of discursively constructed racial fictions have real-world implications and produce material realities. The abstractness of race allows it to undergo a 'continual process of reinvention' (ibid., pp. 8, 110) and as such can remain a usefully agile and adaptive structure of domination. For these reasons, Hall

described race as both a ‘sliding signifier’ (Hall 2017, 31–79) and a ‘floating signifier’ (Jhally and Hall 1996) that constantly shifts its form, target, and meaning. For Hall, a floating signifier is something that ‘can never be finally or trans-historically fixed’ and constantly shifts in meaning (ibid., 8). ‘[R]ace works like a language’ that discursively constructs categories of race, and thus relations of racial difference, to organise the world into ‘superiors and inferiors’ (ibid., 3, 8). The contents of race constantly change meaning in different spaces and at different times. As Lentin puts it, ‘the biological is only one register in which race is played’ (Lentin 2020, 110), and understanding this is integral to developing an account of how race works and what race does.

Accepting that ‘race’ is composed, the dynamic, unstable, and abstract composition of ‘race’ and its various ‘registers’ are of profound importance to my analysis of *grigri*. These ways of articulating race usefully frame my approach to not just race in the context of Seychelles, but also *grigri* as a complex and contradictory product of and response to such globally applied racial fictions. As I will show in this thesis, understanding the situation of *grigri* in the context of modern Creole nationalism is inherently an investigation into the circumstances in which race in Seychelles has been constructed and signified, how race in Seychelles works, and what race has been used to do. This means that an analysis of *grigri* is both an analysis of race and an examination of race that uses *grigri* as its lens.

To help make sense of the situation of *grigri* in Seychelles, this framework also engages with the concept of modernity/coloniality as an enduring structure of European domination. The concepts of racial capitalism (C. Robinson 2000) and racialised modernity (Hesse 2007) explain the entanglements in useful ways. Race and modernity alike are subject to ongoing re-definition because, as I will explain here, they are co-constitutive. Like modernity, the basis of race, or as Robinson put it, ‘racialism’, is a logic ‘rooted not in a particular era but in [Western] civilization itself’ as ‘[a]n enduring principle of European social order’ (2000, 28). Robinson contends that the formation of Europe and the development of capitalism as a world-system were fundamentally shaped by racism and nationalism, and European civilisation ‘was constructed on antagonistic differences’ from ‘its very beginnings’(ibid., 10). The use of the term ‘barbarian’ formed the social basis of European civilisation, where it was used to refer to those who were neither Greek nor Roman and as such served to collectively exclude ‘diverse races with widely differing cultures’ (ibid.) Rather than simply being a policy of isolationism, the existence of the ‘barbarian’ created and justified social order. Though ostensibly excluded from the boundaries of this newly forming European civilisation, barbarians were assimilated into these domains as enslaved labour, which coincided with the emergence of a European civilisation that critically depended on slave labour for production. This dynamic and logic continued into the twentieth century (2000, 9–11). Those first

constructed as racial subjects included, for example, Jews, Roma, and Irish people who were subject to colonial processes within Europe and evolved from here to 'produce a modern world system of "racial capitalism" dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide' (Kelley, 2000b, p. xiii).

Other scholars of race have exhibited similar thinking on racial capitalism through analyses of the modern nation state. Lentin (2004) argues that racism survived 'the passage into the post-colonial era' through an 'emphasis placed on the degrees of difference that separated 'man' from the 'savage'', using Europeanness as the point against which racial signifiers were devised (2004, 433). Lentin buttresses this point with Balibar's (1991) earlier observation that 'all nationalisms were defined against the same foil, the same "stateless other", and this has been a component of the very idea of Europe as the land of "modern" nation-states or, in other words, civilisation.' (1991, 62) Lentin and Lentin (2006, 6) explain that a universalist idea of humanity was racially constructed based upon who 'universally rational man' ought to be and, perhaps more importantly, 'who such a being was not.' The resultant figure was 'the white European' who was rendered against the image of 'the non-European'. The modern nation-state was constructed upon this Enlightenment-shaped terrain and became a vehicle and structure through which relationships with the state, the West, and the non-West were dominated by 'patterns of inclusion and exclusion' (ibid., p. 3). Indeed the 'Other', as Rodríguez and Tate contend, is 'constructed as inferior to the hegemonic White, Male, European Self' in the 'post/colonial context', a fundamental aspect of racial rule and the 'sustaining [of] the coloniality of power' (Rodríguez and Tate 2015, 6). Through a reading of Lentin (2020), Brooks (2021) emphasises how race constructs binary relations such as human/Other, rational/irrational, to the point that bodies become subject to a material refashioning. As Gilmore (2006, 28) contends, race also makes certain groups of people more susceptible to illness and death and, in doing so, rationalises and justifies the state-produced conditions of exploitation that result in such outcomes as natural and inevitable.

An overarching analytical theme of this thesis holds that the discursive construction of a racial Other is part of an enduring logic of European domination. The same enduring logic is suggest to be present in the construction of modern Creoleness. Section 2.2 discussed the usefulness of abjection theory as an analytical tool with which to refer to this logic more generally. The various co-constitutive entanglements of coloniality, modernity, and capitalism demonstrate this logic with the establishment of race as a central organising principle of human difference (Hall 2017, 32–33) that has been used to position Europeanness as superior to non-Europeanness, and with devastating consequences. Relations of domination, including those that operate through capitalist, heteropatriarchal, class, and ableist structures, Lentin explains, must be thought of as 'working

through race, and vice versa.' (2020, 5) With the 'discursive conception of race' (Hall 2017, 33) comes the production of racial beings defined in opposition to Europeanness but also as ante-European. Fanon recognised this process – and the response to it – when he noted that 'it is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude' (1965, p. 47). Robinson similarly described how '[t]he "Negro", that is the colour black, was both a negation of African and a unity of opposition to white' (2000, p. 81). This racialised figure, Robinson observed, was constituted as a 'marginally human group' who possessed 'no civilization, no cultures, no religions, no history, no place' (ibid.). Given the absence of what represented humanity to Europeans, blackness represented a 'collection of things of convenience for use and/or eradication.' The discursive construction of blackness corresponding with the discursive destruction of the pasts of those peoples who came to be designated as black shares themes with the construction of modern Creoleness in relation to blackness in Seychelles. This is an important theme that I will return to later in relation to how modern Creoleness, as numerous scholars of Creoleness have suggested, requires a certain pastlessness, amnesia, and erasure of histories of Africanness and enslavement (Price and Price 1997, 4–6; Walcott 1964; 1974, 4; Glissant 1981; Patterson 1982a, 258).

Understanding that Europe was constructed in opposition to non-Europe is fundamental to how this thesis discusses the abjection of *grigri*. The process of constructing an abject domain to render a subject domain (see section 2.2 on abjection) is contained in many accounts of modernity's European composition. For Weber (1996), it was the 'peculiar rationalism of Western culture' that played a key role in Europe's disenchantment of the world, and thus its unique path through this 'Occidental rationalism' and towards a globalising capitalist modernity (Weber 1996, 19–27). Weber's task was one of comparative analysis, and one example of a broader process of rendering the Occident's modernness against non-European entities. In discussing Robinson's (2000) work in *Black Marxism*, Kelley (2000b) argues that 'the exorcising of the Black Mediterranean is about the fabrication of Europe as a discrete, racially pure entity solely responsible for modernity, on the one hand, and the fabrication of the Negro, on the other.' Kelley sees the articulation of this same logic in Said's *Orientalism* (1977), which 'argues that the European study of and romance with the "East" was primarily about constructing the Occident.' (2000b, xiv) Ikeotuonye (2006) similarly outlines how the 'story of modernity/coloniality is also the story of how the modern occident became "white"', that whiteness is a defining feature of modernity, and that the deployment of negation and construction of antagonistic binaries are 'at the core of modern self/social constitution' (2006, 74). Moreton-Robinson (2015, 49, 110) noted how 'imperialism began to construct the old world' through the conflation of modernity with whiteness, positioned in opposition to a constructed blackness, and the violent possession of Indigenous people's lands. In the context of

Australia's influence in the Asia-Pacific, Moreton-Robinson notes how 'developing nations' are linked with blackness, and white morals, values, and superiority associated with modernity (2015, 144).

Hesse puts it simply: '[m]odernity is racial.' (2007, 643) Europeanness, whiteness, the West, and Christianity, Hesse explains, are 'so frequently assumed in various canonical accounts of modernity'. As a concept, then, understanding race may require that it not be reduced to 'visible, corporeal difference', given how, Hesse continues, the modern state has been instituted as the racial state; the modern world system has been created as a racial project; and because of how the formation of race has been 'central to or constituted by modernity.' (2007, 644–45) Hesse contends that race/modernity studies have not sufficiently understood how racial logic has been defined by 'the formative signifier of *Europeanness*', and how this has occurred through Europe '*colonially* constituting itself and its designations of *non-Europeanness*' (2007, 646). The process of designating Europeanness and non-Europeanness has, like race, occurred 'materially, discursively and extra-corporeally.' Hesse's articulation of racialised modernity is particularly useful for the ways in which I discuss the discursive construction of modern Creole subjects, and the discourse on *grigri* as a signifier and designation of the abject. How these processes are entangled, to use Hesse's reading of Hegel's discourse on modernity, can be understood as emerging from an articulation of Europeanness as 'civilized/superior/progressive and non-Europeanness as its antithesis, whereby races are embodied assemblances of elements – such as bodies, discourses, and practices – which represent these differences (Hesse 2007, 656).

The rendering of Europeanness against assemblages of non-Europeanness is also a theme of Afropessimism, in which certain discussions can provide a useful way of making sense of *grigri's* racialisation and abjection in Seychelles. A range of thinkers and works have come to be associated with Afropessimism (Hartman 1997; Patterson 1982b; Harney and Moten 2015; Sexton 2016) – although not all of them would agree with such an association (Wekker 2021; Lentin 2020, 112–13). Wilderson (2020), who has come to be closely tied to the concept, sees anti-blackness as a fundamental practice and ideology upon which the world, and the figure of the human, has been made (Wilderson 2020; Ochieng Okoth 2020). Wilderson (2020) characterises 'the human' as exclusive of Black people, and dependent on the violence and death of Black people to exist. Further, Blackness is considered inextricable from what Wilderson calls 'Slaveness', and Wilderson contends that the world itself cannot exist without Black people, and that this existence is contingent on the characterisation of Black people as separate to the human world. In this conception, Wilderson articulates Blackness as a 'locus of abjection' that is used in service of anti-

black racial hierarchies, in which Black people are at the bottom, and Blackness is positioned as a phobic object and phenomenon. While Wilderson's theorisation of blackness and anti-blackness shares elements with the discourse on race and modernity discussed so far, Afropessimism has been critiqued as an insufficient and counterproductive theory and tool (Lentin 2020, 112–13; Wekker 2021; Olaloku-Teriba 2018; Ochieng Okoth 2020). Criticisms include that Wilderson flattens blackness to a specifically African-American conception that lacks in internationalism, fails to examine race intersectionally, and discourages black and non-black solidarity. While I accept these critiques of Afropessimist thought, I nevertheless build on elements that I consider useful for my purposes.

If, as Hesse (2007) contends, race cannot be reduced to corporeality, and it is also faulty to conflate blackness with both Africanness and enslavement (Ochieng Okoth 2020; Olaloku-Teriba 2018) – noting, too, the fact of bla(c)k First Nations peoples in Australia and others, for example, whose blackness has not been defined in terms of African heritage – then the implied knowledge of Afropessimism that reduces blackness to Black people is called into question. For my purposes, it is more useful to view blackness as an assemblage of non-Europeanness made up of discourses, practices, and, but not only and not always, bodies. Still useful, though, is Afropessimism's observation of a logic that uses blackness as a locus of abjection to construct racialised subjects, with the noted disclaimer that this is not a homogenously deployed logic and nor is blackness, as a racial concept, reducible to corporeality and heritage.

It is for the reasons outlined in this section that I approach race as an extra-corporeal, abstract, and shifting signifier of non-Europeanness that has been used as an organising principle of modernity/coloniality. However, I also acknowledge that this is not the only way in which race functions as a technology of power. Race is also fluidly ascribed to materialities and epistemologies – bodies and knowledges – such that, for example, conflations may be made between sites of blackness, non-Europeanness, and Africanness, but not always consistently. Awareness of these positions helps provide a flexible analytical lens through which to examine *grigri* as a racialised signifier in relation to modern Creoleness.

2.3.3 Modernity and Magic

The content of this thesis does not focus on witchcraft as a topic in its own right. Rather, it examines the situation of *grigri* as a lens through which to make sense of modern Creoleness and, indeed, the operation of modernity/coloniality as a racialised project. To that end, the extensive

anthropological literature on witchcraft is relevant only insofar as it discusses witchcraft in relation to capitalism, modernity and, though not always explicit in the literature, race.

It is worth acknowledging witchcraft's ambiguity before traversing the topic more broadly. Hutton (2017) attempts to give shape to witchcraft with a comprehensive examination of 'the witch' in recent and ancient times. Many definitions abound, and Hutton acknowledges this by presenting a variety of them (Hutton 2017, ix–x). The first comes from Needham, who saw a witch as 'someone who causes harm to others by mystical means'(1978, 26). Behringer saw witchcraft to be 'a generic term for all kinds of evil magic and sorcery, as perceived by contemporaries' (2004, 4). Luongo, in her examination of the relationship between statecraft and witchcraft in Kenya, gave witchcraft the framing of 'magical harm' (2011, 49). As Hutton continues, a witch may describe an array of nature-based Pagan beliefs or as a marker of 'independent female authority and resistance to male domination.' Hutton also sees the term witch being used to describe 'any person who uses magic', a term that has been used as a 'polemic tool to smear all forms of magic-worker' regardless of whether their intentions are good or bad (1999; 2017, ix–x).

The topics of witchcraft and witchcraft studies are associated with Africa and the diaspora. In the 20th century particularly, British and American researchers turned their gaze towards Africa and explained local knowledge and belief systems in functionalist and symbolic terms, which were typically characterised as witchcraft and superstitious tradition in contrast with modern science and religion (Evans-Pritchard 1976; 1973; Douglas 1991; 1967). The association of Africans with witchcraft, immorality, and primitiveness, however, preceded this work by many centuries. From the 17th century, for example, prominent Capuchins produced enduring stereotypes of Africans that shaped the European imagination for centuries (Bethencourt 2013, 87; Riahi 2017, 65). As MacGaffey (2000) notes while reflecting on the coloniality of anthropology, Africans in particular have been Othered and condescended to by Western anthropologists to maintain their subordination, uphold social evolutionist ideologies, and position anthropologists as pioneers of modernity. Indeed, MacGaffey continues, various African beliefs in the so-called 'occult' are incredibly diverse and have little in common other than their being described as 'witchcraft' by English-speakers. Pels contends that anthropology is chiefly to blame for casting magic as antithetical to modernity (Pels 2003, 5). An overarching response to such observations shaped a reflexive turn by anthropologists who, from the late 1980s, began to reposition witchcraft in Africa in a different light. Witchcraft was no longer primitive, irrational, and a relic of the past destined to disappear with modernisation – witchcraft was now modern, and even characterised as a response to

the forces of modernity and globalisation (Geschiere 2012; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; 2002; Moore and Sanders 2001; Geschiere 2000).

While the application of the term witchcraft to non-European belief systems has been acknowledged as problematic by scholars of magic (Geschiere 2000, 12–15), though not absolutely, the overwhelming focus of anthropologies of witchcraft has continued to be on the conduct and beliefs of non-Europeans, particularly Africans, and how so-called witchcraft features in their responses to capitalist forces but also 'modernity' and 'development' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; 2002; Geschiere 2000; 2012; Moore and Sanders 2001; Meyer and Pels 2003; Taussig 1977; 2010). These works take aim at modernity and the West as moral and unifying concepts and instead suggest that variations of the claim that modernity creates or at least provides the contents for 'witchcraft' and have also acknowledged the colonial effects of designating non-Europeans as irrational and uncivilised. Taussig noted the potential of an inverted gaze in relation to witchcraft studies when he remarked that '[a]nthropology of the strange and exotic can teach us as much about ourselves and our own economic system as it does about the exotic' (2010, xiv). However, insufficient attention has been paid to the deployment of the discursive category of witchcraft as itself a logic of modernity/coloniality. Or, to put it another way, anthropologies of witchcraft are preoccupied with beliefs and practices designated as witchcraft in relation to modernity/coloniality, rather than the composition of modernity/coloniality in relation to ideas about witchcraft. Moving away from prior anthropological constraints, Pels noted that anthropology was 'solely in need of a genealogy of Western perceptions of the magic in Africa' (1998, 194). My research departs from the anthropological emphasis on the 'occult' in Africa and focuses on the specific racial composition of the discourse on witchcraft. This emphasis elaborates on the ways in which existing literature contends, albeit briefly, that the concept of witchcraft forms a critical part of the invention and Othering of Africa (Mudimbe 1988; Ciekawy 1998; Shaw 1997), which itself stems from the European imagination which held Africa to be a site of 'darkness', primitivism, and evil. Decoding the ontological logic of witchcraft's constitution and formation requires an engagement with the historical contexts in which these developments occurred. Despite what the historical focus of anthropological and sociological research suggests, however, the context for witchcraft begins not in Africa but in Europe.

Europe's historical witch-hunts and the presence of witchcraft in Africa and the diaspora can be seen as imbricated and logically consistent. Federici's (2014; 2018) analysis of the witch-hunts in Europe suggests this by establishing a link to the development of Africanised witch prototypes in 'New World' colonies, in which both present key moments in the historical development of

capitalism. Expanding on the Marxist theory of primitive accumulation, Federici contends that capitalist development in Europe was contingent on the accumulation of not just land and capital, but, through the witch hunts, labour. The labour force was controlled using many measures – including the transformation of the social body according to the telos of Mechanical Philosophy – but the state needed to 'place the female body, the uterus, at the service of population increase and the production and accumulation of labor-power.' As a result, Federici continues, a war was waged 'against women clearly aimed at breaking the control they had exercised over their bodies and reproduction.' '[T]his war was waged primarily through the witch-hunt' which grew from an institutional and elite demonisation of all forms of birth-control, contraception, and non-procreative sex (2014, 88). '[H]undreds of thousands of women were burned, hanged, and tortured in less than two centuries' as part of Europe's witch-hunts. However, these developments:

> *occurred simultaneously with the colonization and extermination of the populations of the New World, the English enclosures, the beginning of the slave trade, the enactment of "bloody laws" against vagabonds and beggars, and it climaxed in that interregnum between the end of feudalism and the capitalist "take off" when the peasantry in Europe reached the peak of its power but, in time, also consummated its historic defeat.* (Federici, 2014, pp. 164–165)

Federici positions witch hunts in the context of a broader project of heretical persecution by the Church in the twelfth century that made sexuality a 'state matter' (2014, 37–38). By the fourteenth century, heretics were accused not just of 'sodomy and sexual licence' but also child sacrifice, night flights, and the worshipping of animals and the devil. These newly developed 'associations' exhibited a new form of exclusionary matrix that moved from the persecution of heresy to the hunting of witches. With this transformation came new forms of accusation that supposed that witches sought to 'destroy the generative power of humans', engaged in cannibalism, and used the flesh of children for magical purposes (ibid. 2014, 180). As would be expected, these same exclusionary matrices transformed to suit the purposes of primitive accumulation in Europe's colonies.

The capitalist rationalisation of social reproduction was a fundamental part of this process in Europe, Federici argues, and the morphing of the European witch into the 'African practitioner of *obeah*' was an extension of this logic that indexed non-white colonial subjects as threats to the accumulation of capital (2014, 219–39). The latter occurred as whiteness was becoming a racialised marker of social and economic privilege (2014, 107–8). In Federici's analysis, the repudiation of magic was part of a broader application of Cartesian dualism and Hobbesian thought in which the

bourgeoisie and nobility held the proletariat, and particularly women, to be sites of irrationality, akin to the human body, that needed to be subordinated and transformed into a functional device encoded with a capitalist discipline. This domination of Reason conflated the 'body' with 'the proletariat', and in particular with 'the weak, irrational female' and the '"wild" African', defined by its '"otherness" from Reason' and, as such, to be treated as sources of 'internal subversion.' (Federici 2014, 152). Those who came to be seen as witches were thus 'poor peasant women', indigenous peoples in the Americas, and Africans, while those who made witch accusations tended to be wealthy and prestigious members of communities like employers, priests, and landlords. Federici argues that amid the shifting targets of witch accusations was a 'single logic governing the development of capitalism' that divided the proletariat and colonial subjects in a project concerned with the suppression of alternative forms of power and the subordination of the social body in the pursuit of a 'seemingly limitless supply of labour' that was necessary for capital accumulation (2014, 171, 198, 220, 239).

The intertwining of 'the ideology of witchcraft' and the racist ideologies that served the purposes of colonialism, Federici continues, produced a 'common fate' for 'Europe's witches and Europe's colonial subjects' (2014, 198). The qualities historically associated with witches, and heretics before them, were adapted and applied to colonised peoples, leading to the eventual Africanisation of the witch. The 'ethnographic models' of European capitalist expansion ensured that 'the cultures, religions, and sexual customs' of the colonised Other were viewed through well-established European filters of abjection. Through a definition of colonised subject as, among other things, 'cannibals', 'sodomites', 'devil-worshippers' and naked 'barbarians', European conquests of the New World were justified as moral quests. Within this frame, Spanish missions were seen as moral missions or the legitimate taming of non-human animals rather than 'an unabashed quest for gold and silver' (Federici 2014, 221). Federici asserts that the fates of women in Europe and colonised peoples elsewhere were so deeply interconnected as to make them reciprocal. The logic and activities of the European witch-hunts were applied to 'break the resistance' of colonised people through 'charges of devil-worshipping' to justify colonisation 'and the slave trade in the eyes of the world'. This was deployed much in the same way as the witch-hunts were used to institute the patriarchy of the wage and medicalise reproduction and wellbeing, thus ultimately justifying the subordination of women to the patriarchal family and state (2014, 89, 144, 198, 231). Federici outlines a significant and fundamental framework developed in Europe that was then used for the designation of colonial subjects as supernatural threats. Though not as predominant in the literature as the focus on African 'witchcraft' and modernity, many have noted the specifically racial

character of witchcraft at the interface of Europeanness and non-Europeanness, but specifically blackness.

Though the focus has been less explicit and prevalent, many examples in the literature note the racial characterisation of and intersection with magic. Carol (1992), discussing Davis' work on the Haitian zombie and 'black magic' (2010; 1988), noted how magic was used to impart racial distinctions between 'white science' as a Western rational tradition performed by white men, and 'Black Magic', which includes 'Satanism, voodoo, spiritualism' and is practiced by 'blacks, Native Americans, mixed-raced peoples (especially Cajun and Creole)' (Clover 1992, 66). In the context of the Caribbean, Obeah is designated as a form of black magic practiced by black people, though the discourse on what Obeah 'is' has been dominated by white people and law enforcement, and in this sense has been discursively constructed as a distinct and racialised practice and threat (Paton and Forde 2012; Paton 2015; 2009; Boaz 2017). In an analysis of Obeah, race, and racism, O'Neal (2020) notes that:

Obeah was intertwined with blackness, was synonymous with black people; the blacker (or more African) the Negro, the more savage and superstitious he was and the more removed from the restraints of white civilization. According to whites, all blacks believed in Obeah, and this supposedly innate belief symbolized their inferiority – the blackness outside was mirrored by an interior spiritual darkness that would confound all efforts at racial advancement. Obeah men and women in literature were almost always Africans direct from Africa, even in works set long after the abolition of the slave trade. (O'Neal 2020, 14)

This thesis will show just how strikingly similar this characterisation of Obeah in the Caribbean is with accounts of *grigri* in Seychelles, historically and at the time of my fieldwork. O'Neal bases this conception in 'the English imagination', establishing the same link that I refer to in my own study. Like race, magic is a shifting signifier. The 'Africanization of the witch' that occurred by the 18th century, which 'planters feared and demonized as an incitement to rebellion' (Federici 2014, 237–39), demonstrates one way in which magic, specifically 'black' magic, came to be a racial signifier of non-Europeanness, and Africanness in particular. The infamous witch Tituba's racial identity has shifted since her execution in 1730s Bermuda, generally ranging from 'Indian, to half-Indian and half-Negro, to Negro' (Hansen 1974, 3) as well as Creole (Martin 2012; Breslaw 1997, 537) and a 'West Indian Slave' whose divinations sparked the Salem witch trials (Federici 2014, 237). This process of racialisation extended to Tituba's alleged practice, which went from being English, to Indian, to African, to 'a Negro practicing voodoo.' (Hansen 1974, 3) This process of dynamically shifting racialised signifiers has been observed elsewhere. Shilliam (2018) refers to

how various subjects – including poor whites – were 'blackened' not because they were considered 'black', but because they were attributed with qualities of degeneration, disorder, and other undeserving characteristics. Certain traits, Shilliam outlines, were associated with the 'undeserving poor' that included idleness – or rather, a failure to produce – impropriety – specifically a lack of respect for property – as well as vagrancy and licentiousness – relating in particular to the dis/establishment of patriarchal order. In the context of the Caribbean, the traits of the undeserving poor were attributed to enslaved peoples and, in the process, racialised the undeserving poor and shifted this designation from white to non-white subjects. This process and what Shilliam refers to as the use of the 'slave analogy' are critically relevant to how I examine *grigri* as a racialised signifier in the context of SPUP/SPPF's agenda and historical Seychelles, and how the assemblages of Africanness and modern Creoleness have been shaped by European imaginaries (Strauss 2006). Shilliam's (2018) observation that 'blackening' represented the threat of racial degradation and disorder is, too, relevant for how I frame *grigri* as a racialised threat to the constitution of modern Creole subjects and political order, just as magic – in its various forms and in various ways – has been seen to represent a threat to capitalist discipline vis-à-vis modernity as well as white colonial and postcolonial power (Karina 2021; Federici 2014; Boaz 2017; Paton 2015; O'Neal 2020).

The co-constitutive entanglements concerning both modernity and magic as well as modernity and race are suggested through a survey of the literature. Following this point, the discursive and antagonistic construction of blackness and whiteness could be seen as coinciding with the discursive and antagonistic construction of 'black magic' and modernity/coloniality. The acceptance of these complex and reflexive signifiers is core to the premises of this study.

2.4 The Discursive Contexts of Race and Magic in Seychelles

2.4.1 Racial Antagonisms and the Category of the Creole

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the themes of modernity, race, and magic lattice this study. As a concept concerning race and emerging in modernity, then, Creoleness is therefore a topic that warrants special attention. Indeed, Eriksen contends that '[c]ontroversies over creole identity are related to fundamental questions in anthropology.' (2019, 3), and the term 'creole' has received renewed attention in the social sciences given its use as a category with unstable boundaries concerning dichotomies of Self and Other, culture and nature, continuity and change (Choppy 2020; Eriksen 2019; Cohen and Sheringham 2016; O'Gorman 2019; Boswell 2008; Hall 2015; Spivak 2015). Examining the disputed place of *grigri* in Seychellois Creole culture, then, is fundamentally entangled with controversies regarding Creoleness, a topic I address in this section.

Creole typically describes forms of language that developed in former colonies through the merging of European, but mainly French, and African languages into one supposedly stable form that, as Hall put it, has 'long retained [an] association with the 'native' and the 'abjected' (Hall 2015, 13–14). This tendency to repudiate Creoleness is not a specific local occurrence, but one that hinges on racialised antagonisms and reductionism informed by and derived from various colonial settings around the globe. And because these developments are not ahistorical or uniquely local it is important to examine the topic of Creoleness in Seychelles in a way that is globally situated and indeed constructed by discursive contributions that are not specific to Seychelles. Instances of these synergies can be found in the historical use of 'Seychellois' as a demonym synonymous with whiteness, much as whiteness and 'Australian' are concomitant (Hage 2000). It is also apparent in the influences of key racial figures, events, moments, artefacts, and lexical contributions of former British and French colonies, from the discourse of race science to the intersections of the Haitian Revolution and the racial anxieties of whiteness in American cinema. Taking these discursive links seriously and noting the tendency for them to influence and persist is important for the purposes of this study. Doing this requires a recognition of how discourses are 'historically situated 'real' social practices' that are not merely representative but constitutive in their own right, emphasising the importance of analysing discourses as structures and as social practices that structure knowledge domains (Keller 2011, 46–47). Adopting this premise is important for developing an understanding of how 'Creole' and *grigri* are, too, shaped and shaping concepts that are not just references to real things but also discourses that constitute the category of Creole and *grigri* as one of its contested contents. The suggestion I wish to provide in this section is that these complex and inconsistent links have shaped and contributed to the ways in which Seychellois have been conceptualised, characterised, and racialised. It could be argued that the discourse on Creoleness has been influenced by attempts to manage and order this racial complexity through the use of simpler taxonomies, all of which problematise blackness and are concerned with racial purity and distinction. This section outlines specific examples that seek to demonstrate how the racial complexities of Seychelles can be seen as shaped by a more global discourse on race.

One example of racial antagonism and reductionism can be observed in the origin stories of Seychellois, where distinctions are only sometimes made between 'black' and 'African', or enslaved Africans and South Indians. Indeed, the terms 'slave', 'black', 'coloured', 'Creole', and 'African' have been used interchangeably and with loose attributions in census records and historical accounts (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 120–21; Scarr 2000, 27). What remains consistent in these cases is the category of 'white' that exists in contrast to non-white categories of

labour, variably termed but often conflating ‘Creole’ and ‘black’ (Scarr 2000, 28–29). Roman Catholic Vicar-General Father Angelin demonstrated this tendency when he looked to a book called *The Personality of the African* for guidance on how to deal with Seychellois who he was struggling to convert (Thomas 1968, 37). This was similarly evident when the Church of England minister James Ozanne used race science to discuss Seychellois in terms of blood quantum, contesting how Seychellois, whom he likened to Barbadians, hold that ‘once the African blood has been diluted as far as the octoroon stage the person is counted as European.’ (1936, 157) Lexical borrowings are also evident in the way that Ozanne described ‘a lorry crowded with niggers’ and ‘a howling mob of niggers’ when discussing black Seychellois Roman Catholics in the 1930s (Ozanne 1936, 72–78). As a mark of his influence, this same passage was referenced in a 1937 Adventist publication in Sydney, Australia, where Ozanne was cited to demonstrate how even black Roman Catholics had ‘far more freedom and enjoy[ed] many more privileges’ than non-black Seventh-day Adventists (Ozanne 1936; Rogers 1937).

While the previous examples highlight a tendency towards race reductionism, there is also a tendency to emphasise and define Seychelles in terms of race-mixing. The term ‘melting pot’ is commonly used to describe Seychelles, in former President James Mancham’s words, as a ‘melting pot of ethnical prejudices’ and ‘unique blend of races’ (Scarr 2000, 1), supposedly demonstrating how Creole society embodies racial harmony (Choppy 2017, 11). The term ‘melting pot’ is also adopted from American race discourse, a positive connotation of which was popularised in the context of 20th century racial anxieties where it was used as a metaphor for the centrality of immigration to American national identity (Ansell and Solomos 2013, 99–101). The term ‘melting pot’ has since been critiqued as congruent with a desire for assimilation into whiteness, but more poignantly as a project focused on the assimilation of European immigrants and the exclusion of non-white peoples, particularly indigenous and black peoples, who were ‘unmeltable’ and as such to be sharply distinguished from whites (Pinder 2010, 55–56). In the context of Seychelles, Choppy discusses the term ‘melting pot’ in relation to a ‘creole attitude’ of openness that does not see ‘race, heritage, traditions and religions as hindrance to cooperation’; this ‘overcoming of difference’, Choppy continues, reflects a ‘desire and determination to erase [difference] through policies.’ (2020, 61)

These succinct examples show how Seychellois Creoleness has been understood in various, and not always mutually exclusive terms of Africanness, blackness, and hybridity, and chiefly in terms of racial antagonisms and integration into racial orders constructed in terms of whiteness. These racial reference points provide a way into the notion of Creoleness by showing how Creoleness has been

shaped by the discourse on race from Europe and the Americas. The term ‘Creole’ carries with it similarly themed, often overlapping, but sometimes conflicting meanings. In the sections below I will examine the term ‘creole’ from three different angles. The first considers ‘Creole’ as a cultural identity marked by racial, historical, and geographic attributes. The second angle examines *Créolité*, an intellectual movement that has influenced Creole consciousness in Seychelles and Indian Ocean Creoledom but emerged from Caribbean intellectual thought that regarded the racial, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of Creoleness as both specific to the Caribbean and extensible to Creole cultures across the world. The final angle concerns creolisation, which has come to refer to two somewhat distinct concepts: the process of producing Creole personhood that is historically grounded in the slave trade and African diaspora; and a process that describes cultural exchange and appropriation in the context of globalisation theory (Price 2017).

All these concepts are concerned with various ideas about ‘mixing’, ‘syncretism’, and ‘hybridity’, but range in use from specific historical groundings to universalising theories of ethno-cultural change (Stewart 2007). My use of the terms Creole and Creoleness that is most relevant to Seychelles is focused on Seychellois cultural identity but extends to the various interlinked ideas about Creoleness, *Créolité,* and creolisation/creolization that encompass racialised notions of identity and cultural change. For good reason, Creole scholars have long problematised the term ‘Creole’, contending and contesting its appropriateness as a linguistic, racial, and socio-cultural category (Bernabé et al. 1990; O’Gorman 2019; Choppy 2020; 2017; Boswell 2005). I will focus on Creoleness in the context of Seychelles but extend outwards to highlight the range of ways in which the category of the creole has been engaged with, appropriated, and repudiated.

2.4.2 Creole

The family records of many Seychellois, including that of my enslaved ‘Creole’ ancestors (see Figure 3.), indicate that the category of ‘Creole’ was established in Seychelles to distinguish enslaved people born in the colony from their foreign-born parents, who are typically marked as *esclaves* originating from Mozambique or Madagascar. As I shall demonstrate, even this meaning differs depending on context and has changed over time in Seychelles and other sites of Creoleness.

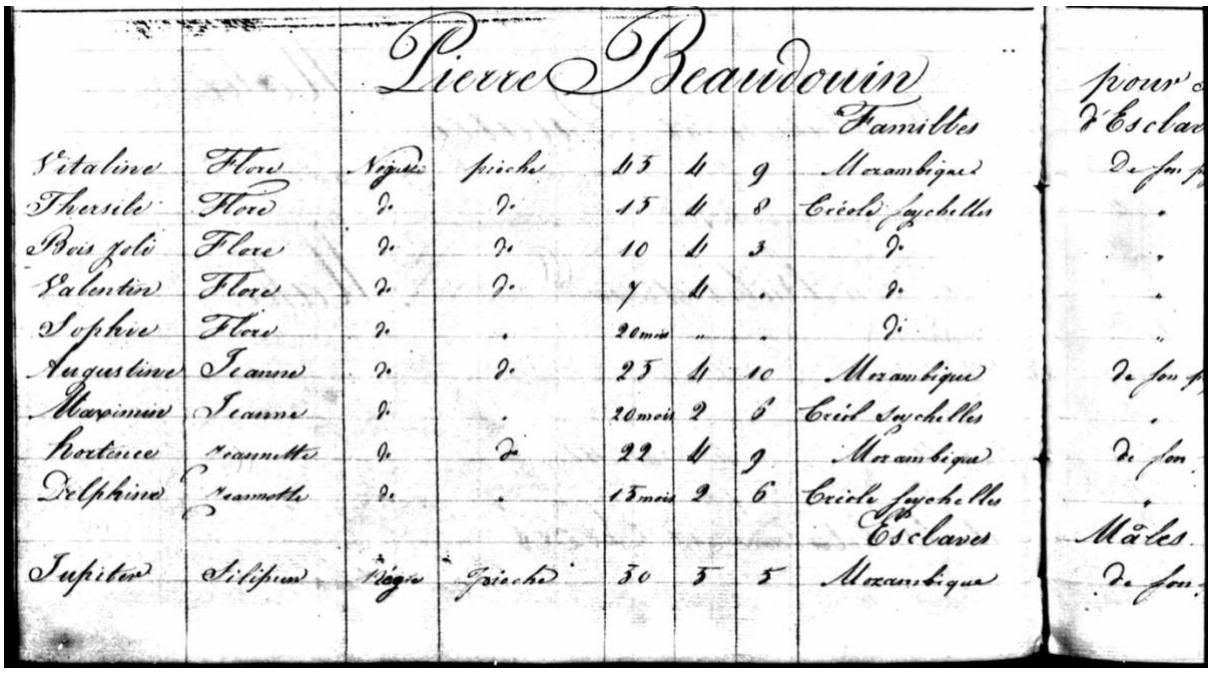

Figure 3. Family record from the Seychelles National Archives

The meaning attributed to the first appearance of the term Creole in Seychelles is corroborated by broad and varying interpretations found elsewhere. As a term arising from colonialism, the category 'Creole' traverses the junctures between sites of displacement and settlement, typically denoting a person of 'Old World' heritage being born in the 'New World' (Mintz and Price 1985, 6; O'Gorman 2019, 27–34; Choppy 2020, 20–46; Boswell 2005). The label of 'Creole' as an identity marker is applied differently in different contexts but indexed according to racial criteria. In some contexts, the term Creole exclusively references white populations. In others, it is only used for black peoples of slave descent born in a New World colony; others still use it to denote populations of mixed African and European heritage, but also Asian (S. Dubois and Melancon 2000, 237).

The term Creole was used in Seychelles exclusively for black people as a marker of racial distinction, while white people were simply 'Seychellois' (Scarr 2000, 5, 29). The term 'Creole' later became a synonymous demonym for all Seychellois regardless of how they may have been racialised (Bueger and Wivel 2018; Choppy 2020, 59–60). This dual and divergent assessment of Seychellois Creoleness is complex and inconsistent, and in this sense it reflects the complicated ways that Creoleness has been conceptualised in places such as Reunion, Mauritius, and Haiti, Martinique, and Louisiana (Stewart 2007, 8). In Reunion, the demonym *Réunionnais* is used while 'Creole' is not, though creole is used to refer to the local creole language (Vergès 2007, 134, 150). In Mauritius, the characteristics of Creoleness that are emphasised, or even required, are blackness, Africanness, and being a person descended from enslaved peoples (Boswell 2008; 2005). Here, Creoles were categorised according to the 'one-drop' rule, which was applied to Creoles to claims

to whiteness (Chaudenson 2001, 6) and in this sense was not dissimilar to the use of *créole* in Haiti, which exclusively referred to black people (Stewart 2007, 8).

In Martinique and Louisiana, the term 'creole' historically referred to white people (Stewart 2007, 8), and in Louisiana white people identified as creole to claim a status that was racially distinguished from 'the slave race' (S. Dubois and Melancon 2000, 237). Creole was eventually adopted as an identity marker in Louisiana by 'the natives of mixed blood' (Cable 1910, 41), including black peoples (S. Dubois and Melancon 2000, 238), demonstrating precisely the opposite path of race-based adoption to Seychelles where Creole applied first to non-whites and was later applied to whites. This breaking down of racial dichotomies did not, however, occur without protest from those who sought to preserve the alleged racial purity of whiteness. Jim Crow laws legislated against non-white claims to Creoleness in Louisiana, asserting that 'non-white' Creoles, and anyone 'with the smallest amount of 'black blood'', be described as 'Negro' and 'suffer the discriminatory consequences' (Cohen 2007, 376). Indeed, from the late 19th century, white power groups like the Ku Klux Klan sought to manage the racial complexity presented by Creoles by forcing 'Creole peoples into the category of 'Negro'' (ibid.). Just as *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith 1915) positioned race mixing as a threat to the preservation of whiteness, and the potential for miscegenation to create a population of '"mulattoes" who might incite racial unrest, like the mixed-race leaders of the Haitian revolution' (Schaefer 2008, 150), the 'very existence of the creole' has been positioned as 'a source of ideological horror because it undermines the white/black binary that keeps the power structures of white supremacy in place.' (Phillips 2011, 27) The synergies between black magic, creoles, zombies, and racial degradation are, too, not without coincidence. As identified in popular culture and film (Phillips 2011; Bishop 2008; Brutus 2015, 52), the zombie, which is 'normally' black, represents a threat to white people because it can turn them into zombies and as such force whites to 'change places with the "naturally" abject black through zombification' (Phillips 2011, 28). So, while prominent theorists such as Hall contend that 'Creole' has primarily referred to 'cultural, social and linguistic *mixing* rather than being about racial *purity*' (2015, 14–15), the opposite is suggested in the historical fixation on the label of creole as a racial differentiator and as a site of racial anxiety regarding the purity of whiteness. In these instances, the Creole has represented a site of racial contamination through which the racial degradation of whiteness might occur.

The influence of the 'one-drop' rule on Creoleness in Mauritius and the United States demonstrates this concern with racial purity and deserves its own focus. The one-drop rule is associated with the Jim Crow laws of the United States, which were guided by a principle of racial classification that

held any person with a ‘single drop’ of ‘black blood’ to be black or Negro or coloured (Cohen 2007, 376), which were not necessarily distinct racial categories. The one-drop rule was espoused by race scientists and eugenicists such as conservationist and anthropologist Madison Grant, who popularised the theory surrounding the one-drop rule along with strategies for preserving white racial purity and supremacy in his book *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Grant contended that ‘a cross between a white man’ and any non-white ‘race’ – using an Indian, a Hindu, a Negro, and a Jew as examples – would cause racial degradation so as to more accurately class the white man as a full member of the non-white race he had mixed with (Grant 1916, 18). Grant’s influence was significant and global: he helped develop racial segregation law in the United States, including the anti-miscegenation Bill to Preserve Racial Integrity (Spiro 2009, 253), and his work went on to influence and justify Nazism so significantly that Hitler wrote Grant a thank you letter for his work on eugenics (ibid., pp. 356–357). The influence of race science on the racial classification of Creoles can be seen in Ozanne’s application of blood quantum discourse to describe Barbadians and Seychellois (1936, 157), as well as the application of the one-drop rule for Creole Mauritians (Chaudenson 2001, 6). This influence has resulted in ‘creole’, especially as an identity, experiencing a complex, divergent, and violently contested passage that has been deeply embedded in and in relation to Europeanness *qua* whiteness.

Unsurprisingly, the literature on Indian Ocean Creoleness, by both Creole and non-Creole authors (Choppy 2020; 2017; Boswell 2005; Eriksen 2007), highlights an uneasiness regarding Creole identity. In the context of Mauritius, Boswell (2005) describes this uneasiness using the term *le malaise Créole*, which generally refers to social problems that disproportionately impact Mauritian Creoles and ‘affect the[ir] social and political integration’, stemming from a ‘negative valuation of Africa and African-ness’ and specifically a ‘hybridity’ that is seen as a threat to the integrity and identity of dominant groups. The idea of *le malaise Créole* shares characteristics of other concepts concerned with assimilation, such as the ‘melting pot’ analogy, but also emphasises alleged racial inferiority as a locus of societal problems. The ‘Negro Problem’, for example, was similarly concerned with problems surrounding black peoples in America. On the one hand, this discourse articulated the Negro as *the* problem while, as Du Bois interpreted the issue, the Negro problem was a cluster of social problems that disproportionately impacted American Negroes (Du Bois 2000, 18–19). Recalling the conflation in Mauritius and the United States of non-white Creoleness with blackness and the figure of the Negro, *le malaise Créole* and the ‘Negro Problem’ position blackness as replete with undesirable characteristics that preclude or entirely prevent assimilation into dominant racial groups, particularly that of whiteness. As put by Wilderson: ‘[b]lackness is a locus of abjection to be instrumentalized on a whim’ (2020, 7), and the ways in which this may

occur are notable where blackness, Creoleness, and Africanity are problematised as monolithic problems associated with black peoples, upon which racial orders are constructed. Indeed, Creoleness and blackness have shared repudiated attributes, such as the casting of Creoles as 'lazy, disease ridden, promiscuous' and 'morally degenerate' where the dark skin of Creoles was seen as a 'symbol of their inferiority, a demonic darkness related to evil, sin, and the Devil' (Stewart 2007, 8–9). The discourse on the Negro Problem and *le malaise Créole* tends to position blackness and Creoleness as sites of social disorder. I reference this tendency to abject blackness throughout this thesis and note the ways in which this designation of blackness as a problem plays a role in the discursive construction of *grigri* as a site of undesirable social elements and figures.

While the meaning of 'Creole' has been in constant flux, and Hall would argue it has never been 'fully fixed *racially*' (2015, 14), the practical application of the term 'Creole' could be seen as antagonistically useful, in that it has been used to distinguish peoples on the basis of race. The relatively short-lived use of Creole as a label to distinguish white settlers from enslaved black peoples in certain colonies is one such example, as well as the distinction of 'blacks born into slavery' from 'African-born slaves' (Stewart 2007, 7). It is also observable in the development of national culture and identity in Seychelles, which I suggest in this thesis has been predicated on ideas about a homogenously mixed-raced society that is contrasted, on this basis, from what are presumably racially purer societies of elsewhere. This racial ambiguity has given Creoleness a certain level of plasticity that has allowed the term to be repurposed and redefined, including through reclamation by Creoles themselves in the example of *Créolité*, but also by non-Creoles who have applied the term 'creolisation' to theories of globalisation.

2.4.3 Créolité

The term *Créolité*, or 'Creoleness' in English, originated in the Caribbean, specifically Martinique, in the work of Glissant (1981) but is most closely associated with *Èloge de la Crèolité* (Bernabé et al. 1990). This cultural movement is a key example of how the category of Creole has been reclaimed by Creoles to celebrate and consolidate ideas about Creoleness. This shift in consciousness de-emphasised Europeanness, Africanness, and Asianness and instead proclaimed 'Creole' as a distinct cultural identity. While this move built on anticolonial thought against 'French colonization' and 'the Western way of thinking', it also disputed the 'African dimension' of Creoleness that thinkers like Césaire established with *Négritude* (ibid., pp. 888–889), an anticolonial Pan-African movement that focused on black identity among the African diaspora and asserted the importance of race consciousness in Marxist social revolution (Césaire 2000b; 1935; 2000a; Rexer 2013). This shift saw 'Europeanness and Africanness [as] two forms of exteriority

which proceed from two opposed logics', described as 'two incumbent monsters' where, on the one hand, Europeanness emphasised assimilation into whiteness and homogenised non-whiteness while *Négritude* 'imposed itself' as a 'stubborn will of resistance' in an attempt to 'embed our identity in a denied, repudiated, and renounced culture.' (Bernabé et al. 1990, 888) The Martinican *créolistes* even established a link to Seychelles in their proclamation that:

[a]s Creoles, we are as close, if not closer, anthropologically speaking, to the people of Seychelles, of Mauricius [sic], or the Reunion, than we are to the Puerto Ricans or the Cubans. On the contrary there are little things in common between someone from the Seychelles and a Cuban. We, the Caribbean Creoles, enjoy, therefore, a double solidarity:

- *a Caribbean solidarity (geopolitical) with all of the peoples of our Archipelago regardless of cultural differences – our Caribbeanness; and*
- *a Creole solidarity with all African, Mascarin [sic], Asian, and Polynesian peoples who share the same anthropological affinities as we do – our Creoleness* (Bernabé et al. 1990, 894)

Créolité imagined a relatively homogenous and global Creoleness while simultaneously disputing the reductionism of *Négritude*. This same message similarly lauded the 'privilege of great powers' to make '[c]ultures melt and spread' despite an aversion to the assimilationist agenda of Europe (Bernabé et al. 1990, 888–89, 902). In the view of the *créolistes*: 'Creoleness liberates us from the ancient world' (ibid., p. 903). As part of this transformation, Eriksen argues that 'Africanness is almost obliterated', and that *Créolité's* 'cheerful and worriless air' has glazed over issues regarding class, racism, and gender, to the point that the *créolistes* risk being 'handmaidens of neoliberalism or neocolonialism' (Eriksen 2019, 3–4, 10–11).

Indeed, as Richard and Sally Price have argued (1997), the *créolistes* looked less favourably on maroons – those who fled the enslavement of plantation owners and supposedly avoided full creolisation – and instead saw 'the real heroes of the historical narrative' to be 'the plantation slaves' (ibid., pp. 8–9) who 'laid the groundwork for what we are today, and did so more effectively than any maroon' (Chamoiseau and Confiant 1991, 61). The desire to abandon the past to make way for a new Creole subject, and the obliteration of Africanness in the process, or indeed as a goal, are two common features of Creole transformation that I will continue to refer to throughout this thesis. An emphasis on establishing progress through an abolition of the past is a key focus of modernity (Giddens and Pierson 1998; Foucault 1977). This explicit objective commonly featured in various political speeches concerning the modernisation of Seychelles (Seychelles People's

Progressive Front 1982; 1981). As already discussed, the abjection of the African has been fundamental to the construction of modernity as a racial order premised on the globalisation of Europeanness in opposition to non-Europeanness, and predicated on the construction of a barbaric Other typified by the figure of the African (Césaire 2000b; C. Robinson 2000; Hesse 2007; Serequeberhan 2006).

The idea of *Créolité* has been embraced, problematised, and critiqued in the decades following its popularisation, most notably in reference to ideas about creolisation (Price 2017; Eriksen 2019; Murdoch 2017; Perina 2009; Stoddard and Cornwell 1999; Hall 2015). Indeed, the concepts of *Créolité* and creolisation have been engaged with and even shaped the discourse on Creoleness in the Indian Ocean by Creole scholars (Choppy 2020; 2017; O'Gorman 2019; Vergès 2015; 2007; F. Lionnet 1993). While the concepts themselves have rippled through the African diaspora in the Indian Ocean, the direct reference made to Seychelles by the authors of *In Praise of Creoleness* (Bernabé et al. 1990) is a rare instance of recognition that may have played a role in its scope of influence. Further, the absence of 'equivalents in the Indian Ocean to Caribbean literary giants' (Choppy 2017, 38) has meant that Caribbean thought – particularly *Négritude* and *Créolité* – is often used as the starting point for an analysis of Creoleness in Seychelles (Choppy 2017; O'Gorman 2019; Twomey 2017). In Seychelles this has, understandably, led to a disproportionate influence on Creole consciousness, possibly also due to the shared emphasis by some Seychellois, *créolistes*, and *négritudists* on Africanness, which has been asserted in defiant and even aggressive opposition to Indo- and Sino- varieties of Creoleness, if they are incorporated into local conceptions of Creoleness at all (O'Gorman 2019, 33–34; Perina 2009, 73–74; Stoddard and Cornwell 1999; Stewart 2007, 4; Khan 2001). Despite these strong synergies, Indian Ocean Creole scholars have critically engaged with the extensibility of *Créolité* and creolisation to Seychelles and regions beyond their specific historical groundings in plantation slavery societies, a topic that I cover in the next section to close the discussion on Creoleness.

2.4.4 Creolisation and Creolization

Related to ideas about 'Creoleness' is the idea of 'creolisation', which emphasises process over cultural categories but has nevertheless been contested in similar ways. I identify two overlapping but broadly distinct camps in the literature when it comes to the term 'creolisation': the first camp asserts that creolisation refers to a process of marginalised personhood firmly embedded in histories of racial exploitation through slavery and on the plantation (Vergès 2015; Eriksen 2019; O'Gorman 2019; Price 2017; Mintz 1996); the second line of thinking, which I term here 'Hannerzian creolisation', adapts creolisation as a generalisable theory of globalisation that can apply to any

modern cultural interfacing (Hannerz 1996; 1987; Clifford 1998; Cohen 2007). The *créolistes* discussed in the previous section arguably straddle both camps but ultimately set the stage for the de-materialised and de-raced notion of creolisation later reflected in Hannerzian creolisation. Price (2017) distinguishes these two camps with the spelling of creolisation-with-an-s to describe Hannerzian creolisation, and creolization-with-a-z to denote a discourse on Creoleness that concerns enslavement and diasporas in specifically the Caribbean. Although I adopt the spelling of creolisation-with-an-s, it is worth noting from the outset that my use of the term for my purposes is aligned with the discourse surrounding 'creolization', rather than Hannerzian creolisation, but links to ideas beyond Price's delineation of 'creolisation' as specific to the Caribbean. I also use the terms 'Creoleness' and 'creolisation' interchangeably at times where they refer to inherently related concepts, which in this way is not dissimilar to how it is applied loosely in the academic discourse on Creoleness more broadly.

Arguing the existence of two distinct kinds of creolisation, Price (2017) contends that creolization-with-a-z is a term that has been relied on by anthropologists and historians, as

> *the marker for the process by which enslaved and self-liberated Africans, against all odds, created new institutions' and 'coming from a diversity of Old World societies, drew on their knowledge of homeland institutions to create new ones that they could call their own and pass on to their children, who elaborated them further.* (Price 2017, 214)

In this view, 'creolization' 'involved rupture and loss, creativity and transformation and celebration as well as a silencing of cultural continuities' in the context of slavery in, particularly, the Americas (Price 2017, 215). Mintz (1996) articulates this process slightly differently, contending that 'creolization' was typified not by cultural fragmentation but the 'construction of culture out of fragmented, violent and disjunct pasts' (1996, 302). Creolization as a concept is firmly focused on seeing Creoleness as a process through a contextually specific, historically grounded, and inherently racialised lens – largely focused on the Caribbean. This fixation was implicitly challenged with the introduction of sentiments surrounding *Créolité* by Creole Caribbean writers like Glissant (1981), Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant (1990), which Price marks as the entrance of the anglicised creolisation-with-an-s. While Glissant firmly rooted Creoleness in the plantation and the inequities of power experienced by the enslaved and colonised (2020), this change shifted creolisation to a more poetic and philosophical position that also strived to strip Creoleness of its racial and colonial trappings – including 'the trap of Negritude' (Bernabé et al. 1990, 889). *Créolistes* sought to position Creoles as 'the anticipation of the relations of cultures, of the future world whose signs are

already showing' and urged a break with the past so as to creatively usher Creoles into a new modern era in which '[t]he world is evolving into a state of Creoleness' (1990, 892, 902).

This shift laid the groundwork for 'creolization' to move from a historically grounded concept concerned with the experiences of enslaved Africans on New World plantations, to a genericised analytical tool that could apply to any cultural encounter across the globe. Indeed, this was precisely the claim that cultural studies scholars like Clifford (1998) and Hannerz (1996) made when they quickly appropriated the concept of creolization, insisting on its more appropriate use to 'describe worldwide contemporary phenomena of mixing, blending, and hybridization, whether in Tokyo, Lagos, or New York city'. This use of the term focused on consumerism as the cultural process and the globe as the specific context of inquiry (Price 2017, 216–17). The connection between Creoleness and creolisation hinged upon the idea that Creoles were not anomalies or abominations that existed in the peripheries but early indicators of how 'mixture' – both cultural and racial – would become a central norm across the world in an age of globalisation.

Hannerz (1987; 1996) was a key proponent of creolisation as a metaphor for globalisation, and echoed the claims of the *créolistes* when he stated, almost as if in resignation, that '[i]n the end, it seems, we are all being creolised' (ibid., p. 557). Hannerz wrote this line in a paper he called *The World in Creolisation* (1987), in which he sees a 'spectrum' of creolisation from the 'First World metropolis' – typified by Europe and North America – to the 'Third World village' – typified by Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. While the discourse on *Créolité* and creolisation challenged the negative connotations of creoleness and emphasised openness and creation – similar to the metaphor of the melting pot discussed earlier in this chapter – Hannerz seemed to consider creolisation with a hint of reservation. Discussing migration, Hannerz argued that 'Asians, Africans, Latin Americans and West Indians in Europe and North America' are not just 'immigrants to the metropoles' but conduits that transform major western sites, such as Paris and London, into Third World cities. Even though Hannerz embraced the 'concept of creole culture with its congeners' as a compelling metaphor for a 'world of movement and mixture', he did so while suggesting that 'openness to foreign cultural influences' also results in the 'impoverishment of local and national culture', and even asked if his native Swedish culture would survive such an era of mass migration and cultural exchange (ibid., pp. 551–557). Even Hannerz's positive appropriation of creolisation is haunted by the historical anxieties regarding Creoles as figures that presaged the racial and cultural degradation of Europe.

The thinking of the *créolistes* and Hannerzian creolisation theory in the 80s and 90s is marked as a moment where Creoleness became a positive metaphor for the racially and culturally mixed future of the cosmopolitan human, yet this optimistic view of Creoleness was already established in Seychelles decades prior. Upon being granted independence from Britain in 1976, the newly instated President James Mancham said the following in a poem to his new Creole subjects

This unique blend of races. Ambassador of all cultures. Mirror resplendent of all colours. The melting pot of ethnical prejudices. The fusion-spot of every civilisation. You are a sample of the world to come. (Scarr 2000, 1)

Almost 40 years later, Mancham (2015) continued to proclaim that 'Creolisation is a sample of the world to come', even arguing that President Barack Obama was 'indeed a Creole' who has 'enhanced the value of *La Créolite* in the future world.' '[W]ithin a Seychellois family, Mancham continued, 'you can find a little daughter looking like a European, a son looking like an African, and a big brother looking like an Asian' – an example he used to define Creolisation, suggesting that such a process had 'already started to make an impact in the UK.' As explained in Chapter 1, Mancham was overthrown in a coup in 1977 led by René, whose anticolonial socialist politics strongly contrasted with Mancham's pro-capitalist and pro-Western agenda (Scarr 2000, 164–203). In stark contrast, Mancham had hoped to make Seychelles 'the Switzerland of the Indian Ocean' (Bhookun 2014, 1). Speaking of René's time in power, Mancham established a racialised contrast between his and René's politics when he contended that 'we cannot promote Seychelles as a new Monaco and then play Bamako policy' (ibid., p. 3), the sentiment of which has been paraphrased to mean '[w]e must aim to get to Monaco and not Bamako' (Volcère 2016, 6) when considering the appropriateness of preserving and promoting the Seychellois Creole language. Mancham's views regarding Creolisation in the 70s preceded the *créolistes* and creolisation *qua* globalisation theory and persisted some 40 years later until his death in 2017 (Vannier and Bonnelame 2017). Yet, like the *créolistes* and globalisation theorists, Mancham's desire to divorce Creolisation from the trappings of racial prejudice exhibited an implicit and often contradictory desire to increase proximity to Europeanness by making claims to a dissociated form of Africanness: one that was firmly grounded in the New World diaspora and detached from the African continent and other characteristics that might too explicitly link Creoleness to the most abject form of non-Europeanness.

While it is not clear how the discursive contribution of Creolisation came to feature in Seychelles, and to what extent it was a contribution from elsewhere at all, given the lineage of this sentiment in Seychelles precedes its popularisation by *créolistes* and globalisation theorists, the core ideas of

Creolisation remain a relatively consistent feature of the discourse on Creoleness in Seychelles (Choppy 2020; 2017; O'Gorman 2019). Penda Choppy, a Seychellois Creole heritage researcher, engages with creolisation theory by asking if 'the post-slavery, postcolonial islands and communities' that are 'currently identified as creole societies' are indeed 'the only ones that can claim a creole identity' or if 'the term creolisation [should] be reserved for a particular historical and sociocultural situation resulting from plantation slavery?' (Choppy 2020, 61–63). Invoking the metaphor of the melting pot, Choppy considers Seychellois culture as a model of openness to racial hybridity that could be applied to 'the metropoles of the Northern Hemisphere, which are currently facing integration issues through the advent of mass migrations, primarily from the Southern Hemisphere'. Exhibiting partial alignment with the *créolistes* and globalisation theorists, Choppy acknowledges the materiality of Creole identity while also offering creolisation as a positive and creative model from which 'the world should learn from and embrace' given the 'effects of globalisation' resulting in '[p]eople all over the world […] creolising' as an 'inevitable outcome of modern times' (2020, 65–66).

Maria O'Gorman (2019), another scholar of Seychellois heritage, provides an alternative view in her research on *kreolite*. Discussing creolisation *qua* globalisation theory, O'Gorman critiques the de-materialisation and reduction of Creolisation to a generic process that describes the modern world. O'Gorman instead emphasises regional differences and insists on the rootedness of Indian Ocean creolization in slavery, indenture, and decolonisation that arose from the interface between European colonisers and the particularly African and South Asian colonised peoples (2019, 24–30). Engaging with Hannerz's belief that 'we are all being creolised' (1987, 557), O'Gorman acknowledges that anthropology's emphasis on 'dynamic concepts that account for duration and change' has been applied to the claim that Creoleness is simply a question of 'mixing, movement, and boundary-dissolution', which has in turn substantiated the de-materialised notion of creolisation (2019, 30). The equation of creoleness to the fuzziness of cultural boundaries – or indeed the absence of boundaries – has been repeated frequently (Cohen 2007; Choppy 2020; Eriksen 2019; 2007) These valid claims about culture being dynamic and porous can be associated with Eric Wolf's work on historical processes in relation to European expansion (1999; 1982a) in which he argued that nowhere and at no point in time could cultural formations be understood as static, primordial, isolated, or unchanging. In the foreword of Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* (1982a), Eriksen – himself a prominent scholar of Creoleness and creolisation – asserts that Wolf's argument highlights diversity, transformation, and the fuzziness of boundaries but should not be equated with a suggestion that all things are equally mixed, or that cultures and societies are non-existent. O'Gorman embraces this nuance and argues that, in the context of Creoleness,

Hannerzian claims about a universalising creoleness serve to obfuscate how Creole personhood is firmly entrenched in 'histories of marginalisation' and as such cannot be abstracted and generalised to include the powerful without actively obscuring the historical production of inequality (2019, 34–35).

Ideas about Seychellois culture have long been aligned with the universalising sentiments of Hannerzian Creolisation. While the appropriateness of this model has been critiqued by academics of Seychellois heritage, Hannerzian sentiments are reflected in – and indeed preceded by – events such as Mancham's poem; the promotion of Seychelles' 'melting pot' as a model for European metropoles; and the racial contrasting of Monaco with Bamako as dichotomous models for Seychellois development. In these and other instances, Europe has been used as the reference point for the universal human. Such moments could be explained as attempts to increase Creoleness' proximity to Europeanness and decrease its proximity to Africanness. It is worth considering the discourse on Creoleness and Hannerzian Creolisation with the literature on race and universalism in mind.

Where the sentiments of Mancham and Hannerz imply that creolisation as a universalising change heralds a post-racial era, Balibar (1994) contends that racism and universalism are merely situated as opposites but in fact determine each other. The literature on race already discussed reveals a strong alignment between theories of universalism and the claims of creolisation. Reflecting on O'Gorman's claim referenced earlier (2019, 34–35), the implication of creolisation *qua* universalism serves to obfuscate the historical production of inequality and the ways in which Creole personhood is firmly entrenched in conditions of racial exploitation.

The promotion of Hannerzian creolisation in the context of Seychelles, then, attempts to draw an equivalence between Creoleness and Europeanness by assimilating Creoleness into Europeanness and erasing the distinctive racial character of Creole personhood. Through a reading of Golberg's theory of historicist racism (2002), Lentin and Lentin (2006) offer insight into this process. The view that '[t]he assimilation of difference' into 'a European standard' is the prerequisite for "racelessness"' is a position that relies on the perceived racial neutrality of whiteness, and as such racism is experienced as the never-attainable quest towards ideals 'encapsulated by the *idea* of the West' (2006, 7). Through different angles and approaches, Hannerzian creolisation could be seen as orbiting – and indeed attempting to avoid – ideas about universalism, dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, and modernity as a racialised concept.

2.4.5 Creoleness as Threat

I have so far demonstrated that Hannerzian creolisation, along with its *créoliste* and Seychellois precedents and transmutations, reveals a notable and continued fixation on Europeanness as a model to align with, appeal to, or as a site of the future – where Creoles remain forever in its abstract past. While I have already discussed the ways in which this thinking has been reflected and queried in the context of Seychelles, it is worth concluding this section with an outline of the broader challenges to the discourse on Creoleness and creolisation within anthropology and cultural studies, and finally by asserting my position with regard to these claims.

While Hannerzian creolisation has been considered and reflected in the works of anthropologists, cultural theorists, and globalisation theorists (Cohen 2007; Cohen and Sheringham 2016; Clifford 1998; Hall 2015), it has been contested due to its emphasis on 'mixing' and the ways in which it has uprooted Creoleness from its historical context of slavery and colonialism (Stewart 2007; Vergès 2015; 2007; O'Gorman 2019; Eriksen 2019; Price 2017; Mintz 1996; Mintz and Price 1985). Noting Mintz's (1996) criticisms of Hannerz, Stewart (2007) surmises that the historical realities of Creoleness and 'creolization' are

> *too extreme to serve as models of contemporary cultural mixtures such as eating a Big Mac in Tokyo, belonging to the Madonna fan club in Singapore, or even moving from Nigeria to the United Kingdom and becoming naturalized as a British Citizen.* (Stewart 2007, 4)

Eriksen has noted how Hannerzian creolisation closely approximates Mauritian usage but remains focused on the contextuality of this concept of creolisation and the concept of Creoleness more broadly (1999). With this view, Eriksen emphasises the uprootedness of Creoleness, along with its racial character (Eriksen 2007, 153), and sees 'the creole world' as 'the outcome of a particular historical experience, namely that of displacement, slavery, emancipation, and its aftermath reverberating into the present' (2019, 3). Building on this view of creolisation, Reunionnais Françoise Vergès (2007; 2015) contends that creolisation cannot be reduced to mere 'mixture' through 'contact' between cultures, given the commonplace result of such events instead producing historical 'apartheid, separatism, multiculturalism, and indifferent cohabitation' (2007, 148). In this sense, Vergès' claim can be extended to the metaphor of the melting pot, in which racial difference is allegedly eroded through 'mixing' but, taking the United States as an example, has been shown to be exclusive of 'groups of African descent, including African Americans, Caribbean immigrants, Afro-Latinos, and African immigrants' (Steinberg 2014). Reflecting this reality, Vergès asserts that creolisation is not a process that takes place 'between equals' given its dependency on exclusion,

discrimination, inequality and brutality (2007, 144–50). Vergès, referencing Gilroy (2000), asserts that reducing creolisation to 'banal invocations of hybridity in which everything becomes equally and continuously intermixed, blended into an impossibly even consistency' (2000, 275) masks 'the brutality of a politics that marginalizes the vernacular and maintains hegemonic cartographies of power' and the terrain of conflict, violence, war, and resistance upon which creolisation has occurred (Vergès 2015, 43). Indeed, this is the implication of positioning Seychelles as 'the melting pot of ethnical prejudices' (Scarr 2000, 1), and as a globally extensible model of post-racial racial harmony that Europe ought to adopt.

Vergès articulates an interpretation of Creoleness and creolisation that acknowledges its tragic contexts but imbibes it with optimism. It is tragic because it acknowledges and problematises Creoleness as a pluralistic but fraught cultural identity and process firmly positioned in histories of slavery, coloniality, and inequities of power (2015, 41–44). It is optimistic because it positions creolisation in terms of creativity and resistance amid the violent contexts in which it has operated (2015, 43). As this thesis will argue, these aspects of Vergès' assessment approximate the situation of Creoleness in Seychelles, and indeed the position on Creoleness that I assume in this work stems from Vergès' assessments. This is because Vergès' framing of Creoleness and creolisation is flexible enough to apply to the modernising political project of post-independence Seychelles, along with the ways in which normative ideas about Creoleness were articulated, experienced, and refused by the participants in my research, most of whom occupied a marginalised position in Creole culture due to their associations with *grigri*.

Some of Vergès' characterisations of Creoleness are particularly useful for my examination of the situation of *grigri* in the modern Creole order. First is the characterisation of Creoleness as a notion that, given its basis in a deeply violent and masculinised diasporic experience of racial hierarchy, can only be discussed in the plural as 'Creole *worlds*, since no Creole society is exactly similar to another' (2015, 43). As such, Vergès considers creolisation as a concept that 'radically queries the ideas of unique roots, of a unique identity' (2015, 41–42) in a way that makes it 'a tool capable of challenging nationalist projects, forging a more supple theory of non-essentialist identity formation and transnational belonging' (Vergès 2015, 44; Ahmed et al. 2003, 279). Here, Vergès positions creolisation as a subversive process that is firmly rooted in resistance and establishes 'common ground that goes beyond national borders, policies of assimilation and a universalism that crushes any expression of alterity' (2015, 55). The characterisation of creolisation as a subversive process that facilitates transnational belonging is particularly useful for my purposes and approximates the ways in which Creoleness has been engaged with in Seychelles as a tool to disrupt colonial ties and

connect Seychelles to other postcolonial and pan-African cultural formations. As this section has already demonstrated, this is not a universal or consistent use of Creoleness.

Vergès' second useful characterisation of creolisation concerns Europe's attempt to 'erase [the] history and presence' of Creoles. In spite of such attempts, Creoles 'were able to create forms that have survived to this day', yet this process could not 'happen without inequality' and 'some form of loss' given its dependency on creating 'space for the other, for the stranger', in an attempt to resolve tension and conflict without successfully dissolving them (Vergès 2015, 43, 50). This implies a Creole dialectic of destruction and construction, self and Other, and reveals how Creoleness is reliant on antagonistic categories and, in this way, is not destined to be the subversive and category-breaking process that Vergès' previous characterisation suggested. Anderson's (1983, 88) identification of creolisation as a motivating force behind nationalism illustrates how, in order to construct the Creole nation, the Creole was split in two: the Self, defined by the national subject, and the Other, whose loyalties remained with their homelands (Stewart 2007, 12). What this characterisation demonstrates is the complexities of Creoleness where, on the one hand, a challenge to bounded nationalist identities is made possible through Creoleness but, on the other, Creoleness also supports claims to distinction that separate Creoles from non-Creoles, and particularly Africanness as a signifier of slaveness. France-Albert René's policies are a case study of this contradiction, where his pan-African socialist agenda featured alongside a desire to reconstruct the Creole subject in a way that established a break with the past. Patterson (1982a, 258) identifies this tendency as '[t]he most important legacy of slavery' where a 'total break' is sought 'not with the past so much as with a consciousness of the past' that results in a state of utter pastlessness'. This tendency is an important theoretical reference point for this thesis, where the figure of the African, as constructed by a colonial dialectic, has been subject to discursive destruction to facilitate the discursive construction of modern Creole subjects. This 'form of loss' that Vergès (2015, 50) sees in creolisation can be likened to what Walcott called the 'absence of ruins' (1964) in which 'the slave surrendered to amnesia [and] that amnesia is the true history of the New World' (Walcott 1974, 4). I identify this recurrent theme throughout this thesis as a key antagonism that the discursive construction of modern Creole subjects in Seychelles depended on – a juncture that *grigri* commonly features in. This relates, once again, to the tension that post-independence Seychelles has been preoccupied with that relates to the racialised tension between Creoleness and Africanness that I have already discussed in this chapter.

Considering the challenges posed by the modernist paradigm of progress for Caribbean peoples, Price and Price (1997) asked:

How at the same time to appropriate and subvert the central ideas associated with modernity? How to write in the colonizer's language and assert one's own vision of the world? How at once to represent and resist the March of History set in motion by Columbus? How to play off one part of oneself against another? (Price and Price 1997, 4)

Slightly reframed for the Indian Ocean context, I consider these same questions to apply to the tensions of an unresolved Seychellois Creole consciousness, and I suggest that examining Creoleness through the lens of *grigri* can contribute to a better understanding of that tension. In discussing creolisation as a 'discursive strategy of resistance', Vergès' third useful characterisation of Creoleness comes into focus as a 'knowledge from below, an alternative epistemology to European domination' (2015, 55) in which Creoles resisted colonisation through the invention of practical alternatives. These alternatives constituted 'processes of freedom and equality' where access to power, education, social mobility, and political representation did not exist, which Vergès contends 'threatened the colonial order and undermined the hegemony of European culture' (2015, 43). Vergès' claim here provides the most useful characterisation of Creoleness for the purposes of this study, in part because it highlights the problematic fit of this characterisation in Seychelles. Considering the detailed histories of Creoleness and political development in Seychelles discussed above, it could be argued that both Mancham and René's politics harboured a creative process of liberation for Creole peoples. Where René promoted a radical anticolonial and anticapitalistic politics, Mancham progressed ideas about Creoleness that transgressed the designation of Creoles to the periphery with claims about Creoleness being a sample of the world to come. Both approaches leveraged the creative power of Creoleness for alternative means, yet both demonstrated an ideological loyalty to Europeanness, even where René explicitly challenged such notions.

2.4.6 Creoleness and Grigri

The thinking on Creoleness in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean overwhelmingly stems from sites where Creoleness has existed at the margins: Martinique and La Reunion, for example, both remain overseas regions of France, while Creoles in Mauritius remain an underrepresented minority. Seychelles presents a peculiar case study in this regard, where Creoles are not just the majority of the population but also predominant in the political class. This juncture raises particular questions about creolisation as a mode of resistance. For example, if creolisation is a subversive 'knowledge from below', then does it continue to function as such in Seychelles where Creole personhood has been institutionalised? Does Creoleness still function as a strategy of resistance to European domination if the SPUP/SPPF took up this charge themselves? And if Creoleness is still manifesting as a mode of resistance, what is it resisting? What form does it take? If *grigri* was a

way of resisting modern Europeanness, as the next section suggests, then can it be classed as a mode of creolisation? If it can, then why was it refused a part in the post-independence formation of Creoleness? I examine the tension between *grigri* and Creoleness with these questions in mind.

The racial antagonisms and anxieties that have shaped Creoleness are a core focus of this study. Outlining the abstract historical situation of Creoleness sets the stage for a focus on the ways in which *grigri* plays a key role in this negotiation of Creoleness. As previously noted, there is a tendency to assert that *grigri* possesses a lineage that is strictly African. Amid the complexities of Creoleness, the emphasis on mixing via the metaphor of the melting pot, and attempts to increase the proximity of Creoleness to Europeanness, Seychelles' heritage is often described as overwhelmingly African (G. Lionnet 1972, 109). Indeed, as I have already outlined, this perception is what key figures in the discourse on creoleness attempt to shed, but as Seychellois heritage researcher Jean-Claude Mahoune contends, this view is 'perhaps what has led everybody to attribute witchcraft in the country only to Africa' (Mahoune 1987, 2). A contradiction exists, then, in the dominant narrative's claim that African heritage is a defining feature of Creoleness while simultaneously claiming that *grigri's* supposed historical and contemporary connection with Africa makes it distinct to Creole culture. Why this compartmentalised link between Africa and witchcraft has been asserted is a question this study seeks to answer. What I have suggested in this section is that the discourse on Seychellois Creoleness could be understood as possessing a specific character that is also globally situated, drawing from and contributing to racial antagonisms that have analytically grouped blackness, Africanness, and witchcraft together in opposition to Europeanness. By highlighting the tension between Creoleness and Africanness, I am attempting to lay the groundwork upon which to understand the place that *grigri* occupies within this negotiation. This is, in turn, relevant to understanding how notions of Creoleness and *grigri* in Seychelles have reflexively developed and informed the discourse that I go on to analyse in the main chapters of this thesis. The sentiment of Creolisation could be seen to position Creoles as more-than-modern, where Creoles are not just a modern people but represent what Europeans will eventually become. This sentiment raises intriguing questions about the modernity of *grigri* if it is indeed a feature of Seychellois Creoleness, regardless of whether or not it is an accepted one. In the next section I survey the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles to demonstrate the overwhelming tendency to cast *grigri* as a marginalised relic of Seychellois' Africanness, as opposed to an embraced feature of Seychellois Creoleness.

2.5 Witchcraft in Seychelles

The previously discussed historical situation of Seychelles highlights the complexities within which Creoleness and race in Seychelles must be understood. It is helpful to examine the contested situation of *grigri* in Seychelles in light of this heavily problematised, racialised, and contested setting. The scant literature on witchcraft in Seychelles reveals ideas about *grigri* that are as racially loaded as ideas about Creoleness. Before examining the literature, it is worth providing a brief outline of how *grigri* has been featured in histories of Seychelles in relation to the activities of the Church and colonial administration.

The Roman Catholic Church established an enduring presence in Seychelles in 1853, long after the first permanent settlement of 1770 (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 143–44). The Church had a limited influence prior to this time, before which Thomas suggests 'the superstitious practices and sorcery introduced by the Africans ran unchecked' (1968, 36). Roman Catholicism has come to be the main religion practiced in Seychelles following the evangelising efforts of missionaries who would attempt to convert freed slaves to Christianity (Franda 1982, 18), along with the arrival of Savoyard Capuchin Priests in the late 19th century (Lamport 2018, 716), and the Swiss Capuchins that replaced them in the 1920s (Mathiot 2017). The local activities of the church and state and attitudes towards witchcraft and the African diaspora need to be contextualised in their global settings. The colonial response to *grigri* in Seychelles, for example, was remarkably similar in character to colonial campaigns against cultural and spiritual practices of the African diaspora elsewhere in the world. The Church's increasing presence in 19th century Seychelles occurred at the same time as its increasing presence in Haiti, where it began intermittent campaigns against *Vodou* that coincided with the anti-superstition campaign of the 1940s (L. Dubois 2012, 258). These activities influenced the formation of numerous penal codes in Haiti and Seychelles that outlawed artefacts and knowledges associated with witchcraft, even making it illegal for a person to claim that they practiced witchcraft. It is not a coincidence that some of the most well-known events related to *grigri* occurred in this same period.

One of the most well-known examples is that of Father Theophile, a Swiss priest of the Roman Catholic Mission in Seychelles, who 'made the attack against sorcerers his special concern and condemned them vigorously and fearlessly'. When he accidentally fell to his death in 1925, crowds gathered in the main town and made accusations against well-known sorcerers (Thomas 1968, 43–44). A petition was circulated and signed by the Roman Catholic Bishop demanding that the accused sorcerers be deported from Seychelles (ibid.). One accused sorcerer – or *sorsye* in Creole – was imprisoned at the time for a month, not in relation to Father Theophile's death but for the act of

practicing witchcraft (ibid.). Another commonly cited instance of witchcraft can be traced to Archdeacon Ozanne's book, *Coconuts and Creoles* (1936), in which he linked *grigri* to several murders, each of which involved some form of mutilation, despite each case never being solved and no killer discovered. Without citing sources, Thomas (1968, 42–43) connects *grigri* to other unsolved deaths involving mutilation that occurred in the 1950s.

In 1958, soon after the anti-superstition campaigns climaxed in the Americas, a Seychelles penal code (Act 4 1958) was passed that made it illegal to engage in the knowledge of witchcraft to influence or affect a person's judgement, feelings, mind, or property. Indeed, as discussed more extensively in section 6.5 of this thesis, anti-witchcraft policies of this kind were being reviewed and enforced throughout the African region around the same time. This included the Witchcraft Suppression Act of South Africa (Wallace 2015) and revisions to witchcraft ordinances in Uganda and Tanganyika (Lambert 2012). Notably, these activities occurred in the years leading up to each area being established as a republic. As noted in the previous paragraph, Seychellois were being incarcerated for practicing *grigri* decades before this law was made. So, although the timing of this move in Seychelles follows anti-superstition campaigns in other colonies, the move itself can be seen as a manifestation of a long existing conflict between *grigri* and Christianity in Seychelles that, like elsewhere, became pronounced in the years preceding the postcolonial era. The outlawing of *grigri* was not just a matter of religious difference, however. This move could also be seen as the exclusion of elements associated with non-Europeanness from the state-oriented borders constructed by Europe. A similar example can be found in *moutya*, a popular Seychellois song and dance that, similar to *grigri*, is seen as 'originating from Africa, a legacy of the slaves' (Choppy 2017, 115–16) and claimed to have similarities with 'voodoo rites' (Ozanne 1936, 112; Thomas 1968, 60). Like *grigri*, *moutya* was subject to prohibition laws in the 1930s (Seychelles Government 1935), during the same era as anti-superstition campaigns were being conducted by the Church in Seychelles and Haiti (L. Dubois 2012, 258), concurrent with the intensifying activities of missionary forces (Mathiot 2017). Both *grigri* and *moutya* have been associated with the figure of the enslaved African, visceral forms of sinful activity concerned with sexuality and the flesh, and general immorality and irrationality that is the result of interaction with spirits, both alcoholic and supernatural (Thomas 1968; Ozanne 1936; Choppy 2017, 115–19). Unlike *grigri*, however, *moutya* was readily embraced by the SPUP leading up to and following the *coup d'état* (Choppy 2017).

A core question of this study engages with this contradiction: why did this Creole cultural revolution embrace certain aspects of so-called African heritage but reject and repudiate others, particularly *grigri*? Answering that question is important, in addition to interpreting how

Seychellois engage with this positioning of *grigri*, but some foundational assumptions about *grigri* can be illuminated with a survey of the literature.

Only a small amount of literature on witchcraft in Seychelles exists, and few writers have paid close attention to the topic of *grigri* for very long. These existing works commonly reproduce popular conceptions of witchcraft as an irrational, primitive, and satanic practice of Africans, reifying both the broader historical views on witchcraft stemming from colonial thought, but also merging ideas about witchcraft with ideas about blackness *qua* Creoleness. Most, if not all of these texts derive their accounts from a few key texts on Seychelles written by non-Seychellois in the early to mid-20th century (Ozanne 1936; Ommanney 1952; Webb 1966; B. Benedict 1966) so as to recapitulate generalities and reify common perceptions. Much of the literature on *grigri* is out of print and hard to locate, made further difficult by the closure of the Seychelles national archives during the time of my fieldwork. Some of my interlocuters mentioned texts in Seychelles that discussed *grigri*, including works by Seychellois, but I was only able to locate some of these texts. This scarcity creates a bias towards reifying existing literature in subsequent works, emphasising the importance of developing new ethnographic data and analyses of *grigri* that approach it from alternative angles. In this section I survey existing accounts of *grigri* to identify the themes, the gaps, and the need to think about *grigri* in different ways.

Most of the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles has been produced by non-Seychellois historians and popular writers. For the most part, the works of social scientists, botanists, and historians have reified popular narratives and representations of *grigri* but have lacked in-depth analysis (Scarr 2000; Thomas 1968; Franda 1982; Ommanney 1952; Bilo and Bilo-Groen 1985; Twomey 2017; Webb 1966). Popular works – including by travel writers and religious figures – discuss *grigri* only briefly and often in disparaging terms (Veevers-Carter 1970; Ozanne 1936; Carpin 1996; Waugh 1951). While a small number of pieces on *grigri* exist within the disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982; M. Benedict 1985; O'Gorman 2019; Mahoune 1987), a more extensive focus on *grigri* that actively engages with anthropological and sociological theory would provide a richer and more complete analysis.

It is worth beginning with existing descriptions of *grigri.* The existing literature has described the range of magical beliefs and practices in Seychelles in the following terms:

1. A way that 'slaves related to the physical world … magical rites, white and black, by which a lover could be won, sterility relieved, an enemy disposed of, and the arbitrary will of the universe momentarily brought under control' (Scarr 2000, 30).

2. A ‘blend of black magic and herbalism brought to Seychelles by the African and Malagasy slaves… [who] more often mix superstition with a genuine herbalist craft’ (Carpin 1996, 51).
3. A ‘much older and darker [religion]’ that is practiced by ‘old ghouls’ who live in ‘shacks and cabins up the mountainside’ because the ‘old savage gods have not yet been quite driven out’ (Ommanney 1952, 43–44).
4. A Seychellois term for witchcraft, of which there are ‘two types’ that ‘exist as opposites: the black and white one’, where ‘[b]lack *grigri* is the evil, the destructing witchcraft’ which functions to enact harm or evil, and ‘white *grigri* is the good, the restoring one’ that typically prevents or remedies evil (Bilo and Bilo-Groen 1985, 393–94).
5. ‘[S]orcery beliefs in the Seychelles… are modes of action, i.e. doing something, in areas of uncertainty and powerlessness’ that ‘expresses aggression, hostility and vengeance in a system which provides frustrations but has few socially acceptable outlets’ (B. Benedict 1966, 64).
6. ‘Witchcraft in Seychelles is known by the name “GRIGRI”. The people practicing it are known as “BONNONM DI BWA” or the female version “Bonnfanmdibwa”’. Various beliefs and artefacts relating to *grigri* include (Mahoune 1987):
    a. ‘Harmless’ practices that ‘bring luck to the bearer’ or offer ‘protection of the individual against the enemy’
    b. ‘Harmful’ practices that are used to ‘cause physical or moral harm to an individual which one believes is one’s enemy’
    c. Oral traditions and stories about feared witchdoctors
    d. Unnatural deaths, including ‘dying at a very young age’ or ‘a sudden death’ that are the result of *grigri*
    e. The making of people into ‘dandosya’, zombies, associated particularly with the sighting of ‘an individual presumed dead’ who is ‘made to dig and plant but is not allowed to eat the produce of its toil’, including salt
    f. A range of practices derived from European texts and organisations including *‘Petit Albert’*, Freemasonry, and *‘Raspay’*

As noted earlier, these descriptions are fairly generic but also relatively consistent in large part because they reproduce popular stereotypes about witchcraft, enhanced by the few key texts on *grigri* in Seychelles: James Alured Ozanne’s *Coconuts and Créoles* (1936); Francis Downes Ommanney’s *The Shoals of Capricorn* (1952); Burton Benedict’s *People of the Seychelles* (1966); and Archibald Wilfred Tisdall Webb’s *The Story of Seychelles* (1966). Later accounts of *grigri* are

more informed by ethnographic data and the lived experiences of Seychellois (Mahoune 1987; B. Benedict and Benedict 1982; O'Gorman 2019), but these still lean heavily on the aforementioned key texts – and a range of texts that cite them – so as to enact an epistemic violence that interprets 'local knowledge with a foreign lens in a way that reinforces colonial, Eurocentric views that are then internalised within Africans themselves' (Woldeyes 2020).

Grigri and herbalism are sometimes seen as distinct practices, but the term *grigri* is commonly used in the literature and by Seychellois to describe all so-called magical, superstitious, and occult-related practices in Seychelles. One of the first to use the term '*Gri-Gri*' in relation to Seychelles was Ozanne, former lieutenant turned Seventh-day Adventist missionary and Church of England minister (Rogers 1937). In *Coconuts and Créoles* (Ozanne 1936), Ozanne describes a 'hotch-potch of popery and voodooism that baffles any attempt at scientific examination', which '[t]he creoles always refer to […] as "Gri-Gri"', a term that Ozanne suggests could be 'a corruption of "Grimoire" – the title of a book on black magic' (ibid., p. 107). *Coconuts and Créoles* assumes many broad links between Seychelles, the African diaspora, and a repudiated non-modern non-Europeanness that includes descriptions of *grigri* in connection with the 'savage tribes of Central Africa', Satanic sacrifices, 'pagan customs and cults that have been handed down from generation to generation' (ibid., pp. 107–109), as well as a claimed correspondence between the Seychellois *moutia*, which he called a 'native dance', and 'the rites of […] voodoo' (ibid., p. 112). The generalisations and connections made by Ozanne are not unique, but *Coconuts and Créoles* is one the first instance that I could locate of the term *grigri*, in which direct links are established between *grigri* and repudiated attributes of blackness. Such racialised characterisations of *grigri* are present throughout the literature on *grigri* even where the authors themselves acknowledge the limitations of such assertions. What is particularly interesting is that Ozanne's reference to *grigri* is the earliest that I and other authors have made. As such, Ozanne's pejorative description of *grigri* highlights the significant role that white non-Seychellois have played in establishing the term *grigri* according to Ozanne's characterisation of it as the 'hotch-potch' of non-European beliefs and practices of Seychellois.

Athol Thomas, another military veteran turned popular writer (Waterford 2012), reifies Ozanne's links between *grigri* and Africa. Thomas asserts that '[i]n most of its forms [*grigri*] was brought from Africa by the slaves of the early French settlers and by Africans… liberated in Seychelles', manifesting in 'sorcery of many kinds … [that] has festered in isolation for more than 150 years' (1968, 32). This claim is made in the same chapter that Thomas notes that he 'could find nothing in the Seychelles archives filed under *gris-gris*' while relying on the raced theories and examples of

Ozanne (1936, 107–12) to substantiate his points over 30 years later. In relying on Ozanne's musings, Thomas entrenched ideas about *grigri* published by white non-Seychellois that, as demonstrated by the participants in my fieldwork and the general themes of the literature, has come to be accepted as historical fact. Thomas' claim that *grigri* came with enslaved Africans has been reified by other authors who, like Thomas, imply the existence of *grigri* in earlier records based on little more than the conflation of non-European beliefs and practices with the more contemporary label of *grigri*.

Similar to Thomas, the American anthropologist Burton Benedict found no record of any religious practices being 'imported into Seychelles by the slaves or by the liberated Africans' (1982, 144). Despite the absence of evidence suggesting an African lineage, and an assertion by Benedict that magical artefacts in Seychelles were clearly European, Benedict maintains the view that the various forms of witchcraft in Seychelles 'seem to be as much European as African' (ibid.). It is precisely this tendency to associate witchcraft with Africanity that this dissertation takes as its object of interest. That is, despite the presence of evidence with which to trace *grigri's* lineage to Africa, *grigri* has been discursively constructed as a persistent inheritance of enslaved Africans by authors like Scarr (2000, 30), Carpin (1996, 51), Bilo and Bilo-Groen (1985, 393–94), Ommanney (1952, 43–44), Franda (1982, 21), Waugh (1951, 135–36), Webb (1966, 36), various Seychellois authors (G. Lionnet 1972; Twomey 2017), and indeed in popular discourse as demonstrated by the interlocuters I engaged for this study. Perhaps more revealing is the kind of language commonly used in the literature to describe *grigri* with terms such as old, dark, lingering, festering, primitive, superstitious, and evil, and the suggestion that *grigri* continues to be practiced and believed in – or, rather, not 'eradicated' – due to an absence of the Church having a strong presence prior to the 1850s (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982; Franda 1982).

The most focused accounts of *grigri* are found in Marion Benedict's ethnography and the sociological survey and accounts of Burton Benedict (1982; B. Benedict 1966; M. Benedict 1985). These works have become key texts on Seychelles that are commonly referenced, often unknowingly, by Seychellois when describing what typifies Creole culture. While these works discuss witchcraft in the context of anthropology and sociology, neither author engages with anthropological or sociological theory in their analyses of *grigri*. Only two works on *grigri* by authors with Seychellois heritage (O'Gorman 2019; Mahoune 1987) could be located, both of whom have used empirical evidence – based on a mix of ethnographic data and lived experience – to form their analyses and descriptions of *grigri*. Coincidentally, these are also the only other anthropological and sociological contributions that could be located in the literature. The first set of

texts were produced by heritage researcher Jean-Claude Mahoune and include various reports and a short book on witchcraft (1987) that I was only able to access directly from the Seychelles archives and from Mahoune himself; the second is found in Mairi O'Gorman's dissertation (2019), which describes *grigri* in relation to the production of Creoleness – *kreolite* – and suggests that the house as a Creole object fosters intimacy that enables 'numerous kinds of occult and mundane harm' (ibid., pp. 56–57). Mahoune, as a heritage researcher, establishes a lineage and catalogue of *grigri* and herbalism with a key objective being to, as Mahoune asserted to me, retain our indigenous knowledge and culture. O'Gorman provides the most comprehensive anthropological analysis of *grigri* in the literature, but *grigri* is not O'Gorman's focus. Further research is urged by O'Gorman to make sense of the ever-present relevance of *grigri* alongside the common inability to locate much detail on the topic at all, suggesting that this could be a 'possible avenue for exploring global black identities and personhood in a way that would not centre on the black Atlantic, but provide new ways of thinking through the legacy of slavery' (ibid., pp. 341–342).

The limited attention given to *grigri* in the literature is, in part, a key driver of this study. In an interview with Seychellois heritage researcher Penda Choppy, she noted that *grigri* represented an area of 'marginalized heritage' that, although on her research agenda, was something she had very little exposure to. Jean-Claude Mahoune was very knowledgeable when it came to what he called 'the occult' in Seychelles, but similarly noted the tendency for heritage work in Seychelles to exclude 'magic' from the discourse and focus, at best, on herbalism and traditional medicine. Indeed, institutional recognition and acceptance of *grigri* is limited, and this is in part why there is such a notable absence of work on *grigri*. This is hardly surprising given the tendency of the literature to observe or assert a desire to create distance between Creole culture and *grigri*.

This section reveals the limited extent of writing on *grigri* in Seychelles and how little focused work on *grigri* has been conducted. This alone underscores the need for the research study I am undertaking here, a need that is further validated by the unestablished connections between the themes and gaps emerging from those existing works. It is through the concepts of modernity, race, and magic that I suggest a more appropriate framework exists within which the topic of *grigri* needs to be grappled.

The existing literature on *grigri* is broad and non-specific but is nevertheless consistent in the overt characterisation of *grigri* as a superstitious knowledge and practice of enslaved Africans and Malagasy that has been sustained in Seychelles in the late twentieth century. Contained within these characterisations are claims about the temporal qualities of *grigri* that suggest it is not something

that ought to exist in the present. And in casting *grigri* in relation to enslaved Africans and Malagasy, *grigri* becomes an inherently raced concept despite the likelihood of many of the practices classed as *'grigri'* being European. All the literature – academic and popular – suggest spatial and temporal links between *grigri* and a relic of Africanness that is repudiated. Some authors merely note the tendency of Seychellois to articulate this link or suggest where this tendency may have substance; most other writers on witchcraft in Seychelles either imply this link through their chosen language, or firmly assert it themselves. As will become evident in this thesis, the views in the literature have become deeply rooted in popular understandings of *grigri* and indeed prefigured how *grigri* was discussed by participants in my fieldwork.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of relevant concepts and discussions concerning modernity, race, and magic before moving to the topic of Creoleness, and finishing with a survey of the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles. In discussing these topics, I have pointed to their overlapping themes in an attempt to demonstrate how modernity can be thought of as, in various ways, co-constitutive with respect to race and, as a racial signifier, witchcraft. This contrasts with the existing literature and theory on these matters, which do not tend to link modernity, magic, and race. Viewing these areas as entangled supports my examination of the situation of *grigri* in Seychelles. While the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles implies the relevance of these three topics, a focused examination of how and why these topics are relevant is lacking. The relative absence of these links in the literature calls for a more explicit connection of modernity and magic to race. These are necessary connections to make given this thesis attempts to make sense of magic as a thing that is not only a response to modernity and coloniality, and not only constitutive of modernity and coloniality, but also a racialised signifier against which racialised modernity has been rendered. As noted in Chapter 1, this research is focused on understanding *grigri's* contested positions in relation to Creoleness, how the concept of *grigri* has been situated and engaged with by Creole people, and what modernity and race have to do with these positions. Answering these questions simultaneously helps bridge the identified gaps between modernity, race, and magic. The next chapter lays out how I answered these questions and the complexities of doing so.

Chapter 3. Methods

3.1 Introduction

I travelled from Australia to Seychelles in 2014 for the purposes of conducting ethnographic fieldwork on *grigri* and cultural identity. My research aimed to make sense of the situation of *grigri* in Seychellois Creole culture, and the objective of this fieldwork was to collect views and perceptions of *grigri* held by Seychellois, including people believed to be practitioners of *grigri*, and examine this alongside the broader discourse on modern Creoleness. As outlined in Chapter 2, the themes of modernity and race are prevalent in both the discourse on *grigri* and the very conceptualisation of Creoleness. Magic is an implicit feature of this discourse that is used to signify non-Europeanness. This study accepts the arbitrary and immaterial qualities of *grigri* in which the discourse on *grigri* is partly concerned with material practices and beliefs, but I also take particular interest in how modernity/coloniality functions as a racial project – within which a project of violent modernisation has been applied to Creole people. This chapter outlines the approaches and issues of conducting research on this complex topic.

Following Janesick's (1998) approach to research design, I will outline the questions that guided this study; describe the sites and participants, and how I gained access to both; the timeline of the study; the selection of appropriate research strategies and the theory of these methods. I will also address my own role as researcher and relation to the sites and participants; and the ethical issues that I encountered, including the ways I dealt with them. I have structured my approach in a slightly different order to Janesick and start this chapter by positioning myself in relation to my research to situate this study as a product of interested knowledge, wherein I myself am implicated as a Creole person. Next, in a similarly non-linear fashion, I problematise the premises of *grigri* to demonstrate the adoption of a reflexive approach to research that meant my initial focus required adjustment, resulting in a set of revised research questions and objectives. From here I move to the site and participants, describing the process I used to locate and engage participants for my study, and the associated limitations. I then discuss how I dealt with various ethical issues, including an innovative approach to de-identification that was required given the illegality of witchcraft-related activities and the small scale of my fieldwork location, including the small geography of Seychelles, but also its small population. This is followed by a discussion of my approach to data collection and analysis, noting a prevailing emphasis on the need to extend beyond the ethnographic site and do what Burawoy (1998) describes as extracting the 'general from the unique', moving 'the "micro" to the "macro"', and connecting 'the present to the past in anticipation of the future' by 'building on preexisting theory' (1998, 5). Such a dynamic approach to analysis was not only useful but

necessary given how 'witchcraft forms part of a much broader ethnographic context' where it is 'not only implicated in [but] moulded by the global system' (Moore and Sanders 2001, 14) so as to warrant 'ethnography on an awkward scale' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 282). This is also why, as I discuss at the end of this chapter, an investigation of *grigri* requires a discourse analysis approach that acknowledges how ideas about witchcraft are discursively constructed, rather than being fully grounded in materiality, but also that discourse is itself a world-constituting social practice (Foucault 1972; 2002; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Keller 2011).

3.2 The Ethnographic Outset: Observing the Unobservable

3.2.1 My Role as Researcher

My encounters with the topic of *grigri* preceded my fieldwork in 2014 as I am, crudely put, what Gwaltney (1976) calls a 'native anthropologist'. I am conducting an ethnography of Seychellois while I am myself Seychellois. Raised and educated in Australia, I 'returned' to my place of birth to study Creole culture which, inherently, is an investigation into Other and Self. While I am Seychellois Creole, and as such can make emic claims about what those things constitute, it is also necessary to acknowledge that I harbour etic perspectives, an outsider lens and habitus, that jars with what Seychellois who have always lived in Seychelles embody. Yet, it is also necessary to problematise this dichotomy as it risks presenting Seychellois who reside in Seychelles as primordial, isolated and immobile inhabitants who are cut-off from the rest of the world. To do so is ignorant, dangerous and unhelpful for the purposes of my research. Almost every participant I engaged during my fieldwork – including, or even especially magical practitioners – had travelled, lived, or studied outside of Seychelles, including in the same Australian cities, towns, and university that I have accessed and resided in for most of my life. To assume clear separations between me, as a supposedly objective researcher, and them, as subjects studied in isolation, is to reproduce the very dichotomic coloniality of Othering (Wodak 2011; Kamali 2011) that I problematise in this thesis.

Noting these complexities at the outset is an exercise in reflexivity. Bochner (2000) supports reflexive writing as a display of honesty, credibility and vulnerability that serves to 'extract meaning from experience' (2000, p. 270). This act, Bochner argues, allows the writer to display self on the page, dig at and under actions and performances, measure the limitations of life and communicate the contradictions, subjectivities, feelings of ambivalence and scripts that constrain transformative processes. We cannot separate ethics from the act of unpacking and understanding the experiences of others. Using a hermeneutic perspective (Dilthey 1976; Gadamer 1990; Ricoeur

1981), I considered myself, as researcher, and participants in my research to be co-actors and subjective parties to the production of interested knowledge. To not make explicit the ways in which I impacted my research and findings, and was a co-producer of those findings, is to risk misrepresenting what I sought to understand.

As Janesick (1998, 43–44) notes, 'the researcher must be ready to deal with the substantive focus of the study and with the researcher's own presuppositions' upon becoming immersed in the field and, later, the data collected. Further, researchers must interpret the data – the beliefs and behaviours of participants in the case of ethnography – because observations and interviews are not sufficient to ensure qualitative research (Erickson 1986, 119–20). My being Seychellois informed the starting points for my participant discussions, which were centred on the contested constitution and position of *grigri* in, and as an aspect of, Creole culture. That is, in asking what *grigri* is, who practices *grigri*, and how *grigri* is situated in Creole culture, I was testing my hypotheses that *grigri* held a contested place and, in turn, that this tension was entangled with questions about Creole identity that were shaped by local and extralocal discourses.

As put by Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 137): '[m]ost research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene', which Tuhiwai Smith contends is a positivist notion related to disconnected ideas about 'objectivity and neutrality'. As a Seychellois who was raised in Australia, I straddle insider/outsider positions and as such seek to make my prior situated knowledge of *grigri* clear from the beginning, as this was the basis upon which my experiential hypotheses about *grigri* were developed in the decades before my fieldwork. This creates what Tuhiwai Smith contends is a major difference between insider researchers and outsider researchers, as insiders 'have to live with the consequences of their processes' along with 'their families and communities', and this means the insider is faced with the 'constant need for reflexivity' (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 137). Following these points, I seek to make clear that I did not become a participant in Creole culture when I arrived there in 2014 to do my fieldwork. To speak as if I only began to learn about Creole culture when I commenced my doctoral research would be misleading, when I instead came to my fieldwork as a product of the site itself. Further, I am accountable to and implicated by the substance of this thesis as it bears on the way Seychellois are racialised and judged in moral terms by non-Seychellois. This situation compels me to have a moral obligation to discuss *grigri* in a way that is respectful and truthful for a number of reasons: as an ethical principle; out of respect for the participants in my study; and because negative and dishonest representations of *grigri* impact Creole peoples, of whom I am one, who are subject to racialised

stereotypes in which ideas about *grigri* and comparable forms of practice and belief commonly feature.

3.2.2 Problematising the Premises of Grigri

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, *grigri* is characterised in ambiguous terms. What has frequented narratives about *grigri* is an origin story that locates the genesis of *grigri* in the arrival of enslaved Africans to Seychelles, which shares its nexus with the Creole origin myth. I carried this assumption when I began my fieldwork and expected to find not only self-identifying *grigri* practitioners, but also *grigri* practitioners who at least in part matched the racialised stereotypes that the literature implied. My original research questions and objectives contained preconceived notions about *grigri* that were derived from such popular accounts, but were also informed by my own socialisation as a Seychellois and the discourse on witchcraft more broadly. These inputs led me to understand *grigri* as a practice, implying in turn that a community of self-identified *grigri* practitioners existed who practiced this thing called '*grigri*'. To that end, my original research questions assumed that understanding the place of *grigri* in Creole culture meant investigating *grigri* as a practice, which resulted in a practice-oriented focus that the initial stages of my fieldwork proved to be misinformed.

My original research question was: what stories do history, memory, and practice tell about the practice of *grigri* and the culture and identity of post-colonial, Creole Seychelles? The associated objectives focused on identifying, defining, and describing the attitudes and beliefs surrounding magic, herbalism and witchcraft. I later revised my research question to: what is the situation of *grigri* in Creole Seychelles? And my revised objectives asked:

4. What is being referred to when the term *'grigri'* is used?
5. How is *grigri* situated in Creole culture? And what can theories of modernity, magic, and race offer in furthering this understanding?
6. And finally, what might answers to the these questions reveal about the category of Creoleness and the construction and operation of modernity itself?

The change in how I have framed this study is nuanced, but the substance of this change lies in my de-emphasising of localised practices and a renewed emphasis on discourse and extralocal systems.

'Locating' the practice of *grigri* was the first issue I encountered in my fieldwork that necessitated a change in how I framed my study. While my initial participant observation reified ideas about *grigri* as a practice, my interactions with those viewed as *grigri* practitioners presented another

picture. The participants in my research took me in quite different directions, quickly revealing that framing *grigri* as a practice in the singular was problematic. This was disproven because, on the one hand, those who referred to *grigri* were typically making generic references to an array of specific practices that were otherwise named and, on the other hand, because even those who were understood to be *grigri* practitioners typically saw *grigri* as a distinct form of magical practice that they did not themselves conduct. Over time I came to understand that *grigri* was, in fact, a signifier of many things and not an objective thing in the singular. The discourse on *grigri* was less about an actually existing community of practitioners and more about a discursively constructed domain of abject qualities labelled as '*grigri'*, in which both real and fictional elements exist. Magical practitioners described *grigri* in ways that were always mysterious and worked from a distance, and while practitioners of witchcraft and herbalism were all commonly described as *grigri* masters, only a few practitioners self-identified as practitioners of *grigri* themselves. Locating magical practitioners was not easy to begin with, and this was made more difficult due to mixed claims about who the real beneficiaries and practitioners of *grigri* were. Where the mainstream pointed to practitioners of the occult and herbalism as *grigri* masters, those associated with *grigri* pointed to different suspects that included members of secret societies and powerful political figures. As an unseen force or taboo practice that was performed by hidden figures who exercised their power in mysterious ways, *grigri* was not a locatable object that could be studied, which made any investigation of *grigri* as a practice an inherently abstract process.

Observing *grigri* was an impractical task precisely because, as I demonstrate in Chapters 2, 4, and 5, *grigri* is largely unseeable and unknowable. Faced with this dilemma, I looked to the work of Favret-Saada who experienced similar difficulties in her ethnography of witchcraft in the French Bocage (1980). From the outset, Favret-Saada accepted that if an ethnographer is led astray by their informants, if nothing in the field aligns with their expectations, and if their 'hypotheses collapse one after the other', then 'these are signs that we are dealing with an empirical science and not a science-fiction' (1980, 13). Taking a social constructionist approach, being led astray improves the relevant scope of data collected and the research process, and strengthens the qualitative data itself as the respondent 'assumes control' of the research process and 'adds a new perspective' (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg 2005, 696). Such an approach required Favret-Saada to 'change [her] plan to study the beliefs and practices of witchcraft' (1980, 13), much as I did. In Favret-Saada's ethnography of the Bocage, magic is a force 'which no one knows of directly' and its existence is always inferred *ex post facto*, where signs, illness, or events signify the activities of a witch having

occurred. Similarly, the magical power of unwitchers[9] 'cannot be directly located' because the target of their magic – the witch – is not there in person (1980, 198–203). For Favret-Saada, the substance of magic was almost wholly based in what she terms 'utterances' (1980, 14), where witches come into existence when they are 'referred to by those who utter the discourse on witchcraft' and only figure in the discourse 'as the subject of the statement' (1980, 24). Indeed, the centrality of discourse was one of the key reasons why Favret-Saada's study required a change of course to ask 'What, then, is at stake when such a discourse is being used?', which led her to ask more fundamental questions about 'the effect of spoken words and the very rationale of this discourse' (1980, 13). Favret-Saada's observations and characterisations of the realm of magic aligned with my experiences in Seychelles, which in some ways is not surprising given the influence of papal magic on *grigri* by way of France, which I reference in later chapters. The applications of Favret-Saada's insights to my research was fourfold: the understanding of magic as unlocatable; the invisibility of witches; the centrality of discourse to magic; and the acceptance that unexpected directions and collapsed hypotheses signify empirical work.

Taussig's (2010; 1977) encounters with magic helped me develop my approach further. In his ethnographies of magic in Bolivia and Columbia, Taussig observed that magical conduct and devil contracts were things that 'nobody claims to have ever seen' but 'nearly everyone has some hearsay evidence and firmly believes that it occurs' (2010, 96). For Taussig, as was the case with *grigri*, what makes a study of magic difficult extends to the fact that stories and accounts are 'told with a great deal of circumspection and in a narrative style that refers such contracts to other persons' doing' which makes it difficult for the ethnographer to be sure of 'whether such contracts really do occur or are merely thought to occur.' There is no 'combatting' or 'overcoming' this, and so it is necessary to accept that to study magic is to study an abstraction, and indeed locating magic in empirical evidence was not important because his work was 'concerned with a collective belief' (2010, 95). Instead of dismissing magic as exotic and irrational, Taussig takes magic seriously and acknowledges that an 'anthropology of the strange and exotic' provides insights into how 'truly strange' the 'reality' of western capitalist culture is (2010, xiv). This particular shift in focus from localised belief to extralocal system is one that I found particularly compelling for my purposes.

[9] Favret-Saada translated *désorcelleur* to 'unwitcher', which refers to a person who reverses the activities of a witch or provides protection against witches (1980, 3). The concept of the unwitcher is analogous to the role held by many of the practitioners I engaged which, similar to inhabitants of the Bocage, was a role sharply distinguished from that of the *sorsye* who used magic to cause harm.

Where Favret-Saada (1980) produces a grounded documentation and description of magic in the Bocage, Taussig extends beyond the ethnographic setting using a postcolonial Marxist analysis and asks: 'What is the relationship between the image of the devil and capitalist development?' (2010, xv). For Taussig, generating an answer to this question necessitated an interpretation of 'the social experience reflected in folk magic' in relation to 'the way of life that is organized by capitalist relations of production' and, ultimately, to view these experiences as 'part of a critique of the modern mode of production (2010, 3, 10, 229). Such a task required Taussig to engage in 'an esoteric attempt to critically illuminate' how 'epistemology itself acts to conceal understanding of the social order' when the social construction of capitalist relations of production is denied (2010, 3–4). Taussig concludes with the claim that the artefacts and creations of folk magic, such as zombies, spirits, and devils, may have grown out of 'precolonial indigenous systems of belief' but 'as those systems responded to conquest, Christianity, and capitalist development', they changed 'to reflect the new situation rather than the precolonial spirit world.' Taussig concludes that the magical creations of witchcraft are 'as dynamic and as everchanging as the network of social relations that encompasses the believers, and their meaning mediates those changes' (1977, 231). This insight is perhaps the most critical in moving my approach to *grigri* from a practice-oriented and localised phenomenon to a cultural artefact that can become an analytical lens for something much broader than its particular setting. Taussig's characterisation of magic as an everchanging response to and critique of capitalist development provided the crux of my renewed approach to *grigri* in relation to modernity/coloniality. Bringing Favret-Saada's (1980) contributions together with Taussig's (1977; 2010) helped me reposition my focus on *grigri* in a way that became far more productive. Favret-Saada shaped my ethnographic approach in a way that gave it an appropriate amount of flexibility while also validating the need to focus on discourse over practice. Taussig's more expansive approach to ethnographic work gave me licence to extend beyond the ethnographic setting and see *grigri* as a lens through which modernity/coloniality could be interpreted, an approach that was further influenced by the Extended Case Method (ECM), which I cover later in this chapter.

Taking the centrality of discourse to magic and interpreting this in a broader context, I was able to better situate the views I collected about *grigri* and refine the focus of my data collection. The views I collected orbited topics that ranged far beyond the specifics of magic and Seychelles, and to ignore this broadness would be to misrepresent the substance and historicity of *grigri*. The topics around which the views of my participants orbited included racialised antagonisms between old and new, traditional and modern, chaos and order, blackness and whiteness, Africa and Europe, slave and master. As discussed in Chapter 1's historical overview, the history of Seychelles represents little more than 200 years of turbulent, non-linear, overlapping, and non-successive modes of

production including slavery, colonialism, capitalism, and socialism. Unsurprisingly, then, the trauma of slavery, the enduring presence of the colonial, and the morality of capitalism frequently featured in the discourse on *grigri*, and in many ways *grigri* was a narrative tool with which these tensions were creatively articulated.

In asking what *grigri* was, and who practiced it, I noticed how often participants – including occult practitioners who did not see themselves as *grigri* practitioners – recited, almost word for word, the mid twentieth century texts that I discussed in Chapter 2. My survey of the literature revealed how descriptions of *grigri* tended to be circular and noted that these descriptions frequently paraphrased the work of Ozanne (1936). Ozanne's descriptions exhibited race science perspectives and promoted racist generalisations of Seychellois. The centrality and popularity of Ozanne's work, the tendency for almost every other work on witchcraft in Seychelles to rely on it, and the frequency with which participants in my research cited these texts, created a false post-hoc validation of Ozanne's claims and an epistemic violence (Woldeyes 2020). In this act of epistemic violence, Bhabha's (Fanon 1986) way of thinking through Fanon's postcolonialism is relevant, where the past of Blackness is 'tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy' that interrupt the construction of a 'history of civil progress', transgressing frames of reference and disturbing fields of vision (1986, p. xxv). Bochner (2000, 270) refers to this rotation between past and present as a structurally complex narrative of the temporal and nonlinear process of memory. He discusses how self-narrative of this sort looks through a lens of the present back at the past to create a 'coherence and continuity that was not available at the original moment of experience.' Doing this highlights how accounts of the past change according to experiences and understandings of the present. Glass (2016) discusses how the past is performed in the present and does not meld with formal histories, and indeed contends that history itself is a construct, not a fact, that is born and performed. To accept accounts of others and the past as truth, as concrete and as fact, would be to rely too heavily on the words of people whose accounts are themselves often intertwined with the 'constructed and contested nature of past accounts' and other data collected in the present (ibid. 2016, 93).

Faced with what appeared to be the reification of a colonial discourse, I became aware that I could not dogmatically and uncritically adopt an approach in which 'the native is always right' (Favret-Saada 1980, 13). Favret-Saada (1980) substantiates this approach through Evans-Pritchard's claim that '[t]he anthropologist must follow what he finds in the society he has selected for study'. Referring to the early stages of his study of witchcraft among the Azande (1976), Evans-Pritchard notes his application of this principle: 'I had no interest in witchcraft when I went to Zandeland, but

the Azande had; so I had to let myself be guided by them' (1973, 2). I looked to Burawoy's Extended Case Method (ECM) to avoid what he calls a 'naïve empiricism' that regards 'ethnography as special because it gets at the world as it "really is"' and reveal the broader historical and geographical contexts in which ethnographic events are situated (2009b, xii–xv). I cover how I drew from the ECM in more detail later in this chapter, but I note its relevance here to highlight how it has helped resolve the risk of a naïve empiricism and built on Taussig's (1977; 2010) approach of extending from the specificities of the ethnographic setting to grander questions that must be situated in extralocal contexts. Adopting this approach has, it is important to note, inherently necessitated the discussion of theoretical and speculative links between these contexts, which is necessary regardless given the relative scarcity of literature and evidence on *grigri* with which to consistently establish empirical connections.

Reconsidering the literature on *grigri* in light of the literature's circular connection to the views I encountered during my research, I took what I saw as a more productive approach. Following Favret-Saada's (1982), Taussig's (1977; 2010), and Burawoy's (2009b; 1998) respective ethnographic approaches, and accepting the critical perspectives on modernity, race, and magic outlined in Chapter 2, I approached *grigri* not as a practice to be studied but as an intangible cultural artefact constructed through discourse that can provide insight into the functioning of modernity/coloniality itself. Grappling with this tension highlighted the need to expand my frame from a focus on *grigri* as an ethnographic object, to seeing discourse as a topic of inquiry, and thus to an anthropology of modernity as the structure within which this discourse emerged. This adjusted stance led me to ask: on what grounds, then, has *grigri* existed? In response to this query, I revised my research question to: what is the situation of *grigri* in Creole Seychelles? And to generate answers to that question, I developed the iterated objectives outlined earlier in section 3.2.2. I examined *grigri* from several angles to answer these questions. First, I re-engaged with popular writings and political discourse on *grigri* and Creole culture as objects of study in their own right. Second, I located how *grigri* manifested in everyday life and discourse, and what it was positioned in relation to. And third, I used *grigri* itself as a lens through which to examine Creoleness and its nation-state form as products of modernity/coloniality.

To understand what was being referred to when the term *'grigri'* was used, I had to understand if and how characterisations of *grigri* found in popular writing and political discourse came to be echoed elsewhere. This required an exploration of how participants constituted *grigri*, along with the nature of *grigri's* history and presence in Seychelles. To make sense of the ways in which *grigri* has been situated in Creole culture, I needed to understand how Creoleness has been

conceptualised. I did this by focusing on the role that popular and political discourse has played in general understandings of *grigri*, particularly in relation to the institutionalising of Creoleness following the *coup d'état*. To understand what *grigri* reveals about modernity/coloniality more broadly, I examined *grigri* as a site through which the operation of modernity/coloniality can be analysed. This required me to conduct an analysis of *grigri* that extended beyond the ethnographic context to the level of social theory. This meant de-centring *grigri* and shifting my focus to what has informed, sustained, and situated *grigri* as an *idea* as well as its various practical manifestations.

3.3 Approaching the Site of Inquiry

I applied a broad focus to data collection to help develop an adequate understanding of the contexts in which grigri features in Seychelles. This ranged from participant observation in settings ostensibly unrelated to grigri, to extensive discussions with practitioners and clients directly associated with grigri. Participant observation was integral to the process of identifying not just relevant participants but also how the discourse on grigri was situated in everyday life. In this section I discuss how I approached my research from these two angles, how I located participants for my research and how I collected the data for this study.

3.3.1 Navigating the Field; Finding the People

I began my fieldwork by meeting with the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture, who provided me with a point of contact, Jean-Claude Mahoune, an anthropologist and government researcher. Mahoune shared his knowledge about witchcraft in Seychelles with an incredible breadth and depth, noting not just the specificities of different kinds of practices commonly termed '*grigri'*, but also the histories and lineages of those practices and relevant practitioners. However, only a handful of the practitioners we discussed were still alive during the time of my fieldwork. Despite this, Mahoune and others asserted that many practitioners – new and old – continued to practice *grigri* throughout Seychelles. My task, then, was to locate them. This was not trivial as, in addition to being culturally taboo, the Seychelles penal code would consider *grigri* to be illegal (Seychelles Government 2014). Finding participants who were open to talking about *grigri* was relatively straightforward. Almost everyone had something to say about *grigri* provided they could disassociate themselves from the examples they were providing. Locating practitioners, however, was a much harder task.

This task was made somewhat harder by my social proximity to Seychelles; to recruit through my family networks would have been the easiest path but would have also meant the scope of my participants would have orbited my own family spheres. However, given the population size of Seychelles is under 100,000 people, with fewer still on the main island of Mahé where I was based, it was virtually impossible to find people entirely 'outside' of those family networks. To somewhat mitigate this potential limitation, along with the 'hiddenness' of *grigri* practitioners and their clients, I was required to adopt an approach that achieved two objectives: it did not rely on my already existing personal connections; and it facilitated access to hidden populations. I looked to the literature on methods used to discover and research with hidden populations and found Goodman's (1961) approach to snowball sampling and Heckathorn's (2011; 1997) respondent-driven sampling to be the most appropriate guides. Both methods rely on 'chain-referral' sampling to access hard-to-reach populations, particularly for the studying of illegal and taboo activities such as illicit substance use, HIV contraction and management, and sex work (Shaver 2005; Dewey and Zheng 2013; Heckathorn 1997).

Heckathorn (1997) notes the difficulties of engaging 'hidden populations' because the size and boundary of such populations are undefined, but also because, where the activities concerned are stigmatised or illegal, privacy concerns may warrant a refusal to cooperate or necessitate the provision of obfuscating responses (1997, 174). Heckathorn identifies three common approaches to hidden population studies that tend to the insufficiency of 'traditional methods': targeted sampling, key informant sampling, and variations of chain-referral sampling, including snowball sampling. In the context of sex work, Shaver (2005) contends that all three approaches present the following methodological challenges: snowball sampling runs the risk of biased results given the tendency for more cooperative or motivated participants to be recruited; key informant sampling constrains the view of research subjects to the specific contexts of informants who are most likely to be police or health and social workers; and targeted sampling overrepresents those who are already the most visible. To overcome these issues in the context of sex work, Dewey and Zheng (2013, 32–37) have implored researchers to understand the non-homogenous settings of sex work by engaging with participants in their own environments, but also by corroborating the stories of participants with their peers to 'increase the validity and reliability of the data'. Despite the potential limitations, chain-referral sampling represented the best approach to reaching hidden populations for my purposes and as such heavily influenced my own recruitment and data collection methods.

My approach to recruitment was adapted from Goodman's snowball sampling (1961) and Heckathorn's respondent-driven sampling (1997; 2011). While both rely on slightly different

approaches to incentivising participation, I decided against monetary incentives so participants could decide to join at their own will, and without the coercive pressure of a fiscal reward, but also because it was not hard to find people willing to talk about *grigri*, even though they typically avoided implicating themselves. Further, representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, my already existing local connections, and several family members had contacts that they were confident would participate in the absence of a monetary incentive. Following Heckathorn's respondent-driven sampling model, these initial participants became 'seeds' – the first nodes in the participant sample (Heckathorn 1997, 178) – who offered to gauge if other people they saw as potentially relevant were interested in participating and, if so, arranged for us to engage. Given my existing family and friendship networks in Seychelles, the 'seed' approach allowed me to venture beyond these connections and allowed for a more organically developed participant base. Using 'seeds' also allowed potential participants to decline directly to the 'seeds' themselves, presumably because they felt more comfortable doing so to their peers.

While this approach eventually provided me with access to a range of practitioners, I also wanted to understand how *grigri* manifested in everyday life outside of the specific practitioner-client context. And indeed, as noted earlier in this chapter, looking into the specific practitioner-client context revealed that so much of the substance of *grigri* that I expected to find there was non-existent, as ideas about *grigri* were rarely rooted in actually existing practices. To find out how *grigri* was situated within everyday discourse more generally I socialised as a participant observer during everyday activities as much as possible. This led to many fruitless attempts to locate practitioners, and included requests to taxi drivers to '*dir mwan kot mon kapab rod e bonnonm dibwa sil vou ple?'*[10] that were met with uncomfortably loud, albeit nervous laughter that probably had as much to do with my poorly spoken Creole and Australian accent as it did with the topic of *grigri* itself. A useful way into this context was through local martial arts groups that I joined and eventually taught at. This leveraged the experience I gained training in Australia, including in the arts of capoeira, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and mixed martial arts. I chose these location-based practices to facilitate a more natural participation in specific contexts of everyday life that ostensibly had little to do with *grigri* in an attempt to understand its broader situation. When I first raised the topic of *grigri* in these contexts it was generally met with collective laughter and queries about whether I had travelled to Seychelles to learn how to become a *bonnonm dibwa*. Over time, as this novelty subsided, several

[10] 'Tell me where I can find a *bonnonm dibwa,* please?' Taxi drivers are said to be well-connected conduits to *bonnonm dibwa*, and some taxi drivers are even believed to have started their taxi driving businesses by transporting clients to famous *bonnonm dibwa* who were their immediate family members.

of my peers discussed their personal views and experiences with me, which ranged from derision, where *bonnom dibwa* were characterised as 'con men', to stories about *nanm* and *djinn* – spirits and demons – that were told with genuine fear. A few of my peers took on the role of a 'seed' and arranged for me to meet people in their own networks who had knowledge or experience of *grigri*. These subsequent contacts included Imams and their students at the local Mosque; a Christian nun who performed exorcisms who I never ended up getting access to; and a number of subject matter experts who had direct experience with *grigri*.

What was most striking about the divergent approach I took was that many of the subsequent 'seeds' ended up being the same people. Separate 'seeds' often referred to the same people, whether by name or by generic locational and descriptive references that I was able to triangulate to pinpoint the same people. There were not many to begin with, and given the size of Seychelles' population this should not have been a surprise. While I was initially concerned that my primary family and peer network would produce a limited participant scope, my contingency merely proved that the scope was already limited. The choice of chain-referral sampling did, however, raise other issues regarding who I was able to successfully engage.

Despite my efforts, the practitioners I met through chain-referral sampling were all men. While many of the non-practitioner participants were women, and some of the stories shared with me were from the children and grandchildren of women practitioners, I was unable to directly engage any women practitioners, or *bonnfanm dibwa*[11], during my fieldwork. I cannot confirm exactly why this occurred, but, beyond the potential barriers arising as a result of my own gender, I suspect there may have been at least four reasons: first, the ability to access men practitioners with greater ease; second, the chain-referral approach resulting in a bias towards men practitioners; third, the seed approach allowing women practitioners to decline participation anonymously; and fourth, the more complex process of witch-gendering in Seychelles.

The first possible reason is straight forward. Practitioners who gained prominence – positive and negative – were overwhelmingly men. This included historical figures but also contemporary

[11] The term *'bonnonm dibwa'* can be translated from Creole to English as 'good man of the woods' and is used to collectively refer to practitioners regardless of their gender. Women practitioners in the singular are referred to as *bonnfanm dibwa*. My use of *bonnonm dibwa* refers to practitioners regardless of gender, but as noted the perspectives of men predominate. Popular views about *grigri* referred to both men and women, but even in this discourse the tendency was to refer to men practitioners.

associations of herbalists, who themselves may not identify as *grigri* practitioners but are often seen that way by the general public. This greater prominence made it easier to begin with men practitioners who were more widely known and reflects Heckathorn's view that 'in practice ease of access virtually always determines the initial sample' when the chain-referral method is applied (1997, 174). This sets the stage for the second possible reason for the under-representation of women practitioners: the initial sample consisting entirely of men practitioners possibly resulted in the chain-referral leading to the peers of those men, who were also men practitioners. This possibility is plausible in part. While it is true that men practitioners referred me to other men practitioners, other participants in my research engaged through the chain-referral method did attempt to connect me with women practitioners – none of whom I was able to successfully engage. A third possible reason for this gap is that the seed approach allowed women practitioners to anonymously decline or otherwise remain hidden. If true – and I suspected that this was the reason in the case of 2 women practitioners – this would suggest not a gap or failure but a successful approach to participant engagement occurring on their terms.

On two occasions, my attempts to connect with two women practitioners through two different seeds was promising at first but never eventuated. One woman did 'real *grigri*' and like many practitioners, was said to live in central Mahé 'somewhere up the mountain' – a phrase culturally linked to '*sorti dan dibwa'*, or 'from the woods' to refer to someone who lived in isolation in the mountainous interiors and often considered to be unclean and a social outcast. The seed said she 'may even be Malagasy', and was described as wearing an African headdress. Another seed knew a *bonnfanm dibwa* who lived near a cemetery; she was an old school friend of the seed who took up fortune telling and cartomancy in adulthood. In the case of both women, however, their respective seeds eventually appeared to obfuscate their whereabouts or relinquished any serious attempt to get in touch with them, perhaps to protect the practitioners themselves or in response to a refusal to participate.

A separate attempt to engage a third woman practitioner was far more confusing. I was encouraged to contact a Malagasy *bonnfanm dibwa* who also lived 'somewhere up the mountain'; after arriving in the specified area with a local guide, we asked for guidance. Consistent with the other reference, a local man said she was 'somewhere up there', pointing up a hill to a vague destination that was only accessible by an unsurfaced walking path. Following the path but unsure where to go, we stopped to ask a man, who was washing down his porch, if he knew of a Malagasy *bonnfanm dibwa* nearby. He asked for more details but provided no further direction, and only after some small talk did he share that his partner was Malagasy, but was in Madagascar at that time. He invited us into

his home, which I was reluctant to do as I wanted to continue searching for the *bonnfanm dibwa*, but he eventually revealed that he was a healer himself. The traits associated with the Malagasy *bonnfanm dibwa* melted into a confluence of this man's stories and identities, spanning not just his healing practice but the fact that he had spent much of his life in Madagascar. In the end it was not clear if the Malagasy *bonnfanm dibwa* existed at all, but in any case, she remained hidden. Indeed, my attempt to locate her resulted in the participation of yet another man practitioner who peculiarly seemed to possess the traits used to describe her in the first place.

Though I expected predominantly men practitioners due to my own preconceptions of *bonnonm dibwa*, the difficulty of locating women practitioners was unexpected, especially given the tendency for witch accusations throughout history and across the globe to be aimed at women rather than men (Federici 2018; 2014; Hutton 2017; Bhattarcharjya 2013). This peculiar contrast leads to the fourth possible reason for the absence of women practitioners in my study: the masculinisation of Creoleness and the gendering of the witch. Vergès (2015; 2007) notes that creolisation in the Indian Ocean 'was a creation of a world of men, of a majority of men enslaved by a minority of men' (2015, 42–43) due to the fact that 'slave and colonial society was first a *masculine* society' in which 'the cultural practices of creolization were produced by *men*' (2007, 141–42). This masculinisation may have played a role in the overrepresentation of men practitioners in popular discourse in Seychelles and in historical accounts of *sorsye* that include *sorsye* accusations aimed entirely at men. Where Federici (2018; 2014) details the ways in which witch-hunting has functioned to subjugate women and control women's reproductive power in Europe, America, and contemporary Africa, she also notes how, by the 18th century 'the witch was becoming an African practitioner of *obeah*, a ritual that the planters feared and demonized as an incitement to rebellion' (2014, 236–38). Historians and anthropologists of obeah in the Caribbean note the presence of both men and women practitioners (Paton and Forde 2012), but contend that '[w]omen's spiritual healing practices were less likely than men's to be construed as obeah' and that men practitioners – or Obeah-men – were more commonly prosecuted than women despite the false British view that women obeah practitioners were more common (Paton 2015, 101, 167). Though not conclusive, the masculinisation of Creoleness and the various ways in which the witch has been gendered may, in part, explain the under-representation of women practitioners in Seychelles. The men practitioners I engaged with often provided services to women that concerned reproductive power – most popularly herbal abortion – while the family members of women practitioners did not share accounts that suggested their services meaningfully differed to those of men practitioners. However, this was not a focus in my study and this gendered difference warrants further attention in future research, especially given the complex gap it highlights. Although perspectives about *grigri* from

women are not at all absent in my data, the voices of *bonnfanm dibwa* are. And while I do apply a feminist analysis of *grigri*, it is likely that the lack of first-hand accounts from women practitioners has resulted in a bias towards the perspectives of men, and this may, for various reasons, be the result of my particular application of the chain-referral method.

Ultimately, the participants that I engaged over the course of my fieldwork included people who shared an association with or belief in *grigri*[12] either directly or indirectly, as well as people who knew about *grigri* but claimed no direct association or belief in it. While I focused on locating practitioners and their clients through the chain-referral method, the use of the chain-referral method to engage those claiming no direct association or belief in *grigri* was less specific, and largely dependent upon those who were willing to share their knowledge and experience. In the next section I detail some of the ethical issues that I encountered prior to and during my fieldwork.

3.3.2 Ethical Issues: Sample Representation and the Illegality of Grigri

The illegality of *grigri* presented the most significant ethical issue for the carrying out of my work, yet this was precisely why the topic of *grigri* was such an important one to examine and perhaps why there is such a small amount of literature on the topic to date. Due to the illegality of *grigri,* I was required to receive Form A ethics clearance before I could commence my study. This was granted provided I was granted local ethics clearance if any such requirement existed; ensured that participants had access to comprehensible information before consenting to participate; and paid particular attention to de-identifying participants. As I explain below, the first and second requirement proved impossible to do prior to arriving in Seychelles, and the third requirement warranted an approach that went beyond common de-identification methods.

The first ethical issue, gaining local ethics clearance, was not possible as no local ethics committee existed for social and cultural research. My doctoral supervisors provided a letter of support from Curtin University to help establish research connections in Seychelles (see Appendix D). After contacting numerous leads in Seychelles, I was directed to representatives at the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture to ascertain what ethics committee or processes existed, and what was required to gain clearance. Attempting to organise this prior to arriving in Seychelles proved difficult, but representatives agreed to arrange a physical meeting with me to discuss the matter

[12] As noted in the introduction, I tend to use the term *'grigri'* in the normative sense to refer to practice, belief, and superstitious events. This is done for simplicity and to reflect the mainstream and discursively constructed concept of *grigri*, but also given the problems with, as discussed in section 3.2.2, viewing *grigri* purely in terms of a practice.

once I had arrived. In the days following my arrival in Seychelles in 2014, I discussed concerns at length with representatives in the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism and Culture and they stated that no local ethics clearance process existed for me to complete. Instead, the meeting comprised of my discussing my research objectives and their associated concerns, and I queried how the illegality of *grigri* might figure into any issues they could see.

Representatives in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture stated that it was virtually impossible to prosecute a practitioner due to their involvement with witchcraft and shared that the most recent attempts to prosecute practitioners, several decades prior to this, were unsuccessful due to the ambiguity of the definition of witchcraft in the penal code. As a result, they assured me, practitioners were no longer prosecuted for the standalone practice of witchcraft. The representatives were more concerned with activities considered illegal under other penal codes, such as poisoning, abortion, murder and the use of illicit drugs, but not witchcraft in its own right – and indeed they disregarded the effectiveness of *grigri* entirely. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture representatives supported my research insofar as I did not promote or document, in a procedural manner, the practical steps involved in any illegal practices that may surface during my research. I assured them that I had no intention of doing this – and indeed it was not something I did or ever set out to do – and they were satisfied that my research would not be of any concern to them and would not violate any laws nor put any participants at risk. Having no local ethics committee for social and cultural research, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture representatives also expressed their satisfaction with the Australian ethics clearance as an appropriate standard, and also expressed confidence in me, as the undertaker of the research, to conduct my work ethically. To aid me, I was assigned a local research officer, Jean-Claude Mahoune, to assist me where required, who provided a supporting document to demonstrate both this and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's approval of my research (see Appendix A).

To mitigate the second ethical issue of ensuring that the consent process was accessible and comprehensible to research participants, I developed a consent form in English with a Grade 7 reading level (see Appendix B) and paid for translation service at the local Creole heritage institute – *Lenstiti Kreol* – to convert the consent form to simplified Creole (see Appendix C). My limited but adequate conversational Creole allowed me to rehearse the Creole version of the consent form so that I could relay the contents where it assisted. Participants provided verbal consent over written consent, which I suspected was due to the taboo and illegal nature of *grigri*; participants did not feel comfortable signing their name or documenting their participation with their personal details, though a small number of participants asked to be acknowledged in my thesis their unwillingness to

sign a consent form. The research project was explained to participants, and they were made aware of their freedom to leave the project without consequence. I also explained that I was unable to document any illegal activities but was willing to document stories about their occurrence, noting that I would de-identify everything they shared with me, illegal or not.

To de-identify participants, I did not collect any personal information, such as their name, birth, distinctive physical characteristics, or residential address, and only met at their place of residence by invitation. My field notes omitted these details too, and I coded each participate in place of their actual name to protect the identities of participants in the unlikely event that authorities requested the data. Participants were made aware of this so they could choose to withhold or obfuscate certain accounts where it demonstrated a personal connection to illegal activities, though only a few participants who I suspected engaged in something taboo or illegal themselves appeared to do this. Maintaining confidentiality was important, however, for reputational as well as privacy and safety purposes, given some practitioners associated with *grigri* operated as licenced herbalists in public so they could work legally while avoiding drawing attention to their involvement in witchcraft. The chain-referral method discussed in the previous section played a role in allowing participants to inconspicuously opt-in to my research project, while also allowing participants to remain hidden, as I suspect some women practitioners may have done.

The small population size of Seychelles presented a more complicated factor that risked precluding the successful de-identification of some participants. As I have already noted, Seychelles has a population of fewer than 100,000 people. Most people live on the 3 main islands of La Digue, Praslin, but predominantly on Mahe. This makes the population of each island significantly smaller than the total, thus increasing the chances of certain descriptions, events, or characteristics of participants in my accounts revealing their identities. This included not just practitioners but also their clients, their family members, and people who did not want their association with or experience of *grigri* to be made known. This was a matter of individual privacy in general, given the taboo situation of *grigri* in Creole culture, where most participants were not willing to be publicly associated with witchcraft, especially where they were sharing their belief in or fear of *grigri*, or particularly where they were sharing their own personal involvement with *bonnonm dibwa.*

Maintaining confidentiality became more complex due to the illegal status of *grigri* in Seychelles. Further, while ‘herbalism’ is legal to practice if one has a licence, *grigri* as ‘black magic’ and *grigri* as ‘herbalism’ are constantly conflated, including by practitioners themselves. This made

distinguishing the 'illegal' aspects of *grigri* from the 'legal' parts unclear. Practitioners would often meander between the two categories of practice and many emphasised that the two categories of knowledge and practice were not separate at all but entangled. On the one hand this was because many practitioners simply offered a range of services, with only some of them being advertised in public. But on the other, the inability to separate 'magic' from 'herbalism' was because plants themselves had magical qualities, were sentient beings themselves, or the fact that supernatural powers had to be invoked for various herbal remedies to work properly. Practices associated with *grigri* were not always in and of themselves illegal; many legal witch trials failed to result in conviction because the practices and artefacts used by *bonnonm dibwa* are common to the Church, are common plants, or are common household goods. The penal code (Seychelles Government 2014) specifically prohibits artefacts associated with witchcraft; the act of using or 'pretending' to use such artefacts by 'witchcraft, charms, or other like superstitious means'; and using or causing 'to be put into operation such means or processes' associated with 'the knowledge of witchcraft or of any non-natural or superstitious processes' (ibid.). The material outcome that the penal code seeks to deter, however, is the use of these tools and knowledges to 'influence or affect the mind, feelings, or judgement of any person or to cause injury to any person or any property' (ibid.). That is, while the means may be understood as 'witchcraft', the ends could be anything. In this way, and similar to the murky distinction between legal herbalism and illegal witchcraft, it was common to hear of *grigri* being used to undermine state activities or achieve outcomes that would, regardless of the means, be considered illegal. The stories I heard about *grigri* often ventured into the realm of the illegal, and upon realising this it became clear that the use of pseudonyms alone would not be sufficient in protecting the identities of those associated with *grigri*.

The first measure I used to deal with this range of confidentiality issues was to use pseudonyms for all participants and omit any information that may reveal their identities. This approach to de-identification is commonly used in qualitative inquiry to protect individual privacy, including where research is focusing on illegal activities such as illicit substance handling (Bourgois 2003; Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), human trafficking (Siegel and Wildt 2016; Scheper-Hughes 2004), and sex work (Shaver 2005; Dewey and Zheng 2013). The small population size of Seychelles – and the tendency for chain-referral to somewhat triangulate – warranted a more innovative approach to de-identification to protect the identities of those associated with *grigri*, especially in the case of practitioners who ran legal businesses and whose public reputations would be put at risk if their knowledge of and experience with 'witchcraft' were to be made public. And, as this thesis will show throughout, attitudes towards *grigri*, and one's willingness to associate with it, are often contradictory and in flux, such that many practitioners would go between denying any knowledge

of or experience with *grigri* to openly sharing their mastery of *grigri*, and often with personal examples. As Dewey (2013, 20–21) notes in the context of anthropological research with sex workers, 'researchers may frequently find themselves relying upon their own individual moral compass' to help navigate the ethical dilemmas they face. When grappling with the issue of how to deal with the multiple public and private personas of practitioners in the micro-state of Seychelles, I similarly found myself relying on my own moral compass to devise de-identification strategies. To this end, I not only adopted pseudonyms for participants while omitting identifiable details, but I also split certain practitioners into multiple 'personas' to reduce the chance of their illegal admissions being associated with their legal and publicly practicing identities. For this reason, while it is safe to say that I engaged less than a dozen practitioners on two islands over the course of my fieldwork, the precise number of practitioners that I engaged has not been disclosed, to mitigate the ability for anyone to deduce which personas were split, and thus who those personas might be. This means that some participants have more than one pseudonym, and their accounts are situated slightly differently where I was required to disassociate their legal persona from their illegal activities.

3.4 Collection and Analysis

3.4.1 Making Sense of Grigri's Situation

In this section I discuss how I collected and analysed data for this study, including an overview of the fieldwork and research sessions, a discussion of the selected research strategies, and the theory of these methods. My approach to data collection and analysis was influenced by the Extended Case Method (ECM) (Samuels 2009; Burawoy 2009b; 2015; 1998) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault 2002; Keller 2011). Adopting an ethnographic approach, I collected qualitative and first-person narrative data through in-depth interviews and participant observation. I situated this data alongside popular writing and historical texts related to *grigri* in Seychelles. The main period of ethnography began in 2014, but I continued to collect data following this period of fieldwork via email communications, as well as during a brief return to Seychelles in early 2018 for several weeks. Over the course of my research, I casually engaged with countless people in everyday settings, some where I took the opportunity to ask about *grigri* in passing, but ultimately conducted targeted interviews of approximately 15 people in repeated engagements over the course of my fieldwork until early 2018. As explained above, my approximation and lack of specificity in stating the number of participants is intentional.

The length of the targeted sessions I ran ultimately depended on how long participants were willing to engage with me. While sessions typically ran for one or two hours, it was common for discussions to turn into leisurely conversations that ran for three hours or more. Although I re-engaged several participants following my fieldwork in 2014 and 2018, up until the time of writing in 2021, the majority of research sessions were conducted in Seychelles in late 2014 and early 2018. Some participants were re-engaged several times during these periods, while others were typically engaged twice: once to introduce myself, the topic, to build rapport, and to arrange a session; and a second time for an in-depth interview. Despite the first session being intended as an introductory meeting, relevant information was typically shared in both the first and second session. Most in-depth interviews were conducted at the participant's place of residence, at their invitation, except for more ad-hoc participants who I met in public places or at a peer's residence. And while interviews were the most targeted form of data collection, this was part of a broader ethnographic approach in which long-term participant observation was key to the locating of appropriate participants, but also to building rapport and establishing trust over time (O'Reilly 2009, 125–30).

In addition to my own field notes for both in-depth interviews and participant observation, I used an audio recorder specifically for in-depth interviews to collect data that I transcribed in the days following the session. Periods of participant observation in everyday life focused on interactions with newly made friends and especially with my martial arts peers. Field notes for these instances were limited to post-hoc and depersonalised note taking, while formal interviews – including with some of those same peers - were always semi-structured. The following lines of inquiry were always used to guide discussions about *grigri*:

1. What is *grigri?*
2. Who practices *grigri?*
3. How did *grigri* come to exist in Seychelles?
4. Is *grigri* Seychellois Creole?

From here I engaged with individuals and issues on different levels and aspects of Creoleness and *grigri*. Interviewees included practitioners of *grigri*, those who consulted them, academics and researchers, especially at the Creole Institute and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and people who claimed to have no association with the practice of *grigri*. Following Favret-Saada's (1980) approach outlined in section 3.2.2, I ran sessions in a loosely structured way so that I could follow the lead of participants. By conducting interviews that were open ended I was able to 'follow' the attitudes and perceptions surrounding *grigri* without restricting interviewees to my own perceptions, while also potentially discovering information unknown to me. The lack of rigidity

allowed interviews to be based on what interviewees saw as important, rather than imposing my own views on the subject (K. Anderson and Jack 1998), and as such allowed me to discover which directions were appropriate while setting the stage for those who have been implicated in and by the discourse on *grigri* to participate in my research on their own terms. Connecting participant accounts with alleged histories of *grigri* in Seychelles, as well as analysing and contrasting this information with the perceptions of the general Seychellois population, helped me to develop and enhance the existing yet very limited understandings of *grigri's* place in Creole culture.

My use of participant observation was necessary for several purposes: understanding *grigri* in the context of the practitioner-client encounter as a 'practice'; acquiring an understanding of how *grigri* was situated more broadly as a cultural concept; and inquiring into contexts that were ostensibly unrelated to *grigri* to make sense of how *grigri* featured in popular discourse and everyday life. This was in addition to the need to become immersed in the site of study over time, rather than forcefully, so as to adapt to the pace of life I was observing. By being able to shift from the proverbial front stage to backstage dynamic (Goffman, 1956), I created the potential to develop an understanding that might otherwise be limited to those engaging in the practice (Jorgensen 1989, 44, 52). As noted earlier in this section, participant observation was necessary to build trust and rapport with new participants – including 'seeds' – but it was also necessary to build trust and rapport with participants I had already engaged. The taboo and illegal status of *grigri* meant that some participants only shared certain accounts after they had become comfortable with me, following several engagements – which in some instances took several months. This gradual reveal ranged from personal experiences and views about *grigri* – including experiences of the supernatural that some were unwilling to share at first – to participants disclosing that they were, in fact, *grigri* practitioners where they initially claimed to only practice herbalism, or did not make public the fact that they practiced anything at all. Engaging in this methodology allowed me to contrast the nature of the information that dominated popular understandings of *grigri* with the reality of the practice (Favret-Saada 1990), which, as discussed in section 3.2.2, only sometimes correlated.

Many popular understandings of *grigri* that I encountered reflected the accounts I located in popular writing, so much so that I suspected they were directly derived from them. This meant that, to understand how *grigri* had been discursively constructed, I needed to understand the broader contexts within which those texts were discursively and historically situated. To do this I analysed sources that ranged from the accounts of travel writers and Christian missionaries to the more contemporary accounts of the SPUP/SPPF surrounding the 1977 *coup d'état*. This was done to

develop an understanding of the historical and ideological context that latticed the existence of *grigri* and Creoleness. Sources for government and historical accounts and records included the museum and library archives, along with the accounts from the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and discussed in later analysis chapters, such as Chapter 6 on modern Creole subjects. As I have already noted, the existing literature on Seychelles – particularly works covering witchcraft – has tended to be limited, circular, and lacking in empiricism. In the course of my fieldwork I began to understand how these limited accounts had shaped and validated the contemporary discourse on *grigri*, including among practitioners themselves. Realising this, I considered how the political speeches and publications of the SPUP/SPPF, and other popular writings on Seychelles, formed part of the discourse that required analysis. This discourse appeared to be constitutive of *grigri*, and as such warranted the positioning of the discourse on *grigri* as a social practice in its own right that has structured domains of knowledge and power (Keller 2011, 46–47; Foucault 1972).

Researchers of obeah have similarly noted the role of discursive construction (Paton and Forde 2012; Paton 2015; O'Neal 2020), such as where obeah has been defined by the English imagination in which whites and/as representatives of the state have been overrepresented in accounts of obeah developed for 'white and imperial' audiences (Paton and Forde 2012, 174). This, in turn, has provided the content for a racist colonial imagination that has spanned the globe for centuries (O'Neal 2020). Paton claims that 'obeah as a discursive construct [has] remained an ever-present sign of Caribbean people's position on the margins of "civilization"', which is the result of obeah being constructed by elites for international audiences (Paton and Forde 2012, 189). By simply 'being there', obeah represented 'an already-constituted target for prosecution' that justified the '[r]epeated declarations that obeah was an evil that must be eradicated'. Discursive links stemming from shared colonial contexts could be seen as existing between this example, the literature surveyed in Chapter 2, and the rhetoric that has shaped *grigri*, Creoleness, and the experiences of colonised subjects throughout the African diaspora.

Realising that this discourse was internationally and historically situated meant that an analysis focusing only on accounts specific to Seychelles would be insufficient. The significance of racialised discourse to the constitution of *grigri* as demonstrated in Chapter 2, and the ways in which this dialogic process strongly reflected that of obeah's discursive construction and other racialised contexts of magic, also explored in Chapter 2, further emphasised the centrality of discourse to *grigri*, as outlined in section 3.2.2 with reference to Favret-Saada's (1980) approach, but also argued by Berger and Luckmann (1966) who contend that discourse is 'the most important vehicle of reality-maintenance' (1966, 152). In the case of *grigri*, however, I was most interested in

understanding whose discourse was seen to matter, and whose conception of reality was maintained through that discourse. Informed by Gergen's (1999) social constructionist approach to discourse, I chose to examine the claims being made, the claim makers, and how the claims-making process was (de)legitimised. This was because participants do not produce knowledge in isolation; they 'come to the interview already socialized' as 'products of culture and history and thus are dependent on the particular prevailing culture at a particular time' (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg 2005, 694).

I conducted analysis on the qualitative data I collected between, during, and following periods of fieldwork. This was not a linear but a reflexive process, which accepted that 'meaning making does not stop with the end of an interview, but […] continues through various readings' (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg 2005, 694). This process allowed me to identify the themes that emerged from the data and select the appropriate theoretical framework with which to explain what I was observing. Both collection and analysis were influenced by grounded theory, thematic analysis, and particularly the Extended Case Method (Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2014a; 2014b; Bernard and Ryan 1998; Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Samuels 2009; Burawoy 2009b; 1998). While applying open coding (Corbin and Strauss 2008) and thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2014b; 2014a) to transcripts, observations, and literature, I took note of what participants emphasised, and what stood out to me given my prior beliefs about *grigri*. This process highlighted the continuities and discontinuities regarding the discourse on Creoleness and *grigri*, revealing how the knowledge domain situating *grigri* and Creoleness was itself situated and shaped by racist colonial discourse. Instead of changing how I described *grigri*, I needed to accept the plurality of *grigri* as something that was only sometimes based in material realities. Acknowledging this highlighted that the situation of *grigri* in Creole culture was not static, nor universally agreed upon. Indeed, in the end, my task was not to understand the 'situation' of *grigri*, in the singular, but rather to understand the *dynamic situations* of *grigri* as a confabulation of floating signifiers that speak of racial order by proxy.

I adjusted the theoretical alignment of my analysis based on the themes that emerged over time and arrived at the view that discussions about *grigri* were predominantly concerned with race, time, and space. Most utterances referenced these topics explicitly – in terms of primitiveness, tradition, modernness, Africanness, Europeanness, slavery, whiteness, and blackness – while other accounts of *grigri* spoke of these topics using racialised proxies – in terms of old versus new, irrational versus scientific, backwardness versus development, idle, lazy, and immoral versus industriousness and honesty. However, given the circularity with which participants described *grigri* in ways that reified colonial accounts, I did not feel that limiting an analysis of *grigri* to the terms of participants

would alone suffice in achieving an understanding of how *grigri* has been situated in Creole culture. While *grigri* was framed by participants with reference to race, time, and space, it was more productive to explain these issues in terms of racialised modernity (Hesse 2007) and modernity/coloniality (Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2019; Quijano 2007), which I suggest in Chapter 2 provides a more appropriate theoretical latticing for this study. Adopting a social constructionist approach was necessary, then, to consider how and why certain knowledge was being produced not just in the research session but in the written sources being analysed. This meant going beyond simply seeing research knowledge as something socially constructed by myself and research participants, to a social constructionist standpoint that viewed the Self as a product of broader historical, social, and cultural forces experienced in context (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Gergen 1999; Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg 2005). To this end, I accepted a view of discourse as an instrument of collective action that aids in the formation of systems of social control, where institutions – as apparatuses of the nation state – claim authoritative knowledge through the political construction of reality (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg 2005, 699; Mannheim 1936; McCarthy 1995; Mills 1939).

3.4.2 The Extended Case Method

The literature review, historical background, and on-the-ground observations demonstrated that while the discourse on *grigri* was concerned with time and space, participants were not always discussing *grigri* in a way that was firmly situated in their time and space. The discourse conceptualised *grigri* in a way that saw its mythical origin story in the arrival of enslaved Africans to Seychelles, as a relic of Africanity that was contributed to Seychelles immediately prior to the creation of the Creole. This stretching of the discourse of *grigri* in Seychelles over time and space meant that my observations and analysis needed to similarly extend across time and space. To extend my study beyond the local to the extralocal, and beyond the specific to the grand, I looked to the ethnographically-oriented approach of the Extended Case Method (Burawoy 2009b; 1998; Tavory and Timmermans 2009; Samuels 2009), a framework for moving from the 'micro' particularities of the ethnographic setting to the 'macro' existing theories of modernity/coloniality, magic, and race outlined in Chapter 2. This included understanding modernity/coloniality as a racial, patriarchal, and capitalist project (C. Robinson 2000; Hesse 2007; Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2019; Quijano 2000) from which imaginaries of 'black magic' emerged (Moore and Sanders 2001; Paton 2015; Paton and Forde 2012; O'Neal 2020; Hours and Geschiere 1998).

Burawoy contends that the ECM is defined by four aspects: the 'extension of observer into the lives of participants under study, the extension of observations over time and space; the extension from

microprocesses to macroforces', and 'the extension of theory.' (2009a, xv) Drawing from a number of different applications of ECM, Burawoy contends that such 'extravagant leaps across space and time, from the singular to the general, from the mundane to the grand historical themes of the late twentieth century' are legitimate and necessary courses of analysis (Burawoy 1998, 5).

In rationalising the ECM, Burawoy notes resistance from 'a naïve empiricism that regards ethnography as special because it gets at the world as it "really is"', a criticism that is often coupled with what Burawoy calls 'an equally naïve positivism' that assumes reality can only be grasped by 'stand[ing] outside the world we study' as the 'proverbial fly on the wall' (2009a, xii–xiii). Acknowledging the more usual course of ethnographers to 'confine themselves to claims within the dimensions of the everyday worlds they examine', Burawoy notes that he is 'not alone in "extending out" from the field' (Burawoy 1998, 5). Indeed, although the ECM is commonly associated with Burawoy, the method has an established record in the Manchester School of social anthropology (Garbett 1970; Gluckman 1958; 1961b; 1961a; 1964; Van Velsen 1960; 1964; 1967; Mitchell 1956; 1983; Epstein 1958). This was marked by a turn from a view of 'the natives' as primordial beings to one that acknowledged that they were situated in a broader global context through which such colonial encounters were made possible. To illustrate the necessity of the ECM, Burawoy (2009a) provides the following example

Analytical theory or science reveals the broader context of our actions, but it also shows how the context creates the illusion of its own absence, of an everyday world that is autonomous and self-contained. We may blame ourselves for unemployment, whereas its sources are markets and governments—external forces that not only produce unemployment but also mystify that production. (Burawoy 2009a, xiii–xiv)

Burawoy contends that 'revealing the connections between micro and macro' is key to developing the sociological imagination (2009a, xiv). The ECM endeavours to shift away from a tendency to isolate the field and understand the broader forces that shape localised instances and requires a framework to identify these broader forces. Modernity, race, and magic were selected as a theoretical framework in Chapter 2 based on the themes emerging not just from the literature on *grigri* but also the mainstream discourse and first-person narrative data that I collected and observed during my fieldwork. Burawoy has suggested the world cannot be studied without presuppositions about that world, and without some idea of how the world works – ideas which represent already existing theories. In Burawoy's conception, ethnography ought to develop theory and, when exceptions to existing theories are encountered, theory needs to be rebuilt, reconstructed,

advanced, and extended. If anthropology seeks to develop specific and general understandings about humanity, and sociology endeavours to do the same with respect to social configurations, then they cannot effectively do so without an appreciation of structural forces that shape those conditions. For the purposes of my study, this meant analysing the data collected over the course of my research and developing theoretical explanations that were grounded in ethnographic observations but explained based on theories about the broader contexts within which *grigri* has existed. My study aligns most closely with Burawoy's articulation of the ECM given the strong synergies between his approaches and topics of interest, namely ethnography, Marxism, capitalism, socialism, and postcolonialism. For example, in Burawoy's Marxist theorisation of the colour bar in the Zambian mining industry, he argues that the 'new African elite focused on forces beyond national control' to 'obscure the class character' of the postcolonial state (Burawoy 1998, 20–21). I offer a similar perspective on Creole nationalism in this study, arguing in Chapter 6 on modern Creole subjects that the SPUP/SPPF used the raceless and depoliticised language of modernisation to obscure the racial character of Creole nationalism and its desire for Seychelles to achieve greater proximity to Europeanness. Similarly, where Burawoy adopts the ECM to 'extend' Fanon's theory of postcolonial revolution to Zambia, I extend the theories concerned with modernity, race, and magic discussed in Chapter 2 to the historical, political, and cultural context of Seychelles.

Drawing from the ECM's approach to extending observations and analyses over space and time (Burawoy 2009b, 46–49, 62–64), I have examined accounts of participants in my research and situated them against how *grigri* has been presented historically, but also how other occult-oriented practices of Europe, Africa, and the African diaspora have been characterised. This was important not just to provide breadth across time and space, but to understand the similarities and differences between how *grigri* has been conceptualised by Seychellois in ways that reflect the characterisation of practices associated – in particularly white male imaginaries – with marginalised and subordinated peoples. The specific historical context for Seychelles spanned the first half of the twentieth century; the time surrounding independence and the *coup d'état* in which the postcolonial modern Creole order emerged; the contemporary narratives observed not just in the time of my fieldwork but also in my lifetime, from the nineties onwards; and the array of accounts that are said to be about *grigri* prior to the twentieth century. The historical contexts for modernity, race, and magic span and precede the context of Seychelles considerably, yet nevertheless demonstrate thematic alignment. Achieving this breadth was important in answering my research question about what informs, sustains, and situates *grigri* in Seychelles and what insights regarding any answers to this question can reveal about the functioning of modernity/coloniality.

3.4.3 Discourse Analysis

While *grigri* and Creoleness represented specifics, and Seychelles their specific context, insights from the ECM inspired me to connect my methodology to the wider discourse on witchcraft and race and, in doing so, extend beyond my ethnographic accounts to make sense of what was more broadly at stake where *grigri* was concerned. My analysis needed to situate grigri in relation to race, space, and time and the broader context of modernity/coloniality, so I used a Foucauldian approach (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Foucault 1972; 2002; Keller 2011) to analysing in-person narrative data, popular writing, political texts, and mainstream discourse as socially constituting discourses that have discursively constructed *grigri* and Creole subjects. This allowed me to position the discourse on *grigri* as a social narrative and a world-constituting social practice informed by the discursive contributions of elsewhere, and accepting that the dominant discourse on *grigri*, derived from a racialised colonial discourse on the irrational figure of the African, has constituted *grigri* in the imaginaries of Seychellois. This also, however, required an acceptance of the existence of plural and creolised worlds within Seychelles, that took alternative conceptions of *grigri* seriously, even where they were in stark conflict with the dominant discourse. While anthropologists of magic might expect research on witchcraft to include detailed descriptions of rituals and artefacts, such an approach would have had limited utility given my research was focused on developing an understanding of the situation of *grigri* in Creole culture. Any attempt to 'document' *grigri* would also rely on the false premise that *grigri* refers to a coherent community of *grigri* practitioners – which, as I highlighted earlier in this chapter, was quickly revealed to be untrue in the early stages of my fieldwork. Following Foucault's (1984) concern with the 'analysis of problematizations', which focused on the 'appearance of central breaking or turning points in the history of social constitutions of subjectivities or particular orders of practices' (Keller 2011, 46), I paid particular attention to the *coup d'état* as a breaking point in the discursive construction of the modern Creole subject where political discourse functioned to identify and categorise desirable and undesirable aspects of Creoleness, with *grigri* being situated as the latter. This political discourse is not isolated; it is present in the discourse of everyday life and a task of this research study was to understand what informed the presence of this discourse which was institutionalised through the modernising project of the SPUP/SPPF.

3.4.4 Organising the Analysis

Following the reflexive process of data collection and analysis, I organised the data from the ethnographic setting in a way that is interwoven with the broader context of modernity/coloniality, while also extending to engage with and build on existing theories on the particular matters being discussed. Chapters 4 and 5 on *grigri*, for example, are firmly based in the ethnographic setting but

build on the theories that participants themselves provided to me concerning the history and origins of *grigri*. In Chapter 6, on modern Creole subjects, I focus on the political discourse of the SPUP/SPPF and query the terms of its authoritative claims about Creoleness with reference to negotiations of Creoleness shared by participants in my research. But, to extend beyond this specificity, I also analyse the effect of this political discourse, what informed it in a historical and ideological sense, and contend the decolonial claims of the SPUP/SPPF by extending feminist theories of abjection to theorise how the discursive construction of modern Creole subjects aided the racialisation of *grigri* and designation of *grigri* and those associated with it to a constitutive 'outside' of the domain of Creoleness. Chapter 7, on *grigri* and decoloniality, takes views on *grigri* from research participants and connects them with theories of the zombie, decoloniality, creative refusal, and a black radical tradition to insights from the ethnographic setting and demonstrates how *grigri* represents a locus of conflict through which the nation state renders its sovereignty and colonised subjects resist and refuse the terms of the postcolonial state.

Chapter 4. *Grigri* and the 'Not Caught'

4.1 Introduction

Concepts like "nation," "society," and "culture" name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding. (Wolf 1982a, 1:40)

This chapter focuses on *grigri*, specifically what is being referred to when the term *grigri* is used; how *grigri* is situated in and in relation to Creole culture; and why *grigri* has come to be situated in the ways that I have observed. To do this, I bring insights from my fieldwork into my analysis to build on the problematisation of *grigri* that I began in Chapter 2's survey of the literature and in Chapter 3, on methods. These insights were generated through ethnographic conversations that were guided with the questions outlined in the method chapter, namely:

5. What is *grigri?*
6. Who practises *grigri?*
7. How did *grigri* come to exist in Seychelles?
8. Is *grigri* Seychellois Creole?

Reflecting the ambiguous presentation of *grigri* in the existing literature and popular discourse, participants in my fieldwork rarely provided a straightforward answer to these questions, and discursive links were similarly established concerning race, space, and time. This chapter presents some of these accounts to demonstrate how the themes of race, space, and time remain a common part of the contemporary discourse in Seychelles among the practitioner and non-practitioner participants that I engaged.

Chapters 4 and 5 both engage with each of my research questions from a range of perspectives. The former broadly concerns those who, to use Favret-Saada's nomenclature, are 'not caught', while the latter focuses on those who are 'caught' or familiar with the 'caught' (1980, 13–20). Those who are 'not caught' are distinct from those who are 'caught'; the 'caught' have either been bewitched or are themselves practitioners, both of which result in them having direct experience with and belief in the currency of magic. Those who are 'not caught' establish and maintain distance between themselves and the domains of magical practitioners. This distinction between 'caught' and 'not caught' is problematic, in that being 'not caught' does not necessarily equate to a lack of belief in magic. Favret-Saada notes that while it may include people who say things like 'spells don't exist'

or ‘oh, spells! I don’t hold with all that rot!’, it also includes people who say ‘that was in the old days’ or ‘they exist, but not here’ and ‘over there, they’re really backward’ (1980, 16). The use of ‘caught’ and ‘not caught’ in the context of *grigri* is productive but requires some nuanced qualifications. Unlike the ‘not caught’ in Favret-Saada’s ethnography, who may have believed that magic existed in the past or somewhere else but not in the Bocage, the analogous ‘not caught’ in Seychelles may believe in the existence of *grigri* in the present but suggest that it belongs in the past or has been imported from the African mainland or Madagascar. Importantly, these two analysis chapters do not represent an exhaustive account from all participants that I engaged, and instead draw out explicit and implicit ideas about *grigri* held by a range of participants. Following Burawoy’s (2009a) approach, I accept that these participants have developed their own theories about *grigri*, just as social scientists would, and I examine these theories seriously.

This chapter begins with accounts that position *grigri* in relation to the uncanny, which is how witchcraft tends to be framed as supposed in Evans-Pritchard’s analysis of witchcraft among the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1976; Mildnerova 2016). Rather than limit my analysis to this aspect of *grigri*, I highlight the ways in which participants linked the uncanny to Africanness through the signifier of *grigri* as a catch-all term for abjected qualities that stand in as proxies for a non-European and specifically African Other. This occurs even where these qualities are European in origin but characterised as African, exhibiting what Shilliam (2018) describes as a blackening effect. My analysis draws out the ways in which *grigri* is articulated and situated in terms of a pre-modern Africanness.

4.2 *Grigri* in Popular Media

As I have already discussed in the previous chapters, the popular discourse on *grigri* associates it overwhelmingly with the first enslaved Africans who arrived in Seychelles; the influences of present-day witchdoctors from mainland Africa and Madagascar; and the presence of mainland Africans and Madagascans in the current era. In this view, all magic is *grigri*, and even herbalism – which may or may not have magical components – is widely conflated with witchcraft. Broadly speaking, the prevailing discourse on *grigri* has epistemically linked it to – and indeed conflated it with – a primordial, pre-modern, and racialised ‘darkness’ that encompasses Africa and the African diaspora. Chapter 2 suggests that the prevailing discourse on *grigri* has been shaped by a small number of non-Creole authors during the mid-20th Century. These characterisations featured in the accounts of participants in my research, as I discuss in this section, but are also circulated more widely and just as recently online by non-Creole authors. In her ‘The Times’ piece titled *White*

Sand, Black Magic (Emerson 2010), white British novelist and travel writer Sally Emerson uses racialised imagery to warn Britons that while Seychelles may be a nice honeymoon destination, there is 'dark sorcery lurking in the shade of the palms'. Emerson states that *grigri* was '[b]rought to Seychelles from Africa by the slaves of early French settlers' and is 'a heady blend of herbalism and voodoo' that 'refused to go' even after it was 'banned from then [sic] islands by the British in 1958' (2010). Online blogger Chantelle Howell – another white British writer – contends that Seychellois 'are still extremely superstitious' and she characterises *grigri* as a 'blend of black magic and herbalism' that 'came with the African and Malagasy slaves' (Howell 2017b), even referring to *grigri* as 'the 'black magic' of Africa' (Howell 2017a).

The persistence of such racist characterisations of *grigri* that position it in the past, and describe it in immoral terms, is not limited to white British authors. I observed similar sentiments before, during, and following my fieldwork by Seychellois in everyday discourse and in Seychellois media. During my fieldwork in 2014, relatives and friends would often share newspaper articles with me that mentioned *grigri* or herbalism. The latter tended to receive more, and more positive attention than the former as strict herbalism is often promoted as a permissible form of non-western tradition, but in all instances *grigri* or 'black magic' would be used as an object of moral juxtaposition. In a 'Le Seychellois Hebdo' interview with Jeamie Dogley (2014), the Vice Chair of the Seychelles' Association of Promoters of Complementary Health in Seychelles (APOCHIS), Dogley promotes traditional medicine as a practice 'more common in Africa, Asia and South America' that, in the case of Seychelles, 'comes from our ancestors'. When asked if herbalists are practitioners of witchcraft, Dogley notes that his grandfather, who was also a practitioner of traditional medicine, used to have his possessions confiscated by police because they believed he '*pe donn dibwa'* – literally translated as 'giving people wood' or 'giving people things from the forest'. The name *bonnonm dibwa* – 'good man of the forest' – is linked to this usage but is an association that Dogley sees as 'a bad and negative concept' that has 'dragged down the trade' and meant 'herbalists were afraid of the authorities' and practised their trade in secret (2014). When I spoke with herbalists during my fieldwork, *grigri* was often used as a reference point against which herbalism was rendered acceptable. This notion was further validated through the use of legal licences that permitted the practice of herbalism, around which APOCHIS was institutionalised, which is not a recognition that has been extended to other practices termed *'grigri'*.

In a similar vein, *grigri* is used as a reference point against which the modernity of Seychelles is characterised, as highlighted in an issue of 'Today' (see Figure 4.) titled *Black magic on the rise?* (2014). This piece begins with a description of Seychelles as a 'rapidly developing country with a

highly literate population and access to fast evolving information technology and communications tools.' The development of Seychelles, the piece continues, has led to 'many of its past traditions and cultures' being 'blended with modern trends' while others have been 'abandoned altogether.' In spite of 'the modernization' of Seychelles and its 'overwhelmingly Christian' population, a 'belief in superstition has survived' and some practices are 'flourishing rather than dwindling away' (2014). The event at the centre of the article relates to the finding of 'coins and a black candle' on a relative's grave, which cemetery workers suggested had 'probably been placed there by someone' for 'superstitious means'. The author of the piece sought the views of a pastor who noted that 'sadly, such things are happening more and more often nowadays in Seychelles.' A 'woman from the Roman Catholic faith' who 'offers a prayer service' was also interviewed for the piece, noting an increase in demand for her services from people asking her to 'pray so their loved one can be freed from some evil spirit' and, in the event those prayers fail, seek out a 'priest for exorcism'. The piece finishes by establishing a link between this event and the increased popularity of 'devil worship' in Seychelles, particularly by 'youths [who] are being drawn in dabbling in black magic' (2014).

TODAY News Thursday 23 October, 2014 p3

Superstition

Black magic on the rise?

Certain seemingly anodyne events can sometimes be a manifestation of something darker.

By JN

Seychelles is a rapidly developing country with a highly literate population and access to fast evolving information technology and communications tools.

As the country develops many of its past traditions and cultures have blended with modern trends and some even abandoned altogether.

However the tendency towards a belief in superstition has survived despite the modernization and notwithstanding the fact that the population is overwhelmingly Christian, some superstitious practices are flourishing rather than dwindling away.

Last week a young woman went to visit her relative's grave and was shocked to see 25-cent coins placed at each corner of the tombstone with one strategically positioned in the middle and to top it all there was also a black candle.

Quite unsure what to do, she asked guidance from the cemetery workers who explained to her that these had probably been placed there by someone who believes he or she can harm others through superstitious means and using the dead person's grave as a medium to call forth certain powers.

This greatly troubled the young woman whose family have absolutely no time at all for superstitions and she was therefore at a loss as to how to deal with the situation. The grave digger explained that she had to remove the objects using an old broom and a black plastic bag into which she must sweep the coins and candles. he added that she should not touch the objects with her bare hands and that after putting them in the bag she must tie it around the broom and dispose of the two things in the deep sea.

The young woman related the event to her family who scoffed at the whole thing, but who were also quite annoyed that someone had defiled their loved one's grave with such things.

A pastor in a born again faith said that, "sadly, such things are happening more and more often nowadays in Seychelles."

This view was also shared by a woman from the Roman Catholic faith who offers a prayer service from her home. While she does not ask for a specific amount most of the people who come to her give her some monetary recompense.

"Nowadays, I am getting more and more people who come to me asking me to pray so their loved one can be freed from some evil spirit or other. Sometime even the prayers don't help and they have to go to a priest for exorcism."

The woman shared the view of the grave digger as to the presence of the coins and candle placed on the grave and clarified that the people who practice these things mistakenly believe that if they offer money to the dead, his spirit will be more willing to assist them in their endeavour.

"Just as we believe in good, others believe they can harness the forces of evil which resides among us alongside the good," she stated.

While generally the world believes in scientific fact and categorises such beliefs as superstitions, even the world of science acknowledges the presence of what has been termed as the paranormal.

Another practice which is said to be gaining popularity in Seychelles is devil worship. Many youths are being drawn in dabbling in black magic and some parents have even reported to the ministry of Education about activities in which their children have become involved in with their groups of school friends.

"Dabbling in black magic also involves carrying out some activities on a grave, so it could also be that as well," a researcher at the ministry of Culture explained.

A young woman recently discovered coins and a black candle placed on a relative's grave.

Figure 4. Black magic on the rise? (JN 2014)

Both the 'Le Seychellois Hebdo' (2014) and 'Today' (2014) exhibit a tendency to use 'black magic' as a reference point against which to render the legitimacy and morality of the modernity of Seychelles and traditional medicine. In both cases the substance of 'black magic' is left to the

imagination of the reader, yet both cases contain signifiers that provide the latticework within which ideas about black magic are shaped. The 'Le Seychellois Hebdo' (2014) interview contains the terms 'witch' and '*dibwa*' to guide the parameters of the discussion, while the 'Today' (2014) piece introduces terms like 'black magic', 'black candle', 'evil', 'superstition, and 'devil' as vectors through which the modernity and Christianity of Seychelles are put at risk, particularly among the youth. The piece characterises development in terms of Seychellois' high levels of literacy and access to advanced technologies, and the abandonment or hybridisation of 'past traditions and cultures for and with 'modern trends' is how modernisation has been achieved. Bringing the elements of both news pieces together, black magic is positioned as a repudiated practice of the past that remains a prevailing threat to the morality and modernity of the Creole nation in the present. As I shall demonstrate in the next section, *grigri* can be seen as a discursively constructed and racialised concept through the use of floating signifiers similar to those discussed in this section. Through this discourse, certain elements of Creoleness are disputed and designated to the 'past', having the complicated and often contradictory effect of indexing blackness *qua* Africanness as an element of the uncanny which, like the semi-living *dandosya*[13], should not exist yet continues to haunt the modern Creole subject.

The above discussion is derived from several views and accounts of *grigri* shared with me by various non-practitioner participants in my research. This is not an exhaustive list of accounts, but the views expressed do constitute what I have come to understand as common popular perceptions. And while I draw out the element of racialisation in these accounts, it is important to note that those who characterised *grigri* in terms of blackness and/as Africanness often identified as African and/or black themselves, highlighting the ways in which double consciousness and anti-blackness operate (Du Bois 1903; Gordon 2014) as well as a view of blackness as a locus of abjection (Wilderson 2020). The ethnographic accounts presented in this section bring stories of *grigri* together in a loose, unbound, and unstructured way to show how *grigri* functions as a floating signifier (Jhally and Hall 1996) that stands in as a proxy for race. These accounts are presented as thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) of *grigri* from the perspectives of participants to highlight the complex, contradictory, and abstract features of the discourse on *grigri*. In this way, a productive contrast is provided against the confident and conclusive sentiments found in the literature discussed in Chapter 2 to show how the discourse on *grigri* is dynamic and abstract while consistently

[13] A *dandosya* is a deceased person who has been brought back to semi-life by a *sorsye* (sorcerer). People who have died and been spotted sometime later, sometimes in another country and often in Madagascar, are claimed to have been turned into *dandosya*. The figure of the *dandosya* is discussed throughout this chapter and is theorised in Chapter 7.

establishing racial links. This situates *grigri* not as a practice but a concept within a broader 'web of meaning' (ibid.), which sets the stage for an analysis of the situation of *grigri* that can be connected to the broader discursive contexts within which I argue *grigri* and Creoleness are situated.

4.3 In Terms of the Uncanny

I start this section with my own, pre-fieldwork experiences of stories and accounts of *grigri*. This is an important first step to, on the one hand, demonstrate the situatedness of my approach to *grigri* while also, on the other, establishing the context for my analysis of *grigri*. Though I have never really attributed any phenomena to *grigri*, I recall a time when I was briefly willing to consider it. I was at a family dinner during a visit to Seychelles in my late teens. After a few helpings of *bourzwa griye* and *karang fri* – grilled snapper and fried trevally, respectively – and a heavy dessert of *ladob* – a sweet cassava and banana stew – I sat and listened to my cousins and aunties telling stories about ghosts and the supernatural. This was not an uncommon post-dinner activity during my visits to Seychelles. I had heard similar stories before, which frequently featured people who had passed away but were spotted sometime after their death, possibly as a *dandosya*; the sound of chains scraping along the ground in the night; mysterious tapping and scraping on windows and doors – also in the night; ghosts sitting on the back seats of cars but only viewable in the storyteller's rear-view mirror; various stories of possession, fortune telling, and people who had been cursed; and many other tales about the uncanny that, when asked for the cause or explanation, the storyteller would often respond with *'grigri'*, trailed by laughter or the shrugging of shoulders. That night, with a stomach that was far too full, I fell to sleep with ease but awoke abruptly a few hours later to what looked like a small, skinny man sitting on an old wooden chair, in the dark, at the end of my bed. He was partially blocked by a wall a few metres away, but I could see that he had his knees tucked to his chest and was rocking back and forth. I forced myself to keep looking, knowing that it would fade away once my eyes began to adjust, but whatever I could see – and I could only just make it out – did not go away. I forced myself to close my eyes and ignore it, and eventually fell back to sleep while wondering if this had something to do with '*grigri'*.

I was seventeen at the time and was no stranger to night-time hallucinations. And while I knew that what I saw that night was not real, I was caught in the moment and willing to consider that this could have been *'grigri'*. The stories I had heard just hours before gave the hallucination a lucid quality and backstory – I was not the first person in my family to witness something that could not possibly be real but was nevertheless undeniably there. Unlike night-time hallucinations in Australia, though, this uncanny event had another context: the broader web of meaning in

Seychelles that put forth explanations that I would not have considered otherwise. What could it be, then, that makes *grigri* seem plausible in Seychelles but not Australia? Levi-Strauss (1963) suggests that magical belief and efficacy hinge upon a reflexive validation loop: sorcerers believe in the efficacy of magical techniques, leading patients and the bewitched to believe in the power of the sorcerer. This establishes a 'gravitational field within which the relationship between sorcerer and bewitched is located and defined' (1963, 167–69). Levi-Strauss' suggestion here is that belief and efficacy are situational and culturally relative. Indeed, I made sense of my experience within a particular locus: the storytellers were convinced of their accounts; the audience to the story – myself included – questioned the accounts but otherwise had faith that the storytellers were not lying; and, in turn, this dynamic was situated in a broader 'gravitational field' within which the *sorsye* in Seychelles is despised and their power – whether perceived to be enacted by magic or deception – is gravely feared. This context of belief influenced me to locate and define my possible occult encounter in terms of *grigri*. Indeed, the next morning I told my cousin about what I had seen, to which he replied with the obligatory *'grigri',* followed by a nervous laugh before he swiftly moved to another topic.

Years later, at a family lunch on a subsequent visit to Seychelles that also preceded my formal fieldwork, another family member called Didi shared an encounter with the uncanny that he had witnessed. Didi received a phone call in the middle of the day from a terrified friend who was working on a building site. While on the call he described to Didi how rocks were being thrown at him, but he could not see anyone casting them. Didi encouraged his friend to investigate, but his friend insisted that no one was there – someone was using *grigri* on him. Didi travelled to the building site with a view to finding the culprit and ending what he thought was a ridiculous matter and claim. When Didi arrived at the building site, he saw rocks flying through the air and confirmed, in disbelief, that his friend's story was true: no one was throwing the rocks. Eyes wide with shock, Didi described what he saw: 'These bloody things, man, I saw them lifting up from the ground and shooting towards this guy! *Grigri sa!*' Didi's profession was, at the time, considered a prestigious occupation in Seychelles, and he travelled widely and was well-connected. He always had exciting stories to tell about his travels throughout Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and these were usually verified by his family, who often travelled with him. These accounts ranged from interesting foods he had consumed to sensitive political events like controversial meetings between high-profile figures or even close encounters while travelling through areas of civil conflict. While always exciting, these accounts never seemed particularly sensationalist and never implicated Didi himself. The account Didi shared of *grigri*, however, was told with apprehension: Didi told the account in disbelief, but he was similarly hesitant to share what might come across as a belief in

grigri. This tension was similar to that of the accounts in the previous discussion, where observations of the uncanny were attributed to *grigri* by those who simultaneously scoffed at the idea that *grigri* was something to be believed in.

This section and the accounts herein demonstrate both my situatedness in relation to *grigri* but also, especially, the ways in which *grigri* and the uncanny are connected in the context of Seychelles. Building on Wolf's (1982a, 1:40) claim at the beginning of this chapter, this section begins to reveal how the term '*grigri*' has been conceived of as a 'thing' – which includes my prior conceptions of *grigri* – where it is better understood as an abstract concept with which various things are articulated and made meaningful in social settings. And only through an examination of the field from which the concept of *grigri* has been abstracted can *grigri* be made sense of as a concept that has been discursively constructed in the context of Seychelles. In the next section I continue with insights from my fieldwork and highlight the ways in which participants in my research linked the uncanny to Africanness through the concept of *grigri*.

4.4 In Terms of Uncanny Africanness

In my first week of fieldwork in Seychelles for my doctoral degree I met a man called Richard. I was introduced to Richard by a family member, at Richard's request, because Richard was interested in my research and wanted to share his views with me. We met at a family member's house, and I suggested we sit together on the porch, in part to be out of the earshot of others but also because I would struggle to hear him over the booming sound of the television. Richard had fair skin and light brown hair; he would be racialised as white inside and outside of Seychelles by most superficial measures, and indeed the family member who referred me to Richard described him as 'a white guy'. I immediately realised that this was not what I expected someone associated with *grigri* to look like. Here was the first participant in my research who had a direct connection to *grigri*, yet they looked nothing like the dark-skinned figure I came to realise I was expecting. In the early stages of my fieldwork, I recognised that this preconception persisted. Whenever I learnt of a practitioner, I conjured up an image of a dark-skinned Seychellois. Whenever I was told about someone who was bewitched, I imagined a dark-skinned Seychellois. I even visualised accounts of *grigri* as if they occurred in the dark of the night. Only after meeting several light-skinned practitioners did I understand this to be part of my own conditioning. This is not due to any specific influence but rather my socialisation in Seychelles, by Seychellois, and even portrayals of witchdoctors and Vodoun practitioners that I directly and indirectly consumed outside of Seychelles – none of which were unique to me, and all of which I came to understand during my fieldwork

were factors in the racialisation of *grigri* within Seychelles. This racial bias existed despite my first-hand knowledge of people associated with *grigri* who were fair-skinned. Meeting Richard for the purposes of researching *grigri* was the first time I became cognizant of my own bias and the possibility of at least some elements of *grigri* being racial fictions.

Richard and I began our conversation with small talk, but without any prompting Richard raised the topic of *grigri*. I asked him what he knew about *grigri* and without hesitation – which also came as a surprise to me – Richard shared that he had consulted practitioners for many years and for various reasons. He often met with a *bonnfanm dibwa* who he believed had practiced for 'twenty to thirty years', who Richard sought for her cartomancy services. He knew her from school and was not sure how she came to acquire her knowledge but assumed she just 'picked it up', given she only started practicing in her twenties. It did not take long to realise that, while Richard was happy to share his involvement with *grigri*, he was not as willing to divulge specifics about his own reasons for seeking out practitioner services. Richard was, though, in disbelief as to why *grigri* would be taboo and especially illegal in Seychelles:

Haiti has Vodoun as an acknowledged part of its culture, it is part of tourism and an attraction. In Seychelles it is all moutya, sega, kanmtole but no grigri. It should all be part of it because it's part of the culture!

I was surprised to hear this sentiment, but over time came to realise that Richard was an outlier in this regard. Many Seychellois endorsed and promoted traditional medicine in a similar way, but I only learnt of Richard and a few *grigri* practitioners endorsing *grigri* at all. Regardless, it was clear to me that at least Richard and a small number of others viewed *grigri* as a part of Seychellois Creole culture.

When I asked Richard how *grigri* came to be in Seychelles, his response echoed popular origin stories that considered *grigri* to be a historic and ongoing mainland African and Madagascan contribution, having first arrived in Seychelles with enslaved Africans. Richard added nuance to this view when he shared his belief that older *grigri* practitioners were the most knowledgeable and effective. Richard's point was not that more experience resulted in greater expertise, but rather that *grigri* had disappeared over time with the passing of older practitioners. In an ontological sense, Richard did not see *grigri* as simply knowledge or skill that could be easily transferred and maintained in the present, but a vestige of the past that older practitioners embodied and that ceased to exist with the passing of time. Other participants in my research articulated this sentiment in a different way, whereby *grigri* practitioners of the past did indeed practise powerful black magic,

whereas *grigri* practitioners of the present were cast as con artists or deluded devil worshippers. Consistent with Richard's assessment of *grigri's* lineage, he also described a woman practitioner who he believed did 'pure *grigri*' and, ostensibly on this basis alone, supposed that she was Malagasy. Richard did not elaborate on what he meant by 'pure' other than to suggest that older and more 'African' contributions resulted in more authentic and powerful magic. Richard and many other participants established similar links between *grigri* and Africanness that conflated both with an imagined pre-modern primordiality.

To aid me in my research, Richard suggested I visit a well-known herbalist named Jean, as many other participants did. While Richard referred to Jean strictly as a 'herbalist', like several other participants did, many people, including Richard, suspected that Jean practiced 'other things', or at least knew a lot about them. Indeed, Jean was more commonly referred to as an authoritative *grigri* practitioner, where herbalism was simply seen as an aspect of his craft. Richard shared a view held by other Seychellois that the difference between herbalism and magic was nuanced, and although they were not exactly the same in theory, they were virtually inseparable in practice. This view was shared by many practitioners themselves who viewed such practices as frequently blended or one and the same. Herbal infusions, for example, often relied on the magical power of plants or the invoking of spirits, and black magic often required the use of potions or *djonk* – a charmed bag or amulet – that may require specific organic matter, including that of plants. Whether informed by these views or not, though, the public discourse on *grigri* has broadly conflated herbalists and black magic practitioners while also establishing a connection between these things, rightly or wrongly, with Africanness.

This connecting of *grigri* to Africanness was made inside and outside of Seychelles. I attended a social event during my fieldwork with a number of Seychellois. Some were first or second generation Australian, South African, or Kenyan, and were either currently living in those respective places or were born and raised there by other Seychellois. I shared with the group that I was conducting research on *grigri* and, as was often the case when I noted this, the group exploded with conversation. One woman, Anne-Marie, shared a story about her childhood in Kenya where she witnessed black magic several times. Anne-Marie was, in superficial terms, a dark-skinned Creole woman. On one occasion, Anne-Marie was staying with relatives who, she said, 'had black African neighbours who practiced black magic. The way she referred to them suggested that she found them suspicious on this basis. During this visit, Anne-Marie continued, she was provided with a bed that had a mosquito net. One night she awoke to footsteps in the house and looked up to see a face pressing against the net, moving slowly towards hers, until it was unbearably close. She

screamed, and in response the face retracted and whatever it was left her room. This event, she asserted, was caused by the black African neighbours trying to possess her using *grigri* – and indeed *grigri* was the term she used for this specific event in the context of Kenya.

On a separate occasion, another participant in my research, Margot, shared a more extensive story about *grigri* that spanned Kenya and Seychelles. Margot was a second-generation Kenyan, born and raised in Kenya and – like her Seychelles-born grandmother – identified as Seychellois. Just before Margot and her family moved from Kenya to Seychelles in 1970, Margot's sister, Therese, was cursed when she stepped over a *grigri* bag placed at her front doorstep. The bag, Margot's family suspected, was intended for Margot and Therese's mother. The theory was that a neighbour believed that her husband was having an affair with Margot and Therese's mother, and placed the bag there intending for their mother to step over it instead of Therese. Immediately after stepping over the *grigri* bag, Therese fainted and continued to faint over the coming months leading up to their departure from Kenya. The condition worsened when they arrived in Seychelles, and Margot recounted how 'she made horrible gargling sounds which sounded more like words' during this time. Margot's family sought a priest to pray for Therese who gave them Lourdes water[14], hoping that it would cure her, but Therese experienced no improvements.

During the period of Therese's illness, Margot described how one night at home she and her family heard a loud 'crack' and 'felt the floor sort of dip'. After checking under the house, they saw that nothing had moved, but they associated this uncanny event with both *grigri* and Therese's possession. In response to these events, Margot's mother was told to go and see a *bonnonm dibwa* named Zialor[15]. Margot's recollection of this time was blurry, and she was not able to accurately differentiate between the work of the priest and the work of Zialor. Indeed, several practitioner and non-practitioner participants in my research noted how priests, doctors, and *bonnonm dibwa* would often work together on health and spiritual matters, where one would refer to the other in the event that their own treatments were unsuccessful. In some cases, individuals would practise across these disciplines with the view that they were interconnected or even that the task at hand could not be adequately tended to with a single discipline. Similarly, some participants described *bonnonm*

[14] Water from the Roman Catholic Church owned and administered Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, which the Catholic Church recognises as healing sick pilgrims through the act of miracles (Spinney 2004)

[15] Zialor is the last name of several notable *bonnonm dibwa*, including some who practiced during the time of my fieldwork, and one particularly famous *sorsye* who passed away several decades ago. Margot was not sure of his specific identity, but it is possible that Margot met with the most notable Zialor given the events surrounding Therese's ailment occurred prior to Zialor's death and before the current-day Zialors were well known practitioners, or even born.

dibwa as performing the role of both priest and doctor, especially historically. Either the priest or Zialor – and Margot could not recall which – made tiny cuts with a razor blade on Margot and Therese's shoulders and chest and rubbed ash in the cuts to create a tattoo that Margot still bears today. The location of these markings symbolised the Christian cross, and Margot recalls that the performer of this ritual insisted that these tattoos would protect them from evil – a ritual called a *garanti* in the context of *grigri*. Therese, however, continued to faint and experience seizures. In the case of the priest, Therese appeared to be getting worse whenever he visited, so he eventually gave up, feeling he could not provide any more assistance.

Some weeks later Therese dreamt of Dada, an elderly paraplegic man that Therese and Margot lived next door to in Kenya. In Therese's dream Dada gave her a series of steps to follow to become cured. Therese followed these instructions, but they failed to work. In subsequent dreams Dada attributed the failures to moral errors, such as where Therese took the ingredients without permission. Finally, Dada gave Therese an image of a beach and instructed her to dip her head in the water seven times. Having only been in Seychelles for a short time, Margot was unfamiliar with the beaches and she and her family could not identify it through description. Persisting, they drove around the main island trying to find the beach that Therese saw in her dream. To Margot's surprise, Therese instructed them to stop the car, having recognised the beach she saw in her dream. Therese went to the ocean and dipped her head in the water seven times, after which she was instantly cured. Margot asserted that everything in the story, from the *grigri* bag in Kenya to Therese's dreams of Dada, was somehow connected to *grigri*.

The accounts of Margot, Anne-Marie, and Richard reveal different but thematically consistent accounts of *grigri*. While the accounts in the previous section attributed the uncanny to *grigri*, the latter accounts in this section attribute *grigri* to Africanness within and outside of Seychelles. Indeed, *grigri* is characterised in terms of nefarious and uncanny events and qualities that are the result of Africanness. The following accounts of Pat, Jeamie, and Ahmed provide similar perspectives that bring the themes of this section together. These interpretations and accounts occur in the context of Seychelles yet highlight attributes of the discourse on *grigri* that are, once again, introduced from outside of Seychelles.

4.5 Extralocal Discourse: *Grigri* and Islam

For the duration of my fieldwork, I stayed in a small one-bedroom chalet in the south of the Mahé. Though the land was small, there were two other premises on the land, and the Seychellois landowner relied on two groundskeepers to keep the vegetation on the property tidy every week or so. The landowner paid them just five dollars for a full day's work, which would involve hard physical labour in hot and humid conditions. They both wore clothes that were often torn and stained with mud and grease; both would work bare foot, and neither was provided with protective clothing other than a visor and gumboots for specific tasks. Both were very dark-skinned Seychellois; one of them spoke a small amount of broken English, while the other – Pat – only spoke Creole. The landowner spoke derisively about Pat to me – sometimes within full earshot of Pat, in both English and Creole – and characterised Pat as 'a dumb drunk who has gone cuckoo'. The landowner knew that I was conducting research on *grigri* and suggested that I discuss the topic with Pat. I was hesitant at first given the imbalance of power between Pat, myself and the landowner. I chose a time when the landowner was not present to make clear that Pat was not required to discuss the topic with me and, hopefully, allow Pat to feel more at ease if he chose to discuss it with me at all. When I asked Pat about *grigri* he laughed nervously – which I was understanding to be a fairly common response to the topic – and, after asking if I was serious, began to discuss it at length in response to my guiding questions.

Bonnonm dibwa and *sorsye*, Pat began, are the same thing. There are good and bad ones of each, but they often work together. The practice of *grigri*, he continued, came from Africa and Madagascar with slaves. Pat asserted that *jinn*, not *nanm*[16], were what possessed people, despite what people commonly thought. *Sorsye* evoke *jinn* to possess you, Pat continued, which was very dangerous and could cause illness and death. The *sorsye* who invoked the *jinn* was best placed to remove it, but in general only *sorsye* could remove *jinn*. Especially bad *jinn*, Pat elaborated, could only be removed by an Imam or similarly powerful Muslim cleric.

Jeamie, a Muslim Seychellois who I Brazilian jiu-jitsu training with, shared a personal encounter with *grigri.* At the end of a class, when everyone else had left, Jeamie approached me asking if I wanted to hear a story about *grigri*. Before beginning, he stated that he did 'not follow *grigri*' but knew about it. As I was increasingly finding to be the case, my guiding questions were not a

[16] In the discouse on *grigri* in Seychelles, a *jinn* was considered a demon or spirit of the supernatural world, but not of a deceased human. *Jinn* were described as distinct to *nanm*, which may be seen as equivalent to the ghosts of deceased humans.

necessary starting point for discussion. In this session, reflecting the points Pat had made months earlier, Jeamie launched into a story about *jinn*:

In Islam there are humans, angels and jinn; jinn have free will like humans, angels do not. Satan is a jinn, not an angel. Jinn are everywhere, not just Seychelles, but are evoked in Seychelles because Seychellois have traditions from Africa, like Vodou, and from Madagascar.

Jinn and other supernatural beings were part of the unseen world, Jeamie affirmed, and 'you should not be able to see *jinn* and similar things. Some people go crazy when they see what should not be seen because their minds cannot comprehend or handle what they saw.' Jeamie went on to share a story of his encounter with a *jinn*:

We stayed at an old colonial house on [one of the islands] off of Praslin and we heard crying. I asked my grandmother if she was crying, and she said she wasn't. We heard it again and thought it might have been the dog but saw it was quiet. Then we heard it again louder and clearer. We went and stood on the veranda and saw a woman floating, not walking, along the ground, and she kept floating and went underneath the house.

Jeamie shared that he strongly believed in the unseen world, spirits and the power of *grigri*, but he did not know or have direct knowledge of any *bonnonm dibwa* or their craft. Supernatural practices, he said, were forbidden in Islam, and it was in other belief systems that 'evil doing' was found. The Victoria Mosque, Jeamie continued, saw many people who went there seeking help after being possessed by *jinn*. Jeamie suggested I meet with his Imam, Ahmed, which he offered to arrange so I could hear his views on *grigri* in Seychelles.

I met with Ahmed at a mosque in Seychelles a few weeks later, after Jeamie had made him aware of the research I was conducting and my interest in speaking with him about *grigri*. We walked to a room separate to the mosque with a few of Ahmed's colleagues and students. Rather than begin with the topic of *grigri*, Ahmed gave me an overview of his beliefs, what he did in Seychelles, which included conducting exorcisms – a service I later learnt he was popularly known for. He deeply opposed western medicine and promoted preventative care over the 'band-aid' western solutions' that he bluntly dismissed as 'poisons'. This was a view shared with many *bonnonm dibwa* that I spoke with, which I also observed to be a popular sentiment in Seychelles in general and, indeed this was a common reason *bonnonm dibwa* gave for Seychellois visiting them in the first place: suspicion of or bad experiences with western medicine.

Ahmed told me that he performed exorcisms several times a week on people who came to him for various reasons: some complained of illnesses that doctors could not cure; others were not willing to see doctors for their illnesses; and some attested that they had been cursed or possessed by *sorsye*. 'One woman came to me coughing…to death, no?' Ahmed looked to his company for agreement, to which they responded by nodding. He continued to describe how he had cured her with the use of exorcism. My conversation with Ahmed went for almost two hours; he kept referring to the evil eye and *shaitan* instead of explicitly referring to *grigri* until, at last, he said that they were all the same. Ahmed went on to tell me about the 'evil eye', which he described as misfortune or harm that can be experienced when you are the subject of another's jealousy and envy. '*Grigri* is all about the evil eye', Ahmed asserted, explaining that what people in Seychelles described as possession was actually what in Islam was explained as the evil eye. This explanation was shared with me on a separate occasion, and in no relation to Ahmed's practice, by a Seychellois Muslim who lived in Australia whose grandmother was a *bonnfanm dibwa*.

In general, I found that those who spoke of *jinn* in their descriptions of *grigri* – including Ahmed, Jeamie, and Pat – did so with direct reference to Imams. Interestingly, I found no other references to *jinn* or Imam during or prior to my fieldwork, nor do *jinn* or Imam feature in the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles surveyed in Chapter 2. *Jinn* were defined in a way that was not dissimilar to the Islamic concept of jinn, anglicised as 'genie', which refers to a supernatural being or creature. Jinn in Islam are associated with witchcraft, sorcery, and the evil eye – which is a belief in the ability for jealousy or envy to cause harm or misfortune (Bell et al. 2012). Based on this analysis, it could be said *jinn* were a recent or distinct discursive contribution to Seychelles discourse on *grigri* that was the result of Islamic thought – but stating this definitively is difficult to do with any contribution to the discourse on *grigri* in Seychelles.

While I found no other references that linked *grigri* and *jinn* in the context of Seychelles, the two concepts are connected elsewhere. Fisiy and Geschiere (1990, 142), for example, refer to the existence of *'djim'* among the Maka people of Cameroon. For the Maka, Fisiy and Geschiere explain, there exists a being called a *djambe*; this being is linked to jealousy and an unsatisfiable quest for consumption that can also give one the power to turn themself into a ghost. Maka refer to this ghost as a *'djim'*, which bears a linguistic and cultural resemblance to the Seychellois *jinn*. Cameroon and Seychelles both share histories of French colonialism, and French terms related to magic, like *sorcellerie*, are used in both places. While it could be argued that the terms *djim* and *jinn* were contributed through this shared French link, to do so would ignore other potential, and indeed more ambiguous and complex pathways like the slave trade, migration, and trade that

occurred centuries prior to even the establishment of Seychelles as a colony. Similarly, belief in witchcraft, jinn, and the evil eye are particularly common in North Africa and Tanzania (Bell et al. 2012, 67–74), the latter of which has long shared ties with Seychelles politically – through the pan-African connections of Seychelles' socialist era – as well as genealogically through Zanzibar, a slave port from where many enslaved Africans throughout the Indian Ocean slave trade were exported.

At the very least, the term *jinn* is not a formally acknowledged Creole word and has no entry in commonly cited Creole dictionaries (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982; Michaelis, Rosalie, and Muhme 2009). Further, 'j' has historically been creolised to 'z' in Seychelles and, as a result, there is no 'j' in the Creole alphabet (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982). Words such as the French *jouer*, for example, are spelt and phonetically pronounced *zwe* in Seychellois Creole. Seychellois who referenced *jinn* in relation to *grigri*, however, pronounced it with a hard 'j', even when speaking in Creole. The lack of verbal and literal creolisation applied to the term *jinn* suggests that it has not experienced a long history in Creole culture but, at the same time, creolisation is not a static, linear, or consistent process that abides by any alleged normative language and cultural standards. What Ahmed, Jeamie, and Pat's references to *jinn* highlighted was that the discourse on *grigri* in Seychelles was anything but singular and unified and, more importantly, has been shaped over time and in different ways by both local and extralocal discourses.

I later learnt that Ahmed had recently arrived in Seychelles from the Maldives and was not Seychellois himself, as I had initially assumed. It seemed odd to me that Jeamie, a Seychellois, would see a recently arrived non-Seychellois as an authority on a Seychellois phenomenon. This became less odd as I collected more views on *grigri* and began to see how the discourse on *grigri* contained assemblages of wide-ranging references that were shared with Vodoun in the Caribbean, occultism in France, and zombie beliefs in East Africa.

4.6 Conclusion

As this section has demonstrated, an examination of the popular discourse on *grigri* reveals a persistent linking of *grigri* to blackness, Africanness, and qualities deemed to be pre-modern. The non-practitioner accounts in this section hinged upon claims about *grigri* that were based in the uncanny and the immoral and exhibited implicit and contradictory attempts for modern Creoleness to be distanced from Africanness and the African diaspora. The accounts shared with me by non-practitioners commonly featured threatening spectres made tangible through the acts of individuals

who were only sometimes locatable, but who were linked to Africa with confidence, albeit in ambiguous ways. As such, these accounts demonstrate how the discourse on *grigri* constitutes *grigri* itself in the popular imaginary, rather than popular ideas about *grigri* being based in materiality. Interestingly, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, the accounts of practitioners were as wide ranging as the accounts of non-practitioners. While only a few popular references reflected what the *bonnonm dibwa* I spoke with actually did or described, there remained commonalities and overlaps regarding the centrality of race, space, and time. However, the sentiments and specifics shared by practitioners were not always aligned with the accounts that I have covered in this section, highlighting the ways in which *grigri* ought to be understood as the product of both discursive construction and indeed creolisation itself.

Chapter 5. *Grigri* and the 'Caught'

5.1 Introduction

The accounts discussed in Chapter 4 covered those who were 'not caught', while this chapter focuses on the 'caught'. This chapter is predominantly concerned with the domain of *grigri,* which I characterise as orbiting practitioners themselves, their family members, and their peers. As the previous chapter illustrated, the popular discourse on *grigri* contends that a causal link exists between *grigri* and blackness *qua* Africanness, reflecting what the literature discussed in Chapter 2 had suggested almost a century earlier. The accounts in the ensuing chapter focus on people viewed, by the wider public, to be *grigri* practitioners, and as such represent those who have been most directly impacted by the discourse on *grigri*. While practitioner accounts of *grigri* orbited race, space, and time – similar to both popular discourse and the popular literature produced by non-Creoles – their perspectives varied significantly to those of non-practitioners.

Key differences concerned what constituted *grigri*, who the beneficiaries and practitioners of *grigri* have been, and how the blackness attributed to *grigri* was perceived. For example, where some practitioners characterised *grigri* as African, it was done so with less repudiation and even characterised as the loss of an indigenous heritage, wisdom, and power. This contrasts with the common view discussed in Chapter 4 that positioned *grigri's* association with Africanness as antagonistic. These tensions map to the anxieties between Creoleness and Africanness discussed in Chapter 2**,** where popular discourse on Creoleness exhibited a desire to create distance from a discursively constructed pre-modern Africanness.

In contrast, this chapter surveys how some practitioners characterised *grigri* in racialised terms that were quite different to the prevailing discourse. Instead of derogatorily reducing *grigri* to a racialised relic of a pre-modern Africanness, participants in this chapter problematised and positioned occult power in relation to whiteness and the modern nation state. This included, among other things: that *grigri* was brought to Seychelles by white plantation owners, rather than first and foremost by enslaved Africans; that the most powerful *grigri* masters or beneficiaries were prominent figures, such as the former socialist President, France-Albert René; and that *grigri* was a specific genus of nefarious and harmful magic, which was not to be conflated with magic in general, especially magic used for good, though what constituted 'bad' versus 'good' magic was often contextual. While participants in this section held different reasons and motivations for doing so, they also commonly viewed *grigri* as a creolised African heritage and indigenous knowledge that had been compromised or subject to attack by white people through the process of colonialism.

It is worth noting that practitioner views on *grigri* were often as diverse and ambiguous as the non-practitioner views discussed in the previous section. Rather than questioning the reliability of the widely varying accounts on *grigri*, these variations highlight the dynamic, abstract, and unbounded category of *grigri*. Indeed, that the dialogue on *grigri* can be so diverse and inconsistent while persistently linking *grigri* to a pre-modern Africanness demonstrates the ways in which *grigri* is less an actually existing practice and more a discursively constructed category of non-Europeanness. Put another way, *'grigri'* as a concept is held together by discourse more than by any standardised community of practice.

Unsurprisingly, the contrasting views on *grigri* shared with me by practitioners also reflected the positionality of practitioners as marginalised and decolonial actors. This provides another productive contrast to usefully analyse the situation of *grigri*. On the one hand, the popular discourse articulates *grigri* as an uncanny signifier of pre-modern Africanness in modern Creoledom enacted by repudiated practitioners who increased Seychelles' proximity to Africa. On the other hand, practitioners creolised *grigri* by incorporating markers of non-Europeanness into their own practices and beliefs and used *grigri* as a way to refuse and undermine the sovereign power of the modern nation state as a product of white ontology. Indeed, almost every practitioner I met shared experiences of police harassment and held critical views of the state and key institutional dimensions of modernity[17]. Chapter 7 discusses *grigri* and decoloniality in more depth to elucidate this point.

The following sections in this chapter provide an overview of key accounts shared with me from participants who had first-hand insight into the domains of practitioners. I present these accounts in two sections: the first outlines views on *grigri* in relation to its Creoleness and Africanness; the second focuses on accounts that link *grigri* to whiteness and the Creole nation state in ways that run counter to popular narratives but also demonstrate conflicts between the domains of *grigri* practitioners and the state itself. I extend from Seychelles to other sites of discourse, space, and time to situate Seychelles and *grigri* in its global and colonial settings. As this chapter shows, participants situated themselves and *grigri* in similar ways. I attempt to bring other elements into focus to add to this discussion but also to understand how theories of modernity and race can

[17] As discussed in Chapter 2, key institutional dimensions of modernity include capitalism, surveillance, the military, and industrialism. Theorists of race contest this neutralised analysis and posit that these dimensions are inextricably racial formations that came into being through the establishment of modernity as a capitalist world-system principally organised through race and racism.

extend, and be extended by, this kind of framing, and what these elements might reveal about Creoleness and modernity/coloniality. Importantly, the pluralistic experiences of the participants in this chapter should not be overlooked, and are certainly not overruled, by an analysis that extends from the local to the extralocal in this way.

5.2 *Grigri* as Creolised African Heritage

In contrast with popular discourse, participant accounts in this section positively highlighted and embraced Seychelles' African heritage. For these participants, an interest in Afro-Creole heritage is often experienced and expressed in tandem with an association with *grigri* as inseparable aspects of Creole culture. Furthermore, *grigri* and Creoleness are discussed as similarly abstract formations that emerged from the margins and are the result of racial marginalisation.

Albert

I met a man called Albert through a mutual connection. I went to visit Albert on a hot, dry day in March, and we sat in his lounge room in front of a fan on its highest setting. The lounge room was not particularly small, but Albert's artefact collection, which covered every surface and wall, made it feel quite cramped. My conversation with Albert started generally, and like many other fieldwork conversations segued smoothly to a discussion about Creoleness and Seychellois heritage. We discussed our family names, slave ancestry and origins, and engaged in the obligatory exchange about how we were probably related through so and so's second cousin – a conversation which always reminds me how tightly and inextricably connected everything and everyone is in Seychelles. Albert was incredibly proud of his Seychellois African heritage, and his artefacts were representative of decades of research into what Seychelles shared with other cultures of the African diaspora. Those artefacts included an array of statues, instruments, albums, and other items that spanned the world from Madagascar and Reunion to Louisiana and Haiti. *Grigri,* in Albert's view, was another aspect of Creole heritage that shared similarities with other sites of the African diaspora, particularly Haitian Vodoun. Albert saw *grigri* as a heritage at risk of being lost like other Creole practices, such as *tinge* and *sokwe*[18].

[18] *Tinge* is discussed briefly in Chapter 1. *Sokwe* is commonly described as a hunting performance of African heritage where participants would wear masks and costumes made of leaves and vines. See Mahoune's (2015) article on traditional dances and games for a useful overview of both practices.

Albert was not a practitioner, but his grandmother, who he was very close to, was a *bonnfanm dibwa* and this provided Albert with exclusive first-hand knowledge of *grigri*. Albert's not being a practitioner was not an explicit choice that he had made; when his grandmother was on her deathbed, Albert explained, he was due to visit her so her powers could be passed on to him – but he failed to reach her in time. The acquisition of practitionership through a hereditary rite of passage was not a method I heard of from other practitioners, who generally suggested that *grigri* and witchcraft in general could be learnt, even though some people were more naturally disposed to it than others.

'She can do bad thing and good thing as well', Albert said, describing his grandmother's ability to perform poisoning and spells, and her ability to make and keep *dandosya*. Her primary craft was herbal medicine, which Albert believed she learnt from her African ancestors, some of whom Albert described as being from the 'deep south' of Madagascar – a term worth briefly focusing on. While the use of the term 'deep south' for Southern Madagascar makes sense from a geographical perspective, the term 'deep south' is commonly used as a racialised designation and in this sense represents a discursive link. The 'deep South' most commonly describes the area from Southern Carolina to Louisiana in which racial tensions – including those surrounding Creoleness – and slave plantations have been particularly concentrated and visible (Allison Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 2009, 3). In the context of Thailand, the term 'deep south' has been used to describe the 'Muslim-dominated Deep South' (International Crisis Group 2008) in which Malay Muslims have made up 85% of the population and where racialised conflicts have occurred between Malay Muslim separatists and the Thai military (Seiff 2016). In the case of Madagascar, the term 'deep south' refers to the southernmost area of Madagascar, an arid region in which the Karembola people live. The Karembola have been characterised by their peripherality, where they have not only occupied the margins physically but also politically as a people who, Middleton (2001) describes, contradictorily subvert and uphold royal power. Indeed, Karembola is invariably described as meaning 'inbetween people' or 'people of an inbetween land' (2001, 172). Albert's use of the term 'deep south' to refer to where his ancestors originated emerges from Albert's familiarity with Madagascar and Louisiana, but it also reflects the discursively constructed idea of the 'deep south' as a site of racial conflict and liminality, which I suggest are similar to the spaces from which Creoleness and *grigri* have emerged, and in which the participants in this chapter reside.

Albert's grandmother, like all magical practitioners, occupied a space in the margins as a *bonn fanm dibwa*. Albert shared memories of his grandmother warmly: 'She was so nice to all the neighbours in the neighbourhood; when they are sick, they come to her for traditional medicine', and the people

in her village valued and appreciated her for this reason, along with what Albert asserted was her incredible effectiveness. That appreciation, however, was not unconditional, and Albert recalled some instances where she was the target of witch accusations, including murder. In one account, 'a little boy passed away in the village', Albert described, and the boy's family argued with Albert's grandmother for hours, saying '"you are the one who kill that little boy"'. Albert was teased at school based on gossip that circulated in his village, which suggested 'many bad things' including that his grandmother would 'fly at night, above their house'.

Such stories, Albert asserted, were made up for no reason other than to make fun of him and his grandmother. Other practitioners shared similar stories with me about them flying at night on banana leaves, which they similarly dismissed as jokes and gossip. Unsurprisingly, jokes and accusations were often entangled with other anxieties about practitioners, including the knowledge that *bonnonm dibwa* could use magic to harm and control people. While Albert dismissed the jokes about his grandmother flying, he knew that she could and had used her knowledge to kill people and turn them into *dandosya* – though Albert was aware that she hid this 'bad side' from others. He listed the many poison crafts that he knew she could perform, which Albert described could be hidden in the food of husbands and enemies to cause a slow and painful death. *Tangen* was one such substance, infamously used in the *tangena* ordeals in Madagascar, where individuals – particularly enslaved people – who were accused of witchcraft and promoting European interests were required to ingest the poisonous substance and deemed innocent based on the outcome of the process, where a guilty verdict would mean death (Graeber 2007a, 67–71; Campbell 1991). The *tangena* ordeals were estimated to have killed over 250,000 people from 1790 to 1863, when the practice was banned, peaking in 1838 with the killing of roughly 20 percent of the population of Imerina, or around 100,000 people (Campbell 1991, 436–38). Albert's reference to this specific substance, the Madagascan lineage of his family and his *bonn fanm dibwa* grandmother – whose Malagasy ancestors would have arrived in Seychelles during the peak of the *tangena* ordeals – highlights a shared context in which a Creole cultural memory was constituted that had witchcraft and *tangen* as its available reference points.

Albert also shared his knowledge of his grandmother keeping *dandosya*, a figure that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7. Albert linked *dandosya* to the Haitian figure of the zombie, citing various similarities such as the act of giving salt to a *dandosya* or zombie returning them to life from their semi-life status. The many acts and practices of Albert's grandmother, he emphasised, could be carried out without leaving a trace, without any doctor being able to uncover the cause of death, and Albert proudly noted that people around the Indian Ocean often say Seychellois are the best

witchdoctors. While Albert's grandmother could wield magical power, this ability was additional to her practical skills. Her effectiveness and influence were also the result of the stealth with which her conduct could be carried out; the stigma and fear long associated with her power and tools of choice; and, ironically, the community gossip that ostensibly sought to diminish the significance of her profession, while simultaneously inflating her magical abilities in the minds of the community.

Traditional Seychellois music, Albert shared, was used in relation to the occult. *Sega* and *moutya*, for example, were associated with rituals, sacrifice, and possession. Playing traditional Creole music, Albert explained, helped the soul travel after death. In contrast, Albert acknowledged the role that European magical arts played in *grigri.* French Roman Catholic grimoires in particular were heavily relied upon by Seychellois practitioners and had come to be known as a form of magic called '*Ptit Albert'*, after a French document of a similar name. Despite this European connection, Albert focused on the Creoleness of *grigri* and its African heritage, ultimately characterising *grigri* as 'something from Malagasy and Mozambican [culture], a combination of both.'

Albert's references to *tangen* and the 'deep south' highlight the broader contexts within which the discourse on *grigri* must be understood, but also how ideas about *grigri* are discursively connected to references that emerged in disparate contexts linked through colonial power. Albert's tendency to frame *grigri* as a Creole artefact with a positive emphasis on its African heritage demonstrates a marked difference to the prevailing sentiment of popular discourse. Albert was not alone in in this sentiment, as the following accounts suggest.

Dominique

Several people referred me to a man named Dominique, who they regarded as an authority on *grigri* in Seychelles. Given his incredible enthusiasm, Dominique was eager to share his knowledge with me, which spanned an array of magical practices. Dominique, however, did not consider himself to be a practitioner at all, let alone of *grigri*, despite having discretely practised *grigri* and noting, with pride, that some people viewed him as 'the greatest *sorsye* of them all' given his vast knowledge of the occult. It was an interest in Creole heritage, Dominique asserted, that led him to acquire his knowledge of *grigri*. Two of Dominique's peers separately shared a contrasting insight with me: Dominique had provided magical assistance to them in the past. These interventions, however, were ad-hoc and not at all a regular part of Dominique's activities. These two peers separately noted that Dominique only provided magical assistance to them after they had requested it from him for some time, persisting to the point that Dominique succumbed to their demands.

Analysing the assessment of Dominique as a *sorsye* despite his claims to the contrary might help explain why other practitioners – whose crafts were ostensibly limited to herbalism – were similarly viewed as *grigri* masters. Favret-Saada (1980) offers a useful explanation for this conflation in the context of the Bocage, where she observed an equation of magical knowledge with magical power because 'witchcraft is spoken words' and 'these spoken words are power' (1980, 9). The simple fact of '[k]nowing about spells brings money, brings more power and triggers terror'. Any person who knows what words ought to be uttered becomes inherently formidable as the deployment of those words 'can tie or untie a fate' (1980, 9–10). Indeed, several practitioners shared with me that spells were cast not with the uttering of commonly known words, but with specifically sequenced Latin words – from grimoires and books on papal magic – spoken in relation to specific objects or times. This level of specificity and skill did not seem to be appreciated by those who were not well-versed in the occult. Favret-Saada was herself mistaken by those in the Bocage for an unwitcher due to her interest and involvement in the domain of magic (1980, 18), similar to how a few people during my fieldwork suspected that I was involved in *grigri* and practitioners through my research. One man, who had acquired debt through gambling, asked me to help him win money and, when I made clear that I could not provide what he was seeking, he asked me to put him in touch with a *sorsye* who could – which I similarly explained was something I could not do. Others suspected me of seeking to secretly acquire occult knowledge under the guise of academic research, which included a belief that learning about *grigri* inevitably meant learning how to practise *grigri*. As Favret-Saada put it: 'in witchcraft, words wage war'; where to even discuss witchcraft is an act of aggression, even when the ethnographer engages with the topic, because there are no 'uninvolved observers' (1980, 9–10). Favret-Saada's analysis provides a useful explanation for how Dominique's immense knowledge of the occult was equated with immense power.

I found that Dominique was as well-versed as any other practitioner when it came to incantations, and examples he provided to me would often be independently repeated when I asked other practitioners for examples, but also as examples in common folklore. Whether or not Dominique chose to utter those words did not matter to those who described him as 'the greatest *sorsye* of them all' – the point was that he had the ability to and his capacity was significant. Dominique's knowledge spanned herbal medicine and the occult, and he had a particular interest in the arcane. While giving me a tour of local cemeteries – which Dominique said were often sites of intense *grigri* activity – he frequently pointed out signs of magical activity that, had he not pointed them out to me, I would not have noticed as they seemed entirely banal.

Figure 5. Signs of grigri in the Mont Fleuri and Bel Air cemeteries

***Left**: 'Grigri sa', gasped Dominique as he pointed out a cross from twigs and string, worried that he had been standing so close to it without realising;*
***Centre**: Cards left on a tombstone at the base of a cross, which Dominique noted were a common instrument used as objects in which to store illness or spirits;*
***Right**: A ten-cent coin dated nineteen thirty-nine, which was embedded in thick moss growth on top of a tombstone. Dominique was visibly horrified and would not touch it but said that it was fine for me to touch the coin because I was from Australia and could not be harmed by its magic.*

Dominique's interest in the arcane extended beyond the occult. As a topic shrouded in mystery due to the slave trade, Seychelles' heritage is an arcane topic in its own right and was an area of intense interest for Dominique, particularly concerning connections to mainland African cultures and the African diaspora. When discussing *grigri*, Dominique segued to conspiracies regarding the Illuminati, Freemasons, and other secret societies that he saw as working in secret to control world affairs. Though conceptually separate, Dominique's reference to popular conspiracy theories while discussing *grigri* established a connection between magical conduct and capitalist, colonial, religious, and political power, in which he implied that each involved people who worked in secretive, unseen ways to control the conduct of others and accumulate power. For Dominique, *grigri* was a form of magic that was particular to Seychelles and the Indian Ocean but shared similarities with other occult forms of the African diaspora, particularly those in Haiti. Similar to the logic of a conspiracy theory, *grigri* was one of many unseen forces that could be used to shape local affairs. However, Dominique racially distinguished those who harnessed *grigri*-esque forces from the whites who featured in New World Order conspiracy theories that shaped extralocal affairs concerning politics and finance. According to West and Sanders, (2003), while a quasi-equivalence exists regarding the shared concern with 'the operation of secret, mysterious, and/or unseen powers', both of which 'express profound suspicions of power', occult cosmologies differ in that they are concerned with how the world works. Conspiracy theories, on the other hand, are more

concerned with an element of the world's workings and do not necessarily constitute a comprehensively developed cosmology (2003, 6–7). Sanders (2001, 168–70) describes similar links and distinctions between the logic of conspiracy theories and the occult cosmologies of the Ihanzu of Tanzania that explain how unseen forces shape everyday life.

In considering the Africanness and Creoleness of *grigri*, Dominique acknowledged the prevalence of *grigri's* European traits, a link that Benedict (1982, 144) established in his brief discussion of *grigri* from his sociological work in the mid twentieth century. However, like Albert, Dominique emphasised the connections between *grigri* and Africanness, and did this in relation to an assertion that there was 'a lot of indigenous knowledge in witchcraft here [in Seychelles] that we've just thrown away'. Dominique was enthusiastic to meet with me to share knowledge about *grigri* that he believed needed to be preserved and was at risk of being lost, which I found to be a common fear of most practitioners I spoke with. *Grigri* was both magic and medicine to Dominique: there were spells and curses that could do good and harm, but there were also spiritual and health benefits associated with the practices of *grigri,* which were dismissed by mainstream Seychellois for little more than being associated with magic. While Dominique was very familiar with occultism, he felt it particularly important that the knowledge base concerning traditional and herbal medicine in Seychelles be preserved. Dominique held that traditional medicine was just as good as, if not better than, scientific medicine; it was just that science had not recognised the benefits of the herbal medicine Seychellois practised yet. This juxtaposition was shared by others, where knowledge associated with *grigri* was dismissed or seen as subordinate by the wider public simply for no reason other than it had not been accepted by Western institutions.

While Dominique exhibited a keen interest in *grigri*, it was not the only way in which he sought to engage with and rediscover Seychelles' Afro-Creole heritage. Dominique was just as eager to share with me his knowledge about the African links to Creole food, music, and artforms, and he took keen interest in the Black Power Movement and other expressive forms of colonial resistance throughout the African diaspora. For Dominique, the loss of *grigri* was an example of 'how the white destroyed all of our culture', and it was far from the only example. His keen interest in *grigri* and Afro-Creole heritage could be positioned as a broader act of decoloniality in which Dominique refused European hegemony, and his extensive *grigri* network as a means through which he stimulated this activity among others. Although Dominique acknowledged the potential for *grigri* to cause harm, he was in no way a pacifist. The way that Dominique displayed a keen interest in black resistance and the African diaspora while expressing frustration at what I would characterise as the

racial violence of Europe, suggested to me that *grigri* was one of the many necessary ways in which Seychellois had been able to navigate and resist such experiences.

Selwyn

Dominique suggested I meet with Selwyn, who was a practitioner on Praslin. Selwyn's particular interest was herbal medicine, but like every other practitioner I met he saw little distinction between herbal medicine and what I initially classed separately as 'magic'. 'Plants', Selwyn explained, 'have power. They have feelings, like humans, but they just can't talk to us.' In fact, Selwyn saw it as important not to separate herbalism from *grigri*. This was because, in his view, plants had supernatural power, making all herbalism a magical act. As such, for Selwyn, it was impossible to suggest that herbalism and *grigri* were different things. Selwyn was passionate about sharing this knowledge with others and discussed how different parts of plants in differing dosages could be used for different purposes; leaves consumed in an infusion might heal an ailment, while the roots of the same plant ground into powder might cause death. He felt that plants were not appreciated enough, and even spoke about *tangen* as a powerful and beneficial plant that had been reduced to its harmful elements. Selwyn shared extensive examples of how plants could change the course of events: placing a *bwa malgas* in certain areas outside the house could, for example, protect the home from evil, and brooms made from *bwa sagay* could be used to sweep yards in a particular way that prevented undesirable people from entering the property.

Like other practitioners, Selwyn appreciated that magic – like plants – could be used to harm and to heal. When asked what a 'typical' example of harmful magic was, Selwyn recounted a spell that involved 'boiling water in a *marmite* (pot) while a fisherman is at sea' to cause his death, where the bubbling of the water matched the roughness of the sea. Similar to other stories that persisted in popular discourse, this spell strongly reflected one published almost half a century earlier by Thomas (1968). In this ritual, water was also boiled until when 'the sea becomes rougher and rougher' the pot is turned upside down, symbolising a capsized boat, and '[t]he man promptly drowns' (Thomas 1968, 40).

Several of Selwyn's examples held a causal relation between analogy-based rituals and an intended outcome. A person or spirit who had entered one's yard intending to do wrong could have their footprints 'scooped up' and placed into a termite mound, which would cause a wound on the person that would correspond in size to the matter consumed by the termites. The importance of symbolism in Selwyn's description of *grigri* was salient. To cause loneliness, for example, photos of the desired victim could be placed in an abandoned tomb, which reflected the condition the perpetrator

wanted their target to experience. Placing a photo of a lover in between branches or wedging the photo under a rock would make them stay loyal.

Other participants shared similar analogy-based rituals with me: the consumption of a rotten egg, when boiled, could prevent one becoming possessed as ingesting something so rotten would prevent other rotten entities from entering the body; boiled lentils, placed on a tombstone, provide protection because, as one practitioner put it, 'nobody will be able to hurt me until these lentils germinate', comforted by the knowledge that boiled lentils could not germinate and thus harm would never come to the person who uttered the incantation. Rituals such as these were characterised by analogical action, where, to borrow from Tambiah, the forms and meanings of magical acts could be seen as based in 'the recognition of similarities between the instances compared', functioning as a 'prototype of reasoning from experience' (1985, 60–66). That is, certain *grigri* protections seemed to rely upon symbolic deductions in which what was true of one thing was likely also true of a thing it was similar to and, on that basis, could be used to substantiate a generalisable truth (Tambiah 1985, 60–66). The theme of analogical action featured frequently in *grigri* rituals, but it was not a defining nor ubiquitous feature of the rituals that practitioners described. Indeed, some practitioners engaged in activities that were much more direct, such as Albert's grandmother's use of substances to cause direct effects on a person, or the use of music to facilitate supernatural activity.

Yard sweeping featured often in the discourse on *grigri*; Selwyn's reference to the use of a broom made of *bwa sagay* is one example, along with the scooping up of a footprint embedded in the disturbed soil of a well swept yard. Other popular examples included suspicions about people who always had well-swept yards but were never seen sweeping. In such examples, it may be suspected that the landowner of a well swept yard keeps *dandosya*. As semi-living beings who only work during the night without tiring, *dandosya* are able to provide the invisible labour required to maintain the excessive standard of an impossibly and eternally clean yard.

While these stories were told and believed by many Creole people, such stories could be seen to have shared traits with occult beliefs outside of Seychelles. For example, Ihanzu witches in Tanzania allegedly use medicines – which they also use to destroy the wealthy and politically powerful – to kill people and transform them into 'a nocturnal zombie labour force' who 'toil at night on the witch's plot' for their own illicit ends (Moore and Sanders 2001, 169). The contemporary and slave-era links between Tanzania and Seychelles make the similarities between *grigri* and the occult cosmologies of the Ihanzu worth noting. This is especially true given the other

potential links between Madagascan and Tanzanian occult practices discussed in this chapter, which bring questions about *grigri's* Creoleness into focus. When asked whether *grigri* was Creole or not, Selwyn scoffed and immediately dismissed any suggestion that *grigri* was not a Seychellois Creole phenomenon, as if he had engaged in such arguments many times before. This was consistent with the views of Dominique and Albert, but not with the prevailing discourse on *grigri's* situation in Creole culture. Selwyn named a herbalist organisation in Seychelles that he claimed were actually occult practitioners who hid under the guise of herbalist licences so that authorities would not bother them. In reality, Selwyn claimed, they offered all kinds of services that included witchcraft – a claim that other practitioners I met would firmly contest. Unlike non-practitioners who shared this suspicion, however, Selwyn appeared to despise the fact that *grigri* practitioners were hiding behind legal facades. Similar to other practitioners and their associates, Selwyn's passion for heritage appeared to be in no way limited to *grigri*, and indeed Selwyn frequently segued between accounts of *grigri* and discussions about other forms of Creole culture that included music, cuisine, and popular folk tales about hidden treasure. It was not that all of these topics involved magic, but rather that all of these topics were relevant if the subject was Creole culture and history.

5.3 *Grigri*, Whiteness, and the State

If a wasp is following you, it means the police are after you. (Creole proverb)

The following discussion progresses my analysis from how the 'caught' in my research have discussed and situated *grigri* to the intersections of *grigri*, whiteness, and the state. The accounts of the previous section laid out the ways in which Africanness, Creoleness, and *grigri* can be understood as aspects of Creole heritage and as ways of expressing refusals of whiteness. The accounts in this section suggest a further accentuation of this racial antagonism between whiteness, the state, and those associated with *grigri*. These can be seen as complimentary rather than opposing angles, and in many ways contain similarly entangled themes. As outlined in Chapter 2, *grigri* has been the subject of scrutiny and persecution by influential figures and institutions for the majority of Seychelles' history, which came to be enshrined in the penal code and enforced by police and courts in the decades surrounding the *coup d'état*. Unsurprisingly, many practitioners have come to view the state, the police, and whiteness with great suspicion. Experiences of persecution and strategies of resistance to these forces presented themselves to me as notable features of the domain of *grigri*, and this section discusses how those strategies and experiences might be articulated in the broader racially antagonistic setting of Creole personhood.

Guy

Late in my fieldwork, a local guide and I were invited into a man name Guy's home while we were searching for a practitioner in Guy's area. Guy identified as Rastafari and incorporated an array of beliefs and knowledges into his healing practice, which included Arabic medicine and rituals that strongly resembled the use of analogical power in *grigri* – and indeed Guy was referred to as a *bonnonm dibwa* by his neighbours. Similar to other practitioners, Guy was heavily critical of western medicine and, in my analysis, capitalist rationalisations of the world. Guy proclaimed that 'the white man tried to make you a slave, forced you to consume things that prevent the spirits from being in you.' And as I suggest of other practitioners discussed later in this section, Guy's magical practice and services could be understood as providing ways to resist subordination by the state. In Guy's case this did not appear to be just for his benefit and interests. Guy shared that many of his clients sought his help to avoid police attention. One way that Guy helped people do this was by providing a concoction of molasses and honey that he said helped people 'sweet talk' their way out of police arrests and legal prosecutions.

As a young Rastafari, Guy shared that he was targeted by police for various reasons, including because he chose to wear dreadlocks, a hairstyle commonly worn by Seychellois, as I did myself in my twenties. Guy explained how he escaped police harassment by living in the hills, where many *bonnonm dibwa* have established themselves, allegedly to maintain isolation and evade police attention, but also to more easily grow and access plants upon which their craft depends. After many years of police harassment, Guy eventually left Seychelles for Madagascar and then spent his time developing and practising his healing profession in Thailand, while also regularly visiting Ethiopia to connect with the Rastafari movement and Ethiopian culture.

Guy's explanation of his association with Ethiopia extended beyond the concept of Ethiopia as a modern nation state. This did not came as a surprise to me given Ethiopia has been reinforced as a significant symbol of power and liberation for black peoples across the world based, among other things, in its successful resistance to European colonial power and popularisation through Pan-Africanism, Rastafari, and reggae music (Bonacci 2015). The Rastafari movement is considered an example of creolisation that demonstrates how 'Africanness and blackness have been claimed and created in the Americas in the aftermath of slavery' (Soumahoro 2007, 45). This explanation, coupled with Guy's Rastafari identity and Rastafari's broader popularity in Seychelles, suggests this historical context may be a central theme with important links to Creoleness, *grigri*, and an experience of race by members of the African diaspora. Importantly, Guy experienced the violence of racialised difference at the hands of the Creole state, confusing popular understandings of racism

functioning as interpersonal discrimination between, and on the basis of, 'races'. That Guy was racially marginalised by Creole state actors provides a potential way in which to see racial modernity/coloniality as a thing made durable even in the form of so-called 'post'-colonial nation states. Discussing this possibility with reference to the post-apartheid Marikana massacre in 2012, in which miners were killed by the South African Police Service during a wildcat strike, Davis (2016) notes that:

The miners were Black, the police force was Black, the provincial head of the police force was a Black woman. The national head of the police force is a Black woman. (Davis 2016, 17)

Such continuations are possible because, as Davis continues, racism is structurally and institutionally embedded, rather than being dependent on individuals and interpersonal dynamics, meaning the regimes, technologies, and targets remain the same. Guy's expressions of a globally situated Afro-Creole blackness forming the basis of his experiences of persecution by an Afro-Creole state can be seen as a demonstration of what Davis posits. It could also be argued that Guy's experience of racialised persecution and association with *grigri* reveals a conflict between his modes of expression and a modern Creole state that has maintained the terms of racialised modernity/coloniality. Simultaneously, through Guy's intersections, *grigri* might also be seen as a site of epistemic conflict in which Creole people have creatively refused the terms of racialised modernity/coloniality. The next participant, Payet, further demonstrates the racialised entanglements of *grigri* and the state, while also expanding on the complex ways in which *grigri* can be understood as a Creole artefact.

Payet

I engaged with Payet, another practitioner several times during my fieldwork. He was perhaps the most public about his practising of 'black magic' of anyone who participated in my research. Payet shared that he was able to practise publicly without fear of reprisal, to the point that he 'marketed' his services on a wall on his property, which featured occult symbols but was otherwise painted entirely black. He was best known for practising Vodou, but he practised many other crafts including *Satanik* (Satanism), *Ptit Albert, and raspay*, all of which he said crossed over. Payet first learnt how to practise witchcraft in Southeast Asia, and he developed his craft further from practitioners in Seychelles. He discovered that there were a range of magical practices and, like other practitioners, saw how these practices were all inherently connected. Magic, Payet explained, was a power that could be accessed by many different people. Some were better than others, and Payet gave Mayans, Ethiopians, and Jesus Christ as examples of masters of magical crafts. Some

magic required special artefacts, like a mirror he used that was given to him by a prominent *bonnonm dibwa* before they passed away (see Figure 6.), while others needed to be facilitated with various taboo rituals.

Figure 6. An inherited magical instrument. A photo of Payet's primary magical instrument, a broken mirror held together by sticky tape that was handed down to him decades prior by a famous bonnonm dibwa

Satanik, he said, was the most popular service he provided because 'people want what is bad'. Instead of contesting the repudiation of *grigri*, Payet embraced *grigri's* abjection as a means to empower marginalised people who have been defined by their 'propensity to bring about disorder to the status quo' and 'threaten social conventions and norms' (Arya 2014, 407). In this way, Payet could be seen as similar to other practitioners who embraced *grigri* as Creole heritage due to its racially and politically antagonistic qualities, and despite these same qualities being key reasons for *grigri's* abjection from mainstream Creoleness. For Payet, like other practitioners and enthusiasts, being associated with *grigri* was met with resistance by the state. Payet had also been subject to police harassment on the basis of his profession but, according to Payet, the state was unable to successfully prosecute him for various reasons. This included the difficulty of establishing evidence to substantiate *grigri* accusations, but also the successful magical protections that Payet had applied to protect himself. Later in his career, Payet was endorsed to be able to continue his practice of *grigri* and avoid subsequent persecution due to a peculiar government arrangement – which he

claimed to have organised with René himself. I asked Payet why René upheld *grigri's* illegality and even attempted to eradicate *grigri*. In response, Payet highlighted, once again, the entanglement of political power and *grigri* when he casually explained that René simply 'didn't want people to challenge his power' by being able to 'see clearly' with the use of magic. *Grigri* could be seen, then, as a source of power that could legitimately challenge political order and political elites such as René, who Payet professed were fully aware of the threat that *grigri* posed to their interests. Payet's acquisition of his *grigri* knowledge coming from both inside of and outside of Seychelles, and in relation to other magical and taboo crafts, further suggests that *grigri* is both the product of creolisation and an aspect of Creoleness. Payet's contemporary *grigri* lineage story is not only in conflict with the mainstream suggestion that *grigri* was a relic of enslaved Africans, but also highlights the complicated situation of *grigri* as inherent to, but also in opposition to, Creoleness.

Alphonse

Alphonse was a well-known Seychellois practitioner that many people suggested I meet. Alphonse and I met and spoke for extensive periods on several occasions, which was necessary given how intent Alphonse was on sharing his extensive knowledge. While Alphonse certainly knew a lot about *grigri*, he asserted that he did not practise it, and that his services were limited to herbalism. Many people claimed the contrary about Alphonse, namely that he was in fact a *sorsye* who attempted to hide his *grigri* practice from public view. In my experience, such assertions tended to come from people who used the term '*grigri*' to describe anything in Seychelles that deviated from accepted Western religious and medicinal practices. However, as I have already discussed, many practitioners also asserted the inability to distinguish herbalism from magic given the supernatural qualities of plants. Alphonse saw magical qualities in plants but firmly distinguished his herbalist craft from sorcery. However, Alphonse frequently alluded to his ability to perform powerful and harmful magic and gave examples of how he had used magic in the past. Over time, I put this ambiguity down to practitioner conflicts regarding how they wanted to be perceived, but there was also nuance concerning what the term *grigri* referred to. Like other practitioners, Alphonse acknowledged the existence of many types of magic, and *grigri* was a term for magic that caused harm or was nefarious in some way. Alphonse described *grigri* in terms that were far from specific and oftentimes establish links between ostensibly different things, a tendency he shared with other practitioners.

When asked about the origins and Creoleness of *grigri*, Alphonse offered a complex narrative that presented multiple and sometimes conflicting views. To a large extent, these views reflected the popular narrative that *grigri* was not Seychellois: in reference to *grigri*, Alphonse asserted that '[a]ll

these things we know are imported'. Alphonse's suggestion was that *grigri* was associated with Africa, and while Alphonse had innate magical abilities that he just chose not to use, he insisted that any other Seychellois who claimed to be *sorsye* were not to be believed:

[T]o become a true sorcerer you must bathe in human blood and then go to the cemetery and call on the dead to rise, and the oils they used were not available in Seychelles. I don't think Seychellois have learnt to be sorcerers or it is in their nature to do so.

Some [Seychellois] will make you believe "I can stop your wife leaving you, I can make your husband return". Lots of things like this. But [Seychellois] can't do this. The people who can do this leave for Kenya or Madagascar. In Madagascar, this is part of their nature, they don't need to learn it from anyone. Like me, I just find I am very good at this. Nobody taught me.

Here in Mahe, to say that there are sorcerers, I don't believe. None!

Reflecting popular discourse, Alphonse associated *grigri* with enslaved Africans who arrived in Seychelles in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, in strong contrast with the mainstream racialisation of *grigri* as a solely African phenomenon, Alphonse also contended that *grigri* was brought to Seychelles by rich white plantation owners:

Here in Mahé, Seychelles, the rich whites - the French - brought the practice here. After that, the whites brought in the Africans. There's lots in Africa. There are Africans who came from Africa and who came here with this ability. When we had seventy-two to seventy-five whites in Seychelles, we had more than three hundred blacks. They were slaves, you understand me. And the slaves came with their knowledge.

Alphonse laid down 4 broad claims in our discussions:

1. *Grigri* first came to Seychelles with rich white colonisers
2. *Grigri* also came to Seychelles with enslaved Africans
3. *Grigri* was still a 'natural' part of particularly mainland African and Madagascan culture
4. Seychellois, except for Alphonse, did not have the ability to perform *grigri*

These claims did not appear to be mutually exclusive and, in many ways, reflected the complex array of narratives in popular discourse. While mainstream discourse racialised *grigri* in African terms, it was not uncommon for the Europeanness of *grigri* practices to be acknowledged – perhaps the result of Benedict and Benedict's (1982) brief but influential claims in this regard, coupled with the fact that the *grigri* lexicon is heavily derived from French. Alphonse's claims about rich white

plantation owners, however, contained an otherwise largely absent level of specificity concerning how those European practices came to be incorporated into *grigri* in Seychelles. In this respect, Alphonse appeared to delineate between Seychellois who had learnt important aspects of *grigri* from non-Seychellois, and Seychellois who falsely claimed to possess actual magical power *vis-à-vis grigri*. Alphonse gave *Bonm* Boutyou as an example of the former, despite popular folk lore holding *Bonm* Boutyou to be a well known *sorsye*. Alphonse asserted that Boutyou acquired his knowledge of *grigri* from the Daubans, a wealthy white plantation family who owned the island of Silhouette after purchasing land from formerly enslaved Africans in the 1800s (Amia 2015). *Bonm* Boutyou resided on Silhouette and was said to have worked for the Dauban family, where he learnt to perform acts associated with *grigri*. As Alphonse contended:

Boutyou learnt this with Dauban; Dauban had this kind of knowledge. They're the ones that brought this knowledge here. Other people were servants. Dauban was the sorcerer. Boutyou was the servant. Boutyou used the tools that Dauban left with him.

Alphonse seemed to allude to a hierarchy of practice and went on to explain that '[i]n sorcery it's like a priest. It's got altar boys, the choir, it's got all the components. They have tools. There are swords, penknives, needles'. Boutyou acquired these tools from the Daubans, Alphonse explained, but Boutyou was subordinate both in terms of his position and with respect to the power he could wield. I had heard many stories about Boutyou's powers before meeting with Alphonse, including that he would ride his bicycle over the sea to get from Silhouette to Mahé. I asked Alphonse about these stories, to which he replied:

Just a story. Boutyou never flew on coconut straw trays. He didn't travel over water. It's just a tale to make fun.

Like other practitioners, Alphonse acknowledged that stories were told about them 'to make fun', but these stories also had the effect of portraying practitioners as powerful sorcerers in the popular imagination. Indeed, Alphonse claimed that Boutyou performed tricks that took advantage of popular gossip, but Alphonse contended that Boutyou did not wield real magical power himself. In Alphonse's view, however, magic was absolutely real, it was just that Boutyou was not 'high degree' like the Dauban family were and as such could not really perform magic. In fact, Alphonse continued, the Dauban family were 'those whites who people called "Freemasons"', and Alphonse claimed that '[i]t was all of them' who practised. Unlike enslaved Africans, however, the magical power wielded by the Daubans and Freemasons was a contemporary phenomenon. This somewhat reflected Dominique's narrative about *grigri* that was entangled with ideas about secret world orders with immense political and economic power. Alphonse specified Henri Dauban, who lived

until 1991 and was the grandson of Silhouette's original owner, Auguste Dauban (Amia 2015). Henri was the 'biggest freemason', Alphonse asserted. He was a practitioner of *Ptit Albert* but was one of many freemasons present in Mahé. Yet, even in this magico-racial order where Boutyou was inferior to the Daubans, Alphonse explained that 'of all the freemasons [in Seychelles], the overseas ones are of a higher degree, higher than the Seychellois ones.'

What was peculiar about Alphonse's narrative was that he seemed to simultaneously claim that magical practitioners did and did not exist in Seychelles. In many ways, Alphonse saw Seychelles as uniquely void of *sorsye* in the African diaspora. While Alphonse noted the presence of *grigri* in Kenya and even Morocco, he listed many other African Diasporic locations, including other Indian Ocean islands, as sites of intense magical activity. He included Madagascar, Mayotte, La Reunion, and Comoros, along with 'those near America', such as Brazil and Haiti, who were 'really bad' and 'worse than us down here'. In Alphonse's view:

The Africans knew about this. But all these skills have disappeared. There's no Seychellois here in Mahé who can do this. Me, I know. But I won't do it, as I don't want to harm anyone.

In stating that he knew how to perform *grigri*, but chose not to do it as he did not want to harm anyone, Alphonse could be seen to have been engaging in what Favret-Saada (1980, 10), via Malinowski (1923), described as 'phatic communication'. In the context of witchcraft, Favret-Saada saw 'phatic communication' to be 'the expression of zero-aggressiveness', whereby 'it conveys to one's interlocuter that one might launch a magic rocket at him, but that one chooses not to do so for the time being' (1980, 10). Or, put differently, it can be understood as the threat of violence. In noting his ability to cause harm through magic, Alphonse was able to convey to me the extent of his magical power. Like other practitioners, Alphonse tended to avoid specifics when discussing witchcraft. Favret-Saada argues that such limited exchanges serve to 'emphasize the violence of what is not being talked about' so as to 'check that the circuit is functioning, and that a state of war does indeed hold' (1980, 10). Similar to what Favret-Saada observed in the Bocage, my experience of such displays demonstrated Alphonse's knowledge and power in relation to my research topic while simultaneously disassociating himself from such acts.

Alphonse also made the general claim that modern Creole people could not perform *grigri*, noting that enslaved Africans could perform *grigri* but, with the exception of Alphonse, their Creole descendants had lost these skills. He insisted that rich white people, like the Daubans, brought *grigri* to Seychelles and continued to practise through organisations such as the freemasons, and he

viewed people in places like Madagascar to know *grigri* as 'part of their nature'. While Alphonse's logic seemed inconsistent at first, Alphonse appeared to be positioning Creoleness as antithetical to one's ability to perform *grigri* – and in doing so he distinguished Creoles from white Seychellois, mainland Africans and Madagascans, and the enslaved Africans who first arrived in Seychelles. Alphonse's retelling of the origins of Creole people further suggested this emergent distinction:

Our country, which really came into being in 1770, when we started to exist. Our first born was in 1777 or 1785, when Hangard was born, when we became normal. We only became Seychellois in the eighteen hundreds.

Common retellings of Seychelles' history state that the 'Creole nation started to form in 1810 when the first '*metisse*' child was born', (Malbrook and Bonnelame 2015), with the French Pierre Hangard and his Malagasy partner often given as examples of a union that produced the first 'coloured family' (Scarr 2000, 7–8). Alphonse's Creole origin story aligns with that of the national canon, but there is also a suggestion that enslaved Africans and their white masters were not themselves Seychellois. In Chapter 2 I described the various racial permutations of 'Creoleness' along with the common view that Creole became a term describing a person born in the 'new world' of parents from the 'old world', particularly a child of enslaved Africans. This discussion also referred to the conflation of Creole and Seychellois as interchangeable demonyms. Bringing these two historical factors together, the popular narrative that only considers the figure of the 'Seychellois' to have spontaneously emerged when the first Creole child was born is in some ways true. This is because, by common definition, Creoles are those who are born in the colony and as such their discursive construction cannot precede this moment. However, this spontaneous creation simultaneously abolishes history and personhood prior to the formation of the figure of the Creole. This conception of Creole people also provides potential insight into Alphonse's ostensibly incongruent claims about *grigri*, particularly his view that *grigri* cannot be performed by Seychellois Creoles. As suggested by Alphonse, Creole people were not only fundamentally different to non-Creole people, but also inferior in power and ability. This difference was reflected in the inability of Creole people to properly perform *grigri* compared to rich whites and mainland Africans and Madagascans, all of whom Alphonse categorised as distinct to Seychellois Creoles. It seemed that even Freemasons in Seychelles were of a lower degree than those outside of Seychelles, implying that simply having an association with Seychelles and Creoleness had a degrading effect on one's power. Alphonse positioned *Bonm* Boutyou as subordinate to the Daubans, and even Freemasons in Seychelles as subordinate to the 'overseas ones'. Alphonse also asserted that the 'real *sorsye* were not Seychellois. They were Africans, Malagasy, there were those

who came from those islands, Haiti. Over there they came with the Americans.' They 'knew these things' because they were 'born with this ability' and it was 'part of their nature'.

The ways in which magic, power, and race were articulated by many practitioners could be understood using what Du Bois (1903) described as 'double consciousness'. For Du Bois, double consciousness described the psychological experience of black people who applied racist scripts written by white people to themselves, while simultaneously demonstrating an understanding of how whiteness has characterised blackness and, on that basis, occupying that place in the world. Gordon (2014) similarly described double consciousness as requiring at least two perspectives: one that 'involves seeing oneself or one's group through the often-hostile eyes of those that construct one as a subordinate term', and another that moves from a 'naïve acceptance of a system to developing a critical perspective on its presuppositions' (2014, 100–101). This latter aspect of double consciousness 'recognizes the dirty laundry of modern society' through a process of 'identifying and illuminating systematic contradictions' so as to analyse the 'social forces involved in the construction of one's inferiority' (2014, 101). Like Dominique, Alphonse appeared to merge conspiracy theories and occult cosmologies to articulate a racialised condition of exploitation and, like other practitioners, Alphonse demonstrated a complex and dynamic analysis of this situation. This analysis nevertheless suggests an understanding of race as a technology of power that links this process to the eradication and suppression, by whiteness *qua* racialised modernity, of both *grigri* and Africanness as signifiers of each other.

Alphonse had a Haitian Vodoun prayer on his wall despite his negative view of Haitian practitioners as 'really bad', yet simultaneously positioned Haitian Vodoun as more powerful and legitimate than the magics claimed to be practiced by Seychellois Creoles. Participants such as Albert, Dominique, and Richard seemed to view the prominence of Haitian Vodoun as evidence of a robust African heritage in Haiti that had been successfully preserved. This contrasted with the view that *grigri* had disappeared in Seychelles, which Richard saw as the result of cultural devaluation, while Dominique considered it an example of 'how the white destroyed all of our culture.' The positive significance of the Haitian revolution in the Creole consciousness should not be overlooked as a factor in the reverence of Haiti among Seychellois practitioners. Césaire (2000b), too, had a complicated relationship with his own home in the African diaspora, Martinique, but held Haiti in high regard as an exemplar of Africanness outside of the mainland:

I love Martinique, but it is an alienated land, while Haiti represented for me the heroic Antilles, the African Antilles. I began to make connections between the Antilles and Africa, and Haiti is the most African of the Antilles (Césaire 2000b, 90).

In Haiti, Césaire saw 'Negritude in action', where Haiti was 'the country where Negro people stood up for the first time, affirming their determination to shape a new world, a free world', ostensibly in contrast with Martinique. For Césaire, Negritude was a 'coming to consciousness' that emerged from an 'atmosphere of rejection' in which black people 'developed an inferiority complex' (2000b, 91). Various sentiments regarding *grigri* could be understood in similar ways. Like the practitioners who saw *grigri* as an important contemporary demonstration of a Creolised African heritage, for example, Césaire asserted that 'Negro heritage was worthy of respect, and that this heritage was not relegated to the past' (2000b, 92). In contrast, however, Alphonse claimed that *grigri* and Africanness were not a part of the Creole present, in which magical power could only be wielded by rich whites and non-Creole Africans.

Consistent with the treatment of other practitioners, Alphonse was the target of police harassment because he was ostensibly associated with *grigri*, and also used magic to avoid state persecution:

[Bonnonm dibwa] Zialor knew certain little grigri and things like that. With Zialor if the police come to search your home, they will find nothing. I watched what he did and for me too when the police came to search my house, they found nothing.

Alphonse provided another example, supposedly used by Malagasy, to smuggle drugs into Seychelles in bags, where magic is used so 'the police don't see it, it's invisible.' *Grigri* and state power can be seen as being in conflict once again here, where the state has persecuted those associated with *grigri*, and practitioners have in turn used *grigri* to avoid persecution by the state. This intersection could also be seen as evident in Alphonse's claims about rich white landowners, who the state represented, and who Alphonse also saw as the original importers of *grigri* to Seychelles. These *gran blan* were seen by Alphonse as unique in that their descendants, such as the Daubans, could also wield magical power and were in union with secretive organisations such as the Freemasons. Alphonse suggested another complex and interwoven connection between *grigri* and state power when he shared that:

Here in Mahé, there's talk that if I'm around the SPUP will not lose elections. But I don't have anything to do with elections! It's the things that Albert [René] has done for the Seychellois people. Seychellois still have a lot of confidence in Albert, a lot! Seychellois do not have confidence in [President] Michel. They have confidence in Albert René. And they say Albert is a sorcerer!

In this sentiment, Alphonse's power has been associated with the state, and particularly the SPUP's power. Further, there existed a view that former socialist president France Albert René was himself

a sorcerer. I had not often heard of *sorsye* being in league with the state, or of political leaders themselves being *sorsye*, but this implied connection appeared to exist in historical examples. In 1925, numerous *sorsye* were accused of causing the death of a young priest who had campaigned against witchcraft (Thomas 1968, 43–44). A petition was developed to not only deport the accused *sorsye*, but along with them several police officers who were described as 'sympathetic to sorcerers'. I also heard separate examples of *bonnonm dibwa* prosecutions failing because accusing police officers could not verify their claims without revealing that they themselves had first-hand knowledge of *grigri*. In one example shared with me by Dominique, a police officer refrained from giving evidence as it would have confirmed existing suspicions that a member of his close family was a *sorsye*, and in doing so implicated the police officer himself.

Alphonse passed away soon after our last engagement, leaving a legacy fortified by his generous contributions to Seychellois heritage and culture. Less than a year after Alphonse's death, the contemporary permutation of the SPUP, United Seychelles, was beaten by the opposition. As BBC News (2020) put it, 'Mr Faure's United Party [sic] seized power in a coup' and the election result was 'the first time since 1977' that the SPUP *qua* United Seychelles had lost power. Alphonse had scoffed at the idea that sorcery was behind the SPUP's power, either because René was a *sorsye* himself or due to Alphonse's influence. That United Seychelles lost power only months after Alphonse's death provided an almost ironic post-hoc validation of the 'talk' on this topic that Alphonse rejected. Activities associated with *grigri* seemed to have heightened in the time surrounding Alphonse's death, the political uncertainty and rupture that resulted in the SPUP's subsequent loss, and the establishment of the new President and former Anglican Priest, Wavel Ramkalawan. Most notable were the activities of a group called 'The Syndicate' (Lawen 2018) and the appearance of occult symbols and rituals.

The Syndicate were associated with – and often directly claimed responsibility for – the placing of human skulls and political messages at churches, sometimes written in code ostensibly resembling occult symbols.

Cascade church

Sinister "Syndicate" strikes again

Another skull and other bones presumed to be human remains were found at the Cascade Church, this time with a legible note signed by "The Syndicate".

by R. J Lawen

Photographs flooded social media early yesterday morning of a skull and what appeared to be pieces of bones found at the St Andre Church at Cascade.

According to the Police, "it was a man who had been in the church area who found and informed the Police of the discovery at around 7:20 am".

The incident happened immediately after reports of what appeared to be a human skull and pieces of bones were found at the St Marie Madeleine parish at Takamaka.

According to witnesses, accompanying the human remains were a note attached to them – although the one found at Cascade was photographed and legible.

The translated opening sentence reads "Danny Faure you have failed",

Continued on page 2

Pictures of the remains and a sheet of paper with writing on it surfaced on social media

Figure 7. Activity associated with The Syndicate (Lawen 2018)

As noted by Today, President Faure discussed the events at a press conference and attributed the placing of skulls at churches to *grigri* (*Today Seychelles* 2018). Messages from The Syndicate referred to the recent disappearances of two Seychellois men – a tell-tale sign of *grigri* and the nefarious creation of *dandosya* that I frequently encountered. In relation to these events, Dominique suggested that my research on *grigri* should look into the 'skulls being exposed around the country' along with 'the disappearances' and the ways in which these suggest 'the resurgence of some old practices – human sacrifices.' Faure's characterisation of The Syndicate's activities as *grigri* in the context of political threats from Ramkalawan, an Anglican Priest, echoed René's pre-*coup d'état* references to James Mancham, his political opponent, as a 'Priest, politician, gris-gris man' who exploited public fear (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1981, 49, 54).

Following Ramkalawan's ascension to presidency, rock pyramids surrounded by candles and occult symbols burnt into the ground have been discovered at various nature reserves (see Figure 8.). Unsurprisingly, such activities have been linked to *grigri* and accompanied by religious pleas on social media. Interestingly, these activities were attributed to 'youth' who were engaging in more 'modern' forms of witchcraft, as opposed to adult and traditional practitioners whose contemporaneous craft, by this interpretation, was for some reason not considered 'modern'. Real or imagined, this attribution suggests a theme concerning a misled generation that includes, as Today News put it, 'many youths [who] are being drawn in dabbling in black magic' with 'their groups of school friends' (2014).

Figure 8. Occult symbols

Scorched occult symbols, candles, and rock pyramids appearing at sites such as Mare Au Cochons; images shared by Seychellois on social media.

The activities of The Syndicate and the sighting of occult symbols have figured into the discourse on *grigri* at a time of political rupture, regardless of how substantiated or coincidental these events are. The discourse that constructs these connections, even if muted and nuanced, is the discourse that surrounds and sustains the public imaginary of *grigri*. While Alphonse dismissed the 'talk' linking *grigri* with the SPUP/SPPF and political activity, he was aware that this talk existed and believed that *grigri* was real and had efficacy, despite his unique and at times conflicting claim that *grigri* was no longer present in Seychelles. As the next two brief accounts suggest, other practitioners saw *grigri* and political power to be much more intricately connected than Alphonse suggested to me. In more generally understanding the place of *grigri* in relation to Creoleness, however, Alphonse's analysis of *grigri's* lineage straddled a complicated place between mainstream discourse and the ostensible counterculture of practitioners. Alphonse's way of explaining *grigri* represented one of the most pluralistic perspectives I had come across, but the links he made nevertheless suggested, to me, recurring links between *grigri* and the racial state.

Michaud

A few months after a session with Alphonse, I was having lunch with a friend in town when he called out to a very light skinned, blue-eyed, and blond-haired man walking by. 'Michaud, vinni!' my friend called out, inviting him to join us. Much to my surprise, I learnt that Michaud was a practitioner, which was why my friend thought we should meet. Michaud was not shy about his being a practitioner, so I invited him to participate in my research, which we discussed at length over lunch. Like many practitioners, Michaud was able to perform a variety of magical arts. He shared that he was most adept at Freemason magic, and discussed his Freemasonry knowledge with

me, touching on the topics of Baphomet, a Freemason god, and a range of Freemason rituals. One such ritual, which he had undertaken himself, required him to be buried in a coffin to become a Freemason Master. Michaud used to practice *grigri* as well, he disclosed, but now chose to focus on Freemasonry. Like some other participants, Michaud viewed *grigri* as a specific kind of magical power that was relevant to Seychelles, and he considered that *grigri* was at its strongest in Seychelles just before the *coup d'état* of seventy-seven. René, Michaud said with wide eyes, was an especially powerful *grigri* master: he used *grigri* to come to power, and he banned *grigri* to prevent any challenge to his own power. This reflected parts of conversations with other practitioners, from *grigri's* centrality to René's power to René's rationale for the renewed ban on *grigri*. I was somewhat familiar with conspiracy theories about Freemasonry and New World Orders prior to my fieldwork in Seychelles, mostly stemming from the popularity of Dan Brown's fictional work (2004). I had never, however, come across the idea of Freemason magic until practitioners raised it. In her recent doctoral research, O'Gorman similarly noted '[a]n old tradition of Freemasonry in [Seychelles that] intersected with belief in New World Order conspiracies', and one of her interlocuters even referenced *The Da Vinci Code* to demonstrate its cultural reach (2019, 232). O'Gorman's work suggests that Alphonse, Michaud, and Dominique held views that were present more broadly. Practitioners such as Alphonse and Michaud also undermined the popular view that the historical and contemporary presence of magic in Seychelles has solely been the result of African contributions and phenomena. However, I was not expecting to meet Alphonse's theories about Freemasons embodied so explicitly in the form of Michaud: a white practitioner of Freemason magic, and promoter of the *Sorsye* René theory. My encounter with Michaud was brief but productively suggested the complex ways in which *grigri*, whiteness, and the state could be seen as entangled in the context of Seychelles, and how popular stereotypes of *grigri* appeared, at least to me, as primarily discursive constructions.

Joubert

I conclude the participant section of this chapter with Joubert, a practitioner who shared accounts with me that further suggested intersections of *grigri* and state power, and showed how *grigri* can be seen as political but also in conflict with political authority. Like most other practitioners, Joubert practiced a range of magical crafts that he had learnt over the course of his life, including from other Seychellois and in diverse locations outside of Seychelles. Joubert held that while these were distinct practices, they merely represented different means through which to engage with occult forces. He was able to talk to demons and, like Albert and Selwyn, suggested that traditional Creole music was used to conduct *grigri*. Joubert shared how he could cause harm to others with the use of traditional Creole musical instruments like the *makalapo*, a bow instrument that attaches

to a box or can buried in the ground. Herbal knowledge also formed an extensive part of Joubert's practice, including for illegal purposes such as herbal abortion. Joubert did not refer to himself as a *grigri* practitioner but asserted that *grigri* was one of the many magical practices that he could perform. Like Payet and Michaud, Joubert believed that the SPUP/SPPF upheld the *grigri* ban to stop Seychellois using magic against their interests.

Figure 9. Joubert's yapannan plant

Joubert, like many other *bonnonm dibwa*, displayed strong anti-establishment positions. Consistent with the experiences and responses of other practitioners, Joubert had also been subject to police harassment and had used magic to help himself and others avoid police attention and state persecution. As suggested earlier in this chapter, *grigri* and state power can be understood as existing in conflict, and Joubert's direct involvement in anti-government activities provides another useful example of this. Joubert shared that, following the *coup d'état*, he was part of an armed group called *Liberte Pour Seselwa* (LPS)[19]. The LPS campaigned against the socialist government, and at one point organised an attempt to overthrow the René government by force. This attempt failed when Joubert and other members of the LPS were ambushed by the SPUP/SPPF military, during which Joubert used magic to protect himself. Joubert's experience and other examples are discussed further in Chapter 7, including other ways that Joubert has harnessed magic to avoid state persecution, for him and his clients, and how Joubert has adopted magic as a way of expressing

[19] All names, groups, and locations throughout this thesis are fictional to protect the identities of research participants and their networks. The name and structure of this group has been fictionalised for the same reasons.

opposition to political authority, particularly that of the SPUP/SPPF. More generally, however, the primacy given by Joubert to his experiences as a magical practitioner who operated antagonistically to the state, both by way of magical practice and as an anti-government militant, suggested that the themes of magic and political subversion were of central relevance to him, for my research, and in relation to each other.

5.4 Conclusion

For Taussig (2010), an '[a]nthropology of the strange and exotic' (2010, xiv) can serve multiple purposes. In conducting ethnographies of the devil and commodity fetishism in South America, Taussig found they revealed as much about the 'strange and unknown' as they did about the peculiar and strange realities produced by capitalism. Much in the same way, engaging with practitioners in an ethnography of *grigri* has revealed as much about *grigri* as it has about the conditions of Seychellois' racial exploitation and marginalisation by the modern Creole nation state. Taussig suggests that ethnography is not simply a tool with which to examine the non-Western Other. This is useful to consider alongside Césaire (2000b) and French sociologist Roger Caillois' proclamation that '[t]he only ethnography is white' (2000b, 68–71). In this sentiment, '[i]t is the West that studies the ethnography of the others, not the others who study the ethnography of the West' (2000b, 71). Participant practitioners in this chapter challenged the view that they, as non-Western Others, could not make sense of the world and turn the ethnographic focus to focus on the West. In my ethnography of *grigri's* place in Creole Seychelles, practitioners offered explanations of *grigri* that expanded to include their own understandings about the world beyond and in relation to Seychelles, and particularly regarding experiences of racialised difference.

In stark contrast with the more common perception that *grigri* is not Creole, Albert, Dominique, and Selwyn firmly believed in the Creoleness of *grigri* and the Africanness of Creole heritage. These interests often reflected refusals of whiteness, such as Albert's focus on the African diaspora, Dominique's bitterness towards 'the white', and Selwyn's ostensibly anti-modern and animistic models of belief. These participants were positioned, and indeed positioned themselves, in contrast with white ontologies. This could be understood as a mode of black expression, and could be explained in ways that are similar to the discourse on black radical tradition and Negritude. In a discussion between Aimé Césaire and Haitian militant and poet René Depestre, they acknowledged a similar trend among Haitian authors who recognised 'the fact that we had an African past, that the slave was not born yesterday, that voodoo was an important element in the development of our national culture' (2000b, 91). The participant accounts presented in this chapter could be seen to

recognise similar things in the context of Seychelles and *grigri*. The proximity of these participants to *grigri* and the ways in which their views differed to that of the mainstream positioned *grigri* as both racialised and representative of domains and peoples subject to a racial logic of abjection.

The accounts of Guy, Payet, Alphonse, Michaud, and Joubert took these intersections deeper, revealing not only the racial character of the discourse on *grigri*, but also the violent political junctures within which *grigri* has been located and discursively constructed. The practitioners in this second part highlighted the complex conflicts, theories, and relationships between *grigri*, race, and the nation state, with Michaud embodying the white *sorsye* and freemason that other practitioners typified in their accounts. These accounts also highlighted how practitioners have been subject to historical and ongoing violence and subjugation by the state given their association with *grigri* – whether real or perceived. This violence has occurred in, and in relation to, racialised settings of the past and present. *Grigri* was linked to intense political activities, from the traumatic recollection of slavery to the *coup d'état* and the recent end of the SPUP/SPPF era. The details of these accounts suggest an alternative conception of *grigri* to the mainstream narrative, but nevertheless highlight the place of *grigri* in Seychelles as a site of tension and conflict within which a racialised modernity project can be understood as negotiable and refusable.

In contrast to the political and mainstream discourse on *grigri*, which can be seen to have conceptualised *grigri* as a racialised locus of abjection, many of the beliefs and practices of the 'caught' suggest a creative ontological and material refusal of whiteness and the nation state. This can be seen to occur even where those caught in the domain of *grigri* would not describe themselves as *grigri* practitioners. Such ongoing and thematic refusals of whiteness and the nation state could be made sense of in terms of what Robinson (2000,73) called a 'Black Radical Tradition'. For Robinson, the concept of a Black Radical Tradition is 'an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle' from 'daily encounters and petty resistances to domination' through which people of colour – specifically enslaved black people, in Robinson's analysis – 'acquired a sense of the calculus of oppression as well as its overt organization and instrumentation.' Robinson classes the Black Radical Tradition as a specifically 'African response to an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era'. In this sense, the Black Radical Tradition could be seen as essentialist, but this is partly due to the essentialisation of blackness where '[r]acist ideologues observed that all Blacks were identical' and in doing so 'supplied the content' of a black essentialist identity. These knowledges, experiences, collective and ongoing refusals of domination – even where they are somewhat disparate – can be understood as forming the basis of 'a means of

preparation for more epic resistance movements' (C. Robinson 2000, xxx,73). Guy's story, to provide one salient case, suggests a site of such intense activity, where his embrace of an abject and internationalist blackness through Rastafari and *grigri* can be seen as intersectional, active, and in opposition to a racialised modernity/coloniality. Positioning Guy's stories alongside the experiences of other practitioners suggests not a passive existence on the margins but interconnected and creative refusals that could also be located within a Black Radical Tradition. Indeed, the persecution of *grigri* practitioners could suggest that this domain embodies a threatening potentiality to the racial order of the nation state.

The pluralistic accounts and subsequent analysis in this chapter could be seen as indicating entanglements of *grigri*, Creoleness, the nation state, whiteness, and political power. The ways in which these elements intersect also reflect a broader academic view on witchcraft, and the accounts in this chapter could be made sense of using at least two positions concerning the political aspects of witchcraft in Seychelles. Sanders and Moore (2001, 16–18) cite these same two popular beliefs throughout Africa but suggest that only one tends to be adopted. The first is a view of witchcraft as a 'form of political action from below', in which witch accusations function as 'levelling mechanisms' that preclude the development of social inequalities that exceed a community's ability to deal with them. The second holds that, as 'witchcraft and the occult are ambiguous and ambivalent forms of power', they can also be used to protect the accumulation of power – and 'political leaders and elites' are 'involved in the nefarious deployment of occult powers to gain and maintain political power'.

My research suggests that both of these beliefs may be apparent in Seychelles and may indeed have been present for at least the better part of the last 100 years. On the one hand, *grigri* has been associated with marginalised peoples – Seychellois or otherwise – who are racialised as or in relation to mainland Africans and who also refuse and undermine the modern Creole state. These qualities fundamentally challenge the colonial myth of a pre-Creole, pre-modern Africanness. On the other hand, *grigri* is linked to state power, where political leaders and landowning whites may be either *sorsye* themselves, in league with *sorsye*, or at the very least empowered through nefarious means. The presence of these overlapping and at times conflicting beliefs suggests that the discourse on *grigri* is creative and dynamic, and that *grigri* cannot be reduced to a practice. Further, the accounts in this chapter suggest that *grigri* should be thought of as Creole, and as having been subject to creolisation, with an existence and relevance that is both traditional and contemporary. What is perhaps clearer in the case of *grigri* than in the analyses of Sanders and Moore, however, is the common presence of racial characteristics and characterisations of *grigri*, replete with myriad

tensions regarding tradition, Europe, and the forces of modernity/coloniality. While *grigri* is contradictorily seen as both African and not African, Creole and not Creole, modern and pre-modern, it is possible to see *grigri* as a recurrent and perhaps central feature of a juncture concerned with the racialised tensions of modernity/coloniality.

Chapter 6. Modern Creole Subjects

6.1 Introduction

[B]elief in indecipherable powers constitutes modernity's dark Other – an Other condemned, as "superstition," to fade under the light of historical progress (West and Sanders 2003, 7)

This chapter focuses on how the political discourse of the SPUP/SPPF figures into the discursive development of modern Creoleness. I suggest that the SPUP/SPPF's agenda of Creole nationalism has been defined in a way that has situated *grigri* in the constitutive outside of modern Creoleness. The term 'modern Creole subjects' is used to describe ideas surrounding Creoleness and Creole people that could be seen as contingent upon the abjection of certain attributes associated with Africanness, including *grigri*. Similarly, the term 'modern Creole order' refers to the project of Creole nationalism as envisioned by the SPUP/SPPF in the pre- and particularly the post-*coup d'état* eras.

Importantly, even though the post-*coup* era represented a violent political juncture in the history of Seychelles, I argue against the idea that it represented an absolute discontinuity. Instead, I suggest that the SPUP/SPPF supported a continuity of sorts. This is suggested through an examination of the SPUP/SPPF's discourse and policy to reveal elements of Europe's modernising and civilising mission, the co-option of statecraft and the European mythology of political order, and the use of racialised prototypes of colonised subjects to justify political initiatives. A historical analysis of adjacent legal codes, events, and with the assistance of relevant theory, I suggest the existence of links between the political rhetoric of the SPUP/SPPF and the racial capitalist character of modernity/coloniality. These synergies can be found where qualities associated with *grigri* and Africanness are discussed interchangeably and simultaneously conflated with immorality, irrationality, and the past. I also suggest that the SPUP/SPPF collectively targeted these elements along with a proverbial 'lethargy of tradition' and perceived qualities of enslaved Africans to establish a foundation for Creole newness vis-à-vis Europeanness.

Shaped by the approach of the Extended Case Method (Burawoy 1998), I locate the ethnographic observations in Chapter 4 and the political rhetoric of the SPUP/SPPF in their broader global and colonial contexts by engaging in what Comaroff and Comaroff have described as 'ethnography on an awkward scale' (1999, 283). This ethnographic awkwardness acknowledges the 'much broader ethnographic context' of witchcraft and considers the ways in which local-level politics, the nation-

state, and the global system of racial capitalist coloniality/modernity can be seen as imbricated (Moore and Sanders 2001, 14), which is an approach used by scholars of modernity and witchcraft (Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998; Parish 2000). As Chapter 3 foreshadowed, this chapter suggests that the raceless and depoliticised rhetoric of modernisation used by the SPUP/SPPF could be seen as an obfuscation of how Europeanness has provided an epistemological referent, particularly where the racialisation of *grigri* and the SPUP/SPPF's explicit desire to obliterate 'superstition' has presented as concomitant with an inclination to abolish a colonial conception of Africanness.

The arguments I make in this chapter are premised on key ideas concerning modernity discussed in Chapter 2. Building on those ideas, a key theme of this chapter relates to abjection theory (Kristeva 1982; Lazaridis 2015; Arya 2014; Butler 1993), which in the case of Seychelles I use to make sense of the designation of *grigri qua* Africanness by the SPUP/SPPF as a source of harm, degradation, and threat to social life and progress. I use abjection as an analytical model due to the ways in which Creoleness and Africanness are entangled in ways that make it impossible to separate the two. This model is dually useful because, as I go on to suggest, the prohibition of *grigri*, as a signifier of Africanness, can be seen as having occurred by designating it to the constitutive outside of Creoleness, which simultaneously renders modern Creole subjects against the abject helps to establish and maintain modern Creole sovereignty. The threat of violence and degradation posed by the abject domain can be seen as useful to a manufactured dependence on the state. Here, I suggest that the certainty of state violence has been posed as a necessary measure with which to manage the threat of the abject domain, which is a process Butler (2016, 25–27) has argued to characterise precarity.

In thinking with modernity/coloniality to make sense of the modern Creole order, it is useful to consider how and where a coloniality of power might exist in Seychelles. Foucauldian governmentality (Foucault 2000) provides a useful theoretical standpoint for such an analysis, in which the state is not a socially nurturing structure, but a life-administering apparatus that strives to socially control populations. The SPUP/SPPF's nation-building project could be framed accordingly as having co-opted dimensions of what Quijano (2000; 2007) called the coloniality of power. Framing the SPUP/SPPF in this way opens up the possibility of seeing the racialised terms of modernity/coloniality in its project, wherein the abjection of non-Europeanness simultaneously required the eradication of 'superstition' and colonially repudiated qualities of Africanness.

However, the abjection of *grigri* discussed in this chapter can also be seen in the popular discourse examined in chapters 2, 4, and 5. It is not necessarily the case that the role of the SPUP/SPPF was primary in the abjection of *grigri* or the construction of modern Creoleness. Chapters 4 and 5 have outlined a complicated range of racialised perceptions relating to *grigri* that are not necessarily the direct result of the SPUP/SPPF's initiatives. Neither, however, should it be assumed that the initiatives of the SPUP/SPPF represent the interests of all Creole people. Rather than parochially suggesting that the SPUP/SPPF is due sole credit for the development of a national Creole culture, this chapter instead focuses on some of the ways in which the SPUP/SPPF played a part in the repudiation of *grigri* through its initiatives, rhetoric, and policies. Even where this may only be an implicit role or a discursive link, the initiatives and lineage of the SPUP/SPPF cannot be dismissed where the maintenance and production of codified institutional formations is concerned. And while factors beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis warrant further consideration, the presence of a political desire to create distance between modern Creoleness and a pre-modern Africanness warrants closer examination.

6.2 The Binary Settings of Creole Modernity/Coloniality

You have heard on Radio Seychelles since this morning that the people of Seychelles have decided to overthrow Mr. Mancham's Government, and that they have asked me to form a new Government. After having accepted, I think it is my duty to explain several things so that firstly you will be able to understand what was happening in Seychelles lately, and secondly to give you an idea of how I expect the country to run in the future. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 3)

France-Albert René declared himself President of the Republic of Seychelles with this announcement on the 5th of June 1977. This speech followed a successful armed *coup d'état*, led by René, that overthrew the pro-Western government of James Mancham. In this act, René established a one-party socialist state. In 2004, René handed the title of President to James Michel, who was among René's coup members and inner circle. The name of the party changed from the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) to the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF), followed by later permutations of *Parti Lepep* – the People's Party – and finally United Seychelles. However, the SPUP/SPPF lineage and its key figures remained in power until October 2020 when President Danny Faure, the former Vice-President of James Michel, lost an election to Wavel Ramkalawan. This represented the first time the SPUP/SPPF party lineage had not been in power since the coup of 1977. The 43 years of SPUP/SPPF governance forms the temporal reference for this chapter's ethnographic scope, with specific attention paid to the speeches, activities, and policies that are

argued to have designated *grigri* and a pre-modern blackness to the constitutive outside of modern Creoleness. Much of the political discourse in this chapter focuses on René, who commandeered the SPUP/SPPF and has been called 'the father of modern Seychelles' (Shillington 2014).

In making sense of the post-coup era of Seychelles, Fanon's (1963) analysis of postcolonial one-party rule provides a useful starting point:

In a certain number of underdeveloped countries the parliamentary game is faked from the beginning. Powerless economically, unable to bring about the existence of coherent social relations, and standing on the principle of its domination as a class, the bourgeoisie chooses the solution that seems to it the easiest, that of the single party. (Fanon 1963, 164)

René buttressed the establishment of a one-party state with public addresses outlining what he saw to be Seychellois values and a vision for Seychelles. Where being 'Seychellois' was previously synonymous with being white, as discussed in Chapter 2, this era saw the universalisation of the demonym Seychellois at the same time as the concept of Creole culture became explicitly tied to a political ideology of universalism:

The aim of our Front is for everyone to have the same possibilities and the same chances. Everyone, regardless of his colour, his previous education, his religious beliefs – whether he is male or female, old or young – must contribute and lend a hand in setting up our new society. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 47)

In choosing a system of education where Creole is used, we are seeing that our children grow up in harmony with the society they are living in, with the values of its people – that is, with the Seychellois ideology. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 135)

[T]here can't be one law for some people and another for some others. The law will apply to everyone - black, white or yellow, rich or poor. Our system needs to be a system of justice for everyone. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 6)

Building on the previous discussion of universalism in Chapter 2, it is useful to return to Wallerstein's (2004, 40) positioning of statecraft that is centred on the idea of universalism but dependent on the existence of anti-universalism. Those who control the means of production, Wallerstein explains, emphasise universalism as it contributes to the accumulation of capital, but rely on anti-universalism to facilitate the assimilation of non-normative subjects into inferior ranks of the subject domain. René's political speeches and letters can be seen to have promoted universalist and capitalist values despite his anti-capitalist agenda. As a transitory activity to

socialism, René insisted that 'capitalist systems' in Seychelles would be developed 'with the idea that they will give us enough capital for us to be able to say later: Thank you very much but we can get on now' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 29). This chapter's suggestion that René's anti-colonial socialist project reified modernity/coloniality's racial logic is reflected in Mignolo's (2002, 77) claim that socialism remains colonial because 'socialism emerged as an alternative within an alternative that change[d] the content of the conversation and maintain[ed] the terms of capitalistic production.' The SPUP/SPPF's attempts to characterise Creoleness as universalistic and 'colour blind' might be interpreted in similar ways. Building on this, as Lentin has contended, the concept of the universal human is predicated on 'the image of the white European, against the non-European' (Lentin and Lentin 2006, 6). If universalism is viewable in these ways, then it could be argued that socialist visions for a universalist Seychellois carries with it a fundamentally antagonistic definition of the human that, at its premise, seeks to exclude non-Europeanness in the interests of capital.

The SPUP/SPPF's initial policy positions focused on charting a path out of colonial dependence and towards socialism (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1978, 1981, 1982). In their first few days and months in power, the SPUP/SPPF announced general positions concerning discipline, responsibility, equality, and wellbeing, before moving on to topics relating to infrastructure, investment, salaries, public transport, health, tourism, education, and economic development (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 5–21). These formative directions were presented alongside an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and pro-African rhetoric. René saw the *coup d'état* as a necessary move against former president Mancham, who he believed was 'putting our country in such a situation that we would have found ourselves slaves of the capitalists and of foreign countries' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 3). Ex-President Michel wrote the *coup d'état* into Seychelles' history in a similar vein:

[S]ince 5th June 1977, a new Seychellois nation has been emerging, making year after year an increasingly wide break with its colonial past. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, xi)

The institutionalisation of the Creole language by the SPUP/SPPF was a fundamental aspect of this colonial break:

A language is a people's way of thinking – this means that it is a specific means of creation within a group of people. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 135)

Fanon (1986) also recognised the power of language when he said:

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. (Fanon 1986, 8)

Fanon recognised a 'third phase' of the development of national culture in the postcolony, in which the new native elite revived 'abandoned traditions' and deployed 'techniques and languages' that were 'borrowed from the stranger in his country' for the purposes of national development (Fanon 1963, 222–24). In the context of Seychelles, these 'techniques and languages' could be seen to have inherited European conceptions of race, enlightenment, and modernity, such as where the SPUP/SPPF used binary juxtapositions concerning modernity in their foundational speeches (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 110–12). This included, for example, references to 'a system of master/servant' or 'master/slave' relationship that was allegedly 'buried forever with the remains of those who lost their lives on 5th June', the date of the *coup d'état*. The 'master/servant tradition', as René put it, was 'why so many people of Seychelles [were] still pre-occupied with the past instead of forging ahead together to build a socialist future for our country.' René contended that this preoccupation was due to 'having been oppressed for so long' that they failed to 'understand the new situation' because '[t]heir thoughts, their actions, and even their ambitions' were 'still conditioned' by the master/slave relation (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 110–12).

Much like the SPUP/SPPF's Creole origin stories discussed in Chapter 1, which relied upon binaries of black/white, the condition of master/slave can be understood as entangled with conceptions of Creoleness and creolisation. Khan (2001, 276), through a reading of Mintz (1977, 79), notes similar juxtapositions made by Caribbean anthropologists, where black/white, master/slave, and similarly paired polarities are deployed to 'forge analytic devices' that render a certain order and can serve to 'deal with very complex realities' rather than the 'overwhelming particulars of Caribbean life and history'. The use of binaries has featured prominently in ideas about Creoleness where, as Khan (2001, 280) discusses with Brathwaite (1974, 5–6), the 'yoking' of blackness to whiteness – such as the enslaved/African to the European – is seen as an ongoing aspect of creolisation that has placed whiteness and blackness in contrast and competition. The black/white, master/slave polarities adopted by the SPUP/SPPF were articulated in relation to conceptions of tradition/progress, peace/destruction, and patriarchal contrasts of father/child. In the next section, I discuss the complex realities of Seychellois Creoleness in relation to reductionist binaries concerning the family and Africanness.

6.3 Modern Creoleness

Security? Culture? The rule of law? In the meantime, I look around and wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, "boys," artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business. (Césaire 2000b, 42)

In this chapter I suggest that the SPUP/SPPF articulated and imposed a certain conception of order modelled upon Europeanness – namely, a white patriarchal political order. The racialised tensions of Creoleness discussed in Chapter 2 can be understood in relation to race and Africanness, while also being evident in the nationalist efforts of the SPUP/SPPF to establish a unique Creole culture that, as Caribbean scholars of *créolité* asserted, held Creoles to be 'neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians' (Bernabé et al. 1990, 886). This conception of *créolité* was promoted in the 1960s and 70s by opposing political factions such as the SPUP/SPPF and President Mancham's Seychelles Democratic Party. The SPUP/SPPF consistently maintained this premise in the decades following the *coup d'état*, as articulated by the then Minister for Youth and Culture, Patrick Pillay:

"Creolite" [was] the special blend of European, African and Asian influences that were central to [Seychellois] identity. Creolite was a unified social and cultural consciousness that embraced the country's diversities and established a common set of human, social and cultural values. (Pillay 1998)

Pillay put forward this definition of *créolité* in the context of the government's challenges, which were considered to include 'the erosion of family structure and community consciousness' (Pillay 1998). It is not uncommon for the traditional family structure in Seychelles to be viewed as patriarchal and nuclear. This could be seen as having more to do with European and Catholic ideas of the family structure than how Creole families in Seychelles have ever been structured. Seychellois Archbishop, French Chang-Him promoted this view when he asked how 'a nation that boasts a population of almost 100 per cent Christian [can] have about 80 per cent of its children born out of wedlock' (2002, 48). While Chang-Him recognised that 'slavery and its aftermath' contributed to the 'shattering of the kinship group' and 'social organization that the African possessed' prior to being relocated to Seychelles by force, his views about the family were preoccupied with the promotion of patriarchal Christian values. In Chang-Him's view, even the Roman Catholic campaigns against cohabitation from 1884 to 1893 'never completely broke the tradition of cohabitation which had begun with slavery', and as a result, Seychellois families had become 'weak and matriarchal' (2002, 48–50).

Benedict's survey in the nineteen sixties and seventies suggested that less than thirty percent of Seychellois households consisted of spouses and children, while the remaining households with children possessed an array of assortments, including where men represented a minority component (1982, 25–255). Concubinage and 'illegitimate' children, Benedict suggested, were near-institutional activities resulting from the cotton market collapse in the eighteen thirties and forties and continued to exist at the time of his fieldwork (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 138). This presentation of the Creole domus as illegitimate, however, ought to be considered against a desire to establish patriarchal structures as a reflection of modernness. In an analysis of Fanon, Vergès (1997, 23, 595) contends that his notion of 'masculinity proposed a modernization of the Creole male through his entrance into a "responsibilized" patriarchy'. This reflects a discourse that, Vergès continues, has sought to define 'Creole men of the French territories as men who do not know how to take care of their families', who are 'not disciplined', 'refuse to work', and represent all that 'the modern white man is not: violent, drunk, lazy, fathering but not parenting'. Such themes were developed in the context of the slave trade where, Vergès (2019) notes, '[b]lacks were forbidden to make kin and family while the white bourgeois patriarchal family was extolled as a model.'

Vergès (1997) has acknowledged that the presence of such discourses among the colonised must be understood in the context of disciplinary strategies applied to colonised subjects and the history of slave colonies more broadly. One such context is creolisation itself. Creoleness in the Indian Ocean, Vèrges (2007) posits, is peculiarly masculine because 'the cultural practices of creolization were produced by men'. In contrast with claims about predominating matriarchal units, Vèrges emphasises the prevalence in plantation colonies of men, particularly young men who were enslaved by slave masters who were men. Here, the enduring and violent separation of families can be seen as a core and even essential feature of enslavement that led to the social death of the enslaved person (Patterson 1982b; Graeber 2007b). The common concerns of Pillay and Chang-Him, then, can be seen to have erased the relations of the plantation and instead foregrounded European ideas about kinship as if they were a timeless, universal, and traditional Creole norm. One possible way of viewing this discursive framing of modern Creole subjects is as a dichotomous fallacy that has attempted to obliterate non-Europeanness from Creole personhood: if the family is not patriarchal and nuclear, then it is not a family at all. Rather than being viewed as a historical truth, the view of patriarchal family structures being central to Creole tradition might instead be understood as a discursive nationalist fiction modelled on Europeanness.

In addition to mourning the loss of an imagined lineage of patriarchal households, Pillay voiced concerns about the degradation of community consciousness (1998). Pillay substantiated these concerns with survey results that suggested Seychellois youth identified more with young people elsewhere in the world than they did with 'older generations', the latter of whom presumably typified Creole culture. This suggests another quality of the modern Creole subject based on nationalist fallacies: if community consciousness is not centred on political conceptions of Seychellois *créolité* modelled on 'older generations', then there is no community consciousness. Pillay promoted a strategy centred on renewing *créolité* to combat the supposed degradation of community consciousness and the 'traditional' family structure. The problems this strategy sought to address, however, appeared to have once again stemmed from nationalist mythologies modelled on Europeanness and nationalism. In this sense, the SPUP/SPPF's claims about what constituted Creoleness and the Creole nation could be thought of as an imagined community (1983). To borrow from Gellner (1964, 169), this kind of nationalism might be understood as one that 'invents nations where they do not exist' rather than being representative of an 'awakening of nations to self-consciousness'.

The SPUP/SPPF placed an emphasis on nation-building following the *coup d'état* and put forward specific ideas about modernness and national culture. In doing so, the SPUP/SPPF simultaneously characterised Seychellois people in terms of deficit. 'The door to progress has been opened wide', René announced following the *coup d'état* (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 111). And with this opportunity he declared '1978 to be the year of discipline', a directive he saw as necessary for Seychelles to become 'a disciplined and orderly society' and 'wake up' from a 'traditional lethargy.' This discipline was required because, in René's view, many Seychellois were 'like young people' who were faced with the unexpected 'responsibility of running our new homes' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 110–12). To support this goal, René announced that certain elements present in Seychelles had to be destroyed:

[W]e must look for all the elements which lead to war, disputes, problems among ourselves and differences of opinion in the country. We must find these elements and destroy them so that we are able to live in peace…. We must enjoy peace and we must create a revolutionary system under which we destroy everything that disrupts society.
(Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 42–43)

René described Seychelles' history and tradition as a foundation that needed to be destroyed so the socialist house of modern Creoleness could be built:

There is a saying that goes: "It is not good to build a new house on an old foundation". We all know that a foundation 20 or 25 years old can cause a house to crumble.

To create a socialist society, as we have said, we must adopt democracy. The old foundations of democracy, the elements that do not go with democracy, must be destroyed. (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 42–43)

Where, around the same time, Lorde famously proclaimed that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (1984, 110–13), René ostensibly sought to destroy not just the house but any foundations that were not conducive to the SPUP/SPPF's aims. However, if the SPUP/SPPF's could be seen as having co-opted a colonial trajectory, it would suggest that not only did the modern Creole order actively rely on 'the master's tools' in its quest for postcolonial sovereignty, but it also sought to retain the house itself. In targeting 'elements that do not go with democracy' for destruction, René emphasised the need to 'break down', 'replace', and 'uproot' them. These undesirable elements, in René's view, included 'what is embarrassing', 'what is old', and what 'we have inherited from the old times, the colonial times' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 42–43). While vague in its definition, this rhetoric could be seen as a general initiative of the SPUP/SPPF to eradicate inheritances from the past that were seen as shameful.

The logic adopted by the SPUP/SPPF could be understood through Scott's (1995) examination of colonial governmentality and the political forms of modernity. Scott discusses the emergence 'of a form of power' – a modern power – that was 'not merely coincident with colonialism'. These modern forms of power, Scott argues, have maintained a European colonial trajectory and operated according to 'rules of difference' that have oriented themselves according to 'a rule of exclusion/inclusion'. As part of this work, Scott has inquired into what this form of power has sought 'to organize and reorganize', what it has taken as its 'target upon which to work', and what it has required that target-object for (1995, 193-194,196-197). The SPUP/SPPF's fixation on abolishing the old to make way for the new could be seen as having given shape to their own project of political sovereignty. This could, in turn, be argued to have inherited colonial principles of differentiation that were used as points of difference and targets upon which to develop modern Creoleness.

Using Scott's analysis of modern power, the SPUP/SPPF's initiative could be explained as having disabled 'old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions' and creating new conditions that enabled and obliged 'new forms of life to come into being' (1995, 193). This

process might be observed in instances where, for example, René instructed Seychellois to develop 'a new discipline and a new sense of responsibility' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1981, 5–6). Scott contends that modern power needs targets for its application, along with a field of operation that it must construct for its own purposes. To do this, Scott continues, colonial power has deployed various 'means and instrumentalities…. in search of […] targets, points, and objects' (1995, 193). Previous chapters have outlined the explicit prohibition of *grigri* and how practitioners and those associated with *grigri* have been subject to police raids and harassment, all of which occurred during the SPUP/SPPF's rule. One way of explaining this, to use Scott's approach, is by suggesting that the SPUP/SPPF marked *grigri* as a zone of abject conduct upon which to rationalise its purpose and power. As research participants in chapters 4 and 5 discussed, *grigri* can be characterised in diverse ways and seen to include a range of qualities. These various points of reference included signifiers of Africanness, satanism, rituals that involved homosexual acts, and reproductive interventions, all of which have been sanctioned by the modern Creole state. As such, the domain of *grigri* might contain the 'targets, points, and objects' upon which the modern Creole order has also been able to enact its power and manage 'old forms of life'.

Robinson's (1980) analysis of political authority as Western mythology provides another useful way of explaining the SPUP/SPPF's contradictions. For Robinson, the basis of Western ideas about social order are illusory, and predicated upon a rationalisation of authority, leadership, and state power. These suppositions position political order as natural and universal and, in contrast, chaos, disorder, and pluralism as representative of violent antagonisms that are hostile to social life. To apply this to the SPUP/SPPF, it could be argued that modern Seychelles was conceived of in a way that, to borrow from Robinson, was ultimately limited to – and indeed attempted to – 'develop an alternative authority within the social, cultural, and historical matrix of political authority'. In this context, the modern Creole order could be seen to have purveyed Western ideals of order rather than subvert them and, to continue with Robinson, produced 'an analytically consistent alternative' that was 'an alternative *of* the social order, not *to* it' (1980, 215–16). Indeed, as outlined in Chapter 2 on the primacy of exclusionary logics to European civilisation, the SPUP/SPPF adopted a narrative that preceded modern democracies. In René's proclamation that all that disturbs peace should be destroyed, it is the very threat of violence that is suggested to result in peace.

The positioning of political power and state violence as benevolent has been analysed from various angles. In a discussion about precarity, Butler (2016) contends that political orders, which include social and economic institutions, designate themselves as protectors of those who might be exposed to violence were the state to not exist. The state is presented as a force that protects populations

from disordering violence when, as Butler contends, 'the state is precisely that from which [one requires] protection'. A reliance on the 'nation-state for protection *from* violence' results in the exchanging of 'one potential violence for another' (Butler 2016, 25–27). Mbembe recognises the violence of political power as expressed in the ability to 'dictate who may live and who must die' (2003, 11). In this sense, the dictating of the terms of life and death is fundamental to sovereign power. For Robinson (1980), political leadership is a set of social relations established through violence, coercion, domination, and control, and political instruments function to advocate for political authority and, more importantly, to manage oppositional forces. Though force is not always the singular feature of a political matrix, it is fundamental to political relations (1980, 44). Walter (1969), in his work on terror and resistance, frames government force in terms of terror (ibid., 7), where states are viewed as establishing control over communities by destroying parts of them and, rather than using violence as a last resort, states regularly engage in the use of violence to maintain political power (ibid., 29).

These assessments collectively suggest that political power is preserved through violence, which is at odds with the view that political power protects political subjects from a violence that would otherwise exist. A more critical view of political order might help make sense of the SPUP/SPPF's obfuscation and rationalisation of its own violence whilst promoting itself as a benevolent entity. Further, as this section has discussed, the SPUP/SPPF imagined Creoleness based on a patriarchal family unit that Creole people did not commonly possess, and a community consciousness that was absent in the imagined community of concern. By unpacking the SPUP/SPPF's conceptions of modern Creoleness I instead suggest that modern Creole subjects have inherently been constructed in terms of Europeanness, despite the anticolonial, anti-capitalist, and pro-African mantras of the SPUP/SPPF. Viewing these implicit dynamics as inherent to modern Creoleness helps contextualise the suggestion that *grigri* occupies an antagonistic place in the modern Creole order as a racialised and abject concept.

6.4 Modern Creoleness and Racialised Modernity/Coloniality

It is not my intention to argue that the differences between slavery and freedom were negligible; certainly such an assertion would be ridiculous. Rather, it is to examine the shifting and transformed relations of power that brought about the resubordination of the emancipated, the control and domination of the free black population, and the persistent production of blackness as abject, threatening, servile, dangerous, dependent, irrational, and infectious. (Hartman 1997, 116)

The previous section's analysis positions the SPUP/SPPF's fixation on abolishing 'old', 'inherited', and 'embarrassing' 'elements' present in Seychelles as a racialised colonial inheritance. The SPUP/SPPF were explicit in their desire to violently subordinate the population to establish a disciplined sovereign nation, which is a tactic Federici (2014, 136) contended was fundamental to the development of capitalism in sixteenth and seventeenth century European domains. In Federici's analysis, the witch-hunts played a formative role in this violent transformation. This section continues to discuss the racialised aspects of the intersections between an anticolonial nationalism, capitalist transformation, and the prohibition of witchcraft in René's vision for Seychelles.

In an address to the People's Militia in 1978 (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1981, 148–50), René asserted that post-coup Creole society was like a person who 'you have taught since childhood to eat with his fingers' and is suddenly told that their behaviour must be stopped because 'we have to create a new system where we use spoons and forks.' One cannot expect, René continued, that 'the next day he will start using a spoon and fork' because there are things that prevent him from doing so. 'His parents have probably told him that spoons and forks might poison him', or his 'superstitious beliefs, which we call "gris-gris", might make him afraid to do certain things'. In this analogy, René positioned *grigri* as a hurdle to an ability to progress and modernise, both of which René saw to be represented in the form of national and institutional developments and 'enlightenment'. René announced the development of new structures that would see the 'development of our land', a 'system of work', a 'system of education', and 'a system where the government gradually takes over the land to be later redistributed to the people.' The state militia was designated by René to 'light the way for our young people growing up so that others who want to be enlightened gradually understand how it all works' and act as 'torchbearers, leading and guiding others so that those who are human and have some intelligence will sooner or later start to find that the new way is best.'

In these examples, spoons and forks were a metaphor for the modern nation state and *grigri* was, not even in a metaphoric sense, representative of the irrational and superstitious beliefs René perceived Creole people to have possessed. This antagonistic positioning of *grigri* and modernisation suggests that René saw the two to be in direct conflict. While spoons and forks might appear to be relatively neutral symbols, they have been understood to signify Europeanness and a Cartesian attitude towards the body. According to Federici (2014), Europe experienced a Cartesian transformation in the everyday through 'the use of cutlery' and other forms of bodily and behavioural regulation, which came to shape European culture more generally. In relation to this transformation, Federici has argued that a 'bundling' of social forms occurred, where the proletariat, the African, and the woman came to represent the 'body' of society. These elements were treated as agents of 'internal subversion' because they were void of Reason and purity, and replete with qualities of wildness, irrationality, and weakness (2014, 152–53). If, to René, *grigri* represented a site of irrationality that prevented the adoption of cutlery, and, for Federici, irrationality was a racialised quality of the body politic while the European adoption of cutlery signified a Cartesian attempt to dissociate from the body, then René's vision might tell of a Cartesian desire to detach modern Creoleness from that racialised body.

This colonial logic could be seen in René's conception of *grigri* as a domain of irrationality, fear, as well as an aversion to modernisation and, perhaps inherently, to Europeanness. More plainly, however, was René's positioning of *grigri* as an aspect of Creole culture that was not conducive to the development of modern Creole subjects. Indeed, fear itself was seen to be counterproductive to the SPUP/SPPF's aims. In a 1982 speech, René referred to 'false rumours' and 'The Rasta[20] problem' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 157–58). In this talk, René referred to a rumour being circulated that 'Rasta were heading for Plaisance School to take the children and hide them in the woods' (ibid., 157). For René this rumour transformed into 'a greater state of fear' around the island and drive parents, some of whom were police officers, to take their children out of school. René asserted that it 'was not the Rasta who caused people to panic and run' but rather 'the fear of Rasta'. What René found particularly horrifying was that the 'system of education was destroyed in one day' by 'a small group of Rastas', that the panicking of 'one woman was enough to close all our schools', and that mass fear was able to cause 'all this havoc' (ibid.). While René saw Rasta to be a threat to social order, he deemed fear itself – which he connected with *grigri* in the story about cutlery adoption – to be the more serious threat given its ability to mobilise large

[20] The plural and singular are often the same word in Creole. This sometimes enters into English usage in Seychelles, as is the case with 'Rasta', where 'Rasta' is both the plural and singular form.

populations and destabilise the social order and operation of state institutions. However, rather than viewing this event as a chaotic instance of moral panic, René characterised this moment as a political orchestration: 'Our enemies are putting all sorts of ideas in our heads because they know that our belief in rumours is a tool with which to destroy us' (ibid., 158).

At least two things could be located in René's analysis: the first being that rumour and irrational fear had the power to create disorder and shut down national systems; and the second being that 'The Rasta', perhaps as a figure of black expression and Western refusal, represented a potent site from which mainstream fear and disorder could emerge. Rumour and gossip – or *kankan* in Creole – have also been linked to *grigri* (O'Gorman 2019). *Kankan* has been considered a source of power in its own right, but also a mechanism through which the social influence and intimateness of *grigri* could be given effect (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 96–100). Similar to René's concerns about the adoption of spoons and forks, the articulation of the Rasta problem in relation to irrational fear, and 'enemies' using fear to undermine national development, might reveal concerns that have underscored the logic of the SPUP/SPPF. Such concerns might include how the integrity of the modern Creole order was threatened by irrationality, fear, *kankan,* and – in the figure of the Rasta – elements that have signified a perceived Africanness and an aversion to the development of a modern nation state.

These elements are entangled in political discourse as well as in the discourses and identities embraced by those associated with *grigri* – as demonstrated in Chapter 5, particularly in the story of Guy who was a persecuted Rasta, healer, and exile. Politically abject elements were present in the narratives of each of those individuals, and mainstream and political discourse have discursively constructed these disparate elements into an almost singular abject figure. In Federici's analysis (2014, 152–53), ruling classes have positioned this singular figure as representative of the impure, irrational, African, and feminised body of the working class, all of which have been resistant to capitalist discipline. For Linebaugh and Rediker (2000), the ruling classes used the figure of the many-headed hydra to represent their fears, which included disorder and resistance to the development of capitalist orders and nation states, which was not just a figure of speech but a designation of violence according to lines of race, class, and gender. Ramsey (2011) observed a similar development in Haiti, where 'the enslaved, marron, or free "*sorcier*" of colour' were constructed by the colonial regime based on the fears of the white establishment (2011, 59). In Seychelles, a similar dynamic could be seen to have applied to the figure of the Rasta, the *bonnonm dibwa,* and the *sorsye* who have similarly been designated as threats to social order and national progress.

6.5 Modern Creoleness and the Racialisation of *Grigri*

As I have suggested thus far, the logic of SPUP/SPPF's anti-colonial agenda was selective. René's opposition to British administration was overt but, despite France being the original colonial administrator of Seychelles, and the French the original Seychellois enslavers, René promoted the celebration and preservation of Seychelles' Frenchness. This could be likened to Bernabé's (1990, 886) assessment of Caribbean Creoleness, in which the reification of 'the domination of an elsewhere' was the result of Creoleness being constructed 'through the filter of western values'. In an analysis of Chatterjee's (1986) work, Cheah (1999) described 'anticolonial cultural nationalism' as the situation where 'a rising but weak indigenous bourgeoisie' successfully co-opts a logic – and the masses – to produce a 'struggle to wrest hegemony from the colonial regime' (Cheah 1999, 232). In the context of Seychelles, certain so-called Afro-Creole practices and artefacts were promoted and institutionalised as part of the SPUP/SPPF's anticolonial strategy while other activities and artefacts were selectively omitted from the Creole canon. While *grigri* has been considered characteristic of Seychelles' Africanness, the formative political moments of the SPUP/SPPF unambiguously rejected the concept:

> *A socialist society does not accept superstitious beliefs and practices and the Front will work towards their complete eradication.* (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1978, 32)

This declaration, later published by the SPPF in a policy statement titled *Onward to Socialism*, once again designated 'superstition' as antithetical to the aims of the SPUP/SPPF. As already noted, 'superstition' and *grigri* were seen as one in the same, the latter simply being a local term for the former (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 148).

Federici (2014) offers another perspective that helps to make sense of why eradicating *grigri* was an important and explicit policy position for the SPUP/SPPF. For Federici, witch-hunts were central to the suppression of power and communalism of women to support capitalist development in Europe, and the Africanised witch was used to rationalise the management of colonised subjects and the expansion of capitalism throughout the globe. Witch-hunts in Europe and the New World formed a 'strategy dictated by specific economic interest[s] and the need to create the preconditions for a capitalist economy' (2014, 110). In the context of Seychelles, René's repudiation of *grigri* occurred while he simultaneously proclaimed the need to expand capitalist operations in order to transition to socialism. Just as Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) recognised that the many-headed hydra was not just a figure of speech but a declaration of violent intent, so too should the explicit declaration against *grigri* be recognised. As discussed in Chapter 5, many practitioner research participants had

been harassed by the police based on their association with *grigri*. These were not, of course, isolated incidents, but part of a campaign that intensified during the SPUP/SPPF era, particularly in the 70s and 80s. In his own words, Police Commissioner James Pillay commandeered an eradication campaign involving police 'raids on gris-gris houses' that intended to continue until [the country [was] rid of it] (Franda 1982). In line with my research questions, which have sought to understand the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness in Seychelles, my concern here is with the SPUP/SPPF's abjection of *grigri* from the Creole canon despite its so-called Africanness – or rather, because of it – along with what this move reveals about the operation of racialised modernity/coloniality. Put differently, why was *grigri* in particular seen as hostile to the modern Creole nation state while other Afro-Creole traditions and artefacts were not, and what might the operation of racialised modernity/coloniality have to do with this?

To answer these questions, it is useful to look to colonial discourse and legal codes in Seychelles, Africa, and the African diaspora more broadly. The elements that the SPUP/SPPF focused on were well established attributes of a racialised threat model constructed by white colonial regimes centuries prior to the establishment of Seychelles as a colony. The anti-superstitious proclamation in the SPPF's policy statement, for example, was already enshrined in a Seychelles penal code 20 years earlier by the colonial British administration. The title of this code was, and remains to this day, 'Pretending to deal in witchcraft and offences connected therewith', and is articulated as follows:

303. (1) Any person who -

> *(a) pretends to deal in witchcraft; or*
>
> *(b) pretends to tell fortunes; or*
>
> *(c) uses or pretends to use subtle craft, means or device by witchcraft, charms or other like superstitious means, to deceive or to impose upon any other person or to cause fear, annoyance or injury to another in mind, person or property; or*
>
> *(d) employs or solicits any person to advise him on any matter for any purpose whatsoever by witchcraft, non-natural or other like superstitious means; or*
>
> *(e) has in his possession any charm or poison or thing which he intends for use either by himself or by some other person for the purpose of any act punishable under paragraph (a), (b) or (c) of this subsection,*

is guilty of a misdemeanour (Act 4 1958)

Another entry of this same Act, worded slightly differently, prohibits anyone acting on the advice of a practitioner who would be guilty of the above misdemeanour (Act 4 1958). These laws still apply in Seychelles today and have, at least in theory, prohibited anything associated with '*grigri'*. This includes the possession of *grigri* artefacts, consulting a *grigri* practitioner, or acting on the advice of a practitioner – particularly to 'influence or affect the mind, feelings or judgment of any person or to injure any person or any property' (Act 4 1958). Rather than abolishing this specific aspect of Seychelles' colonial foundations, René's anti-superstition declaration reified this colonial penal code and further authorised its enforcement by police. In doing this, René was inherently maintaining a campaign that has, for centuries, targeted non-white peoples throughout Europe's colonies as well as women in Europe (Federici 2014; 2018). Before examining the colonial lineage of the penal code in Seychelles, it is useful to consider the more immediate Christian context in which René's convictions can be situated.

As noted in Chapter 2, the introduction of laws concerning witchcraft coincided with anti-superstition campaigns by the Catholic Church in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Certain campaigns, such as those against *Vodou*, climaxed in the Americas in the 1940s (L. Dubois 2012, 258). In the 19th and 20th centuries in Seychelles, there was overlap between anti-witchcraft campaigns and religious persecution that included the efforts of Archdeacon Ozanne (1936), Father Theophile (Thomas 1968, 43–44), the prohibition of *moutya* in the 1930s (Seychelles Government 1935) and its connection to 'voodoo rites' (Ozanne 1936, 112; Thomas 1968, 60), and the broader evangelising efforts of the Catholic Church (Chang-Him 2002, 48–50; B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 143–44; Franda 1982, 18; Lamport 2018, 716; Mathiot 2017). In Benedict's ethnography of *grigri* in the 1960s, one Swiss Capuchin expressed their concerns with how Seychellois 'believe in *gris gris*, an African word they use, meaning witchcraft', and how Seychellois 'worship hate, not love – the devil, not god' (B. Benedict and Benedict 1982, 12–13). Other noted concerns included drunkenness, illiteracy, promiscuity, poverty, and idleness, the alleged presence of which, for this Swiss Capuchin, characterised Seychellois outside the category of the human: 'They are not people; they are pigs!' (Benedict and Benedict 1982, 13). This sentiment reflected a broader Western characterisation of Africans shaped by Capuchins from the 17th century onwards. Africans were seen to be riddled with the 'defects' of 'arrogance, shamelessness, laziness, ineptitude' and barbarism in general, and deploying this sentiment helped justify the conquest, murder, and enslavement of Africans for centuries (Bethencourt 2013, 87; Riahi 2017, 65).

While René's initial SPUP/SPPF policies were ostensibly opposed to the Church, he had first sought to become a Swiss Capuchin before entering law and politics (Künzler 2018, 3–4; Scarr 2000, 172; Ernesta and Mathiot 2019). Such a vocational beginning may provide some insight into why Rene's foundational positions appear to reflect the Church's racist characterisations of Africanness and *grigri*. Looking to Paton (2009, 2), the very concept of religion can be viewed as a 'race-making category' that, since the Enlightenment, has distinguished 'religion' from '*witchcraft, magic* [and] *superstition*'. This boundary-marking technique, Paton continues, has been used to delineate 'supposedly "civilized" peoples (who practice religion) and "primitive" peoples (who practice superstition or magic)', where practices like obeah have been associated with the latter (ibid.). The creation of specific penal codes that prohibited witchcraft institutionalised such distinctions. As Maggie (1992, 33) asserted in the case of Brazil, the state was able to use a similar legal code to construct, reify, and reinforce the distinction between religion and magic and, in doing so, further facilitate the establishment of class stratification and racial order. Johnson contended that 'Afro-Brazilian religions were considered a dangerous detriment to national progress' and 'a civil threat to public health'[21] that represented an 'ideological development' (2001, 19). Similar antagonisms between the nation state and witchcraft in the African diaspora are suggested in this thesis. Indeed, the timing and content of various colonial penal codes and anti-superstition campaigns of the Church could be described as collaboration rather than coincidence.

The making of the 1958 penal code by the British came relatively late in a trend of similar colonial laws made elsewhere in Africa and throughout the African diaspora. These developments occurred during a similar period to Christian campaigns against not just witchcraft, but practices associated with Africanness, such as the 1935 banning of *moutya* that has already been discussed. These acts figured into a broader pattern of persecution throughout Africa and the African diaspora. Laws prohibiting obeah, for example, were made in various Caribbean colonies between 1760 and 1927, including in Guyana, Jamaica, and the Bahamas (Boaz 2017, 427–28). As noted by Johnson (2001, 19) through a translation of Maggie's work (1992), an existing penal code was amended in 1890 Brazil, soon after the abolition of slavery, to prohibit the use of magic to influence health, sentiments, and public belief. In the African region, the earliest colonial laws concerning witchcraft were introduced in 1879 in South African Transkei, which were argued by Boaz (2020) to have influenced anti-witchcraft legislation throughout Britain's African colonies. According to Boaz,

[21] While beyond the scope of this thesis, the observation regarding public health threats reflects concerns raised to me by a Ministry of Health official, in which *sorsye* were considered a threat to public health due to their allegedly ineffective and near-fatal provision of herbal abortion and alternative medicine.

anti-witchcraft campaigns in the eastern Cape were critical to colonial projects just as they likely were throughout the rest of Africa. Examples of the latter include ordinances in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika throughout the 20th century, with a heightened focus in South and East Africa in the years leading up to, but also sometime after, the establishment of republics and independence from the United Kingdom (Lambert 2012; Orde Browne 1935; Boaz 2020; Wallace 2015). Wallace (2015, 34) has suggested that anti-witchcraft legislation deployed throughout Africa was based on a Christian interpretation of witchcraft, which is indicated in the mirroring of South Africa's Witchcraft Suppression Act 3 of 1957 and the British Witchcraft Act of 1735.

While the introduction of anti-witchcraft laws in particularly British colonies occurred over a period of some 200 years, these laws were similar in several ways. Similarities include their timing but also their simultaneously specific and abstract content. Boaz (2017) has identified similarities between various obeah laws in the Caribbean that span from the particular language used to the vagueness with which obeah has been defined and prohibited. A colonial antecedent to the various laws prohibiting obeah, Vodoun, and *grigri* can be found in English law. Federici (2014) examined this in extensive detail with reference to the development and expansion of capitalism, while Boaz (2017) directly traced the English lineage of obeah laws in the Caribbean. For Boaz, such laws in England were developed from the mid-1500s to 1735 (2017, 428–29). Further similarities between these laws and those in Africa and throughout the African diaspora can be seen in, for example, the use of the terms 'non-natural' and 'pretending'. However, as Boaz has noted, the last known witchcraft conviction in England was of Jane Wenham in 1712, who was later granted full reprieve. The legal suppression of witchcraft then ended, at least in England, with a new 1735 statute. This was followed by a 'period of indifference' and a shift in law to a focus on 'pretending' to possess supernatural powers. Soon after this shift, however, renewed efforts against witchcraft began in the New World, which had a distinctive racial character compared to their English precedents.

While Boaz (2017, 423–24) outlined how obeah laws were initially modelled on 'British statutes banning vagrancy' and their 'ideals about witchcraft and sorcery', Federici (2014) goes further in establishing a segue from the British imaginary to the colony. 'By the 18th century', Federici contends, 'the witch was becoming an African practitioner of *obeah*, a ritual that the planters feared and demonized as an incitement to rebellion' (2014, 237). Significantly, the infamous Salem witch trials 'were sparked by the divinations of a West Indian slave – Tituba' (2014, 237), and the last recorded witch execution in an English-speaking territory has been described as an enslaved black woman, Sarah Basset, who was murdered in Bermuda in 1730 (Daly 1978, 179). Seychelles saw witch hunts and trials, from public persecutions in the early 20th century to police raids in the 70s

and 80s under the SPUP/SPPF, but the absence of executions was potentially the result of witch executions going out of fashion in Europe and the Americas prior to even the establishment of Seychelles as a colony. What is saliently congruent with those earlier colonial practices, however, is the way in which *grigri* in Seychelles has been racialised.

Federici bases the Africanisation of the witch in the shifting of targets from white European women to non-white, and particularly black peoples in the Americas. Such a claim is underscored by the linear succession of witchcraft laws that expanded from England to Europe's colonies. This can be traced from laws in England in the 1500s to 1735 but followed swiftly by obeah laws and the like in Caribbean colonies from 1760 to 1927 that climaxed in the anti-superstition campaigns of the 1940s. These then overlap with the development of anti-witchcraft laws in the African region from 1879 in Transkei to, among others, the Seychelles' penal code that prohibited witchcraft in 1958. This timeline of developments traces the various times and places that witchcraft has served as a useful proxy with which to persecute women in Europe and non-white peoples in the colonies. In Tituba, the famous Salem witch, lies a salient nexus of the racialisation of the witch. While there are suggestions that Tituba may have been Creole (Martin 2012, chap. 1), or 'the product of an emergent Creole culture' (Breslaw 1997, 537), descriptions of Tituba's 'own race [have] changed from Indian, to half-Indian and half-Negro, to Negro' (Hansen 1974, 3). Further, what Tituba has been said to practice has similarly evolved from being English, to Indian, to African, with Tituba even being described as 'a Negro practicing voodoo' (Hansen 1974). In documenting the 'blackening' of Tituba, Hansen notes that the metamorphosis was a racist one in which witches and witchcraft featured productively, but in the end the basic information about Tituba suggests that she 'was a Carib Indian who seems to have been involved in practicing English magic' (1974, 5, 12).

The shifting ways in which Tituba's identity and practice have been racialised strongly reflect how, in my assessment, *grigri* has been racialised in terms of blackness and Africanness in Seychelles despite the basic information suggesting it is probably creolised, on an ongoing basis, from at least Europe, Africa, and Asia. With reference to Webb's (1966, 36) earlier notes on Seychelles, Benedict acknowledges that '[i]t is often said in Seychelles that Africans brought belief in witchcraft with them' but suggests 'it is also probably true that beliefs in witchcraft were imported by Europeans' (1982, 144). Despite witchcraft beliefs existing in both Europe and Africa, Benedict continues, certain objects used in witchcraft in Seychelles were evidently European, such as packs of playing cards, and the forms of witchcraft in contemporary Seychelles were seemingly 'as much European as African' (Benedict and Benedict 1982, 144).

The Europeanness of *grigri* could be seen to exist in the practice of *Ptit Albert,* to use one example, which has been linked to a French Grimoire of the same name, *Petit Albert,* by Albertus Magnus, the Catholic Saint (Mahoune 1987, 7; Thomas 1968, 44). Many terms associated with *grigri* in Seychelles are derived from French: *Bonnonm dibwa*, from *bonhomme de bois*, which means 'man of the woods' in French; *raspay*, which is a creolisation of French author François-Vincent Raspail, whose writings on medicinal plants are reflected in *bonnonm dibwa* knowledge and praxis (Mahoune 1987, 8); *sorsye,* which is from the French word *sorcier,* or sorcerer in English; and other terms that have similarly direct French origins (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982). The language of *grigri* appears to be mostly French, then, rather than of African origin. Only a few terms specific to the *grigri* lexicon appear to be African in origin, such as *dandosya,* which holds a similar meaning to the East African Yao word *ndondoca* (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 68). Yet, despite the overwhelming evidence suggesting that '*grigri'* is both Creole and creolised, the SPUP/SPPF adopted colonial signifiers which suggest that *grigri* is a relic of a pre-modern Africanness in Seychelles. In this sense, both the political discourse and mainstream discourse discussed in Chapter 4 reinforce each other, such that *grigri* is abjected from the domain of permissible Creole attributes.

In their examination of witchcraft, race, and racism in the English imagination, O'Neal (2020) makes an important claim about prevailing conflations of blackness, Africanness, and witchcraft that helpfully positions my analysis of *grigri's* racialisation in Seychelles:

Over and over again, writers made the point that Obeah was intertwined with blackness, was synonymous with black people; the blacker (or more African) the Negro, the more savage and superstitious he was and the more removed from the restraints of white civilization. According to whites, all blacks believed in Obeah, and this supposedly innate belief symbolized their inferiority – the blackness outside was mirrored by an interior spiritual darkness that would confound all efforts at racial advancement. Obeah men and women in literature were almost always Africans direct from Africa, even in works set long after the abolition of the slave trade. (O'Neal 2020, 14).

O'Neal's assessment reflects my own observations, particularly in chapters 4 and 5, where instead of being a creolised and contemporary concept, the presence of *grigri* in Seychelles is frequently distantiated as a historical import of enslaved Africans or the contemporary migration and influence of mainland Africans and Madagascans. The racialisation and prohibition of witchcraft by colonial authorities might be seen as inextricable from white anxieties and the nation state, which are both inherently concerned with racial order (Lentin and Lentin 2006). The first obeah statutes, for

example, were implemented in Jamaica in 1760 immediately following a significant rebellion of enslaved peoples. This statute prohibited 'any negro or slave' from 'pretending' to possess any item used in obeah or witchcraft, or 'pretending' to possess supernatural powers. Like the prohibition of Afro-Brazilian religions, the 1760 Jamaican ordinance was made with the intention of protecting national interests, namely the security of Jamaica in the face of perceived risks posed by obeah and obeah practitioners (2017, 428–29). In the shadow of the Haitian revolution, the Haitian penal code from eighteen thirty-five similarly focused on outlawing the tangible methods, tools, and practitioners rather than specifying and defining the abstract and unknowable qualities of magic (Ramsey 2011, 102–3). In both cases, the efficacy of witchcraft was less of a concern than a belief in witchcraft and the power of practitioners potentiating social unrest, disorder, and revolt. As discussed in Chapter 2, magic, social revolt, and racial degradation have intersected with the figure of the Creole that were forged in white anxieties about the Haitian revolution. In the context of a Black Radical Tradition, Robinson (2000), too, recognised the entanglements of obeah, Creoles, Rasta, and social revolt among enslaved and freed peoples of the African diaspora. Robinson even connected these themes with marronage and the 'Bush Negro', which represent ostracised, racialised, and resistant figures not dissimilar to how *bonnonm dibwa* have been characterised in Seychelles.

If magic has been understood as a vector of irrationality and disorder, then it is useful to examine this sentiment in relation to social revolt. The Africanisation of the witch and the prominent figure of the feared and demonised obeah practitioner who incited rebellion is not an example that exists in isolation (Federici 2014, 237; Savage 2007, 637). Popular discourse suggests that Vodoun was vital in inciting the Haitian Revolution, which allegedly began with a Vodoun ceremony at *Bwa Kayiman*. Thylefors (2009) states that evidence of this popular attribution is unclear, but nevertheless asserts that Vodoun rituals have commonly preceded revolutionary activities in Haiti. The lack of evidence to support this, however, does not stop the idea from riddling popular imaginaries with white anxieties. The Haitian Revolution has contributed to anti-establishment rhetoric in Seychellois in the past (Scarr 2000, 58, 65), and tropes concerning Haiti have shaped the political psyche concerning *grigri* and Creoleness in Seychelles. Even the conflicted repudiation of *grigri* in Seychelles reflects that of Vodou in Haiti: Vodou has been, on the one hand, closely linked to Haitian identity while, on the other, rejected as a 'cause of underdevelopment' and 'an expression of mental backwardness' (Thylefors 2009, 74). If Europeanness has been conflated with intelligence, social progress, and development, then such attributes would position witchcraft as antithetical to Europeanness because it is counterproductive to 'development' and 'forwardness'. In this sense, what might be seen as inherently criminal about magic is its ability to to mobilise

populations in ways that disrupt capitalist order, which would reflect the concerns shared in René's stories about cutlery adoption and the Rasta problem.

As Lentin argues, race functions as a 'technology' of power 'for the management of human difference, the main goal of which is the production, reproduction, and maintenance of white supremacy on both a local and planetary scale' (2020, 5). Witchcraft might provide a useful proxy in this configuration if, as Karina contends, it occupies a position on the margins that is threatening and, as such, embodies abjection (Karina 2021, 12). How, then, might the functioning of race as a technology of power be linked to the positioning of witchcraft as abject, and the racialisation of witchcraft as African? Using a view from race studies that holds blackness to represent a locus of abjection, one possible way of doing this is by seeing a connection between the vague abjection of witchcraft throughout the colonial world and the SPUP/SPPF's view of *grigri* as antagonistic to national progress. If *grigri* in Seychelles has been epistemologically linked to a pre-modern and socially volatile domain of Africanness, then the SPUP/SPPF's management of this discursively constructed domain of racialised difference could be thought of as a component of racial power.

There are, I have suggested, global similarities in anti-superstition penal codes and their deployment as tools of patriarchal and racial power. These consistencies suggest that the abjection and racialisation of *grigri* in Seychelles adopted a gendered and racialised logic that has underpinned European civilisation and colonial expansion. If witchcraft has served as a proxy and signifier for this project, then this alignment might suggest that race can operate as a technology of power and cannot be reduced to corporeality alone. While nuanced, the racialised components of the SPUP/SPPF's political campaigns point to how the configuration of modern Creole subjects and the abjection of *grigri* and Africanness might be connected, just as racialised domains of witchcraft throughout the African diaspora have been positioned as antagonistic to the development and maintenance of colonial states.

6.6 The Discursive Construction of Modern Creole Subjects and the Discursive Destruction of Pre-Modern Abjects

What white people have to do, is to try to find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place, because I'm not a nigger, I'm a man, but if you think I'm a nigger, it means you need it. (Baldwin 1989, 45)

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon 1986, 9)

This section attempts to strip the SPUP/SPPF's project of its local trappings and make sense of its underpinning logic in a broader global and theoretical landscape. To do this, I look to extralocal examples while paying closer attention to theories of abjection and racialised modernity/coloniality. Wolf (1982b) observed the need for such meta-analyses when he critiqued the emphasis on 'turning dynamic, interconnected phenomena into static, disconnected things' given humankind's constitution as a 'totality of interconnected processes', the reality of which is falsified when things are disassembled but not reassembled through inquiry (1982b, 3).

I begin this discussion with a premise before moving on to how others have thought through similar topics. My starting premise is this: in constructing modern Creole subjects as, but also in opposition to Africanness, certain qualities of Africanness constituted an internal threat to the integrity of modern Creoleness. Given the ways in which Africanness and Creoleness have been co-constitutive, political authorities and subjects alike sought for these qualities to be *pushed out from within* the domain of modern Creoleness rather than attempt that they be *kept out* of an already Afro-creolised domain. Dealing with this contradiction became not just an objective of the SPUP/SPPF but a justification for its own project, as the rhetoric cited throughout this chapter has indicated. The discursive construction of a pre-modern Africanness by the SPUP/SPPF, where *grigri* might be seen as an archetypical manifestation of said Africanness, and the designation of this racialised assemblage to the past, suggests the establishment of a constitutive outside to the subject domain of modern Creoleness. As this chapter has discussed, if the SPUP/SPPF's characterisations of *grigri* have signified Africanness *qua* blackness, then the SPUP/SPPF's objective of liberating Creoles from the conditions of slavery – which the SPUP/SPPF determined

as lasting until the 1977 *coup d'état* – could also be seen as a quest to liberate Creoles from the perceived destitution of blackness itself.

To contextualise the rationale for this premise, it is useful to return to Chapter 2's discussion of binary logics. For Mignolo (2011a), the 'darker side of modernity' denotes a time in which a modern power emerged from the Enlightenment and particularly the colonisation of the globe by Europe. Here, Europe was at the centre of the world and modernity was the world's logical historical endpoint. One of the major conceptual pillars of Western civilisation, which Mignolo (2011b) argues was only conceptualised in the 1500s, was the 'spatial construction of the "barbarians," new and old'. Based on Mignolo's analysis, 'external barbarians' included Indians and enslaved black peoples, while 'internal barbarians' included, historically, Lutherans and Calvinists. The racialisation of the planet was another major conceptual pillar, Mignolo contends, in which 'global linear thinking' categorised the world in terms of colonial difference primarily delineated by Europe *qua* the civilised, and non-Europe *qua* the uncivilised. As outlined in Chapter 2, this binary may have a longer history that underpins the logic of civilisation itself, in which 'barbarians' were a category against which to render the sovereignty of the 'civilised' (Kelley 2000a; 2000b), or as a 'dark twin' thesis, where civilised-barbarian pairs were 'born together as twins' (J. C. Scott 2017, 247–49). Robinson (2000) recognised the historical presence of a racial logic within European civilisation that preceded the concept of race and identified an 'exclusive conception of humanity [that] was molded' in the figure of the 'Negro', through which whiteness was forged. This figure was constructed as an 'opposition to white', lacking in temporal, cultural, spatial, ethno- or political situatedness, and was absent in civilisation, culture, religion, history, place. A perceived lack of humanity allowed the concept of the 'Negro' to be used to signify 'a collection of things of convenience for use and/or eradication' (2000, 185). Collectively, these discussions suggest the existence of a binary logic central to European civilisation itself. This logic has held various qualities to be antagonistic but also co-constitutive, such that newness, modernness, and being civilised have come to be racialised as white and in contrast with an oldness, primitiveness, and barbarity that has come to be racialised as, in particular, black and African.

If this binary logic is accepted to be co-constitutive, such that each requires the other to exist, then abjection theory can help provide insight into this relation. Kristeva (1982), drawing on Bataille (1957), highlighted how abjection relies on weak prohibitions. The 'weakness' is in effect an inability to successfully 'exclude' or obliterate that which is designated as abject. This weakness is not necessarily unintentional. Indeed, Kristeva (1982) saw the 'production of the abject' and its constant prohibition as necessary for the construction of social order. The example given by

Kristeva is of purification rites, where the key function is to 'separate this or that social, sexual, or age group from another one, by means of prohibiting a filthy, defiling element.' As the purpose of the rite is to rid an entity of an abject element, the abject element is itself the inherent reason for the existence of the rite. The logic of prohibition, then, depends on 'dividing lines' being drawn between certain elements 'on the basis of the simple logic of *excluding filth*' so that a subject can be defined as being free of said filth (1982, 64–65). The presence of the abject, and as such the ongoing need for its prohibition to be enforced, legitimises the power used to protect the subject from defilement (1982, 68–70). Progressing from this theoretical basis, the discursive construction of *grigri* as a domain that conjoins Africanness, primitiveness, and irrationality might be seen as a useful target object for the SPUP/SPPF to prohibit. In addition, the SPUP/SPPF may have seen utility in maintaining rather than destroying *grigri* to retain the content against which their project has been justified, and modern Creole subjects have been rendered.

As an alleged relic of Seychellois' Africanness, the prohibition of *grigri* as a fundamental policy of Creole nationalism suggests an antinomic relationship. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ever-present threat of *grigri* usefully positioned the SPUP/SPPF's policies as the necessary means with which to prevent the racial regression of Creoles. For Butler (1993), the domain inhabited and defined by normative beings is formed using an exclusionary matrix. To define what is included there must be something to exclude, and it is on this basis that the subject depends on the existence of the abject. The abject, Butler continues, forms 'the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject' and 'is required to circumscribe' the subject domain by providing its 'defining limit'. The formation of the subject is made possible 'through the force of exclusion and abjection' through 'a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge.' Butler's analysis situates the abject as both 'a threatening spectre' to the subject and a figure that the subject domain depends on to articulate its own form of identification (1993, 3,112). The theory of subject-abject relationality can help contextualise the suggestion that *grigri* has been cast out of the domain of modern Creoleness while also highlighting the political utility of retaining and positioning *grigri* as a threatening spectre.

Abjection theory can be expanded upon further with the afro-pessimist suggestion that categories of 'non-Black must establish their boundaries' by 'having a recognizable self *within*', a process which necessitates 'an outside', a '*without*', where anti-blackness designates blackness as 'the dark matter surrounding and holding together the categories of non-Black' (Racked & Dispatched 2017, 9–10). Hartman discusses the abjection of blackness in the context of racial formation, in which the United States has relied upon 'the creation of an internal danger to the purity of the body politic' (Hartman 1997, 119). With reference to events surrounding the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights

Acts, Hartman notes how the ‘abjection of blackness’ played a role in the incorporation of black people as citizens while simultaneously requiring the exclusion and containment of blackness to preserve the integrity of whiteness (1997, 163). Such efforts, Hartman continues, facilitated new relations of domination rather than abolishing old ones due to the ‘ambiguous legacy of universalism’ and a fixation on ‘transforming the formerly enslaved into rational, acquisitive, and responsible individuals’ (Hartman 1997, 4–10). Hartman’s assessment of how relations of domination and formerly enslaved peoples were transformed in the context of black liberation points to tensions that are similar to how the SPUP/SPPF contradictorily imbricated its own efforts towards black liberation in Seychelles.

Importantly, my assessment of *grigri* as a racialised proxy considers anti-blackness differently to, in particular, the somewhat essentialist characterisation of blackness by theorists like Wilderson (2020). Here, to borrow from Hesse (2007), my analysis leans towards a consideration of anti-blackness as a dynamic mechanism through which race is configured ‘beyond corporeality’ as ‘assemblages of ‘Europeanness’’ and constructed in opposition to ‘non-Europeanness’. From this position, modernity itself can be understood ‘as a historical and discursive ‘European’/’non-European’ colonial process.’ *Grigri* could be seen as subject to this process where it is referenced as a signifier of an ever-lurking irrational and primitive Africanness that risks drawing Seychellois (back) into slaveness. Building on previous theorisations, Ikeotuonye (2006) has positioned race as part of a contradictory antagonistic binary in which modernity/coloniality has been produced, which has included the ‘modern agonistic of mind and body, nurture and nature’, as well as ‘master and slave’ and ‘capital and labour’ (Ikeotuonye 2006, 72). In Bauman’s (1989) work on the holocaust and modernity, a society-as-garden metaphor is used to describe the operation of modernity in terms of the cultivation of desirable plants and the extermination of weeds. Progressing from Bauman, Ikeotuonye (2006) recognised modernity’s linking of destruction with creation and a hierarchical establishment of perfection that is necessarily built on the subjugated imperfect. The SPUP/SPPF’s infantilisation of Creoles might exhibit a similar relation, where modernity’s hierarchical destruction-creation binary could be located in René’s conception of Creoles as irrational children unwilling to let go of the ‘old’, which had to be destroyed, to make way for the ‘new’.

The observable tension between *grigri* and the construction of modern Creole subjects can be explained as stemming from the shame associated with a colonial past. As a historical relic, *grigri* has been located in this colonial past as a relic of enslavement and pre-modern Africanness. C. L. R. James suggested a similar racial tension among West Indians, whose conceptions of liberty he saw as based in a quest to rid themselves ‘of the particular burden which is the special inheritance of the

black skin' (1980, 177). This can be connected to what Patterson (1982a, 258) claimed of West Indians, where the a 'total break' with 'a consciousness of the past' has represented the 'most important legacy of slavery'. This chapter has outlined several instances where the SPUP/SPPF exhibited a similar desire to enact breaks with a past described in terms of slaveness, Africanness, irrationality, and superstition. It is with this exclusionary schema – from the single logic that Federici (2014) identified to the matrices present throughout European civilisation-building – that the antagonistic relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness might be understood.

Kelley has suggested a 'deliberate destruction of the past' can lead to a 'reinvention of the colonized' if everything 'advanced, good, and civilized' is 'defined and measured in European terms' (2000a, 9, 27). By paternalizing Seychellois to save them from an abject *grigri*, the authority of the SPUP/SPPF could be seen as having relied upon what Kelley saw as the 'sense of superiority' that colonial powers used to justify civilising missions by 'turning the Other into a barbarian'. Without this abject Other, those with political power would have 'no purpose, no justification for the exploitation and domination of the rest of the world' (ibid. 2000a, 9). As a post-colony, however, the SPUP/SPPF focused on establishing a break with an enslaved African past. For Robinson, the 'obliteration of the African past' by Europe was 'the culmination of a process a thousand years long and one at the root of European historical identity' (2000, 82). If modern Creoleness has been discursively constructed with the use of an exclusionary matrix modelled on Europeanness, and contingent on the destruction of an Africanised past, then it could be argued that the political authority of the SPUP/SPPF inherently reified, rather than absolutely challenged, the very colonial logic that it sought to resist.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the SPUP/SPPF's political discourse and modernisation programme proxied *grigri* as a floating signifier racialised in terms of Africanness in a range of ways. Consistent with Federici's (2018; 2014) arguments, one possible explanation is that witchcraft has presented an epistemological and material threat to the development of a disciplined capitalist labour force, which the SPUP/SPPF sought to instil in the modern Creole nation. The second explanation, related to the first, is that witchcraft could be seen as a threat to the sovereign power of Seychelles as a postcolonial African state. Karina (2021) has described this kind of threat in terms of racialised phantasms surrounding witchcraft, where witchcraft has represented a 'most shamefully savage' pre-modern Blackness, of 'African primitivity', and as such the presence of witchcraft – real or imagined – has posed a threat to the African postcolony's claim to modernity.

The third suggestion is that the SPUP/SPPF positioned *grigri* as a pervasive racialised threat because this fear was exploitable, because Creoleness and Africanness could not be decoupled, and because *grigri* would evade eradication due to its ambiguity. The positioning of *grigri* as a signifier of pre-modern Africanness helped to rationalise postcolonial sovereignty and define the appropriate ontological and epistemological parameters of modern Creoleness.

If race can be viewed as a technology of power to manage and exploit human difference, and modernity can be thought of in terms of Europeanness, then this chapter offers the suggestion that *grigri* has provided a racialised proxy with which to develop Seychellois in terms of Europeanness. The legal lineage and colonial discourse traced in this chapter also suggests that the SPUP/SPPF inherited a position on witchcraft that Europe has deployed throughout the world for colonial purposes. As Chapter 5 foreshadowed, some Seychellois, particularly practitioners, have refused and resisted these terms in various ways. The next chapter continues this discussion with a focus on Creole responses to the terms of modernity/coloniality in the context of Seychelles.

Chapter 7. *Grigri* and Decoloniality

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the various ways in which the domain of *grigri* can be understood in relation to decoloniality in Seychelles. When I refer to *grigri* as being an aspect of decolonial practice in Seychelles, or as a form of decoloniality, I rely on Mignolo's (2011a, 54) conception of decoloniality as 'the analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to build a world in which many worlds will coexist.' Mignolo distinguishes decoloniality from decolonisation, where the latter aims at 'forming sovereign nation-states out of the ruins of the colonies' while the former aims at 'decolonial horizons of liberation beyond state designs, and corporate and financial desires' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 125).

This distinction between decolonisation and decoloniality somewhat resolves the contradiction between the decolonising aims of the SPUP/SPPF, who sought national sovereignty on anti-colonial terms, and for *grigri* to be expressed as a creative refusal of the terms of the modern Creole state. That is, the SPUP/SPPF enacted a project of decolonisation while *grigri*, in many but not always coherent or consistent ways, moves beyond the premise of the nation state and modernity itself. To tend to the complexity of *grigri's* position as the latter, I use Graeber's (2013) conception of 'creative refusal' as an act of self-definition that is based on the active rejection of dominant forces. This is useful because, as Graeber explains, acts of creative refusal are a complicated mix of strategies that often involve mutual self-definition. This concept reflects Scott's (2017, 248) claim that 'barbarians' were the 'dark twin' of the 'civilized', where in many ways each depended on the existence of the o/Other. These theoretical concepts tally with the claim of this thesis that the abjection of *grigri* and its discursive construction has been central to the formulation of modern Creoleness, while proponents of *grigri* similarly render both personhood and their strategies of resistance in opposition to the terms of modern Creole order. This chapter explores examples of the latter. In doing so, it responds to my research questions about what the term *grigri* refers to, how *grigri* is situated in Creole culture, and how race and modernity/coloniality feature in answers to these questions.

Various elements of *grigri's* domain are explored in this chapter, wherein I make the claim that *grigri* can be understood in terms of decoloniality by focusing on two things. The first is the *dandosya*, which I argue to be a creolised figure through which coloniality is critiqued in the contexts of chattel enslavement and capitalist alienation alike. The second area focuses on contexts

within which *grigri* emerges as a decolonial option, where accounts and experiences relating to justice and mysterious harm unsettle and disrupt the logic of coloniality.

7.2 The Spectre of the *Dandosya*

Although no longer the extension and instrument of the master's absolute right or dominion, the laboring black body remained a medium of others' power and representation. (Hartman 1997, 120)

The *dandosya* is a central and prevalent feature in the discourse on *grigri*. While I have already outlined and suggested that some people believe in *grigri* and others do not, the figure of the *dandosya* occupies a more complex albeit common space in folklore that is sometimes discussed independently of *grigri*, but is nevertheless associated with *grigri*. As such, my research into the meanings and references of *grigri* necessarily requires an analysis of the figure of the *dandosya*. Like *grigri*, the figure of the *dandosya* is many things to different people, each of whom may hold varying degrees of 'belief' in *grigri* itself.

The word *dandosya* is likely derived from the word '*ndondoča'* in the Yao language of Tanzania, which refers to a dead person who is 'brought back to semi-life by witchcraft' (Baker 1993b, 142), and is translated into English as 'zombie' in the *Kreolische Bibliothek* (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 68). To define *dandosya* as 'zombie', however, lacks nuance. Both 'zombie' and '*dandosya'* embody similar meanings: a deceased person who is brought back to semi-life and, in the case of the *dandosya*, is enslaved to the person who made them or bought them. Though many people find *dandosya* horrifying, it is not strictly speaking because *dandosya* themselves represent a threat to other people. The likely heritage of the word *dandosya* being Tanzania, from which many Africans were enslaved and forcibly transported to Creole colonies, makes the historical basis of this figure in the slave trade and displacement compelling, but does not constrain the relevance of the *dandosya* to a historical colonial era.

While the *dandosya* evoked fear, it was not a fear of the *dandosya* itself but of becoming a *dandosya*. With this in mind, I examine the currency of the *dandosya* as well as the historical contexts from which the *dandosya* emerged. I approach this analysis in the same way that Taussig analyses devil-beliefs in South America: as an image or 'text' that is inscribed with a cultural fear and consciousness (2010, 96). I contend, then, that the figure of the *dandosya* is most usefully understood as a metaphor and creolised figure ascribed with various meanings concerning chattel slavery but also relations of domination that persist in the capitalist present.

7.2.1 Jealousy, Poison, and Unseen Forces: The Social Science of Zombies

The *dandosya*, like *grigri*, is an artefact of creolisation produced through myriad inputs that have been used in various and conflicting ways to engage with coloniality. On the one hand, the *dandosya* allows relations of domination to be read, engaged with, and cautioned against. On the other, as I note in this section, the *dandosya* provides a way to establish connections to other sites of the diaspora, such as Haiti, and formulate common analyses of shared experiences.

In one discussion about *dandosya*, research participants Loïc and Albert used Haiti as a reference point for explaining the history and constitution of the *dandosya* in Seychelles:

***Albert**: In nineteen-sixty-four there was a big rain for one week, non-stop rain, torrential rain, and one night about ten thirty there was a man knocking on the door outside, soaking wet in the rain. He came in begging for food at my father's place and my mother said to my father "kick him with a baton or a stick" but my father just said to him "go away, go away" and my grandmother inside just keep quiet. He was hungry and nobody feed him… he die about three or four months before he appeared at my father's place. I think [my grandmother] was the one responsible for it, and my father knows about it. She used to boil breadfruit and jackfruit without any salt because they say dandosya doesn't eat salt.*

***Loïc**: Because with the zonm lib… in Haiti they would say that. You can give shark meat or whatever… but you don't put any salt in it so you do not neutralise the thing that you've given them.*

***Me**: How did he become a dandosya?*

***Albert**: Some people say that you die but it's a trick, you know, just like in Haiti, the Caribbean you know. They poison you with something that the doctor don't realise what's going on.*

***Loïc**: A dandosya, the person is dead, and the person uses them. There is something here called fler koray -*

***Albert**: - and puffer fish… they grind and make into a powder, you can sleep for 48 hours.*

As other chapters have shown, Haiti is frequently referenced to make sense of various aspects of Creoleness in Seychelles by Seychellois and non-Seychellois alike. One *bonnonm dibwa* participant, Dominique, drew on Wade Davis' work and popular film on Haitian zombies (2010;

1988) to help explain the science behind the *dandosya* phenomenon. Davis (1988, 129, 145) claims Datura, or Devil's Trumpet, was used in Haiti to poison people and turn them into zombies. Datura is a delirium that creates an inability to differentiate reality from fantasy and is known as *fler pwason* in Creole. I saw many *fler pwason* growing near my fieldwork residence and heard it referenced by various *bonnonm dibwa* on separate occasions. Many understandings of *dandosya* reflected what Davis observed in Haiti of zombies. *Dandosya* and Haitian zombies, for example, were both able to be returned to their human states by consuming salt. *Sorsye* and *houngan* – Seychellois sorcerers and Haitian Vodou practitioners, respectively – can acquire the undead by stealing their bodies from graves and leaving stones in their place; Dominique gave me a tour of the main cemetery and showed me several stone-filled graves and a tomb that had been meddled with (see Figure 10.), all of which he said were sites of *grigri* conduct.

Figure 10. Disturbed gravesites

The image on the left is of a grave filled with stones; the image on the right is of an old tomb a caretaker showed us, which had its encasing stones removed. Both were described by Dominique as sites of grigri conduct, where bodies and parts of bodies were removed from graves to be used in rituals. The caretaker confirmed this and stated that he would often find disturbed gravesites.

Davis noted that the idea of salt reversing the effects of tetrodotoxication had no pharmacological basis on the face of it, but a lack of salt and its chemical relationship with tetrodotoxin may be key factors in zombification (1988, 201–3). At first, I believed that Davis' work came to inform and define narratives of *grigri* in Seychelles. However, Albert's accounts of his *bonnfanm dibwa* grandmother preceded Wade Davis' work. Similarly, Thomas (1968) stated in the 1960s that *dandosya* were only allowed 'sugar and starch', decades before Davis' work existed, and wrote that

a *dandosya* was not 'allowed to eat the produce of its toil, only sugar and starch'; that *sorsye* reanimated corpses to create semi-human slaves to do their bidding; and that practitioners protected people from being turned into *dandosya* with the use of portions 'of brain from the disinterred body' of an individual who died naturally – not from *grigri* – along with soil and other artefacts taken from graveyards. The withholding of salt and the use of body parts, especially those of children and bones, were all written about in Thomas' book (1968, 40–43) in nineteen sixty-eight, almost twenty years before Davis observed similar witchcraft characteristics in Haiti. While I initially suspected that Dominique drew his evidence from Davis, Davis' findings further substantiated explanations of *grigri* that long preceded his work. How these geographically disparate similarities occurred is unclear, but in any event Davis' work in Haiti validated existing ideas about *dandosya* in Seychelles.

Similar to Loïc and Albert's claims about *dandosya* being made following the use of death-faking powders, Davis explored Haitian zombie ethnobiology to ascertain whether the use of toxins or chemicals could produce the effects of zombification and the illusion of dying (1983; 1988). Qualities of *grigri* and Vodou, especially in the figures of the *dandosya* and zombie, have traversed time and place such that Vodou and *grigri* share historical entanglements of heritage and creolisation through, probably, myriad pathways and media. Some of these may be based in the tangible practices and beliefs dispersed throughout the diaspora by enslaved Africans, while others, particularly colonial narratives, likely constitute European beliefs and discursive constructions of Africanness that were transported, and subsequently reified, through these same networks by colonisers and colonised alike.

7.2.2 The Zombie, the Dandosya, and the Enslaved

I had always understood *dandosya* as a figure of horror, and during my fieldwork I came to understand that this view was widely held. Not all participants believed in *dandosya*, just as many Seychellois do not believe in *grigri*. For those who were either proponents of the occult, or who believed in but did not condone *grigri*, the *dandosya* was a horrifying thing. *Dandosya* could come in the form of a living but decrepit and unclean person, the stereotype of the 'zombie', as a non-human – such as a rat or lizard – or the *dandosya* may not be visible at all. This sits in contrast with the popular portrayal of the zombie in Hollywood cinema that Lauro describes, where the zombie 'conjures images of… a mob of moaning, half-rotten people greedily devouring the entrails of their friends'(2015, 3). The popular zombie seeks out humans to devour and, in this process, converts them to zombies. The *dandosya*, however, does not seek out others, but quietly carries out the

bidding of its master – and it is the master, not the *dandosya*, who has the power to turn other people into *dandosya*.

The *dandosya* somewhat differs to dominant anthropological representations in that the discourse surrounding its presence firmly emerges from and engages with the spectre not of the colonial slave, but of enslavement and, I argue, persistently familiar relations of domination that transgress the ontological category of the colonial slave. Several research participants spoke of *dandosya* as part of a current reality, including *bonnonm dibwa* and opponents of *grigri* who discussed how *dandosya* were still made and traded by *sorsye*. Albert, the grandson of a *bonnfanm dibwa*, told me about how his grandmother kept *dandosya*. He 'saw the reality' of the *dandosya* when he was a child and witnessed his grandmother taking tobacco to her *dandosya* in a bush that they were hiding in. Others told me that it was not uncommon to see *dandosya* at the public markets purchasing goods for their master, and noted that they could always be identified because they were unclean and did not talk. *Dandosya* also figure into gossip about who may be involved with *grigri*, and a common claim concerned people who kept tidy yards and gardens who, the claim went, could only do so because they kept *dandosya*. 'They say she keeps *dandosya*', a man said of a woman in his village whose property always seemed to be in impeccable condition. The logic behind such accusations always seemed to doubt that anyone would put such effort into producing excess by their own hand, and so must have forced someone else to provide their labour using magic. Many stories existed of famous *bonnonm dibwa* whose productive gardens were made possible by forcing their *dandosya* to work through the night, unseen. On different occasions, two research participants claimed that the Dauban family kept *dandosya* on Silhouette Island. This was the same family who, in Chapter 5, were referred to by one *bonnonm dibwa* as the original practitioners of *grigri*. Similar accounts have existed for at least the last 50 years; Thomas' writing on *grigri* in the nineteen sixties contained accounts that reflected my own, including how *dandosya* were 'made to dig and plant'; how 'the *dodotia* slaves away unfeelingly for its *malfaiteur* [*grigri*] master until the time death would have occurred naturally' (1968, 40–41).

While participants discussed *dandosya* in myriad ways, it was common to refer to the conditions of the *dandosya's* mysterious emergence or depraved existence. Many stories about *dandosya* involved the sighting of someone who was missing or believed to be dead. In the 1960s, Thomas (1968, 40–41) observed a 'strong belief in zombie-ism' in Seychelles, recounting tales of Seychellois hearing 'zombies chained in caves up on the mountain', which Thomas suggests 'harked back to the days when slaves were, in fact, chained by the masters.' Thomas also referred to a 'well educated Seychellois' who 'swore' to him that 'long after a man had been buried, he was

seen several times by people who had been his friends.' During my own fieldwork in 2014, one participant – who did not explicitly 'believe' in *grigri* – told me of a man who had just gone missing on Mahé: he had been seen 'in a town in Madagascar!' she said in shock, 'they're saying he's a *dandosya* now!'. It was common to suggest that sighting a deceased person after their death, who was once again ostensibly alive, was the result of them being turned into a *dandosya*. There are certain ideas and themes contained within this narrative that infer conditions in which enslavement was made possible.

Reflecting Paterson's (1982b) theorisation of social death and slavery, Graeber (2007b) emphasised that tearing people from their social contexts allowed the requisite detachment that produced enslaved personhood through the loss of humanity and sociality. This 'separation of the place of social (re)production of the labor force, and the place where that labor-power is realized in production' is key to not just slavery, Graeber claims, but capitalism more broadly, such that '[w]e are dealing with the same terms, differently arranged' (2007b, 136–39). Vergès (2019) reflects this in the observation that slavery was 'founded upon the capacity of black women's bodies to reproduce capital', whereby African women 'bore children for centuries who were then stolen, captured, and thrown into the maelstrom of the slave trade' (2019, 2). Displacement, death, and the return to semi-life are important and notable components of the discourse on *dandosya*. The historical contexts in which slavery was made possible through social death reflect the contemporary *dandosya* as once-dead people appearing in unexpected places. The *dandosya* is similarly an abject figure in that, to use Lazaridis' description of abjection, it was once a living subject that has become a 'thing that should be alive but is not'(Lazaridis 2015, 6). Recalling the traumatic figure of the enslaved African, the *dandosya* has experienced social death and arisen solely as a mechanical body, traded from master to master as a semi-living being, or transported to another one of the colonies.

Another link between the figure of the *dandosya* and the figure of the enslaved African is the figure of the maroon, who fled the master, destined for death, only to be seen again in the hills or hiding among boulders. Research participant Albert shared that, when he used to walk in the forest of Anse Aux Pin as a child he 'saw black shit' and his *bonnfanm dibwa* grandmother would say 'it's *kaka dandosya* [*dandosya* faeces]'. Albert used to live in this area and noted of the large boulders there that '*dandosya* used to live under them.' Elements of Albert's accounts relate to a story of the most famous maroon in Seychelles, whose name was Castor. Castor was said to be 'a leader of the maroons on Mahé', who hid among mountainside boulders in Anse Aux Pins for years (G. Lionnet 2011a). A boulder in the area called *Roche Castor* is named after him (G. Lionnet 2011b). For

reasons unknown, Castor surrendered to his master before becoming a commander in the police force and infamously capturing other black maroons in this newfound role (G. Lionnet 2011a). Albert's *dandosya* account broadly reflects elements of the story of Castor, while Castor's maroon-cum-commander story accords with attributes of the *dandosya* as a being who has vanished only to be seen alive again sometime later, and who then, in the form of the *dandosya*, carries out the bidding of a master regardless of their own wishes and desires.

The *dandosya*, like the zombie myth Lauro (2015) analyses, is entangled with ideas and concerns about dehumanising exploitation. This is broadly consistent with ideas about zombies throughout Africa and the diaspora, where various permutations of the zombie represent people who have been reduced to dehumanised labour to serve a powerful master (Moore and Sanders 2001). Anthropologists of witchcraft and modernity do, however, somewhat detangle the figure of the zombie from the historical context of enslavement, turning instead to the context of migrant labour anxieties and discussing the zombie as an emergent figure produced through the turbulence of modernity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002; Moore and Sanders 2001). While these anthropologies of the African zombie attempt to counter colonial representations of Africans as primordially 'backwards' and pre-modern, the ensuing analyses risk presenting an ahistorical view of the zombie that somewhat de-emphases slavery as its historical context. The popular zombie has similarly been detached and appropriated from history, and Lauro (2015) notes how it has featured in the Western imagination as a figure representative of enslaved Africans encroaching on white domains, and more recently as an appropriation and product of consumerist concerns. Lauro's 'zombie dialectics' refers to how the figure of the zombie has dynamically shifted between the 'specter of the colonial slave and that slave's potential for rebellion'(2015, 5).

Taussig (2010, 231) notes how, 'in the colonial situation', the zombie 'changes to reflect the new situation rather than the precolonial spirit world' in response to 'conquest, Christianity, and capitalist development', and in this sense zombies are as fluid as any cultural element or system of social relations. As a creolised figure, the *dandosya* straddles various concerns of the past and the present and reflects disparate conceptions of the zombie but has nevertheless remained a relevant figure through which Creole people have viewed relations of domination in both slavery and post-slavery Seychelles. That is, the *dandosya* represents the possibility, now as in the supposed bygone era of the colonial slave, that one can be transformed into a vacant body for a master's ends.

The life of the enslaved person, Patterson discusses, is centred on the matter of one's body. It is not a social experience but a powerless, matter-based existence of the body (1982b, 3, 36–39, 66–72).

To become enslaved is only possible through social death, as Graeber discusses, where one must be 'ripped from one's context and, thus, from all the social relationships that make one a human being'; this makes the enslaved person 'in a very real sense, dead' (2011, 186). Lauro paints a picture of the Haitian zombie as a 'critique of commodity production under a slave economy', and the modern cinematic zombie as 'an allegory of the blind ingestion of the consumer capitalist' (2015, 4). The zombie is about 'the disempowerment of the colonial subject' but also about the 'dialectical exchanges between masters and slaves, between the colonised and coloniser' (2015, 6). Lauro discusses zombification on the basis of slavery, where 'a body [is] deprived of its soul and made to work for the profit of another' (2015, 122). In Lauro's assessment, the figure of the zombie speaks to the experience of exploitation more generally, not just chattel slavery. Taussig's view of magic and devil contracts in South America provides an analogous view of how subordinated peoples respond to capitalist modes of production. 'We must see the devil-belief', Taussig begins, 'as an image illuminating a culture's self-consciousness of the threat posed to its integrity' and speaks to a danger of 'becoming a tool of the ruling classes.' (2010, 96). This framing helps to make sense of the figure of the *dandosya*. The *dandosya* is a timeless figure because it represents a timeless cultural fear: that one might be turned into a soul-less source of labour for the sole purpose of capitalist production.

The figure of the *dandosya* recalls the trauma of chattel slavery but also speaks to ongoing alienation and exploitation. The ongoing existence of *dandosya* in Creole culture would seem to confirm this, including that contemporary sightings of *dandosya* were sightings of known persons. The figure of the *dandosya* was not a historical figure, then, but a contemporary warning of the possibility that anyone's body could be seized for another's purposes. In this sense, the *dandosya* speaks to how capitalist excess is achieved through the social death of those who produce capitalist excess with their labour, who are also denied access to the product of their labour. Indeed, that post-abolition black Seychellois were denied access to what the white propertied class had was, as detailed by Scarr (2000), an explicit aim among *gran blan*: 'the negro [was] an animal and must not be allowed to forget it', and providing black Seychellois with 'a bit of land' would mean that they 'would no longer work for *blancs* on what little wage the copra and essential oils could afford.' 'Why anyway should Creoles need possessions?', was an explicit statement among the *bourzwa* class while also being the rhetoric that justified deprivation (2000, 118–22). The mercantilist 'utility of poverty' doctrine surely underpinned this ideological reprehension of black Seychellois workers just as Federici (2014) linked it to the repudiation of occultism, witches, women, and the proletariat in general. The *dandosya* speaks to these same conditions of exploitation and repudiation. This mercantilist logic was encoded in the slave trade; the forced apprenticeship of formerly enslaved

Creole peoples; the *moitie moitie* era which sought the economic binding of formerly enslaved people to their former masters; and the hesitant provision of wages to black Seychellois. It is in these ongoing conditions of capitalist alienation and labour coercion that the persistent figure of the *dandosya* can be located.

7.3 State Sovereignty and *Grigri*

The previous section focused on how the *dandosya* could be understood as a metaphor for and critique of coloniality, specifically the conditions of capitalist exploitation and alienation. This section progresses the discourse on the *dandosya* by revealing further shared contexts within which coloniality is experienced in Seychelles and, subsequently, how the domain of *grigri* can be understood as one in which decoloniality is performed. I examine how state sovereignty and the domain of *grigri* interplay by moving through accounts and experiences of justice and mysterious harm.

7.3.1 Grigri vis-à-vis States of Injustice

I set the stage for this discussion with an ethnographic account. Danny and Henry are key characters in this story; I had known Danny since my period of fieldwork in 2014 and met Henry in 2018 when they both helped me locate magical practitioners during the latter part of my fieldwork. Henry had been homeless since leaving a rehabilitation centre, but Danny had recently taken Henry into his care to assist him in recovering from his heroin dependency, which Henry developed as a teen.

Henry was somewhat shy, but – probably given my role as researcher – he openly discussed sensitive and taboo issues with me unprompted. He shared his thoughts and experiences of *grigri* with me on two separate occasions. On the first occasion, he confided in me that one of the participants discussed in Chapter 5, who claimed that they did not themselves practise *grigri*, had performed a *grigri* ritual to help him with his substance abuse and transformed him into a bear. I asked Henry what he meant by this, and he explained that the ritual gave him the power of a bear, which made him stronger and more confident. This echoed a ritual, performed by the same practitioner, that had been performed on a friend that I had made during my fieldwork in 2014, which was done to help him perform better as an athlete. On a separate occasion, Henry shared further thoughts about *grigri* with me. Like other participants before him, Henry asked if I was using my research as a guise for learning how to become a *sorsye* myself. I laughed, as I often did in reflexive response to the question, and stated that becoming a *sorsye* was not my intention. I then shared that while I was not sure if I believed in ‘magic’, I did believe that *grigri* had a ‘real’ effect

on people and the world, including through the use of herbal knowledge and the real-world implications of a belief in – and fear of – *grigri*. It was common for participants to respond to my research topic with laughter. This laughter sometimes indicated a nervousness surrounding the topic, but several people – more than a few of whom were educated at English universities – dismissed *bonnonm dibwa* as charlatans and con artists. Henry presented neither of these responses, and instead, somewhat nervously, relayed his interest in becoming a *sorsye* himself and cited a desire to use *grigri* to become powerful. We were having this discussion out of Danny's earshot while looking for the location of a *bonnonm dibwa*, and Henry made this point just before Danny reappeared. I did not get the chance to ask Henry what he would seek to do with this power, but I immediately felt sympathy towards Henry given his disempowering circumstances and expected that this may have been the basis of his quest for power.

Danny, Henry and I were meeting with Joubert, a *bonnonm dibwa* whose account I explored in Chapter 5. This was the first time I had met Joubert, and my intention was to recruit him to be a research participant. Joubert agreed to an interview a few days later, but we managed to have a casual discussion. Danny shared Henry's story to Joubert; Joubert looked Henry up and down, saying that he could help him. 'I see you, and you are zero' Joubert said to Henry in a tone that somehow managed to be soft and uncritical. 'You must have willpower. The Church, God, the doctor, none of these things will help you, you have to help yourself.' Henry did not have permanent employment; when Henry did find employment, a government requirement ordered that he purchase and inject methadone before beginning work for the day. The cost of each methadone application was around twenty Australian dollars, a significant portion of what Henry earnt in a day. Hearing this, Joubert shook his head, visibly disgusted, saying that methadone was 'destroying their heart', referring to Seychellois youth affected by substance abuse. 'It is not medicine', Joubert said, with tangible sorrow in his voice, 'it is a drug to counter medicine. The government made a terrible mistake when they burnt the country's marijuana crops because now the youth take heroin'. Without stating specifics, Joubert agreed to help Henry and we assumed that this engagement could be the start of that process. We had to cut the session short as Joubert needed to visit a client who was asking for an exorcism to be conducted. Piqued by his openness to share this detail, I quickly asked if he would consider allowing us to attend. He said no, understandably, out of respect for his

client but also because if there were *nanm* or *jinn*[22] present they may seek to occupy another body, which could be one of ours if we were nearby.

Danny, Henry and I left Joubert's house and went to locate another practitioner on the other side of the island. Henry and Danny, moved by what Joubert had said, were discussing rehabilitation strategies during the car trip. Danny spoke extensively about the problem of heroin, and of how unjust it was that Henry came to be in his situation. 'There are people who make money from this', Danny said, referring to the drug trade in Seychelles, 'including corrupt officials!' He named several people, including senior officials, who he claimed were involved in smuggling drugs through the port. We drove down a winding mountain road to try and find the location of another practitioner, who would later turn out to be Guy, whose account I also discussed in Chapter 5. We came to the rough location we had been given, slowing down and looking out for a hint of some sort, when I heard the revving of a car engine. A police car accelerated past my right, but instead of continuing it turned sharply to the left and cut me off, forcing me to brake suddenly. Four police officers threw open their doors and jumped out of their car and hastily marched towards us. One officer slowed down and tilted his head, looking at me sternly. My window was open and I expected him to say something to me, but instead he continued to the rear door, pulled it open and, without making any statement at all, dragged Henry out by his arms and placed him in handcuffs. Danny rapidly exchanged Creole with the officers; I struggled to understand it all but could clearly make out Danny's repeated exclamation of 'why?!', which was enough to tell me that the officers were not giving a reason for Henry's arrest. Henry, visibly terrified, begged Danny to come with him; Danny, similarly stiff, said that he would meet Henry later at the station. Scrambling to make sense of the situation, I asked Danny what was going on. Danny apologised for interrupting my fieldwork but was relieved when I suggested that we follow them to the police station.

The police car sped off with Henry in the back. Danny and I managed to get to the police station just as Henry and the police officers were heading inside. Danny accidentally hit the police car while opening his door. The officer who had given me a stern look doubled back and began to examine his car closely, looking for a dent or scratch, while audibly sighing and looking at Danny with his lips pressed together. Danny apologised several times, anticipating the officer's anger and

[22] *Nanm* is the Creole word for 'ghost', possibly derived from the French *âme*, referring to a soul or spirit (D'Offay and Lionnet 1982, 275). I discuss the Creole use of *jinn* in Chapter 4, which may be derived from the Arabic *jinn*, meaning genie but also spirit or demon. In the context of Seychelles, *jinn* were sometimes used interchangeably with *nanm* but also, as Joubert's use implied, seen as a distinct concept: a demon, rather than the ghost or soul of someone who had died.

calling the officer - who was significantly younger than Danny - 'sir'. The officer, unable to find any damage to his door, walked slowly inside with his lips still pressed together. Inside the station, Danny continued to ask why Henry had been arrested but continued to be ignored, so I decided to try myself. I had remained quiet the whole time, so this was the first time the officers heard me speak. I explained that I was a researcher from Australia and asked what I could do to help; the atmosphere changed as soon as they noted my accent. It was not Creole. The stern officer unpressed his lips while the other officers looked towards me and stood taller. My accent had introduced something new to the situation. Two officers finally began to explain the situation: they were looking for a young black man with dreadlocks. I asked why, and why Henry had been arrested, but they were unable to provide any further detail and admitted that they were not themselves sure of what crime had even been committed.

The stern officer eventually explained that Henry had been arrested on suspicion of stealing food. The explanations given by the officers went back and forth for some time, sometimes in conflict, until they eventually came to the real-time agreement that Henry had stolen cassava from the yard of a Catholic orphanage where Henry had previously lived. Cassava is by far one of the cheapest foods available in Seychelles, and one that Danny grew himself. The story made no sense, yet the vague and uncompelling details were enough to put Henry in a prison cell over the weekend to be informally interrogated by police officers before being released several days later. A few days after Henry's release, nuns at the orphanage said that there had been no theft, despite the police saying that this was the basis of Henry's arrest. Henry was arrested and imprisoned again later in the week on suspicion of stealing food from yet another location. The evidence against him was reducible to Henry fitting the description of a young black man with dreadlocks from a certain area. The officers alleged that people who knew Henry had confirmed that Henry was the perpetrator despite the officers acknowledging that none of those making confirmations had witnessed any of the crimes.

Danny and I agreed that Henry's guilt was unlikely, and even impossible. Henry had been with Danny and I when the alleged crimes were committed, and the location of at least one of the crimes was too far away from Danny's residence for it to have been physically possible for Henry to travel there and back at the given time. Each time Henry was told to come in for questioning, he was given the option of paying several thousand rupees – which equates to several hundred Australian dollars – instead of appearing for questioning. This amount increased each time he was called in for questioning until Henry was eventually released without charge. Henry said that the police asked him questions about his social circles and extracted contacts from his phone rather than

investigating the crimes he was accused of committing. Both Danny and Henry believed that the police were simply collecting a list of suspects based on their connection to Henry.

In anger, Danny proclaimed that even if it were true that Henry stole cassava, surely it would be better to invest in preventing the probable reason for the alleged crime: food poverty. We found ourselves discussing the meaning of justice using Henry's targeting as a reference point. Henry was homeless. He was a third generation Chagossian: Creole people who were forcibly removed from the Chagos Archipelago by the British in the nineteen sixties to establish the Diego Garcia American military base. Henry was also recovering from substance dependence. The police officers did not intervene to address the injustices that Henry or his ancestors had experienced. Instead, the mere idea that Henry had stolen property was enough to justify his imprisonment and interrogation, regardless of whether there was any evidence to justify his incarceration. Indeed, while Henry's skin was considered very dark by Seychellois standards – and he was sometimes described using the colourist term '*ble*', or 'blue' – the police officers who arrested him were similarly dark-skinned Seychellois. The targeting of Henry may have been the result of an internalised anti-blackness by the police officers, but, in any event, the police officers were continuing the anti-black work of the same forces that displaced Henry's ancestors from Chagos decades before, and who enslaved and forcibly relocated Henry, Danny, and my ancestors over the centuries prior to that day.

Danny and Henry were exasperated by how powerless they were to counter the power of the police. The shared contempt of Danny and Henry did not remain hidden, and it only validated their convictions about institutional corruption and, to me, the conditions in which people like Henry might seek to become a *sorsye* or otherwise seek out the services of one. Our discussion regarding injustice further illuminated to me the context in which *grigri*, as an alternate power, may have held appeal more broadly. It is not uncommon for *grigri* practitioners, including those whose accounts I shared in Chapter 5, to provide services that helped people evade police attention and prosecution, and it is also not uncommon for practitioners to use these techniques themselves. The anti-establishment advice that Joubert gave to Henry when they first met[23] is a relevant discursive theme that situates the domain of *grigri* in a decolonial context.

Clients came to Joubert for many different magical services, including for help with criminal cases. It was becoming increasingly apparent that *bonnonm dibwa* were not simply healers or fortune tellers, but also conduits for challenging and creatively refusing the terms of political order. On the

[23] See pages 12 and 13

one hand, Joubert's clients, like Guy's, wanted to avoid state persecution and *grigri* provided a way to help them. On the other, practitioners such as Joubert and Guy experienced adversity at the hands of the state, and *grigri* came to form one of their strategies of resistance and survival. The injustices faced by Henry position him at the intersection of both, substantiated further by his inclination towards seeking out the help of Joubert and his interest in attaining the power of a practitioner.

Joubert's modes of subversion were varied and many, and it was not a surprise that people came to him for assistance with state persecution. The scope of Joubert's political activity was not, however, limited to magic, and magic was but one example of Joubert's strategies rather than its scope. Joubert shared that, following the *coup*, he was part of an armed branch of an anti-government group: the *Liberte Pour Seselwa* (LPS)[24] movement. Joubert and several of his friends were planning to overthrow the René government. The LPS had hidden weapons to use in a possible coup, but when they went to retrieve them, they were ambushed by SPUP/SPPF soldiers. Joubert was the only one in his group who managed to escape – in part, he asserts, because he was protected by magic. When I asked Joubert why he was anti-establishment, he explained that the socialist government stole from people – land, houses, money – and Joubert and his friends formed the armed branch of the LPS to address state theft and corruption. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, Joubert was one of several practitioners who believed that the SPUP/SPPF – and René specifically – upheld the ban on *grigri* to protect their own political power. Practitioners provided me with varying explanations for this, which included that *grigri* could be used effectively against the state and because René, who some proclaimed was a powerful *sorsye* himself, wanted to have exclusive access to the power of *grigri*.

Histories of *grigri* being used against state apparatus go back much further than my fieldwork, including to influence state-determined outcomes. For example, *grigri* bags, potions, and other rituals are commonly mentioned in the literature and in public discourse in relation to court cases. Thomas (1968) observed this in the nineteen sixties when he noted that 'judges often [found] potions' and other artefacts in court rooms and about the houses of intended targets, so-placed to influence outcomes. Simply becoming aware of interference, Thomas suggests, was enough to influence someone's behaviour to affect the desired course of action (1968, 38–39). The penal code

[24] All names, groups, and locations throughout this thesis are fictional to protect the identities of research participants and their networks. The name and structure of this group has been fictionalised for the same reasons. Specifics in Joubert's account have been omitted, though themes and tactics in Joubert's story share similarities with accounts made through the recently initiated Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Commission, which was set up to investigate alleged human rights violations relating to the 1977 coup.

implicitly acknowledges the effectiveness of witchcraft to do this and as such prohibits witchcraft being used to influence the minds and feelings of others. The contemporary use of magic for similar purposes by Alphonse, Payet, Guy, and Joubert means that *grigri* has existed as a political tool for some sixty years at least, from the 1960s to the time of my latest fieldwork in 2018. Although no formal network of magical practitioners exists[25], all practitioners that I met with widely shared their knowledge and tools with each other. That many practitioners also offered their services as a mode of political intervention suggests that practitioners have the effect of being collective agents of subversion in response to a real social need and demand by Seychellois. This cannot be separated from the sentiment that drives the use of magic for political subversion, and in this sense, the contemporary use of *grigri* can be understood as a continuation of a tradition of creative refusal and a Black Radical Tradition (C. Robinson 2000).

7.3.2 Grigri, 'Society', and (Dis)Order

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder (Fanon 1963, 36)

In establishing the terms of the modern Creole order, René was concerned with each person's contributions to society. Following the *coup d'état*, workers were no longer simply working to meet 'an obligation to an employer', René asserted, they were now partaking in a 'collective effort' that would contribute to 'the prosperity of the nation'. Post-coup, it became 'the duty of every worker to perform his work to the best of his ability' because '[h]is contribution' was no longer a contribution to a mere employer or master, but 'a contribution to the whole society' (Seychelles People's Progressive Front 1982, 111–12). The premise of 'society' to begin with is, as Graeber (2011) notes in his exploration of debt, only possible to be thought of as a 'single bounded entity' due to the modern state's 'elaborate border controls and social policies' (2011, 69). Indeed, Graeber continues, the very idea that there is 'this thing called society, that we have a debt to it, that governments can speak for it, that it can be imagined as a sort of secular god' was 'born alongside the idea of the modern nation-state' (2011, 69). By engaging in the kinds of activities I have discussed in the previous section and throughout this thesis, *grigri* practitioners offered the subversive view that a person's fate need not be determined by the state at all.

[25] Some practitioners attest that a well-known formal herbalist organisation exists as a cover for magical practice, but no formal network or organisation exists that explicitly practices magic.

In refusing the authority of the state, subverting political order, and taking one's fate into one's own hands, those who seek and perform *grigri* call into question René's claim that they owe anything to 'society', and that the state constructed conception of 'society' is something that should decide the destinies of people. By seeking to harness the power of the cosmos to subvert political order, those who believe in the power of *grigri* also believe in the ability for humans to intervene with, and even reject, the nation state. Graeber argues that 'theories of existential debt always end up becoming ways of justifying - or laying claim to - structures of authority' (2011, 69). Interrogating such presuppositions raises questions about 'who exactly has a right to speak for the cosmos, or humanity, to tell us how that debt must be repaid'. 'Human freedom', Graeber continues, is the 'ability to decide for ourselves' how debt is to be dealt with (2011, 68–69).

The position of the domain of *grigri* as a domain of creative refusal, then, subverts state sovereignty because it suggests that the right to decide how one's debts must be repaid does not belong, at least exclusively, to the nation state. 'To exercise sovereignty', Mbembe explains, 'is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power' (2003, 12). *Grigri*, then, undermines the sovereign claims of the nation state and proponents of *grigri* implicitly reject the SPUP/SPPF's social contract. While *grigri* may operate through gossip, folk lore, and the rituals and remedies of *bonnonm dibwa*, the domain of *grigri* also offers a decolonial understanding of how power works and who can wield it. The magical option offers another way of being, knowing and doing and, as such, presents the ontologies and epistemologies of the state and modernity as options in themselves rather than logical and inevitable conclusions. Or, to put it another way, *grigri* is a mode of decoloniality performed in the context of Seychellois Creoleness.

Magic practitioners and their clients endeavoured to shape fate by engaging with the metaphysical or by directly influencing individuals. Shaping fate by influencing individuals is, in turn, a way of deconstructing the state itself. This illustrates that if justice is in fact mediated by the state, and individuals such as lawyers and police can influence the course of justice, then the state must consist of mere people. And because the state consists of mere people, and lawyers and police too are mere people, then anyone can intervene in the course of justice. Those who practise magic and those who believe in the power of magic seem to realise that ultimately, justice is a thing that can be mediated and determined by people. Practitioners offer magical intervention as a form of power available to and enacted by mere people, which means that anyone can access it. This de-mystification of state mechanisms – or perhaps, a lack of belief in them in the first place – and the use of *grigri* as an alternate power, positions *grigri* as a domain that disorders political order.

7.3.3 Violating Sovereign Power: The Hidden Power of Poison

The ability for the domain of *grigri* to undermine the sovereignty of the state, particularly the state's monopoly on violence, is also evident in the association of *grigri* with mysterious death. It is common for unexpected and mysterious deaths to be associated with or even attributed to *grigri*. A mysterious death might include someone dying at a young age, of an undiagnosable illness, through drowning, or a number of other unexpected causes of death. Many practitioners spoke of how one could be murdered through the use of poison or through the introduction of some other foreign material that could cause illness or death. To poison someone is not an inherently magical intervention, but because it can take one's life without the overt use of physical force, it is attributed mysterious power because its cause and presence may be unknowable and unseeable. Poisoners and witches were commonly associated and conflated with each other in European discourse on magic (Federici 2014, 11, 194, 205, 221, 236), and it is due to such entanglements that poison craft has similarly become part of the discourse on *grigri*. Rather than being a casual matter, poison craft is a policy-level concern. Certain plants are illegal to grow in Seychelles because they are known to have been used for the purposes of poisoning or herbal abortion; *tangen*[26] is one such plant and was commonly referenced in my conversations with *bonnonm dibwa*. Many other plants, like *fler koray* and *bwa malgas*, are either illegal or considered suspicious if spotted on one's property because they are associated with witchcraft.

Poisons and the knowledge of poison craft allow lethal force to be widely wielded and freely available rather than exclusively deployed by the state. More than a few *bonnonm dibwa* I engaged with proclaimed that 'the best doctors in the world would not be able to find out what is wrong' with an individual targeted by a harmful concoction. The power of poison was manifold, further accentuated by the inability of people to understand the connection between poison and magic. It was precisely this lack of knowledge that supported superstitious claims, and as such *grigri* was commonly associated with certain manifestations of illness and misfortune. One participant told me that 'fish scales' appearing on the legs of a person were an example of a *grigri* curse, while a *bonnonm dibwa* shared with me that this was actually the result of 'physical herbs', which the target of such magic would be unaware of. One research participant, Albert, shared the many ways that his *bonnfanm dibwa* grandmother knew how to cause harm and death covertly. One example Albert

[26] *Tangen* is the same plant-derived poison popularly used in the Madagascan Tangena Ordeals that killed around twenty percent of the population of Imerina in the mid nineteenth century. The poison and the Tangena Ordeals were commonly associated with witchcraft. For more detailed discussions see Campbell (1991, 437–39) and Graeber (2007a, 66–67).

shared involved the use of a bamboo spine: ‘a woman’, he specified, ‘could hide the spine in her husband’s sandwich. He sit down at lunch to eat, and the *pikan* [thorn] will become lodged here’ said Albert, pointing to his gut, ‘this make him ill. Over time, he would become sicker and the *dokter* [medical doctor] will not know what is wrong, and then he will die.’ ‘She knew many of these things.’

The ability for people to cause one’s death through the administration of poison violates a fundamental premise of sovereign power: the exclusive ability to decide who lives and who dies. Foucault (1978) notes that the right to decide life and death has long been a characteristic privilege of sovereign power. Though the focus of this power shifted from the right to kill to the administration of life itself, the right for dominant powers to kill their subjects remains implied and central to sovereign claims (Foucault 1978, 135–41). Federici challenges the idea that this shift really occurred at all, and in contrast to Foucault’s assertion highlights that capitalism’s focus on promoting life-forces was but a shift in its targets; the promotion of Western populations was directly accompanied by the massive destruction of life in Europe’s colonies and trade in enslaved peoples (Federici 2014, 16). For practitioners to be seen as also possessing the ability to decide who lives and dies, and without consequence to them, is to undermine the state’s sovereign right to give and take away life.

Importantly, practitioners do not need to be directly witnessed causing death to be attributed symbolic power. As Graeber (2014) explains, symbolic power is ‘a form of power that works largely insofar as it remains symbolic’, providing the example of political power that can operate indirectly by ‘creating a political environment defined by the knowledge of utterly disproportionate access to the means of violence’ (2014, 474–75). Indeed, several practitioner participants shared with me ‘tricks’ that they knew other practitioners had performed to allude to the existence of the supernatural. Freminot, a *bonnonm dibwa* who had been practicing magic in Seychelles since the nineteen fifties, knew just about everyone who, as he put it, ‘claimed’ but did not really know how to practice *grigri.* Stories about flying *sorsye* and other tales were not based in reality and only served ‘to make fun’, Freminot stated. Many of the stories were not unreasonable, however, as some practitioners would drag chains past houses at night to scare people into believing that *dandosya*, *sorsye* or other supernatural creatures were outside haunting or stalking them. ‘*[Sorsye]* Didi used to say “tonight I’ll come to your house and you won’t sleep”. He makes noise outside and he sounds stupid. He came by himself. Or he walked outside with something that made noise *kakalak kakalak* so you hear noise. He used chains and boxes to make the noise. He used to scare people that way.’ ‘Even though I am getting old’, Freminot said, ‘I also did those tricks.’ The

culmination of these acts was not harm but a reminder that magical power was ever present, even if in these instances it had no real substance. No harm needed to be caused for the threat of harm to become an embodied fact, and the process of creating symbolic power is no different to how the state reminds the social body that it, too, possesses the ability to cause harm.

It is in *grigri's* perceived potential, rather than in specific and observable events, that state sovereignty is called into question. Marion Benedict points to many stories of poisoning, revenge, and jealousy – enacted particularly by women – in her ethnography of *grigri* in Seychelles (1982, One). Supernatural means, Benedict observed, were used by women to control men (1982, 98, 208), and the belief that this was possible was sufficient to generate fear and have 'subjective beliefs become objective reality' (Benedict 1985, 23). Thomas (1968, 39) referred to a form of *grigri* called 'befuddlement', which he described as 'closer to straight-out poisoning.' '[P]owdered wood or herbs' would be added to the food of the 'master of a household', causing them to become 'confused mentally' so that, for example, cooks could aid others to steal from the household master. 'Great *bonnonm dibwa* are often great cooks!', one practitioner said to me. *Bonnonm Marimba* – a famous practitioner whose partner was the granddaughter of King Prempeh and said to have received Prempeh's writings on witchcraft – was known for being a great cook, this practitioner participant explained. For participants in my research and accounts in the literature alike, culinary craft and witchcraft were entangled, and this interplay was a site from which symbolic power emerged to undermine both the nation state and patriarchal power. The topics of food, witches, poison, masters, the enslaved, and revolt are connected, and indeed Federici summarised the modern manifestation of the witch as 'the obeha woman who poisoned the master's food and inspired the slaves to revolt' (2014, 11).

7.4 Conclusion: The Decolonial Contexts of Grigri

In this chapter I have focused on how *grigri* can be understood in terms of decoloniality. I have used the *dandosya* to demonstrate how its associated discourse can be seen to render a critique of modernity/coloniality, particularly conditions in which colonised subjects have been produced. The *dandosya* is also demonstrably a creolised figure, in that it has been used to connect with other African diasporic experiences that have critiqued these same colonial terms. In this sense, the figure of the *dandosya* has been a persistent and specifically Creole warning of capitalist exploitation, rather than functioning solely as a historical reminder of chattel slavery. In the latter half of this chapter, I pushed this analysis further and explored other ways that the domain and discourse of *grigri* has provided critiques of coloniality as well as strategies of resistance that have undermined

state sovereignty. Beginning with Henry's story, broader contexts have been discussed within which decolonial options exist, where *grigri* was revealed as one such option through the use of poison craft and the subversion of 'justice' as examples. Bringing the meaning of the *dandosya* together with strategies adopted by the marginalised has emphasised the conditions of exploitation that could position *grigri* as a decolonial response. In a broad sense, then, the domain of *grigri* has been concerned with possibilities that have undermined modernity/coloniality, including the proclaimed sovereignty and benevolence of the state. These threats have been discursively constructed by the nation state but have also presented themselves as strategies to be adopted by proponents of *grigri*. Both angles suggest the existence of a fragile and fictional political order while pointing to the decolonial and disordering potential of *grigri*.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together key observations and arguments in response to my research questions, which have sought to make sense of the meaning and place of *grigri* in relation to modern Creoleness and consider what this might reveal about Creoleness and modernity more generally. I then point to the broader implications of this work and opportunities for further research.

In Chapters 4-7, I explored key themes and accounts concerning *grigri* from various Creole standpoints, including non-practitioners and practitioners, and through a deconstruction of political discourse. Using these sources, I offered ways to make sense of *grigri* in relation to Creoleness and modernity through a range of Creole and theoretical perspectives. As foreshadowed in Chapters 1 and 2, this exploration extended to issues relating to modernity and race that reflexively revealed ideas about modernity and modern Creoleness vis-à-vis Africanness.

My discussion in this chapter has been shaped by two thematic motivations, which I have used to position this research more broadly. The first is Hartman's (1997) emphasis on examining relations of power that shifted and transformed following the abolition of slavery, during which the emancipated were resubordinated by the 'persistent production of blackness as abject, threatening, servile, dangerous, dependent, irrational, and infectious' (1997, 116) The second motivation stems from Lentin's (2020) shifting focus from whether race *exists* to an examination of what race *does*. This entails an understanding of race as a practice and technology for 'sifting and classifying the world' (2020, 49) and for racial logics to be engaged with not as static – as if they were based in biological fact – but as adaptive and discursive. The same focus on understanding what race *does* has been adopted here to offer a perspective on what racial logic has been deployed to achieve in the context of Seychelles.

8.2 What is *Grigri*?

My first research question asked: 'what is being referred to when the term *'grigri'* is used?'

Chapter 4, my first analysis chapter, explored this question from the perspective of the mainstream, through the accounts of non-practitioner Seychellois, as well as Seychelles media and popular writings about witchcraft in Seychelles. Most participants in this chapter had experienced what they described as *grigri*, and all had views on the topic, but were 'not caught' by the influence or power

of *grigri*. In all accounts, *grigri* was described in terms of magic or supernatural affairs associated with Africanness and enslaved Africans, which was reflected in the discourse on *grigri* among Muslims in Seychelles and in popular media. With the exception of Richard, who saw *grigri* as a part of Creole heritage deserving of recognition and celebration, *grigri* was approached as a taboo, undesirable, and dangerous topic and domain. These themes were consistent with the understandings I had acquired through Seychellois family and friends and Creole socialisation prior to my commencing fieldwork – from the fear, repudiation, and Africanisation of *grigri* to the marked fascination with a topic seen as mysterious, evil, and nefarious.

Chapter 5 shifted the focus to those associated with the domain of *grigri*, or 'caught' by it, which predominantly included Seychellois practitioners, or family members of practitioners, but also those who were believed by others to practice *grigri*. While the views on *grigri* shared by Chapter 5 participants were complex and pluralistic, they also described *grigri* in terms of magic and the supernatural, including as a particular form of 'black magic' that was not to be conflated with magic in general. For most participants in Chapter 5, *grigri* or magic in general were not to be shunned and, in many instances, were embraced and in need of recognition and revival. Most participants associated *grigri* with Africanness, like those in Chapter 4, while others, particularly those who described *grigri* as a specific type of nefarious and harmful magic, also associated *grigri* with powerful white and Creole figures who either introduced *grigri* to Seychelles in the first place or were the ultimate beneficiaries of such power, inside and outside of Seychelles. All practitioners used the term *'grigri'* loosely and interchangeably with other forms of magic that were seen as powerful, harmful, and nefarious, even where those other crafts carried distinct names. However, not all practitioners shied away from the use or application of *grigri* despite the negative associations attributed to *grigri* by the mainstream and, at times, by practitioners themselves. As such, the use of *'grigri'* among practitioners was broadly consistent with the catchall use of the term in mainstream discourse, but with far more nuance and complexity. Exploring understandings of *grigri* from the domain of *grigri* revealed narratives about power being wielded, and lost, in settings of racialised stratification and exploitation. This power could be seen as wielded 'from below', by colonised subjects and particularly enslaved Africans, or 'from above', by whites and Creole elites. The discussions in Chapters 4 and 5 emphasised the mysteriousness of *grigri*, and as such tended to avoid much specificity, but generally associated *grigri* with the channelling of supernatural forces to create a material effect on the world. Though the 'not caught' and the 'caught' defined *grigri* with nuanced differences, all characterised *grigri* as a form of occultism that was, implicitly and explicitly, seen as present not just in Seychelles but throughout the (particularly African and postcolonial) world.

The political discourse of the SPUP/SPPF were the focus of Chapter 6. This traced the discourse and events surrounding the 1977 coup and subsequent institutionalisation of modern Creoleness. Here, the meaning of *'grigri'* was explored by unpacking the terms, motivations, and premises of the SPUP/SPPF and theoretically contextualising them alongside more global themes relating to Creoleness, modernity, and witchcraft throughout Europe, its colonies, and the African diaspora. Participant views in Chapter 4 and the literature on witchcraft in Seychelles in Chapter 2 were reflected in the SPUP/SPPF's rhetoric and objectives. These were premised upon reductionist and racialised ideas about *grigri* that implied an association with Africanness and 'the past'. Included in these views was a characterisation of *grigri* as the irrational and superstitious beliefs held by ignorant Seychellois who were reluctant to let go of old traditions and a master/slave conditioning. In the SPUP/SPPF's quest to develop a nation of modern Creole subjects, destroying *grigri* was made an explicit policy objective. As suggested in this chapter, *grigri* was positioned as antagonistic the SPUP/SPPF's aims in a way that could be seen as consistent with colonial antecedents. This included the racialised discourse on witchcraft promoted by Europe centuries prior, as well the lineage of legal codes that evolved from a focus on persecuting women in Europe to racialised subjects in Europe's colonies.

Chapter 7 discussed *grigri* in relation to decoloniality, which I summarise further in section 8.3. In response to my first research question, however, Chapter 7 highlighted the discursive character of *grigri*. The figure of the *dandosya*, which has featured in the domain and discourse of *grigri*, was presented as a means with which to process and articulate experiences of racial capitalism and, indeed, to call the legitimacy of racial capitalism into question. In this sense, *grigri* might be seen as a narrative about racialised conditions of exploitation, and the *dandosya* as a creolised metaphor that remains a relevant warning of capitalist dehumanisation. *Grigri's* discursive qualities are explored further in the second part of Chapter 7, where *grigri's* discursiveness is considered as a tool with which to undermine state sovereignty and coloniality. If, as this section suggests, *grigri* can be seen as a vessel through which a disordering symbolic power could be wielded, then it – and *dandosya* by extension – might also provide a mechanism with which to creatively refuse, question, and delegitimise the modern Creole state's claims to sovereignty and authority. This discussion underpins the approach taken in Chapter 3, where a discourse analysis approach is promoted to engage with the discursive construction of *grigri* while also recognising discourse as a social practice through which the world is constituted. Recognising this aligns with how, despite being fictional, discursively constructed racialisations might still produce material realities with real-world implications. Chapters 5 and 7 broadly supported Chapter 2's suggestion that witchcraft

could be seen as a response to modernity's disempowering conditions. However, the conduct of *grigri* practitioners also suggests that if these are responses, then they are not reducible to inconsequential expressions given their range of discursive and physical acts that have material effects on the world. The surveyed colonial history of legal codes have outlawed witchcraft on an epistemic basis, where the ability to influence through the use of magic is prohibited, rather than the prohibition of magic itself as a categorically defined concept. As suggested in Chapters 6 and 7, the presence of similarly vague penal codes and policies in Seychelles might be due to the vagueness of *grigri*, in that it cannot be reduced to any specific thing, or collection of things, and is instead reckoned with as an assemblage of racialised threats to the stability and hegemony of modern power in Seychelles.

In asking what *grigri* 'is', this research has presented *grigri* as a dynamic and discursive shortcut for qualities associated with a pre-modern Africanness, racialised in terms of blackness, and in relation to the supernatural and evil – but not always consistently or universally. It is likely that practices and beliefs associated with *grigri* are predominantly European and have been coupled with African occult-adjacent concepts such as the *dandosya*, *djonk*, and herbalist knowledge, all of which have been creolised through colonial interactions and discourse. This is why, as discussed in Chapter 3, it was unhelpful to reduce my focus on *grigri* to ostensible 'practice', and a more productive stance was to make sense of *grigri* as a discursively constructed concept and domain. The various qualities, beliefs, and practices associated with *grigri* were grounded in *ideas* about magic, the supernatural, race, and the kinds of people associated with such things. Such assessments and associations were reflected in, and perhaps preceded by, the literature discussed in Chapter 2 on witchcraft, particularly but not only in Seychelles. These were, I suggested, likely colonial ideas written by non-Seychellois that Seychellois had consumed and reproduced as valid epistemology. However, as my analysis chapters suggested, only certain aspects of these ideas about *grigri* were grounded in the actually existing practices of the *bonnonm dibwa* that I engaged, or the descriptions of those practices by those who knew or consulted practitioners. And, despite popular discourse suggesting that the presence of *grigri* in Seychelles was the result of mainland Africans or Madagascans, all of these practitioners were Creole people, and most positioned *grigri* in the context of a Creole, or at least creolised, lineage. These themes suggest that *'grigri'* has been used in mainstream discourse as a code and proxy for an abject and racialised domain constructed in association with a nefarious, volatile, and mysterious domain of a perceived pre-modern Africanness. This domain can in turn be considered a threat to the constitution of modern Creoleness, and indeed the modern Creole state. In contrast, and perhaps because of this contrast, many of those in the margins – the 'caught' who were more closely associated with *grigri* and

impacted by its abjection – appeared to have embraced the racialised contents of the domain of *grigri* as a way to engage with themes of power and heritage and creatively refuse the terms of modernity/coloniality as deployed in Seychelles.

8.3 How is *Grigri* Situated?

Building on this focus, my second research question asked: 'how is *grigri* situated in Creole culture? And what can theories of modernity, magic, and race offer in furthering this understanding?' This research question is inherently linked to my third and final research question, which asked: 'what might answers to these questions reveal about the category of Creoleness and the construction and operation of modernity itself?' This section summarises the main findings and responses to both questions.

Section 8.2 has already alluded to the suggested situation of *grigri* as a marginalised and repudiated domain that has simultaneously been embraced by those in the margins. Chapter 2's survey of the literature on modernity, magic, and race prefigured the racial anxieties concerning Creoleness, blackness, and whiteness that were reflected throughout the remaining thesis, and which this research suggests could be seen as coagulating in the concept of *grigri*. As already noted in Chapter 3, I initially set out to examine *grigri* in a way that reduced the concept to a practice, and subsequently understood that a more productive approach would use *grigri* as a lens through which to examine modernity and race in the context of Seychelles. These themes were made viewable through the prism of *grigri*, in which the presence of *grigri* signified the presence of a pre-modern Africanness within the domain of modern Creole subjects. If *grigri* was a signifier of a pre-modern Africanness for the mainstream, then how has that pre-modern Africanness been situated in relation to Creoleness? And how has this characterisation been responded to?

Importantly, as this thesis has explored, *grigri* has been discussed in relation to Africanness and Creoleness. In doing so, blackness has been used to signify Africanness by some, and as a signifier of pre, or anti-modern qualities by others. As such, a pre-modern Africanness and a pre-modern blackness have sometimes been discussed interchangeably, even though Africanness and blackness are not inherently the same thing. This interplay is evident in Chapter 4, where most 'not caught' participants broadly disassociated *grigri* from Creoleness by conflating *grigri* with a racialised pre-modernness, which was characterised as African. The sentiments of these participants could be described as a desire for distance to be created between Creoleness and *grigri*, which was reflected

in – or more accurately, preceded by – the political discourse of the SPUP/SPPF discussed in Chapter 6.

Following the coup of 1977, the SPUP/SPPF discussed *grigri* in association with the alleged irrational beliefs and behaviours of Seychellois and other qualities deemed undesirable, such as an aversion to work and discipline. The SPUP/SPPF sought to eradicate *grigri* through its policies, institutional and cultural exclusion, as well as police raids, legal proceedings, and militant initiatives. Chapter 6 explained this process as a designation of *grigri* to the constitutive outside of modern Creoleness, where the domain of *grigri* has represented a racialised assemblage of what modern Creole subjects ought not to be according to the SPUP/SPPF. In doing this, the SPUP/SPPF continued an attack on Africanness that the British, the French, and the Catholic Church initiated centuries prior throughout Africa and the African diaspora. Despite the de-raced and anticolonial agenda laid out by the SPUP/SPPF, their rhetoric and policies reflected a pre-existing colonial agenda and the racialised anxieties concerning Creoleness outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. This has been offered as an explanation for why the SPUP/SPPF's anticolonial agenda engaged in a contradictory promotion of Africanness while simultaneously seeking to cast off elements of Africanness that it deemed to be antagonistic to the development of a modern Creole state.

In Chapter 2, the historically shifting contours of Creoleness were explored to reveal a racial category that has moved between whiteness and blackness and, as such, was seen as a site of racial regression and degradation. Chapter 6 continued this exploration by examining how the development of modern Creole subjects could be seen as a simultaneous desire to create distance between Creoleness and Africanness and, in turn, achieve greater proximity to Europeanness. These tensions are particularly salient in Seychelles given the historical conflation of Creoleness and blackness, and because the term 'Creole' originally and only referred to enslaved Africans born in the colony. This contrasted with how whites in Seychelles asserted themselves to be Seychellois – a demonym that the SPUP/SPPF adopted and promoted as universal despite its racialised history. The conflation of modernness with Europeanness and Creoleness with blackness has been suggested as a possible motivation for creating distance between modern Creoleness and what were perceived to be pre-modern forms of blackness, including *grigri*, because of the threat they posed to the racial integrity of modern Creole subjects. Indeed, modern Creoleness might have been afforded this flexibility because of the fluidity of race and the historically shifting but also ambiguous category of Creoleness.

Chapters 2 and 4 suggested that *grigri* has been subject to a specific process of *abjection*. The usefulness of abjection as an analytical tool was discussed in Chapter 2 as a way to explain the situation of *grigri* in Seychelles. This particular approach was taken because *grigri*, as a perceived signifier of a pre-modern Africanness/blackness, existed *within* the domain of modern Creole subjects. Further, the designation of *grigri* and its associated qualities to the constitutive *outside* of the subject domain could be explained as a way to differentiate and render modern Creole subjects and to rationalise the authority of the modern Creole state. This simultaneous reliance on and expulsion of *grigri* demonstrates the usefulness of abjection theory to discuss *grigri's* situation. It also provides a useful expansion to abjection theory, which Chapter 2 suggests could offer another way to describe the antagonistic and exclusionary processes with which modernity/coloniality has been constructed.

Chapters 5 and 7 demonstrate how *grigri's* alterity has also provided the 'caught' with a way to challenge and undermine modernity/coloniality's racial logics. As already discussed in section 8.3, the 'caught' in Chapters 5 and 7 similarly associated *grigri* with Africanness but more commonly deemed it to be a part of Seychelles' Creole heritage, which strongly contrasted with popular discourse. Many of the 'caught' actively sought out expressions of Africanness in the African diaspora as a way to (re)connect with Seychelles' Afro-Creole heritage and redeem blackness while refusing whiteness. This countering of *grigri's* racialised abjection reflects what Boswell (2005, 204) observed among Rodriguan and Mauritian Creoles who would 'go back by going black' through pro-black expressions to 'publicly articulate the acceptance of their origins' and oppose white hegemony. Boswell contended that these connections and expressions have provided Creoles with strategies for emancipation that affirm the place of Creoles within the African diaspora, rather than being homogenous and nationally bounded. This could be reckoned with Fanon's suggestion that, while the white man 'creates the Negro' it is 'the Negro who creates negritude' (1965, 47). The discussions in Chapters 5 and 7 of Creole strategies could be explained similarly, where engaging with the domain of *grigri* by some could be seen as a way to express and reclaim Africanness but also as decolonial activity.

Importantly, while not all participants saw themselves as practitioners of *grigri*, they embraced alternative practices, beliefs, and politics that fortified their marginalisation despite their knowledge that doing so associated them with *grigri*. As noted in Chapter 3, my use of *'grigri'* is aligned with dominant discourse – rather than the specifics and nuance of actual practices – because this research also focused on *grigri* as a discursive formation. Collectively, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 suggested that *grigri* refers not to a singular practice but a racialised domain of abject qualities that have been

situated in opposition to modern Creoleness by the mainstream. And while *grigri* has itself been discursively constructed as a racialised concept, and many of those associated with the concept of *grigri* have denied this association, the elements and qualities associated with *grigri* have also been adopted and deployed by those impacted by the discourse on *grigri*. In doing this, *grigri* has been discussed as a site from which the creative refusal of whiteness and modernity/coloniality can occur. As Chapter 7 argued, the activities and actors associated with *grigri* could be seen as decolonial in that they have unveiled the logic of coloniality (Mignolo 2011a, 54) and refused to accept the existence of a sovereign world in the singular. Instead, through *grigri's* tools and expressions, participants could be seen to have challenged and undermined whiteness, modern Creoleness, and state sovereignty. Practitioners also offered clients alternatives to, and tools with which to undermine, state power in response to grievances, dissatisfactions, and experiences of disempowerment and exploitation by the state. As outlined in section 8.2 and Chapter 2, the literature on modernity and witchcraft has suggested that witchcraft in Africa can be understood as a response to the forces of modernity, but also that modernity and witchcraft might be seen as co-constitutive. In situating an analysis of *grigri* in modernity and race studies, further links have been suggested in this thesis that situate witchcraft as discursively constructed by the racial logic of modernity/coloniality, but also as a response to modernity/coloniality. In this way, *grigri* and witchcraft throughout the African diaspora could be explained in terms of a black radical tradition (C. Robinson 2000), in that they have been part of an enduring refusal of colonial domination and, at least in the case of Seychelles, remained in a creolised dialogue with the African diaspora.

In alignment with Lentin's (2020) focus on examining what race *does*, this research suggests that the adaptive logic of race has been used to discursively construct modern power in Seychelles in a way that has been detached from corporeality. The literature surveyed in Chapter 2 highlighted the connections between modernity and magic, and separately to modernity and race, but argued that further exploration is needed to better connect all three topics of modernity, magic, and race. This thesis offers explanations for how and why race ought to be conceptualised beyond corporeal referents, given how racial logics have operated through *grigri* with little basis in corporeality or actually existing practices, but have nevertheless substantiated racial fictions with real world implications. I have suggested this with reference to the ways in which these processes in Seychelles reflect activities elsewhere, including similar legal codes deployed in Europe, Africa, and the Americas over many centuries, to the discursive construction of *sorsye* in Seychelles and Obeah in the Caribbean, along with the Africanisation of the witch throughout Europe's colonies, including Seychelles. These synergies suggest that the racialisation of witchcraft has occurred globally, for similar purposes, and with relative consistency. If the rejection of *grigri* from the

Creole canon was a fundamental policy of the SPUP/SPPF's modernisation programme, then it could be suggested that race has provided a useful technology with which the SPUP/SPPF has constructed and justified modern Creole power. That the targets of anti-witchcraft discourse and laws shifted from 15th century vagabonds and women healers in Europe to racialised subjects in Europe's colonies, too, suggests that the racialisation of witchcraft has played a role not just in Seychelles but in the expansion and reproduction of Europe across the globe. In making sense of the relationality of *grigri* and modern Creoleness, this thesis has connected the subject of witchcraft to themes relating to modernity and race that have hitherto been insufficiently examined.

8.4 Implications and Opportunities

Inspired by the approach of the Extended Case Method (Burawoy 2009b), this thesis has explored connections between the 'micro' context of *grigri* in Seychelles and the 'macro' contexts of racialised modernity/coloniality. These connections were suggested to help make sense of the broader forces within which the ethnographic site of Seychelles can be situated. In doing so, theories of modernity, magic, and race have been engaged with and extended to develop both specific and general understandings about social formations and structuring forces. This section discusses several implications arising from this work, and opportunities for further progressing research in this area.

The first implication relates to my use of abjection theory to make sense of the relationality of *grigri* and modern Creoleness. Chapter 2 suggested that a theory of abjection can build on analyses relating to exclusionary logics, particularly concerning race, the nation state, and racialised modernity/coloniality. Using abjection theory as a shortcut, later chapters adopted abjection as a way to describe the casting off of *grigri* from the domain of modern Creoleness. This can be seen to have extended abjection theory in a way that progresses Arya's (2014) view of abjection as a useful way to explain a social logic that underpins the operation of exclusionary forces, as well as the response and resistance to such forces by those most impacted. Further research opportunities exist to recognise the application of abjection theory to explain similar dynamics that, at least currently, are often explained through separate but implicitly connected and overlapping analyses of social exclusion and domination.

The second implication concerns the validation, extension, and connection of modernity, magic, and race theories. The main overlapping and relevant points of each were outlined in Chapter 2, with a specific focus on how the witch-hunts and disenchantment of the world have been

fundamental to capitalist expansion; how modernity can be thought of in terms of Europeanness, and as such how race and modernity have been described as co-constitutive; how magic and modernity have also been seen as co-constitutive; and how the Africanisation of the witch has shifted the focus of witchcraft from the site of Europe to assemblages of non-Europeanness. Researching the situation of *grigri* in Seychelles has further suggested the existence of these links as interconnected and considered how the locus of 'witchcraft' might serve to hold these ostensibly disparate themes together. This research has offered alternative ways of thinking about *grigri* and witchcraft more broadly, while simultaneously presenting other ways of thinking through race. Following this, existing theories of modernity and magic might be linked more explicitly to race. Simultaneously, understandings of race beyond corporeal referents can be built upon by considering how race can be signified through witchcraft and, as a result, how this constitutes social life. Further, this thesis might reveal how a focus on witchcraft that does not explicitly consider race can serve to obfuscate the operation of racial logics.

The third and final implication is more specific to *grigri* and Seychelles. As noted in Chapter 2, the existing literature on *grigri* in Seychelles is sparse and dominated by white non-Seychellois from the 20th century who promoted circular ideas about Creole people. And where this literature exists, references to *grigri* are brief, and contributions by Creole people are limited. My investigation into *grigri* offers an uncommonly in-depth examination of *grigri* in Seychelles from a Creole standpoint. It also moves from a prevailing view of *grigri* as a localised belief in Seychelles to a more globally situated understanding of *grigri* as a discursively constructed and racialised concept. In doing so, the topic of *grigri* has been explicitly connected to the previously detached themes of race and modernity. Further, this research has taken *grigri* seriously as a discourse, domain, and as a pluralistic series of beliefs and practices in the face of popular writing that has characterised *grigri* in condescending and racist terms. By offering a grounded analysis of *grigri* from a Creole standpoint, the voices and perspectives of those impacted by the discourse on Creoleness and *grigri* have been emphasised. Recognising the pluralistic and conflicting explanations of *grigri* and Creoleness as valid concomitantly presents Creoleness as a domain and concept characterised by diversity and contradiction. Paying close attention to those impacted by the discourse on *grigri* has also highlighted the value and significance of their roles, work, power, influence, and insights. It is also worth emphasising the role that these practitioners have played in Seychelles and the challenge they have – and have not – presented to political order, and how their decolonial and disordering imaginaries have synergies with other sites of the African diaspora. Indeed, in their knowledge, imaginaries, and experiences exist accounts that represent opportunities for further research into decoloniality and black radical traditions in the African diaspora, particularly the underrepresented

site of Seychelles, that could be extended to the under examined topic of *grigri* and similarly creolised concepts.

In addition to these implications are opportunities for this research to be carried forward. As noted in Chapter 3, practitioner participants in my research were all men. I outlined several reasons why this may have been the case, and two are worth noting here that warrant further exploration. Reproductive control was a consistent provision of *bonnonm dibwa*, from birth control to herbal abortions, which was simultaneously a prominent concern of the Seychelles Government. Examining the intersections of reproductive power and *grigri* were beyond the scope of this thesis and perhaps not appropriate for me to explore further if, as I assumed, women practitioners may have been more likely to cater to this gendered issue in response to the needs of women clients. In any event, my inability to locate and engage women practitioners during my fieldwork provide an opening for further exploration and engagement with women practitioners and clients. The notably gendered topic of witchcraft, given its historical focus on women in European witch hunts and the colonies, necessitates further examination of gender in the context of *grigri*, which could build significantly on the contributions arising from this thesis. Another possible reason given in Chapter 3 for the lack of women practitioners relates to the masculinisation of Creoleness and the gendering of the witch. Two observations raise opportunities for further research in this regard. The first relates to what Vergès (2015; 2007) saw as the particularly masculine qualities of enslavement, colonialism, and creolisation in the Indian Ocean. The second concerns the tendency for men to be construed as obeah practitioners in the Caribbean, and as such more commonly prosecuted despite a British imaginary that held women to be witches (Paton 2015, 101, 167). In the case of Seychelles, men are also overrepresented as *sorsye* and *bonnonm dibwa* in the popular discourse on *grigri* as well as historical accounts and accusations. Further research on the gendering of *grigri* could help to draw these themes out and possibly shed light on why men may be overrepresented in the domain of grigri when compared with gendered representations of witches historically and elsewhere.

Other opportunities exist to build on this research by expanding or altering its scope. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the motivation for this thesis emerged from the connections, real and imagined, between Seychelles and the broader African diaspora. This focus stemmed from the literature and discourse surveyed on *grigri*, as well as my own pre-existing understandings as a Seychellois from other Seychellois. These reference points suggested the existence of salient connections between Seychelles and the African diaspora, particularly the Caribbean, which participants echoed during fieldwork. The history of Seychelles as a French and then British colony further solidified connections with the French and English-speaking world, which necessarily shaped the scope of

this research. The literature and mainstream discourse seemed to link Seychelles to mainland Africa via colonial discourse, and frequently in a way that suggested a greater temporal and spatial distance from Seychelles than its proximity to other sites in the African diaspora. This peculiar differentiation became an object of study for this research. And while the SPUP/SPPF's repudiation of *grigri* in the post-coup era provided a hook and key reference for this thesis, *grigri's* complicated situation has been shaped by more than the SPUP/SPPF's anticolonial socialist agenda. However, where this thesis saw discursive connections, the African diaspora, and the colonial world as foci, further avenues could be explored to consider the historical and contemporary connections between Seychelles and the African mainland. This might consider Seychelles in relation to socialism and Marxism throughout Africa, as well as how postcolonial African states have engaged with the topics of witchcraft and tradition. While such a focus was beyond the scope of this thesis, pursuing an understanding of *grigri* and the logic of the SPUP/SPPF from this alternative angle could provide other ways of explaining the SPUP/SPPF's maintenance of *grigri's* prohibition and the relationality of *grigri* and Creoleness.

As with any research, the currency of these findings will also need to be assessed in future, particularly given the significantly altered political landscape in Seychelles compared to the SPUP/SPPF era in which my analysis and fieldwork occurred. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the SPUP/SPPF governed Seychelles from 1977 until President Faure, the successor of René's successor, was replaced by Ramkalawan in late 2020. As noted in Chapter 5, anxieties concerning black magic were expressed at the time of this monumental political shift. And, as foreshadowed in Chapter 1, if it is valid to view witchcraft as a response to the political turbulence of the SPUP/SPPF era, then a continued examination of how practices and anxieties associated with *grigri* play out in the post-SPUP/SPPF era would put this claim to the test. A key discontinuity marked by the end of the SPUP/SPPF era will be a point of interest for studies going forward that might ask what the discourse on *grigri* looks like in this new era. In dialogue with the explanations I have offered in this thesis, future research might also explore how significant the political order of the SPUP/SPPF was in the discursive construction of *grigri* by examining its continued forms, or lack thereof, in the post-SPUP/SPPF era.

I finish here with a final frame through which further research and engagement with the topic of *grigri* might occur. This research has suggested that a racial logic within modernity/coloniality has attributed an abject status to *grigri*, Africanness, blackness, and pre-modernness in Seychelles. As such, these qualities and domains might simultaneously be considered as decolonial potentiators that put coloniality itself at risk of being disordered. As Edwards (2016) suggested, human

relationships exceed order and flourish in what might be considered disorderly conditions, shaped by and in the body, the ancestors, and the natural world. Such a view, Edwards continues, calls into question the state's monopoly on violence and claims to the necessity of political order. Chaos is a 'thing we need now more than ever' that is 'composed of the heretical movements of people in solidarity in rejection of Western society, not simply against it but in affirmation and preservation of a history of collective being' (2016, xxiii–xxv). For Edwards, survival is upheaval, and there is potential for the domains of *grigri* and African diasporic witchcraft(s) to be further examined as decolonial responses with which variously displaced peoples have navigated, survived, and resisted colonialism and coloniality alike. Such a focus might better acknowledge the agency and radical traditions of those in and of the margins who have, for centuries, deployed and creolised acts of creative refusal in response to modernity/coloniality's relations of racial domination.

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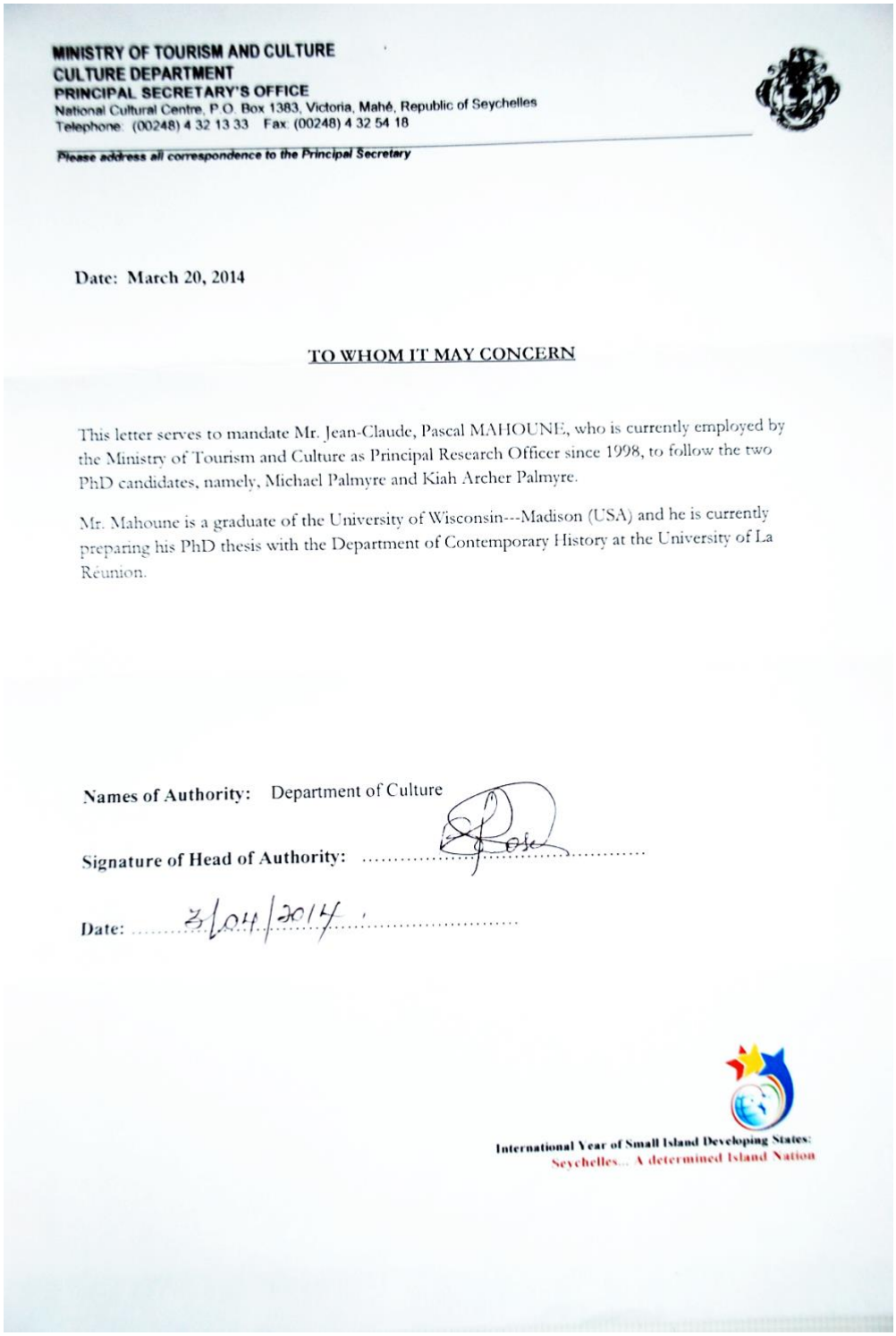
Appendices

Appendix A: Seychelles Government Support

Letter of support from the Seychelles Government and local researcher Jean-Claude Mahoune. The letter referenced myself and my partner, Kiah Archer, who was also completing fieldwork in Seychelles at the time.



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CULTURE
CULTURE DEPARTMENT
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE
National Cultural Centre, P.O. Box 1383, Victoria, Mahé, Republic of Seychelles
Telephone: (00248) 4 32 13 33 Fax: (00248) 4 32 54 18

Please address all correspondence to the Principal Secretary

Date: March 20, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to mandate Mr. Jean-Claude, Pascal MAHOUNE, who is currently employed by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture as Principal Research Officer since 1998, to follow the two PhD candidates, namely, Michael Palmyre and Kiah Archer Palmyre.

Mr. Mahoune is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin---Madison (USA) and he is currently preparing his PhD thesis with the Department of Contemporary History at the University of La Réunion.

Names of Authority: Department of Culture

Signature of Head of Authority: .....

Date: 25/04/2014

International Year of Small Island Developing States:
Seychelles... A determined Island Nation

Appendix B: English consent form

Consent form in English with original thesis title

Fragments of Culture, Colonialism and Identity:
The Place of *Grigri* in Seychellois *Créolité*

Curtin University – Perth – Western Australia
Principle Investigator: Associate Professor Philip Moore
Co-Investigator: Associate Professor Joan Wardrop
Co-Investigator: PhD Candidate Michael Palmyre

Purpose and background

I, Michael Palmyre, Anthropology PhD Candidate at Curtin University, am conducting a research study to help develop an understanding of the practices of *bonnonm dibwa*, *sorsye* and *grigri*, magic and herbalism in Seychelles. This work will help to develop a deeper understanding of Seychellois identity and culture. I am asking you to participate in this study so that I can document what you know about *grigri*; what you think a *bonnonm dibwa* or *sorsye* might do; and what you know about the history and origins of *grigri* and herbalism in Seychelles. Any experiences you may have had or that you know of someone else having will help the development of the project.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study I will talk to you to learn about your experiences with these topics. You are free to decline any meeting should you wish to do so.

Risks or discomforts

If any topics make you uncomfortable or upset you are free to decline to answer any questions or to ask the researcher to leave or stop talking at any time.

Your records will be handled as confidentially as possible and researchers will forgo the recording of your name to help de-identify you. You will be de-identified in all our transcriptions and fieldwork notes. This data will be kept secure and only Michael Palmyre and the members of this research team will have access to these notes. Information will be used for the PhD thesis and may be used for academic presentations and publications.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, the information that you provide will help to develop a greater understanding of Seychellois identity, history and culture. It will not cost you anything to participate in this research.

Questions

If you have any questions you may call email Michael at michael.palmyre@postgrad.curtin.edu.au or call him on 2 617 151.

Comments or concerns about this study should be discussed primarily with Michael. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Committee. This study has been approved by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number xxxx). The committee is comprised of members of the public, academics, lawyers, doctors and pastoral carers. If needed, verification of approval can be obtained either by writing to:

Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research and Development
GPO Box U1987
Perth WA 6845

Or by telephoning +61 8 9266 9223 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au

Consent

You will be given a copy of this form for your records if you agree to participate in this study.

By signing this document you are demonstrating that you agree to participate in this study and understand the intent and purpose of this research. You are also demonstrating the knowledge that you are free to decline to be in this study if you like. If you do not wish to sign this document you may give verbal consent instead.

_____ _____
Date Signature of Study Participant

_____ _____
Date Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix C: Creole consent form

Consent form with original thesis title translated from English to Creole by *Lenstiti Kreol*

Kiltir, Kolonyalism e Lidantite:

Plas pou Grigri dan Kreolite Seselwa.

Curtin University – Perth – Western Australia

Envestigater Prensipal	Associate Professor Philip Moore
Koleg Envestigater	Associate Professor Joan Wardrop
Koleg Envestigater	PhD Candidate Michael Palmyre

Obze e kontekst

Mwan, Michael Palmyre, Kandida PhD kot Liniversite Curtin, Ostrali, pe fer en letid pou konpran pratik bonnonm dibwa, sorsye e grigri, mazik e lerbalism dan Sesel. Sa louvwaz i pou ed developman pou nou plis konpran lidantite e kiltir Seselwa. Mwan pe rod ou partisipasyon dan sa letid pou nou dokiman sa ki ou konnen lo grigri; ki ou kwar bann dimounn i fer ki i apel bonnonm dibwa ou sorsye; e ki ou konnen lo listwar e orizin grigri e lerbalism dan Sesel. Okenn leksperyans ki ou annan ou si ou konn e lot dimounn ki ya kapab ed i a gran ed pou devlop sa prozet.

Prosedir

Si ou dakor, mwan koz ek ou pou konn ou leksperyans dan sa bann size. Ou pa bezwen zwenn avek mwan si ou pa oule.

Risk e komfor

Ou kapab refiz reponn okenn kestyon e ou kapab demand mwan pou aret kestyon ou nimporte ler si ou senti ou anbarase.

Tou linformasion ki nou anmase nou pou gard konfidentel. Ou non pa pou ganny asosye avek okenn lenformasyon.

Benefis

Menm ki ou pa pou ganny benefis direk pou sa bann lenformasyon ki ou pou donn nou zot pou ed nou konpran plis kiltir, zistwar e lidantite Seselwa. Byen sir si ou pa bezwen peye pou partisipe dan sa resers.

Kestyon

Si ou annan okenn kestyon, email Michael kot michael.palmyre@postgrad.curtin.edu.au oubyen apel li lo son mobile 2 617 151.

Si ou annan komennter ou konsern lo sa letid, kontakte Michael premyerman. Si ou annan okenn reson pou pa fer sa, ou nabou kontakte 'The Human Research Ethics Committee' dan liniversite.
Sa letid inn ganny aprouve par 'The Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee' (Numero Aprouvasyon: xxxx). Sa komite I annan memb piblik, etidyans, avokas, dokter e representan relizyes. Si ou bezwen verifikasyon pou sa aprovasyon kontakte:

Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research and Development
GPO Box U1987
Perth WA 6845
Australia

Oubyen ou kapab telefonn +61 8 9266 9223 ou email hrec@curtin.edu.au.

Konnsentman

Ou pou ganny en kopi sa form pou ou record. Ler ou siny sa form ou pe montre mannyer ou dakor pou partisipe dan sa resers. Osi, ou pe montre mannyer ou konn ou kab aret kontinyen si ou le. Ou lib pou siny sa form oubyen donn ou konnsentman en parole par rikor.

_____ _____

Dat Signatir Etid Partisipan

_____ _____

Dat Signatir Personn ki pe Ganny sa Konnsentman

Appendix D: Curtin University letter of support

Letter from Curtin University provided to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture ahead of fieldwork being conducted.

Curtin University

School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts

GPO Box U1987
Perth Western Australia 6845

Telephone +61 8 9266 7688
Facsimile +61 8 9266 3152
Email j.wardrop@curtin.edu.au
Web http://humanities.curtin.edu.au

29 November 2013

To whom it may concern:

We are writing to introduce and in support of Mr Michael Palmyre. Mr Palmyre is a postgraduate student at our university, enrolled for a PhD in Anthropology, and hopes to carry out archival and field research in the Seychelles. He has detailed his research project in his application to you.

Our university seeks, as a matter of standard practice with research outside of Perth, the support of a connection with a local educational institution so that the visiting researcher can participate in seminars and the intellectual life of the host community. Mr Palmyre's research is funded by our university and we do not seek any resources from the local educational institution.

Mr Palmyre has achieved doctoral candidacy at our university. Having completed a year of preliminary research he hopes to begin his field research early in 2014. Mr Palmyre's research grows out of his own status as a Seychellois born person now living in Australia.

We are co-supervisors of Mr Palmyre's research and we are both experienced in this type of supervision. We are hoping that your institution will be able to provide the sort of academic connection that is so valuable for visiting researchers.

Should you have any questions regarding this request please do not hesitate to contact either or both of us.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Wardrop, D.Phil. j.wardrop@curtin.edu.au
Philip Moore, Ph.D. p.moore@curtin.edu.au
Associate Professor
Department of Social Sciences & International Studies