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OF INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION AND  
RELOCATION**

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# MAURITIAN MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF INDUSTRIAL CONCENTRATION AND RELOCATION

Suzanne CHAZAN and Isabelle WIDMER\*

## Introduction

The model of development in Mauritius<sup>1</sup>, based on free exchange, goes back to the French origins of the colony ; this model replaced the mercantile system of the East India Company to become the dominant model of the British colony (cf. CHAZAN-GILLIG 1998). The British colonial system, taking over from the incomplete French colonial system, did not focus exclusively on the social relations within the plantation production system, (a system which already existed from the time of the slave trade), but rather on the structure and control of the preferential sugar exchanges which became the main export activity, while at the other end of the line the coolie trade developed in order to bring in the required workforce. At this time the colonial power only intervened indirectly, in order to create the most favourable conditions (conditions stemming from the general development of trade) for the optimisation of capital-work returns<sup>2</sup> in the sugar plantations. This mixed colonial system, based on the trade system of the plantation, entitles us to consider Mauritius as a northern

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French by Mr. Jeremy PRICE, University of Poitiers. This is a revised version of an article that was presented to the 3<sup>rd</sup> seminar of the Austral Demographic Institute, held on the 27 November 1998, by the Observatoire de Développement Régional, or ODR, (i.e. the Regional Development Observatory) of Reunion Island. We wish to thank Mr. Thierry DE LA GRANGE, Director of the ODR for having invited us to participate in this seminar.

<sup>2</sup> Among the commissions of inquiry there was the « Frères et Williamson » commission in 1873 and the « Sweetenham Commission » of 1909.

hemisphere country in terms of the colonial nature of its economy, but as a southern hemisphere country in terms of the effect of the migrating workforce on the contemporary organisation of Mauritian society.

Given this dual perspective, how may we interpret the influence of free trade policies on the migrations and social transformations in the transitional demographic situation of Mauritius from the 1950s up to the present day? No definite answer is possible as yet. Demographers and economists assert that beyond the models and projections which aim to evaluate the « consequences of free trade and accompanying budgetary measures on employment and income levels » (COGNEAU & TAPINOS 1985)<sup>3</sup>, qualitative analyses (ZELINSKI 1971, COURGEAU 1986, PEEMANS 1992) must be introduced in order to understand the way in which social, cultural and political relations interact in the demographic and economic transformation. Our task will be to show that Mauritius, a developing, or recently industrialised country, has continued to build on its original specificity as a « populated colony » by developing around the pre-existing affinities of its former colonial situation, around the markets for the main export products, and around the peripheral free quota markets characterised by wide price fluctuation.

The first part of this study will present the migratory situation of Mauritius as a general social phenomenon. The capitalisation of human resources was a determining factor in the creation of Mauritian society from the very start of the slave trade, and again, later on, at the beginning of the coolie trade. It will be seen that the Mauritian « populated colony » developed its independence from the colonial power by linking contractual relations with a form of local identification going beyond the boundaries of a territorial nation state; from the mill to the store of yesteryear, and from the firm to the market of today, the difference is only a question of degree and of transposing the social links recognised by the constitution.

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<sup>3</sup> Denis COGNEAU & George TAPINOS, 1995, pp. 27-51. The authors suggest a different model from the « neo-classical model » of allocation of production factors which pre-supposes full utilisation and neglects their dynamic content. The MAQM system is suggested with a view to a reasoned choice of periodisation in order to study the effects of commercial liberalisation on investments. This modelisation, in the context of a reasoned choice of work, home, and financial sphere analysis categories, is a « simulation exercise which consists of identifying and comparing the line of growth reference with the developments leading to free trade ».

In the second part we will look at the close links between migration and industrial de-localisation : the main emigration trends represent a new form of expansion of the « world economy » (ADDA 1999 : 57) which places the Mauritian market within the sphere of international trade, leaving the island state a role as grand organiser.

In the final part it will be shown that the migratory movement (TARRIUS 1989) which characterises present day Mauritian society (in the form of labour, business or land cultivation migrations) reveals the pervading vagueness of the notion of residence. The migratory tendencies which have become apparent since the 1960s are of new territorial significance given the external links which preside over development in Mauritius at the present time. This development is based to a an ever greater extent on regional dynamics which are more or less dependent on European and American markets.

### 1 - The Migratory Situation in Mauritius : A General Social Phenomenon

The migratory situation in Mauritius is a general social phenomenon in that it reveals the mode of functioning of the whole of Mauritian society since it constitutes the most significant factor of transformation.

#### *The Migratory Situation*

*Figure 1. Presentation of net emigration of Mauritian residents, net migratory totals, and emigration rates*

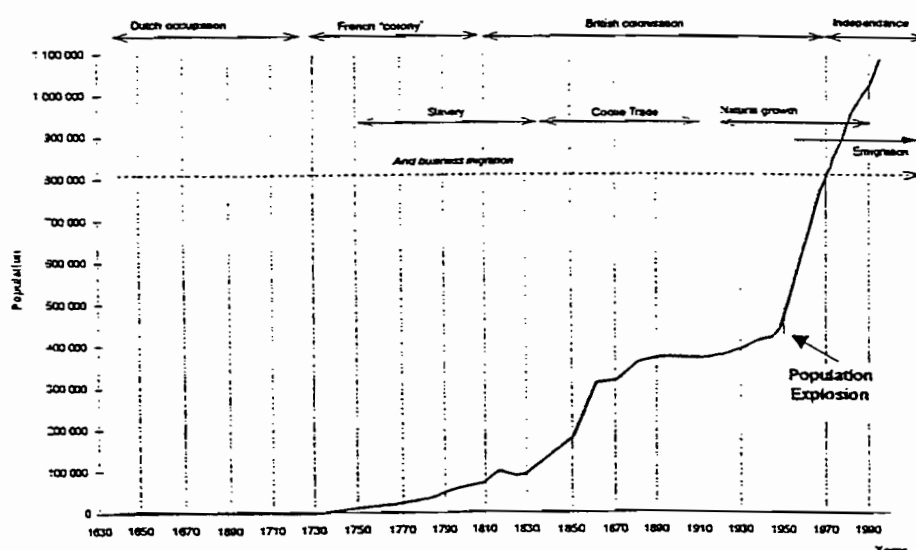
	1958-1963	1964-1973	1974-1983	1984-1993
Average Population	662,286	784,145	914,601	1,011,773
Net total emigration of residents	- 2,806	- 32,728	- 41,097	- 39,929
Average net annual emigration of residents	- 468	- 3,273	- 4,110	- 3,993
Average net annual rate of emigration of residents per 1000 of population	- 0.7	- 4.17	- 4.49	- 3.95

Source : embarkation and disembarkation cards

Mauritian migration, indicative of the balance between population and resources, is characterised by the existence of a high proportion of continuous emigration, up to a total of nearly 4,5% of the resident population according to the net annual rate of emigration estimated at - 3,993 (i.e. 3.9‰) for the period 1984 to 1993. And for an average population of 1,011,773 the net total emigration amounts to the considerable figure of - 39,929.

This tendency began in the 1960s. Indeed the population grew moderately from 1910 to 1950 with strong natural growth leading to record annual increase and demographic explosion in the 1950s (cf. fig. 2) :

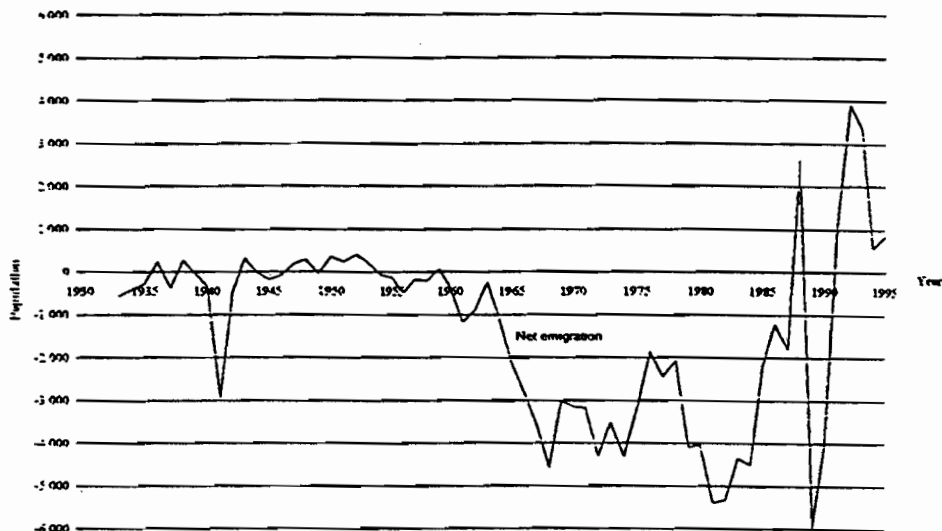
**Figure 2**  
*Mauritian population growth : demographic acceleration*



Source : Central Statistics Office, A. TOUSSAINT 1972, J. M. FILLIOT 1974.

Negative migratory totals (fig. 3) reach very high levels from 1960 to 1985, from 1,000 net departures for the lowest years, to 4,000 or 5,000 net departures for the highest years. From 1930 to 1960 the migratory totals were almost nil, except for 1941 when migration was affected by the Second World War.

**Figure 3. Net migration for 1933-1995 : total variation of arrivals and departures recorded at ports and airports**



Sources : Family Planning and Demographic yearbook 1995, Evaluation Unit, Ministry of Health, Republic of Mauritius, October 1996.  
International Travel and Tourism Statistics, December 1984 and October 1995, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, CSO.

Emigration follows on from the beginning of the demographic transition in 1948 with a slight delay effect (DOMENACH & PICOUE 1992, CHARBIT 1993)<sup>4</sup>. Emigration increases from 1960 on to reach record levels in 1968 and, after a brief lull, takes off again in the 1980s and 1990s. The size of net migratory totals between 1965 and 1985 prompts Monique DINAN (1985 : 39) to compare the emigration flow to the « exodus of an island on the point of departure ». This comparison is of some validity in view of the 33,000 net average annual departures from 1964 to 1973, a figure which increases to 41,000 net average annual departures for the years 1974 to 1983.

<sup>4</sup> The transitory demographic situation of Mauritius is a general phenomenon frequent amongst colonised islands.

In what way have the differences of social status and economic role intervened in the migratory processes in Mauritius (a country of immigration until 1910<sup>5</sup>) in the context of sugar production crises, widespread unemployment, post war natural disasters<sup>6</sup>, and the movement towards Independence in the 1960s ? The answer to this question is general and indirect due to the symbolic parallels that are to be drawn between spatial mobility and the sedentary population in the sugar economy and other Mauritian institutions.

### *Spatial Mobility and Local Settling*

In the absence of historically developed indigenous cultural references, Mauritian society has constructed a common mode of belonging to the nation, which, paradoxically, is not recognised for what it really is, in other words a mode dependent on the sugar plantation economy while still orchestrating ethnic differences. We may look at this contradiction more closely, by comparing the processes of identification of the white community with the sugar factory, of the Chinese community with the store, and of the Indo-Mauritians with the *kalimaïs*<sup>7</sup>. These three distinct communities were already present in population censuses from 1845 on, and continued to be referential categories until 1962 when the community identification criteria began to change. Thus it was that at the time of the Inquiry Commission requested by DE PLÉVITZ<sup>8</sup>, in 1872, the notion of « Creole Indian »<sup>9</sup> was used for the first time to explicitly designate the first generation offspring of immigrants in order to differentiate them from more recent immigrant arrivals. It may be noted that the Creole<sup>10</sup> category is absent from the

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<sup>5</sup> The last year of Indian immigration.

<sup>6</sup> Especially cyclone Carol in 1960.

<sup>7</sup> The *kalimaïs* are small religious cults where Indian plantation migrants worship the deity Kali. Some of these *kalimaïs* have now been transformed into temples.

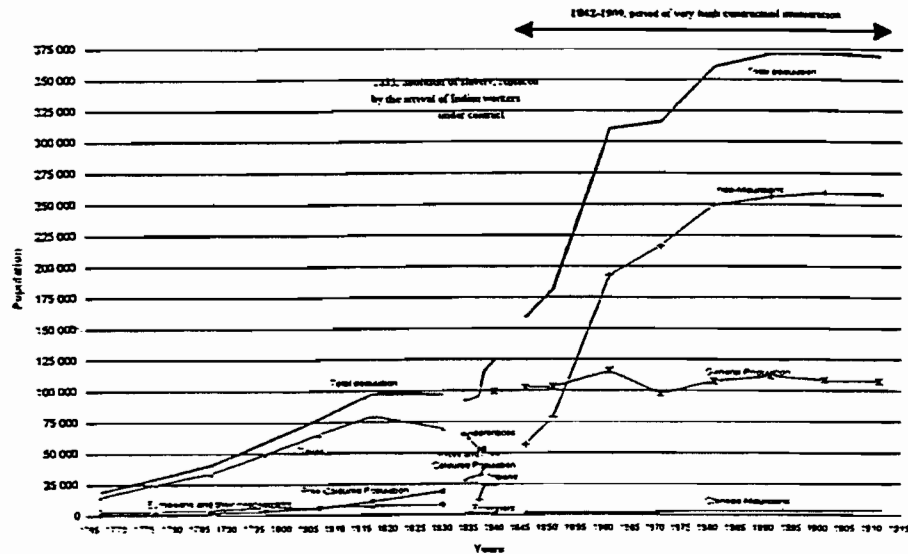
<sup>8</sup> The « Frère and Williamson » Inquiry Commission which sets out all the industrial relations existing at that time (relations between owners and workers).

<sup>9</sup> Interview of Yvan MARTIAL, journalist and former chief editor of *L'Express* and founder of the *Gazette des îles*.

<sup>10</sup> In Mauritius the term « Creole » is generally used to describe poor black Mauritians who are of African or Madagascan origin. The term « mulâtre » (mulatto) is used to describe half-castes of proven European origin. The term half-caste is not in usage. The term « elite Creole » refers to mulattos. The term « coloureds » stems from the term « population libre de couleur » in usage during the French colonial period.

statutory distinctions of the census despite its social and economic importance in Mauritius.

**Figure 4. The statutory ethnic group differentiation categories used by the censuses during the immigration period in Mauritian history**



Sources : Digest of Demographic Statistics 1994, Central Statistical Office.  
 Republic of Mauritius. Vol. 10, September 1995.  
 CSO 1956. Natality and Fertility in Mauritius 1825-1955.

The statutory categories from 1845 to 1910 are very different from the initial categories used during the period of French colonisation, before 1810, which distinguished the white population from the black slaves (fig. 4). The categories in use from 1845 to 1910 remove the socio-economic distinctions which existed formally from 1810 to 1845, thus abolishing the very real distinctions between White, Mulatto<sup>11</sup>, and Black, and no longer listing the « apprentice » category which was the only professional category, made up largely of Indians (mostly Christians) and of

<sup>11</sup> In Mauritius the « half-caste » category does not exist. A distinction is made between « Mulattos » and « Creoles », the former refers to Mauritians who are able to prove genealogically confirmed white origins, whilst the latter refers to Mauritians having African, Madagascan or Mozambican origins from the slave trade.



Creoles. Officially the process of emancipation of « coloureds » was completed in 1833. The all-encompassing category of « General Population » was used at this time to cover whites, coloureds, and Indians (who shared the same Catholic religion), and thus to indicate that slavery was a thing of the past. The main distinctions thereby established stigmatised the origins of contractual workers (the Indians and Chinese). The Chinese were storekeepers on the plantations, whilst Muslim traders of Indian origin were not listed in a separate category from other non Muslim Indians. In 1835, after the official abolition of slavery, the « General Population » category came to 100,000 inhabitants, a total which remained more or less stable at around just under 120,000 until 1910. The Indo-Mauritian population curve climbed steadily up to 250,000 people for a total population of 375,000 in 1910. The Chinese-Mauritians remained under 5,000 in number.

The references to religion and origin used to describe the population of Mauritius in the 1962 census use the terms established in the 1840s (CHRISTOPHER 1992 : 57-64)<sup>12</sup>. How can the use of these terms be explained at a time in the 1960s when the sugar plantations were experiencing highly fluctuating development during a period of large and small parcel land divisions (ALLEN 1982), technological innovation, and recurrent natural disasters ? The answer can only be found in the social modes of the structure of capital, work and business in the sugar plantations. These modes correspond to the three main categories of « General Population », « Indo-Mauritians » and « Chinese-Mauritians ». This tripartite social division distinguishes the Chinese storekeepers, the Indian labourers (for whom different backgrounds are not stipulated), and the Mauritian plantation owners (of French origin). For Mauritians of French (and mostly white) origin, the settling process, which centred around the sugar factory, involved identification with property represented by the factory chimney. That is not to imply literal individual ownership but rather a collective relation with the land which reinforced the permanence of family links and highlighted the existence of a high level of strictly endogamous and strategic alliances as the foundation for wider interest groups within which there were internal contradictions during the periods of sugar sector concentrations. Faced

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<sup>12</sup> The author demonstrates the logic of the progressively developed British Imperial system. His analysis deals with the sugar trade, the small independent plantations and the formation of the urban environment : through this analysis he attempts to identify where migration intervenes in social differentiation.

with this situation, the indentured labourers were grouped together in camps inside the sugar plantation and organised into gangs, each gang working on a delimited plantation zone. The labourers lived in camps within the enclosure of the plantation. The social organisation of these camps was based on the *kalimaïs* religion observed outside the camps and usually at the junctions of the internal sugar plantation roads which divided up the different gangs' plantation zones. The camp was a residential unit made up of families federated by the sardar<sup>13</sup> who managed the workforce based on social links which were elaborated on the spot. The system of family and ethnic social relations created in the camps was the starting point for more complex stratifications, based on the caste system and also depending on the region of family origin in India. The camps' permanence was based on direct control of the labour force, and thereby became analogous to the sugar factory in the building of social and family relations. Similar social and family rules governed inherited family property invested in the sugar factory. This common mode of settling was overshadowed by the domination of capital over labour, but it appeared clearly at times of sugar crises and at times of sugar sector concentrations. This implies a dialectic of power relations and interests at stake in the production process. They were not exclusively centred on working conditions, but also involved the legitimisation of the right to cultivate inhabited portions of land. These rights were legalised in 1948<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, on the outskirts of these relations, another division was established on the basis of the daily requirements of foods and other goods on the plantation. The Chinese storekeepers fulfilled a role of intermediary on the plantation, and in their stores despite the fact that they did not own the stores. These stores were the backdrop to a whole network of apprentice/assistants who moved from one store to another transporting goods, running errands, or merely looking for further employment. These apprentice/assistants were thus eventually able to found a family business of their own by taking advantage of the network of relations they had set up by visiting stores on errands or looking for work. This activity enabled them to acquire the necessary knowledge of the business, of customer needs, and of the social links available to do business. The family relations which were thus

<sup>13</sup> The sardar is a kind of foreman who deals with work organisation in the sugar plantation cane fields. He represented the intermediary level between the factory managers and the Indian workers.

<sup>14</sup> The law on prescription. It is important to note the coincidence of land laws with the start of the demographic transition.

established took as reference the clan scattered throughout the island : Lee, Ng, Chan etc. The store was a central place on the outskirts of the clan organisation, and a meeting place for the established « society » in the capital Port-Louis. The store was a place for stocking up on supplies and a meeting place for other storekeepers exchanging news before departing again.

From the factory to the camps and stores, the settling down process was only recognised as such when family and social links, and their rules, had been formed. These relations, be they centralised or delocalised, provided the basis for the sugar plantation system in which relations of exploitation and domination existed. In these « Factory Areas »<sup>15</sup> there was room for freedom and independence at times of sugar production crises and insufficient food supplies, and this was reinforced by the indirect control of the workforce. The contractual relations had to follow the logic of social settling : from very early on this was the case for the White, Indian and Chinese community relations which were built up against the backdrop of those contractual relations. Social distinctions were based on the separate spheres of social belonging because the dominant production relations were founded on the differential value of exports (sugar) and imports (food supplies). They were also founded on the unequal value of capital (land ownership and finance) and of work. The private ownership of land, and the value of that land, experienced differing fortunes and the mutations of the plantation ownership land reveal the significant changes in the relations between plantation owners and planters. Thus a certain number of recurrent images or metaphors have been remarked in interviews carried out<sup>16</sup> in order to explore the nature of the new social relations created by the protracted period of industrial concentration from the 1930s to the 1960s. In these interviews we find, on the one hand terms such as « dégonfler l'usine » (« streamlining the factory ») and « cristalliser les frontières », (« crystallising the frontiers »), in reply to which there are terms such as « balance »<sup>17</sup> (« balance ») and « groupe »<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See notes 44 and 45 and their corresponding sections.

<sup>16</sup> Several interviews were carried out, with various interviewees, on the subject of the evolution of social relations within the plantation production system, under the auspices of the « *Migrations, commerce, plantation* » program contract between the Institute of Research for Development (l'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement or IRD) and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) from 1991 to 1996.

<sup>17</sup> It may be noted that most of these terms which were used in the interviews refer to forms of production which link the activities of the plantations to the sugar refining industry. « Dégonfler une usine » (streamlining a factory) implies a certain reduction

(« group ») used to designate the dominant relationships in sugar plantations. The term « bande » (« gang ») is used equally to refer to a group of planters (often related and in charge of a certain production area) and also to refer to the distinctions between family collaterals constituting a genealogical family tree<sup>19</sup> of the Mauritian community of French origin.

The distinctions of origin in the census categories symbolised the contractual situation of the Indian or Chinese immigrants whose cultural and religious values only facilitated settling in so far as they moulded social, family and ethnic relations. The Christian religion, taken as a characteristic of the « Population Générale » (the « General Population » category), with no distinction of origin, had the function of promoting socio-cultural assimilation<sup>20</sup> which was a condition for integration. However, the de facto functioning of the economy, and of the plantation society, was quite different. It produced a form of common settling based on lasting social and family links made possible by daily life in the camps and linked to the established social relations within the plantation production system. This was how the sugar issue, although disparaged by some, became an important influence for all Mauritians, and it was also due to this that the independent plantations were able to develop on the margins of sugar firms. Family and ethnic business activities also developed in a similar fashion. The junction between plantation and business, which was inherent to the development of the sugar plantations, generated a form of settlement. But it was the strong nature of these (more or less closely interwoven) networks

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which may lead to the shutting down of the factory if it does not work at full capacity. « La balance » (the balance) is where the sugar cane quality control takes place, in order to fix the relative value of the sugar cane in terms of its weight in sugar ; it is also a metaphoric term which is a symbol for the happy medium, and the balancing of relations in negotiations ; it is also a term used in everyday life situations.

- 18 The notion of group has a social, family and economic content : sometimes the group is associated with the family which possesses a majority of the shares, and sometimes the term is to be understood in a wider sense including the relations of domination and dependency which have been set up and which go beyond the social and family framework and the sub-divisions of the communities.
- 19 This is an important issue which will be taken up further on in the interpreting of ethnic differentiation in socio-professional terms.
- 20 The assimilation or integrating function of religion for groups of diverse origins around one dominant group played a role in the « general population » category, but also for the term « Hindu » which designates collectively all the Indian immigrants from several different regions in southern India, around the dominant group from northern India.

which intrinsically linked mobility and residence in the public sphere of the legitimisation of ethnic and religious social groups.

Thus, during the immediate post-war years, in the process of general economic mobilisation paving the way to Independence, the differences of origin (European, African or Asian) tended to force their way into the international arena. The dominant ethnic form (VUDDAMALAY 1992)<sup>21</sup> of distribution of Mauritian emigrants in countries with a higher rate of immigration underlines the internal determination of the migrations despite anti-immigration policies in the destination countries. The development model put forward by the experts at the LSE<sup>22</sup> as a solution to the problem of imbalanced population resources mentioned earlier, is that of a supplementary step in capitalist development which supposes a new assignment of the workforce and the reduction of the existing model through the extension of markets and a re-centring of productive balances. The interpretation of the Mauritian migratory system must take into account the way in which internal differentiation has been structured in such a way as to triumph over external policies set up by other countries in order to limit migrations.

### *The Ethnic Characteristics of Mauritian Emigration*

#### *Migrations within the Region : South Africa and Australia*

Australia, described as a sort of a « Klondike for the brave » still represents a promised land for Mauritian families who experienced emigration at a very early stage. Indeed, it was the discovery of gold in 1850, the technological contribution to the Queensland sugar industry, and the development of cattle raising in the 1940s, which first brought lasting settlement of Mauritians in Australia. (DINAN 1985 : 120). This wave of pioneers, (which is still continuing), accounts for 13,351 official emigrants from 1961 to 1993 (table 1). The rate of unofficial emigration to Australia (DINAN 1985 and WIDMER 1999)<sup>23</sup>, which was negligible until

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<sup>21</sup> VUDDAMALAY presents a map of the ethnic distribution of Mauritian emigration abroad.

<sup>22</sup> London School of Economics of the University of London.

<sup>23</sup> By official emigration we mean the declared departure of Mauritians in possession of an employment contract and an emigration visa delivered by the destination country. Unofficial emigration on the other hand is calculated from the difference between the total actual number of departures and the official total. The statistical tables created by Monique DINAN deal with the period 1965-1985, whereas those created by

1974, is still less than half the rate of official emigration. The net emigration curve per annum for Australia confirms this global result. It is characterised by one single official emigration curve at the time when the highest peaks of emigration are recorded, from 1964 to 1970 (WIDMER 1999 : illustration 61). The peak recorded at Independence, in 1968, reveals Australia to have been an alternative to South Africa for Creoles who were rejected by South Africa because of the apartheid regime.

South Africa may be differentiated from Australia by a high rate of informal emigration, from 1960 onwards, accounting for approximately 3 out of every 4 emigrants in 1962. Mainly made up of Mauritians of French origin, South Africa is a destination that is underestimated by the statistics (table 1). This already significant proportion of unofficial emigration to South Africa increased in 1966 when Mauritian currency transfers were taxed at 15%. The highest proportion was reached in 1968 when currency transfers were banned completely at one point (WIDMER 1999 : illustration 59). Subsequently official emigration decreased down to zero whilst unofficial emigration continued to increase until 1993 : the taxes on currency transfers increased from 26.25% in 1969, to 55% in 1981. Here the emigration pattern coincides with a mobility of capital and is also linked to the extension of the sugar economy to South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia).

The significantly ethnic character of this local-regional emigration, comprised for the main part of white and mulatto Mauritians, is due, at one and the same time, to the immigration policy of the destination country, and to the dominant socio-economic structural model during the long period of preparation for Independence. This model evolved from a policy of import substitution (from 1960 to 1970), to a policy of industrial diversification and concentration of capital in association with foreign capital (from 1970 to 1980). The Asian migratory movements are only statistically observable<sup>24</sup> from 1985 onwards, once full employment had been achieved. It is also at this period that there was a change in the type of migration and that Mauritius entered fully into globalisation.

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Isabelle WIDMER extend from 1965-1995. All of Monique DINAN's figures have been checked and analysed.

<sup>24</sup> No statistical treatment of migration by ethnic origin is possible, and similarly, and for the same political reasons, censuses since 1983 do not record community differences. The only criteria which are applied are differences of language and religion.

Table 1 – Breakdown of net Mauritian emigration by period and main destination country and type of migration (official or unofficial), and comparison with the destination countries census results for Mauritian immigrants.

Declared destination country	Type of departure	1961-1963	1964-1973	1974-1983	1984-1993	Total 1961-1993	%	Census immigrant population	Year of census	% of departures before 1974	% of unofficial emigration
South Africa	Official	141	654	35	330	1160					
South Africa	Unofficial	?	94	789	-1250	-367					
South Africa	Total	141	748	824	-920	793		4602	1991		

*Incorrect estimate due to very high rate of unknown unofficial departure before 1972 ; Interference since 1984 due to frequent return stopover in South Africa*

Great Britain	Official	1884	5880	1513	890	10167	38.7				
Great Britain	Unofficial		8143	5641	2320	16104	61.3			(cards)	(cards)
Great Britain	Total	1884	14023	7154	3210	26271	100.0	23450	1991	60 %	61 %

*Correct estimate : definite minimum*

France	Official	54	2551	1470	1802	5877	29.2				
France	Unofficial		1345	9745	3170	14260	70.8			(cards)	(cards)
France	Total	54	3896	11215	4972	20137	100.0	23441	1990	20 %	70 %

*Correct estimate : definite minimum*

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Australia	Official	137	9452	658	3284	13531	64.4				
Australia	Unofficial		85	2084	5310	7479	35.6			(cards)	(cards)
Australia	<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>9537</b>	<b>2742</b>	<b>8594</b>	<b>21010</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16888</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>46 %</b>	<b>35 %</b>

*Correct estimate : definite minimum*

West Germany	Official	0	92	47	175	314	4.7				
West Germany	Unofficial		6	1875	4540	6421	95.3			(cards)	(cards)
West Germany	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1922</b>	<b>4715</b>	<b>6735</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>non declared</b>		<b>1.5 %</b>	<b>95 %</b>

Italy	Official	1	106	125	423	655	9.5				
Italy	Unofficial		109	1764	4390	6263	90.5			(cards)	(cards)
Italy	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>1889</b>	<b>4813</b>	<b>6918</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3212</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>3 %</b>	<b>90 %</b>

*Italy as stopover for Mauritians*

Canada	Official	6	284	296	506	1092	33.5				
Canada	Unofficial		27	865	1280	2172	66.5			(cards)	(cards)
Canada	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>1161</b>	<b>1786</b>	<b>3264</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5305</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>45 %</b>	<b>66 %</b>

*Estimate almost correct : implies possible indirect immigration from Mauritius via Great Britain to Canada*



*Migrations to the European zone : Great Britain and France*

The variation of migratory flow towards the European zone, where Great Britain and France record the highest rates of immigration, is linked to the progressive restriction of immigration (table 1), which coincides with the policy of industrial delocalisation associating foreign and Mauritian capital in the development of an industrial free trade Export Processing Zone (EPZ) (HEIN 1996 : 25)<sup>25</sup>.

Thus the net total emigration curve for Great Britain from 1958 to 1984 (WIDMER 1999 : illustration 60)<sup>26</sup> records the highest emigration rates before 1974, and shows official emigration to decline generally, with the exception of minor emigration peaks in 1962, 1965, 1968 and 1979. Apart from 1965, the step by step decline of the peaks corresponds to the legislative measures which aimed to selectively reduce immigration according to professional qualifications (1962), sex (1968) and age (1979). The official emigration rates for Great Britain decrease from 1985<sup>27</sup> onwards : this was the period when the policy of industrial delocalisation began to have an effect on full employment.

The emigration curves for France, both official and unofficial (WIDMER 1999 : illustration 60 and 62)<sup>28</sup> reveal a larger proportion of unofficial emigration from 1973 to 1982. Monique DINAN (1985 : 147-178) mentions the saga « des sans-papiers » (the epic attempt to obtain residence permits for illegal immigrants in France in the 1980s) and speaks of controlled, but unchecked immigration (the « Fontanet » Laws of 1974). Unofficial emigration is at all times significantly higher for France than for Great Britain, as

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<sup>25</sup> EPZA or « Export Processing Zone Act ». The private industrial sector was created on the initiative of Professor MEADE and followed on from the Tittmus report (cf. bibliography). EPZA is a specific act, signed in 1970, the aim of which was the opening up of Mauritius to foreign investment through the creation of favourable conditions : 10 year tax exemptions, preferential tariffs for energy consumption, customs duty exemptions and banking advantages. Many textile factories were set up throughout the island, and the electronics, jewellery, and tourist industries were developed. 50% of investment came from abroad and 50% from Mauritius. HEIN states that a large proportion of Mauritian investment came either directly, or indirectly from the sugar industry.

<sup>26</sup> The total net emigration to Great-Britain from 1960 to 1984 taken year by year.

<sup>27</sup> Table 1. The official emigration rates to Great Britain vary from 1,513 in 1974, to 890 in 1984 and 1993, and from 5,641 to 2,320 for the unofficial emigration rates from 1984 to 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Curves of total net emigration progression from 1960 to 1984.

appears in table 1 which shows the total number of emigrants before 1974. The total immigration figures are 20% for France and 60% for Great Britain, while Mauritian unofficial emigration represents 61% of the total emigration to Great Britain and 70% of the total emigration to France. However, it is also from 1974 onwards that total net emigration figures decline sharply.

These comparative results reveal the global effectiveness of immigration control by the destination countries, but they also highlight the remarkably high mobility of Mauritians under unemployment pressure (HEIN 1996 : 76)<sup>29</sup>. The comparative study of the figures for Great Britain and France show British immigration control to be significantly more effective with selective methods halting immigration in 1979. After that, immigration does pick up again, but only unofficially, and in very small numbers. Once the « umbilical cord has been cut » (DINAN 1985 : 101), Great Britain becomes a stopping post on the emigration route leading to other neighbouring European countries such as France<sup>30</sup>, and also to Canada, Australia and the United States. Countries such as Belgium and Italy, but also, although to a lesser extent, Switzerland and West Germany, have been identified as stopover destinations for emigrants intending to reach Great Britain and France<sup>31</sup>.

The spatial distribution of Mauritians emigrating to France and Great Britain is highly representative of a mirror effect of the main distinctions which developed in the colonial context when « Île de France » became the British colony of Mauritius Island. Most of the initial Mauritians who migrated to Great Britain were Indo-Mauritians, whereas those who migrated to France were mostly Creoles, thus reflecting the differences which developed in Mauritian society in relation to the former colonial power. These differences were projected onto the international scene of exchanges and industrial delocalisations. Great Britain initially accepted Indo-Mauritians<sup>32</sup> for the most part. They were British

<sup>29</sup> Information table on the unemployed in Mauritius from 1981 to 1995.

<sup>30</sup> It is to be noted that when British emigration control policy became effective in 1980, illegal immigration increased in France.

<sup>31</sup> This is dealt with under the heading migratory movement, in the last part of the present article.

<sup>32</sup> It was the trading Tamil community who first decided, as early as the 1950s, to adopt emigration as a way of maintaining their threatened socio-economic position. Indeed business employment was no longer sufficient to absorb the employment demands of parents for their children, whilst the civil service which had previously offered

subjects and some arrived as students, whilst others had sufficient financial means to cover the cost of the voyage and of settling in Great Britain. The latter were for the most part low or middle ranking civil servants, or merchants offspring. A large number of professional<sup>33</sup> people found employment in hospitals or in education. In 1970 the waves of Mauritian emigrants who arrived in France were mostly underprivileged Creoles who were sometimes helped by the « Catholic Mission » and who arrived largely unaware of the conditions they would face as immigrants in France (DINAN 1985 : 152, 155)<sup>34</sup>. After the reduction of immigration in Great Britain, the social and economic characteristics of Mauritian immigrants in France become similar to those in Great Britain.

The policy of industrial delocalisation, which became effective in the 1970s, saw Mauritius establish itself as a northern hemisphere country in terms of structure, whilst remaining a southern hemisphere country in terms of sovereignty. It is in this context that the importance of the immigration issue (which is central to ideological debates around the time of Independence) may be interpreted. The most fervent defender of a pro emigration policy as a solution to the imbalance between population and resources (DINAN, 1985)<sup>35</sup>, was the PMSD leader Gaetan DUVAL. Thus Mauritian emigration also reflects internal social differences, which increase around Independence, as seen through political and trade union movements and through the sugar sector concentrations and the policy of industrial importation substitution in the 1960s. This apparent contradiction, which equates migrations with social mobility in the context of the creation of a free industrial exportation zone. This raises several issues. What new statutory distinctions were established to serve as a framework for the constitutional ethnic differences ? What was the social base of the urban elite who have emerged since Independence ? And lastly, what fundamental changes were there in the capital-work relation and connected developments in the sugar industry at a time when the economy was moving towards diversification ?

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openings for the multi-lingual Tamil community, became closed to them at Independence with the ascendancy of the Hindus.

<sup>33</sup> Engineers, the liberal professions, tradesmen etc.

<sup>34</sup> DINAN mentions « disillusion » and « difficulties of legalisation ».

<sup>35</sup> DINAN notes that in 1967 there were 20,000 unemployed signing up in Port-Louis.

## 2 - Industrial Delocalisation and Migration

The main characteristics of Mauritian emigration, apart from the ethnic differences, are defined by the relation between unofficial and official emigration on the one hand, and, on the other, by the relative importance of new markets which determine the main tendencies of the international migratory movements. We shall interpret the Mauritian migratory system in view of the urban restructuring and social distinctions which have developed since Independence.

### *The Social Meaning of the Statistical Difference between Official and Unofficial Emigration*

The recent changes which explain the contradictions in Mauritian society (balancing economic openness with social restriction), have their origins in the emergence of the urban elite, and in the relations that the various established groups have maintained with the sugar plantations in the context of the opening up of the sugar economy and of industrial diversification. The family, ethnic or religious community links which presided over the departure of the migrants have, for the most part, been maintained. The social chain of relations between migrants settled abroad and relatives in Mauritius have also been maintained because those who chose to emigrate (brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles or nephews, sons or daughters) have often remained financially associated with relatives in Mauritius. This is the case for land owning families with the turning to profit of sugar or food producing plantations which are jointly owned. The same holds true for shareholding relatives abroad, realising their capital through a concentration when their shares are managed as parts in joint ownership during the lifetime of the last surviving relative. Many also left in the hope of building up something new, from scratch, which might widen the scope of the family business with which they were associated. Lastly, the young Mauritian students who went to Europe to pursue university studies, began careers, within the space of 10 years, as politicians, businessmen, major wholesalers, insurers, company managers, or in the liberal professions. Generally speaking, whether the migrants background be from the plantations, trade, business or the emerging political class, the decision to emigrate was taken as an integral part of the continuation of a forward movement in order to maximise on, to

increase, and to stabilise the advantages of their situation, or to attempt a social ascendancy which was not possible in Mauritius. That is the reason why Mauritian society, which reacted positively beyond all expectations to the incentive to work when delocalised companies created jobs (DE GENTILE 1997)<sup>36</sup>, continued its emigration movement, despite the immigration ban in developed countries which were delocalising their production units in search of « employment basins<sup>37</sup> ». This double movement which coupled the creation of low wage employment in Mauritius with emigration in search of work, business or education, has provided the backdrop to the emergence of a new urban middle class. This middle class was supported equally by the old elite, who were part of the established structure of the ethnic communities, and by the new elite which was created by Independence and which was favourable to the Indian majority.

The statistical difference between official and unofficial emigration, reveals the process by which domestic and sugar capital (ALLEN 1999)<sup>38</sup> were transformed into a national interest after Independence, and also sheds light on the development of the free industrial exportation zone. Indeed, it may be observed that the migratory movements continued in spite of immigration restrictions in the main destination countries. In 1974 there is a

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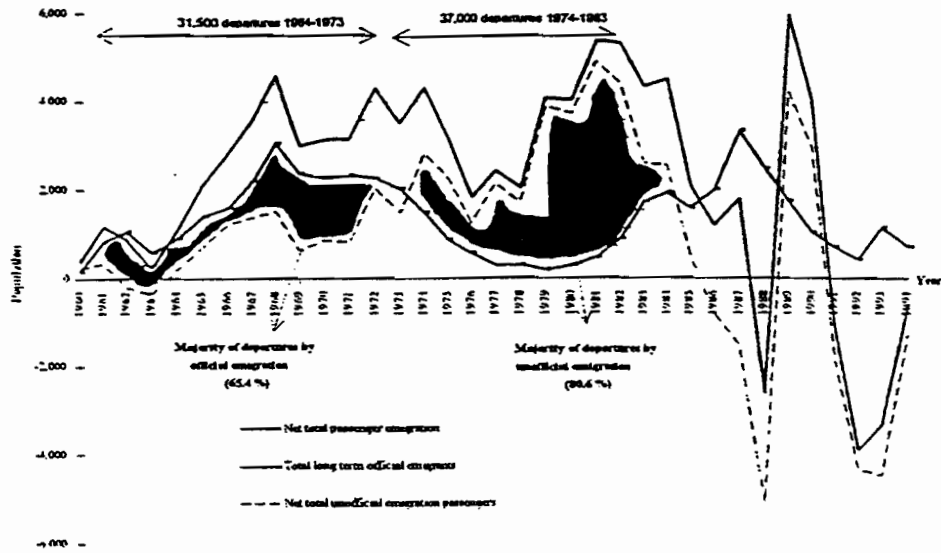
<sup>36</sup> The first textile companies were set up in the large towns but progressively they spread out over the whole island. DE GENTILE presents the distribution of the Floréal group textile factories, created by the Beauchamp sugar company and which bought the shares of the Espitalier-Noël group in 1986. This group, made up of 14 subsidiaries and 22 production sites, is a typical example of a characteristic vertical and horizontal economic integration of the diversified EPZA sector. DE GENTILE also quotes the factory concentration of the Thierry Lagese Textile Group.

<sup>37</sup> The employment basins correspond to the new labour markets with large, unskilled and cheap workforces. Madagascar is an example of this new type of labour market which allows a significant reduction of production costs. In textiles there is presently a division of work between Mauritius and Madagascar. The Floreal Knitwear group has delocalised some of its production factories to Madagascar for certain production tasks, while the Mauritian factories deal with the finishing touches to ensure final quality. Similarly the Sonacotra spinning factory in Antsirabe in Madagascar is the main supplier of fabric for the Floreal group's Mauritian textile production.

<sup>38</sup> ALLEN analyses the conditions and modes of emergence of domestic capital which are advantageous to the first generation of Indian and coloured immigrants. Class differences, often minimised compared to racial or ethnic distinctions, appeared very early in Mauritian society. These differences cross all the social groups constitutive of Mauritian ethnicity, including the white, so-called Franco-Mauritian minority. In these circumstances the simple description of the professional ethnic stratification does not sufficiently explain the actual functioning of Mauritian economy and society : this point will be developed further on.

change in the type of emigration, since there is a considerable decrease of official emigration whilst unofficial immigration becomes predominant (fig. 5). From 1964 to 1973 official emigration is higher, reaching 65.4% of total net emigration, and from 1974 to 1983 the rate of informal emigration, at 80.6% of total emigration, becomes higher than the rate of official emigration.

Figure 5. Net total emigration, including official and unofficial emigration



Sources : International Travel and Tourism Statistics, December 1984 and October 1995.  
 Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, CSO.  
 Annual Digest of Statistics 1995, July 1996, Ministry of Economic Planning and  
 Development, CSO. Monique DINAN, *Une île éclatée*, 1985.

Two years later, however, in 1985, this tendency was reversed with official emigration predominating during a period coinciding with significant reduction in the number of unemployed. This was one of the Mauritian government's aims. Unemployment practically disappeared in 1990 (WIDMER 1999 : 440, illustration 96)<sup>39</sup>. After a peak of 75,000 in 1983, unemployment decreased

<sup>39</sup> The annually readjusted figures for rate of change of official unemployment from 1983 to 1995 by sex. These readjusted figures declined from more than 19% for both men and women in 1983, to 2% for women and 3% for men in 1990. WIDMER insists

steadily to less than 5,000 unemployed in 1997 and has stabilised since then at a very low level of less than 2% of the active population. Official emigration has been extremely sensitive to any reduction in unemployment levels, while unofficial emigration has been equally sensitive to policies of immigration restriction in destination countries. These factors are significant indicators of an internal social and economic differentiation in relation to community distinctions which are validated by local society. Inversely when official emigration takes the lead, it may be legitimately surmised that it is a result of lesser tensions in the local social and economic sphere. Thus the mechanisms that structure Mauritian emigration, apart from any institutionalised migratory policy, have followed the same lines of division as the existing social distinctions which explain the emergence of a rapidly changing urban society due to the combined circumstances of Independence and restructuration of national capital. While Mauritian society has projected its previous colonial stratification in terms of the choice of preferential migration destination countries in the international arena, it has also, concurrently, rebuilt itself along the lines of a triumphant capitalism which has filled the gaps of the social differences which were useful to its development.

*Social, Professional and Ethnic Differences : the Actual Status of the Urban Elite*

The main tendencies of Mauritian emigration highlight the island's singular status as a « centralising periphery » which was firmly established in the post Second World War period<sup>40</sup> due to preferential sugar agreements<sup>41</sup>. Thanks to these agreements the sugar industry was able to extend its influence to the local investment markets in Australia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Tanzania<sup>42</sup>. It is during this period of diversification of sugar

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on the fact that these figures are « readjusted » from studies and recordings which are considered to be more accurate than population censuses. She states that these declared levels of unemployment, in particular since 1990, are an accurate reflection of the actual levels of unemployment in Mauritius.

<sup>40</sup> And also at several other periods of its history, and more particularly during the period of development of merchant capitalism, which was concurrent with the first Mauritian settlers who left the towns of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts to settle in the islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

<sup>41</sup> In 1945 the price of sugar was guaranteed by quota.

<sup>42</sup> These investments began around 1954. Subsequently, by the Lomé agreements, the Mauritian sugar market became part of a zone of preferential exchange linked to the

capital that syndicate type associative forms were created in Mauritius, thus organising social relations within the plantation production system, and also in other key sectors of the economy such as water, electricity, transport and customs services. After the creation, in 1920, of the Sugar Syndicate, (the central government body in charge of setting domestic market prices and of commercialising sugar), and the formation of the Mauritian Labour Party in 1930, the late 1930s were affected by the development of the main institutions representing the planters and plantation owners : notably the planters syndicate, the production price Control Board, and the Arbitration and Control Board who dealt with disputes between planters and plantation owners. It was the Mauritian Sugar Producers Association (MSPA) which became in charge of defining the sugar cane cultivation zone for each factory (this led to the « Factory Areas »<sup>43</sup>). This body, placed at the heart of the sugar production system, became a place where the main factors of the production process were centralised for control purposes. Industrial and land capital, and the independent or contractual planter workforce participated in the decision process at Board meetings where each of the involved parties was represented in discussions on the Factory Areas modifications required for sugar concentrations<sup>44</sup>. The 18 sugar companies which resulted from the sugar concentrations were still operating in 1995. This was part of the ultimate aim of an unfinished industrial transformation process, as if the balance or happy medium had come to serve as the fixed value beyond which it was not safe to go. The concentrations which lay ahead, and which were to reduce the factories from 18 to today's 9, had been planned by the 1960s, but have only been implemented since 1995. The rhythm of economic transformations took into account the social transformations and financial capacities of the existing industrial groups because each concentration involved an interplay of powers and interests which caused significant changes in socio-economic status. The domestic

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European Market ; all the sugar producing countries of the Asian Pacific zone were similarly associated to the European Market.

43 The Factory Areas are sugar cane cultivation zones associated with a specific factory.

44 The changes of borders between the production zones assigned to the « Factory Areas » requires the producers to send their sugar cane to their assigned « Factory Area » factory. These changes are a national issue which is dealt with by the Board of the MSPA where all the planters and plantation owners' syndicates are represented. The MSPA is a para-public body whose president must not have an excessively close relation to the concerned parties.



market is regulated by the combined action of the sugar syndicate. They determine domestic price variations depending on sugar value calculated as a function of cane tonnage during the harvest, and as a function of the producer's duty to transport his cane to the relevant factory for his Factory Area. The international market became protected from 1945 on, thanks to a guaranteed price for a specific quota, firstly within a Commonwealth framework and subsequently also within the European framework. The market regulations thereby facilitated the investments of the sugar industry which was able to commit itself to importation substitution activities before opening up to new markets and associating with foreign capital.

This situation, which prevailed in the sugar industry during the 1950s, reveals the direct and indirect importance (HEIN 1985 : 25) of the sugar sector in the process of industrial diversification which took place in the 1970s. The capitalist stakes present in the sugar economy and in the industrial substitution activities, were quite naturally transferred, in part, to commercial diversification activities, tourism transport, and textile industrialisation. Thus the private EPZA was not created independently of the sugar economy, even if the development model which proved its efficiency was tested (independently of the sugar industry) in the jewellery sector which was perfectly adapted to an employment basin<sup>45</sup> where an unskilled and less expensive workforce was to be found. Once the effectiveness of this type of industrial delocalisation had been proven for employment and production costs (with the help of fiscal legislation and banking advantages) the sugar industry interest groups were naturally inclined to diversify and began associating with the old trading houses from the 1970s on. This analysis may be applied to the successive integration mechanisms of large commercial and industrial groups such as Rogers or IBL which were comprised of 110 and 80 subsidiaries respectively (HEIN 1985 : 41-53)<sup>46</sup>. The analysis reveals the progressive disappearance of the old sugar families which are being transformed into more restrictive financial interest groups, and retraces the way

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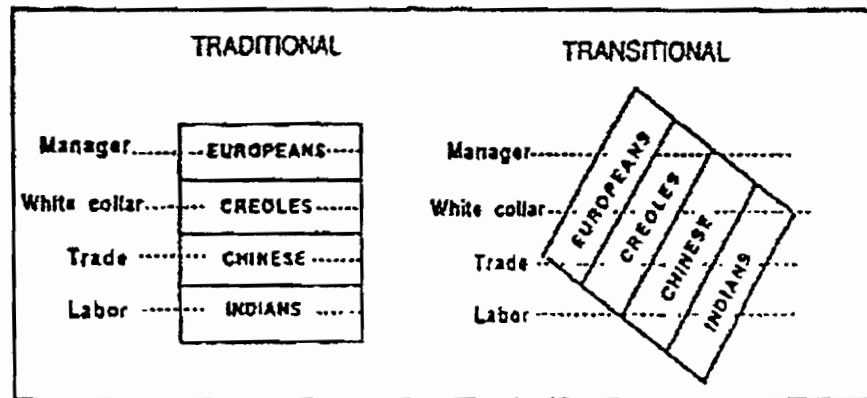
<sup>45</sup> Interview with José PONCINI on the history of the creation of the Free Industrial Exportation Zones.

<sup>46</sup> Amongst the 60 largest companies Rogers and IBL come foremost with the majority of shares coming from the sugar interest groups WEAL and Espitalier-Noël for Rogers, and from the Dalais Group for IBL. All of them have turned towards the local markets and the free zone sector.

in which these financial groups associated with foreign commercial and industrial interest groups in the 1970s.

In parallel, the re-capitalisation of the sugar industry which began in the 1950s brought in its wake the creation, by the pre-existing urban elite, of small and medium industrial and commercial sector firms. The social base of the elite widened due to the combined fact of Independence and the economic policy which was adopted and which advantaged the social mobility of the lower classes, sometimes labelled as small planters, storekeepers and workers who are mentioned by Burton BENEDICT in 1962. BENEDICT presents a so-called « traditional » socio-professional stratification scheme which he contrasts with the emerging and so-called « transitional » stratification. This transition, which highlights the changes observed (fig. 6), leads the author to consider it a given fact that the large established ethnic groups (Europeans, Creoles, Chinese and Indians) have produced their urban elite.

Figure 6 . Socio-professional stratification in Mauritius

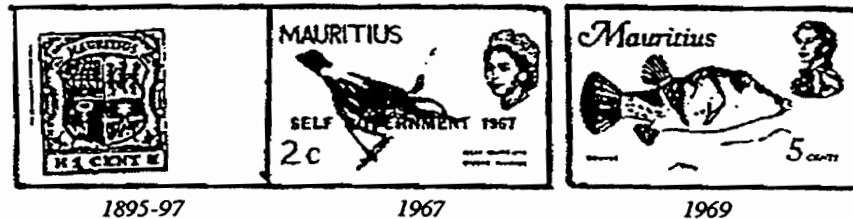


The main ethnic differences are thus linked to professional hierarchical distinctions as follows : White managers, Creole civil servants or white collar executives, Chinese storekeepers and traders, and Indian labourers. This ethnic and professional hierarchy model does not allow sufficiently for the social transformation during the period of preparation for Independence. The term « Creole » acquired a negative connotation referring to the part of the population who were neither white, nor Chinese, nor Indian. The term « European » designated the white Mauritians.

Burton BENEDICT's references are ideologically biased in that they refer to the development model adopted by the London School of Economics (MEADE 1961, TITMUS & Abel SMITH 1961) at a time when the colonial period was coming to an end and the sphere of bilateral relations was opening up to Europe, whilst the emigration waves of the elite Creole, the so-called « coloured peoples », began to turn towards Australia in the same way that the white emigrants turned towards South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). In addition to this, the only professional categories used by BENEDICT refer to the urban zone with no link at all to the plantation environment. This failure to link the two zones is particularly clear as regards the workers' category which is totally undifferentiated. And yet an explanation of the tremendous socio-economic and historical transformation that the country has undergone since Independence, (a transformation in which unemployment and migrations seem to interact), emerges through a consideration of the importance of all the activities related to land ownership. Land ownership laid claim to a historically and contractually established legitimacy. Neither the link between ethnic differences and differences in professional status, nor the strict relationship between migration and employment allow us to reach the actual structuring influence of mobility on economic and social development. The central ideological theme of migration at the time of Independence reveals the structural aspect of migration as it has been engraved in Mauritian history from its very beginnings. This has been perpetuated at each period of transformation of social relations within the plantation production system. It always coincides with an adaptation to more or less accessible markets and thus determines the country's position in the international arena. The « star » and the « key » are commonly found metaphors for Mauritius' domestic and international spheres. These metaphors have been applied throughout the whole history of the Mauritian nation. The postage stamps published around the time of Independence display this star-like construction which presents Mauritius, and its capital Port-Louis, as the starfish of the Indian Ocean and as the key to market distribution. The bird, depicted on the stamp published in 1967, symbolises the transition to Independence and refers to the island's borderless territoriality. The fish, published in 1969, one year after Independence, symbolises the strict territoriality conferred by the acquisition of national sovereignty (fig. 7). On both these stamps the effigy of the Queen is placed in the background and to the right. Before Independence the Queen was depicted wearing the crown of

England whereas in 1969 the crown is absent from the medallion representing the Queen.

*Figure 7. Emblematic representations of Mauritius*



These two symbols, one of a limitless territoriality and the other of a well defined territoriality, are emblems which have actually been used to represent the founding relations of the island. Published in 1967 and in 1969, these stamps symbolise the process of setting up Independence by the British crown. Similar representations are also present in stamps from 1895, where four symbols<sup>47</sup> are clearly distinguishable : on the one hand men and boats, and on the other the star and the key. The star refers to maritime navigation, and similarly, the key refers to migration (the people). The merchant network (the boat) refers to the migratory network (the people again). Through their mutual links, these four symbols evoke a social movement rather than migratory flow. In other words, belonging to the nation projects the island's positioning in the world economy as establishing a symmetrical relationship between people and goods, thus highlighting the degree of social openness or restriction.

### 3 - Mauritian Migratory Movement

The fundamental changes occurring in the domain of new markets, which became open to investment after 1970, determined population movement even more closely because of the changes in the social relations within the plantation production system. The workforce, which had previously been hemmed in by production activities linked to the sugar industry, gained a new-found mobility

<sup>47</sup> This symbolisation does not take into account the specific significations associated with the history of coats of arms.

which gave rise to a number of new activities including production and trade. Domestic and sugar capital was restructured, reinforcing the position of the urban elite, and favouring the emergence of a middle class which remained ill defined (due to ethnic differences limiting and masking class differences). A strong link was maintained between the urban and rural populations and characterised the links between the Mauritian government and the sugar power group from the run up to Independence to the 1990s when Mauritius reached a new stage in its commitment to globalisation.

***Migration, trade and plantation : the emergence of an urban middle class***

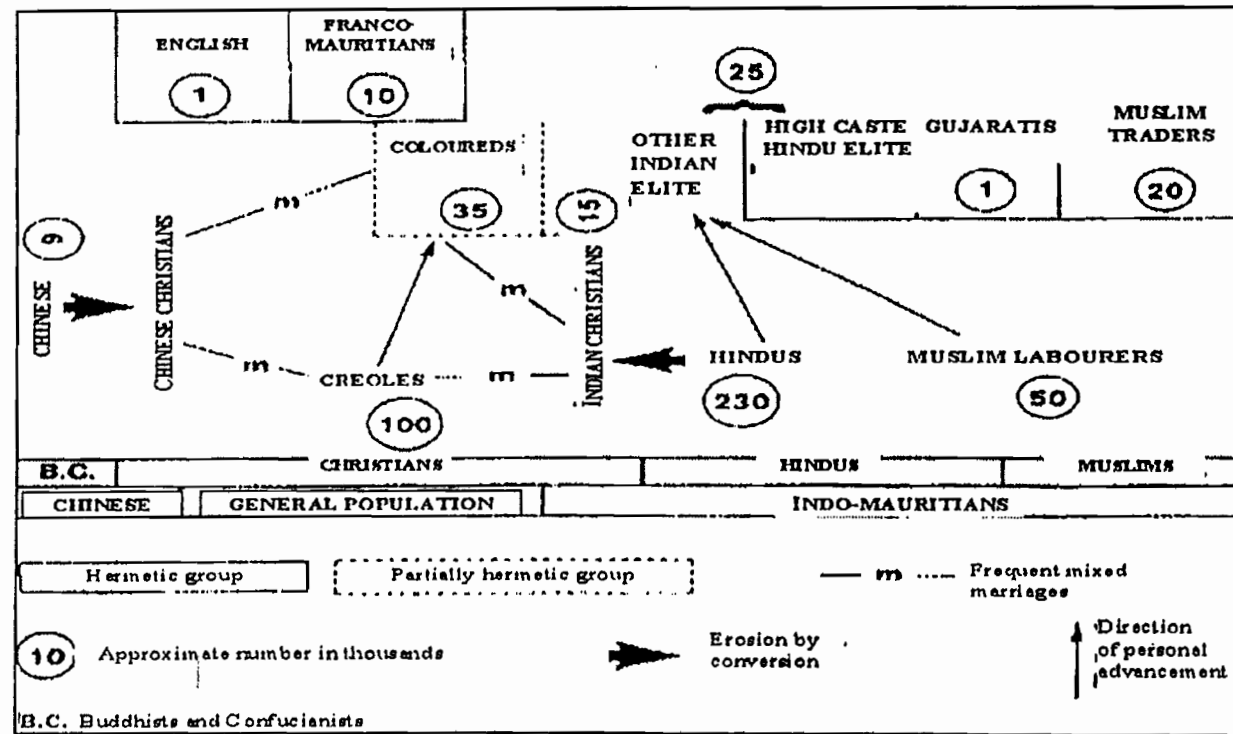
Most of the authors who have written about Mauritius have considered the interaction of cultural, racial, religious and class differences in order to study the changes which have occurred. BROOKFIELD (1958) is notable in that the social stratification he presented in 1958<sup>48</sup> identified the central role of the relationship between the plantations and the urban zone in the creation of the social elite (fig. 8).

BROOKFIELD indicates the existence of a similar hegemonic position for Mauritians of French and British origin. In his view their relations with the rest of the population are conditioned by the privileged position of the whites compared to all those of 'non-white' origin. He begins by identifying the circle of the coloured elite including the Creoles, Indians of Christian denomination, and the Chinese who act as intermediaries between the Creoles and the coloureds due to mixed marriages between the Chinese and the other two groups. The second circle, made up of Hindus and Muslim labourers, is linked to the « Indian elite », to be distinguished from the group of the « high Hindu castes ». The latter are described as being close to the two long established trading groups, the « Gujaratis » and the « Muslims », and are identified as presenting the same socially closed off characteristics. One notably identified link is that between the « Indian elite.» and the « high caste » due to the nature of the privileged relations between these two groups. In this general scheme the Creoles, the Hindus, and the Muslim labourers are part of the underprivileged social classes. This differentiated picture of Mauritian society, where the term « coloureds » is used without distinction to

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<sup>48</sup> Ten years before Independence and just four years before Burton BENEDICT's research work.

Figure 8. Socio-professional stratification in the population of Mauritius



Source : H.C. BROOKFIELD « Pluralism and Geography in Mauritius » Geographical Studies, Vol. V, No. 1, 1958.

designate mulattos and Creoles of African or Madagascan<sup>49</sup> origin, and where « high caste Hindus » are ranked amongst the elite bourgeois traders, coincides with the 1930s colonial social order which gave rise to the Labour Party and the prestigious civil service career system. In the history of the sugar industry there was an early emergence of a category of planters who filled the role of sardar (or overseer), thus explaining the formation of the « high caste » elite. This scheme was presented in 1958, ten years before Independence, and is now somewhat dated but may nevertheless help to understand more recent developments.

The domain of the plantation, which is dealt with by BROOKFIELD but absent from the earlier model presented by Burton BENEDICT, gives a better explanation of the dynamic aspects of the social transformation. The planter's status is not simply that of large or small planter, owner or tenant as this status may refer to a variety of situations in such a way as to account for all the professional categories established by BENEDICT, from manager to worker, and from civil servant to storekeeper. This heterogeneity certainly reveals the diverse strategies which are applied to land ownership, but this is not the most important point. The plantation land continued to be the basis for Mauritian society and, as such, was expected to provide protection and safeguards against all difficulties. Come what may, this sector remained a privileged sphere of social protection, for non-salary based advantages and for indirect redistribution against natural risks. This then, in terms of stability, but also in terms of social dynamics, is the main area of government intervention. There are several examples of this type of intervention : in the parcel land divisions, in the holding of legally acquired property thanks to the laws on prescription, in the process of industrial sector concentration, and in the recent development of residential areas to the detriment of cultivated land<sup>50</sup>. The issue of land distribution is omnipresent. It is the central issue in the lives of all the different communities. It

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<sup>49</sup> In Mauritius the term Creole is generally used to designate the often underprivileged category of the population who are assimilated to their black African or Madagascan origins. The term mulatto is used to designate the urban elite having social proximity with the white population. Generally they have pale, almost white, skin colour. The laws of genetics do not recognise this type of racial distinction and it is not uncommon, within the same family, to come across the whole range of skin colours from practically white to black.

<sup>50</sup> Doctoral research is currently being undertaken by Stéphanie BORDES on the origin of parcel land division and how it is linked to the different stages of sugar sector concentration and to contemporary social transformations.

determines the relationship between the private and public spheres, with anything that involves the small plantations and sharecropping having political overtones. This is revealed by interviews on this subject which indicate that being a planter is synonymous with potential for political power thanks to the influence of a certain number of workers. Being a planter also entails benefits such as fiscal protection, non-salary based advantages and subsidies (e.g. travel allowances for civil servants every two years dependant on salary, and, for planters, the option of buying a tax free car every five years. According to census information, 30% of the 35,000 small planters are civil servants, mostly in the north and south of the island (in other words in the areas where the great Independence leaders emerged).

This is a long way from the widespread image of the small individual Mauritian planters having only their essential planting activity in a similar position to the coolies of yesteryear with no family network to rely on. The plantation provided a framework for the elaboration, structuring and differentiation of social and family links. This role still exists today, and an analysis of this framework reveals how personal links have been transformed into political links and also reveals their relationship to economic changes. The key to social permanence and to economic vigour, to the success of EPZA and to coping with the different identities to be dealt with in the constitutional and political fields, all depends on one distinctive characteristic of Mauritius : the transformation of the historical sugar production from a colonial structure to a national interest and asset. It is on the basis of this transformation that the new relationship between the private and public spheres has been built, based on the belief that the plantation system was in need of change. And it is precisely here, in this plantation system, that not only ethnic family integration, but also intercultural and economic exchanges find their nexus. Alongside the settled background values the new contractual relations came into play. The chain-like network of personal links, stemming from the omnipresent associative system tended to become generally widespread, thus being transformed into power relations through multiple series of individual negotiations (i.e. on each occasion that a conflictual situation required debate between two or more parties with the State present as arbitrator and moderator).

From the above it appears that the emergence of the urban elite, whether its origins be from the plantations, from business, or both, entailed the creation of a middle class through the process

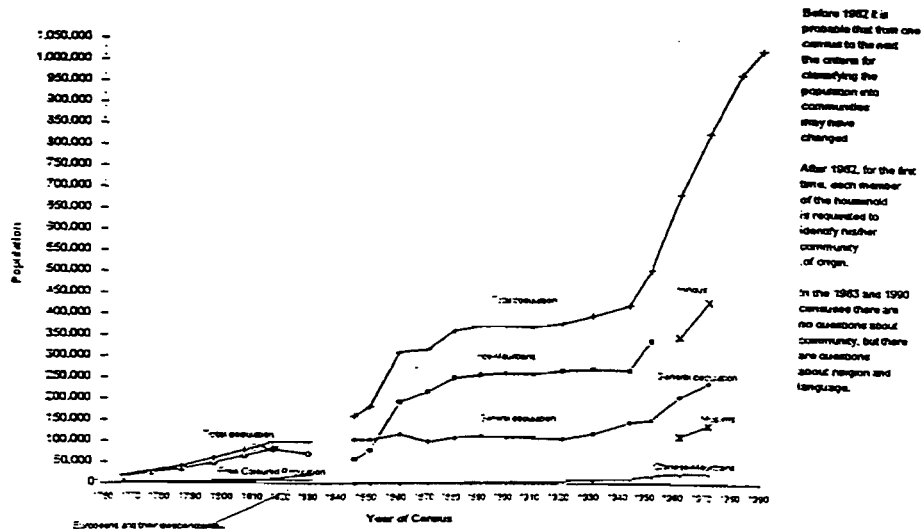


leading to Independence (SMITH SIMMONS 1982)<sup>51</sup>. The process by which that middle class gained its autonomy is closely linked to the migratory movements from 1985 to the present.

**Migration and Social Transformation**

The historical data relating to social differentiation have been subject to constant evaluation in the censuses.

**Figure 9. Community, professional and social distinctions**



Sources : Digest of Demographic Statistics 1994, Central Statistical Office, Republic of Mauritius, Vol. 10, Sept. 1995. CSO 1956, Natality and Fertility in Mauritius 1825-1955

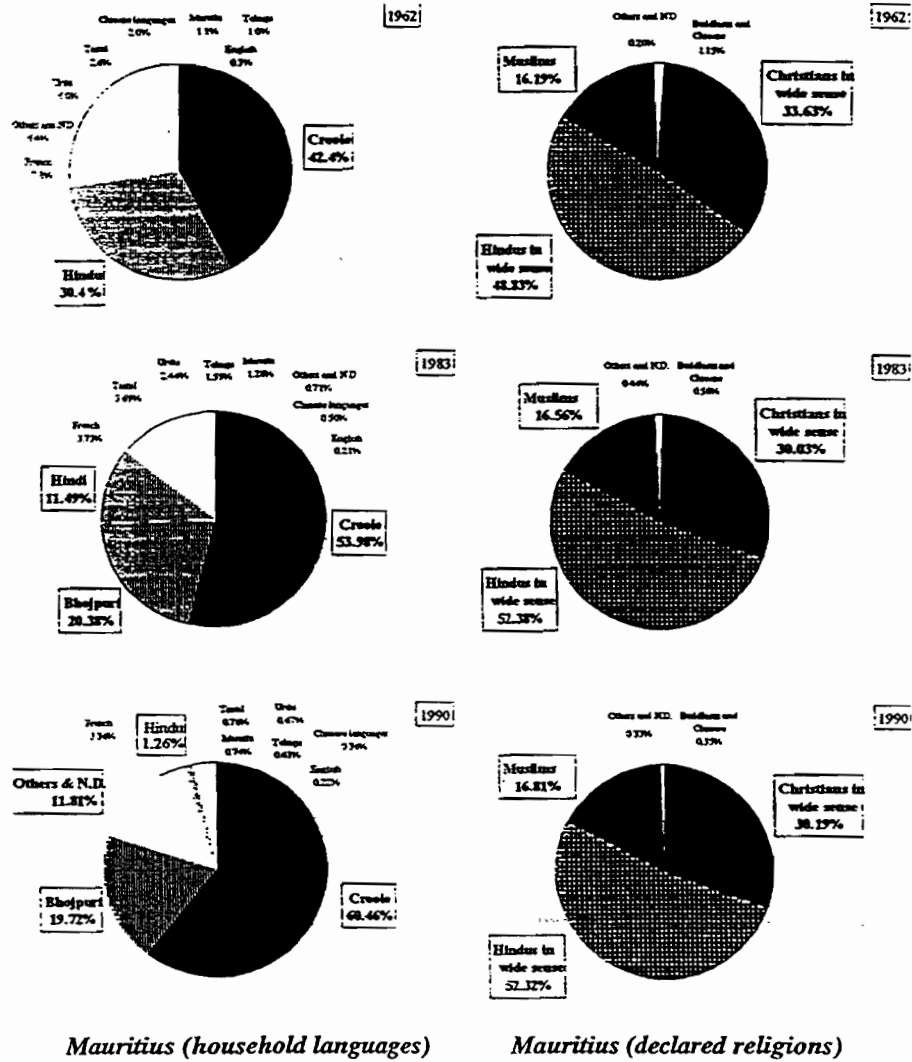
<sup>51</sup> The process leading towards Independence began in the 1930s, at the same time as the creation of the Labour Party, the creation of associations and workers unions, and the cultural renewal around Basdeo Bissoondoyal. The period from 1938-1948 saw constitutional reforms and a prelude to the changes which were to have an influence on Independence in 1968. The communal system, which took shape between 1948 and 1956, was born from this long gestation period prior to Independence. SMITH SIMMONS analyses the multiple legal, religious, cultural and economic implications of the Independence process. The presentation mode he chooses, both generic and structural, allows the reader to apprehend the strategic positioning which presided over the emergence of a political class which was already taking shape before Independence, and which subsequently developed its formal structure.

It is in 1962 that each household member is, for the first time, requested to identify the community he/she belongs to. Henceforth the Indo-Muslims are placed in of a separate category from the Hindus, while the Chinese-Mauritian category remains unchanged, and the « General Population » (a residual category), retains its historical link to the Christian religion (fig. 9). In the context of the general opening up of markets, these ethnic differences have gradually moved towards religious differences, thus creating larger categories which are supposed to represent the major social forces in Mauritius. Indeed, in 1983 and 1990, the statutory census classification no longer mentioned community (during the period between these dates there were ethnic disturbances in Port-Louis<sup>52</sup>) but does mention language and religion. The effect of these new differentiations has been to fudge the ethnic categories for which the differential demographic proportion is of utmost importance in electoral issues and in migratory and professional strategies. The evolution of the status of languages spoken in the household (fig. 10) allows an approach of the respective demographic proportion of the different ethnic groups mentioned above. The 1962 figures distinguish the Marathis, Telugus and Tamils from the Hindus, the latter being the only group to speak Hindi. In 1962, Bhojpuri, which along with Creole is one of the two native tongues in Mauritius, did not appear on the list of languages spoken in Mauritian households. That is the reason why Hindi accounts for 30.4% of household languages in 1962. The same figure may be obtained in the 1983 census by adding Hindi and Bhojpuri, whereas the total figure for the two languages decreased to less than 22% in 1990, with Hindi accounting for only 1.3%. The figures for Creole are highly significant in terms of their constant and considerable increase : from 42.4% in 1962 to nearly 54% in 1983, before reaching 60.5% in 1990. The unwritten Bhojpuri and Creole languages, which are spoken in the daily lives of many households, together account for 73% in 1983 and 79% in 1990. By comparison international languages such as French and English account for a very low percentage ; the same is true for certain native ethnic languages such as Marathi, Telugu, Tamil etc. This is even the case for the Tamil language which is characteristic of the ethnic identity of the southern Indians in contrast with the Hindi speaking northern Indians : Tamil accounts for 2% in 1962, 3.7% in 1983, before going back down to 0.7% in 1990.

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<sup>52</sup> Ethnic conflict in Port-Louis first began in 1967.

Figure 10. Community references based on the replies to questions on household languages and declared religious denomination in the 1962, 1983 and 1990 censuses



Sources : Census data. Mauritius Central Statistical Office. Notes : 1) The heading « Others and non-declared » includes combinations of languages, infrequently occurring languages, and blank replies. 2) The option « Bhojpuri language » appears for the first time in the 1983 census.

These results reveal the importance of the country of origin, while the constant decline of certain original languages is an indicator of the existence of dominant sub-groups within the main ethnic groupings. The dominant groups generally have the backing of the religious denomination which constitutes the most stable cultural reference likely to ensure an equilibrium between majorities and minorities and their co-existence in political and economic life (figure 10).

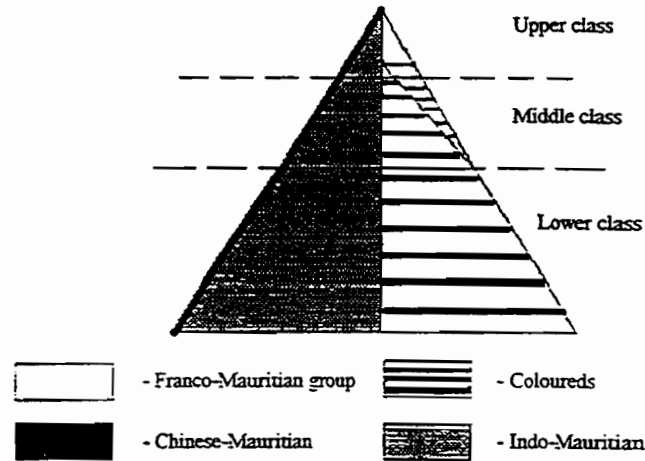
This classification by religion (Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims) was used as a reference by BROOKFIELD in his analysis of social distinctions in 1958, in contrast with the classification made around 1845 (Chinese, « General Population », Indo-Mauritians). Demographic distribution is also indicated in BROOKFIELD'S synoptic table of Mauritian society, thus confirming the sociological reality of the existence of a national bourgeoisie within which there are status distinctions legitimated by the constitutional system which allows for a seat in parliament for the « best loser » so to speak, on condition that the latter represent an electoral quota of at least 18% of the total vote.

In these circumstances the presentation of the social stratification and economic differences of contemporary Mauritian society is a somewhat approximative activity, and to be of any use care must be taken to avoid the risk of caricaturising and thus deforming the racial or ethnic differences which exist. As far as class differences are concerned, it is to be noted that they are never projected within an exclusively ethnic configuration. Stating that the first waves of emigration towards Europe, Australia and South Africa were aided by religious and cultural associations in no way implies that the strategies were necessarily collective in nature, nor does it imply that it was the poorest Mauritians who emigrated first. Figure 11 is taken from a recent doctoral thesis on the Franco-Mauritian community (DE GENTILE 1997 : 201)<sup>53</sup>. This thesis, through the criticism it presents, raises the issue of the increase of the middle class which is considered by development experts as an

<sup>53</sup> Illustration title : « The Franco-Mauritian group in Mauritian society ». DE GENTILE discusses the ethnic categories of Thomas EIRKSEN and presents an ethnic distribution table of management personnel in the sugar industry based on the 1992-1993 Mauritian sugar industry directory. Using this proof to show and to state that there is social stratification in the sugar hierarchy reveals nothing as regards the actual social functioning of these firms. The current doctoral research by Stéphanie BORDES deals with internal communication within a sugar firm : this is an original subject which will raise a number of questions regarding the content and the location of ethnic differences in the management of sugar firms.

indication of economic success and of the social transformation underway since Independence.

Figure 11. Ethnic stratification and economic differences in Mauritian society (Astrid DE GENTILE, 1996)



DE GENTILE reveals the racial differences which may be situated on a scale to present class differences. She distinguishes the White and Asian groups in that they are present at all levels of the social ladder. Since they have no racial differences, the Asians are supposed not to have any internal differences analogous to gradations of skin colour. These gradations of skin colour are represented (fig. 11) by black stripes which are thicker on the right and subdued on the left to differentiate mulattos from black Creoles. In addition to this lack of knowledge of the Indian population, and caricature of the White and Creole populations, must be added the fact that even when class distinctions are established they are not quantified and are lost due to the difficulty of locating the middle class in relation to the upper and lower classes. The ambiguous status of the middle class<sup>54</sup> in relation to the upper and lower classes resides essentially in the fact that it is,

<sup>54</sup> This quantification would have been possible by working on the CSO statistical employment data which has been analysed by Isabelle WIDMER in her doctoral thesis (Tome 2. from p. 400).

for the vast majority, still not completely detached from the rural population as has been mentioned previously. It is also made up of all the religious, ethnic and racial « communities », including the White community (although admittedly in lower proportions). The main characteristic which may be used to define the middle class as regards professional stratification (WIDMER 1999 : 414<sup>55</sup>) is not easy to establish due to the multiple activities of Mauritians who often combine a salaried activity with other private activities in order to increase their income. In addition, there are many families who have several different types of source of income. Thus neither professional distinctions, nor individual salaried incomes, are sufficient to establish the location of the upper or lower middle class in relation to the other classes. The varied means of payment : per task, by the hour, daily, weekly or monthly makes it even more difficult to clarify the criteria which should be retained in order to evaluate the numerical size of the middle class. Difference of salary should be linked to an as yet unaccomplished evaluation of the proportion of non salaried income to be added to fixed income<sup>56</sup>. The possession of a savings account within the family, even of a modest amount, is another criteria for belonging to the middle class<sup>57</sup>. The latter, still not completely detached from its small plantation roots, and partially dependent on salaried income, went beyond the borders of the national labour market at the same time as sugar investment sought new markets, from 1950 on. The applicants for emigration were neither the worst nor the best off, since they belonged to the intermediate social levels (apart from the permanent civil servants). As a result, the social partition which has occurred since 1960 makes it difficult to distinguish residents and non-residents. A mutual internal/external interaction has in the end

<sup>55</sup> Volume 2. Table 54. WIDMER presents the active population, by profession, according to the 1990 census. The selected categories are tradesmen, shopkeepers (20.1%), intermediary professions (5.7%) and employees (15.9%). This represents over 40% of the population to be assimilated to the middle class and which may be further differentiated into its upper and lower divisions if, as we suggest, other economic indicators are taken into account. In the absence of a national employment survey in Mauritius, this data remains unclear. However, the hypothesis of the existence of a large proportion of the population sharing similar economic conditions, and who may therefore be equated to a middle class of 40% of the population, is probably accurate.

<sup>56</sup> Whether it stem from private and individual initiative, or family initiative, or from income linked to plantation activities or from dividends corresponding to the profit share of family wealth.

<sup>57</sup> The MCB has policies that are highly favourable to the very numerous small savings accounts.

turned out to be beneficial to the balance which was sought after by the EPZA strategy. The new relationships between the private and public spheres which were at stake at the time of Independence had as their objective the creation of a close link between migration, employment and investment. This was how the sugar interests came to be transformed into a national interest through the relative importance of the small independent plantations, the prevalence of salaried income, and the rental of sharecropping lands, as well as the 50/50 investment of Mauritian sugar interests and foreign capital in the free zone. The population-resource imbalance of the 1950s has evolved and the centripetal movement of the migrations of the past have been transformed into the auto-centring and centrifugal mechanism of the migratory pattern. The migratory movement has in fact taken shape since 1986 when unemployment was absorbed and the Asian markets opened up to Europe. Mauritius is no longer an employment basin but a zone of peripheral market penetration. Mauritian emigration has reached a more mature phase, after having helped compensate for certain inequalities, as witnessed by the rise of the middle class. This emigration has now become more of a social movement through which the Mauritius island area is becoming a potential zone for the distribution of markets and the new international division of labour.

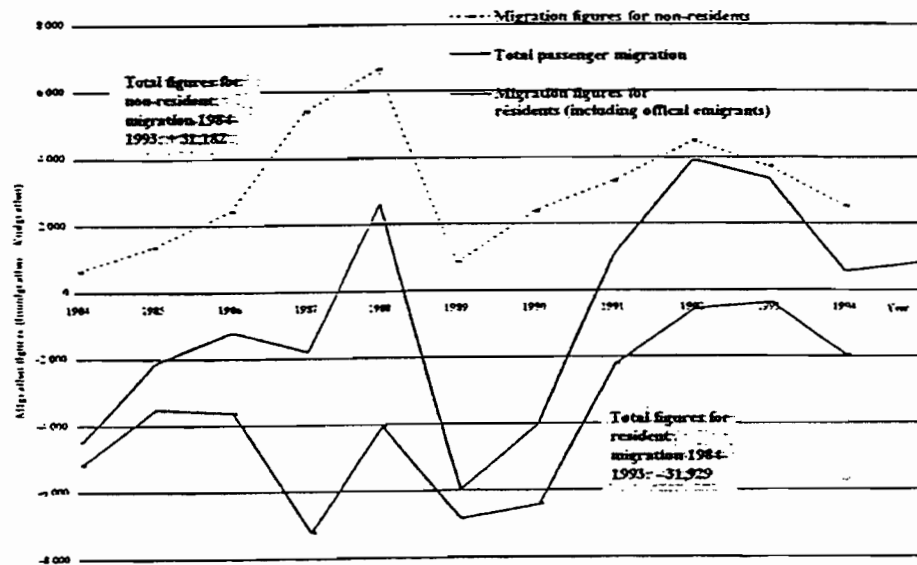
#### *The General Extension of Markets and Mauritian Migratory Movement*

In parallel to the dominant North-South relations which have caused work migrations (more often than not informal migrations), there has been a partition on a national level which has consolidated the sovereignty of the independent Mauritian state. With the setting up of an industrial exportation sector, the country has opened up to exchange and investment relations able to serve as a basis for regional structuration. In this sense Mauritius has regained something of its former pre-eminent function, during the pre-colonial era, at a time when India-India trade flourished between the countries of the Southern and Eastern African coasts, India and Asia.

The new relationships between production and trade systems, which developed in the sugar companies and in the new firms in the free trade zone, have had the simultaneous, but independent, effect of amplifying industrial relocations, and this has in turn entailed a diversification of local trade and the emergence of family or ethnic based companies set up in Europe and in some southern

hemisphere countries. In this context it is very difficult to distinguish the different and complex types of migration involved. Firstly the migration may concern Mauritians resident in Mauritius or abroad, or official Mauritian emigrants with visas or with work contracts. Secondly they may be travelling for holidays, for business purposes or simply be in transit on the way to other destinations. This interweaving and superposition of reasons for departure and arrival may explain the apparent instability of the net total annual emigration figures which have been recorded since 1985 (fig. 12). This instability may be interpreted based on the distinction to be made between resident and non-resident Mauritians passing through the island. Figure 12 reveals a total of 39,929 resident departures (including the official emigrants) whose departures are not compensated for by a return journey from the destination country.

Figure 12. Mauritius, 1984-1985 : Evolution of passenger migratory figures with distinction of residents and non-residents



Sources : CSO

The global analysis of the migratory system is only possible through an interpretation of the difference which exists between the



persistent net emigration of Mauritian residents and the apparently contradictory emigration of non-residents. Recent immigration of more than 31,000 people, from 1984 to 1993, is a sign that the Mauritian employment market, which resorts to unskilled foreign labourers, is not structurally adapted. The omnipresence of a constant stream of Mauritian emigrants, despite full employment, reveals the existence of a number of migration strategies which influence the decision to emigrate to an increasingly varied list of destinations. Thus, since around 1985, emigration stopover countries have developed as intermediary destinations for return journeys, or as departure stages of varying duration : South Africa, Reunion island, Australia and Singapore are examples of such stopover countries for returns to Mauritius and also for departures towards Europe, Canada or the United States. The world tour is thus back in fashion. The planned journey may be westward, for departures towards Europe (or via Europe to Canada or the United States), or eastwards via Singapore towards Asia and the United States. In any case the motives for travelling, whether it be for pilgrimage to Mecca or India, or for business reasons, may be assimilated, since what is revealed is that travelling is not unusual for Mauritians, whether they work on the plantations or in the civil service<sup>58</sup>.

A tour of the world has become possible for greater and greater numbers of Mauritians, whilst work migration through official or non official channels no longer has the same implications as the first of the mass departures. Indeed, the former destinations of the 1970s now constitute emigration routes to destinations unknown at the time of departure and depending on where families may regroup. Today we are reaching a stage of transgenerational repetition of emigration routes : what counts now is the possibility of either returning to Mauritius at retirement age, or of lasting settlement abroad. This means that the links with the country of birth must also be widened to include the re-establishing of links with the country of family origin in order to enable the necessary differentiations for settlement in the country chosen by the emigrant. This importance of the emigrant's country of family origin in relation to his country of birth is not quantifiable but it allows us to apprehend how work migration may also give rise to

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<sup>58</sup> Migratory movement is to be noted around certain axes : Australia-Asia, South Africa-United States, and Great Britain-Canada. These areas are to be correlated with zones of regional co-operation.

new possibilities for exchange<sup>59</sup> which have an influence on the intermediary function of social utility of the country of birth in the international sphere. That is why the characteristic Mauritian migratory movement always involves a (generally triangular) relationship which symbolically<sup>60</sup> associates the country of birth, the host country and the country of family origin. That is also why world tours, or pilgrimages, play such an important part in the life of many Mauritians, whether they reside in Mauritius or abroad. Migration movement abroad is similar to movement within the island for family, religious or cultural events : Mauritians move from one place of residence to another, from one camp to another, from one village to another in the same way that they move from one country to another. Mobility is thus an essential characteristic of Mauritian social life and economic development.

This social movement may be apprehended statistically by comparing the official figures for Mauritian immigrants in certain countries (table 1, column 8) with the net official Mauritian emigration statistics compiled from embarkation cards with declared destinations. The comparisons, destination country by destination country, reveal overestimation in some cases and underestimation in others, thus revealing a series of significant variations compared with the travel routes declared on Mauritian embarkation cards<sup>61</sup>. There is, for example, an overestimation of departures for Great Britain and an underestimation of departures for Canada. In this case the respective differences, and knowledge of historical patterns of Mauritian migration, confirm that some of the departures for Great Britain continue their journeys to Canada. For Italy the overestimation is even more apparent in comparison

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59 The term exchange is to be understood in its widest sense (i.e. exchange of products, people and symbolic goods).

60 This symbolic triangular relation affects the way in which salaried and productive activities are constructed and interlinked, and the way in which local activities are linked to global activities.

61 Comparison between the results of embarkation cards and censuses in the immigrant countries do not merely reveal a general problem of migratory flow between the country of departure and the country of arrival ; the direction of population flow and the compared numerical differences between countries (e.g. for Italy the Mauritian embarkation cards indicate a higher number of immigrants than the Italian censuses, whereas for France the Mauritian embarkation cards indicate a lower number of immigrants than the French censuses ) confirm the existence of migratory movement of Mauritian nationals between Italy and France. Such movement has already been identified for other populations : the same applies to Belgium.

with underestimation for France<sup>62</sup>, thus revealing the movement of Mauritians from Italy towards France.

In these circumstances the various motives for migration are increasingly difficult to distinguish, except in the case of official migration. Departures for family reconstitution, to visit far away relatives, for trading or business reasons are all a part of social strategies which have the effect of relocating immigrants who have settled abroad within a sphere of socialisation in which the country of birth regains its function of mediation in order to further develop preferential links. This intrinsic relationship between the settled emigrant and the resident Mauritian traveller, a more or less distant relative or friend, highlights the « dialectic relation which has always existed between islands and continents, between continental empires and oceanic empires » (CHAZAN-GILLIG 1996 : 40). Mauritian society functions as a diasporic entity which fits into the established circles built around the former British and French colonial spheres, and which is redefining itself in relation to an emerging Austral belt. This Austral belt is linked to maritime potential based on South America, South Africa and Australia (MAESTRI 1994 : 118-119). It is as if « would be » emigrants have rediscovered, via a « suspended history waiting to be written in the pages of an official history » (HOVANESSIAN 1998 : 23), a collective affirmation of their communities of origin. This affirmation would stem from a reference to a nation state with no natural boundaries, the ocean being the location, par excellence, of the exercise of its mediating capacity for the determining of interplay between domination and dependence. From a structural point of view Mauritius is a northern hemisphere country, and yet from the point of view of sovereignty it is a state of the southern hemisphere.

### *Mauritius in the World Economy*

While Mauritian society may have reacted positively beyond all expectations to the incentive to work, and while it may have delayed the effects of inequality through emigration, it is clear today, that the year 1990 saw a speeding up of the process of globalisation. By becoming a land of emigration and immigration,

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<sup>62</sup> Compare table 1 column 6 and column 8. For Great Britain 26,271 Mauritian departures are overestimated against 23,450 in the British censuses, compared to Canada with 3,254 Mauritian departures underestimated as against 5,305 in the Canadian censuses. For France 20,137 departures are underestimated against 23,441 compared to Italy with 6,918 departures overestimated against 3,212.

Mauritius revealed its new positioning in the field of international « division of labour ». The new situation as regards Mauritian migration therefore reveals the lack of flexibility of its labour market, which is entering into a phase of structural difficulties. Indeed, Mauritius is recruiting qualified personnel abroad for the needs of the high technology industries, while other immigrants are arriving through informal channels for unskilled work at very low wages. However, Mauritius continues to confirm its status as a developing country with the modernity of its banking system, with its innovative activities, with the fact that national debt stands at less than 30% of GNP<sup>63</sup>, with the changing structure of GDP, with national savings at a steady 20% of GDP, and with a Gini coefficient which has gone from 0.45 to 0.38 (HEIN : 1967)<sup>64</sup>. Thus it may be said that Mauritius is resolutely entering « the second phase of its development. The innovation period comes after an initial period of imitation and export industrialisation, but competition with developed countries is apparent from the beginning of phase 2 », according to NICOLAÏ (1998). This competition is manifest if we compare northern hemisphere European investment, with the South East Asian investment now associated with Mauritian capital in the development of the free trade zone (HEIN 1996 : 32)<sup>65</sup>. In this respect, Hong Kong and Taiwan are main and secondary investors with 24.3% and almost 8%, respectively, of total investment from 1985 to 1992. Hong Kong is by far the main investor, with Taiwan alongside France (8.9%) and the United Kingdom (6.2%) as secondary investors. German investment has fallen to 4.1%, whilst the main suppliers of imports are France and South Africa, followed by Japan, Great Britain, Germany, Taiwan and the United States (HEIN : 70). The developing Asian countries are both investors and import suppliers, thus tending to reinforce their dual role to a greater extent than their rivals, whilst also positioning themselves within the sphere of the preferential relations of the Northern protected markets, particularly for textiles. The complementary nature of the textile and electronics markets, which contributed to the structuring of the Mauritian free trade zone, is also accompanied by a widening of the sugar market, thus reinforcing official agreements with South

<sup>63</sup> Philippe HEIN estimates Mauritian debt to be well below international averages.

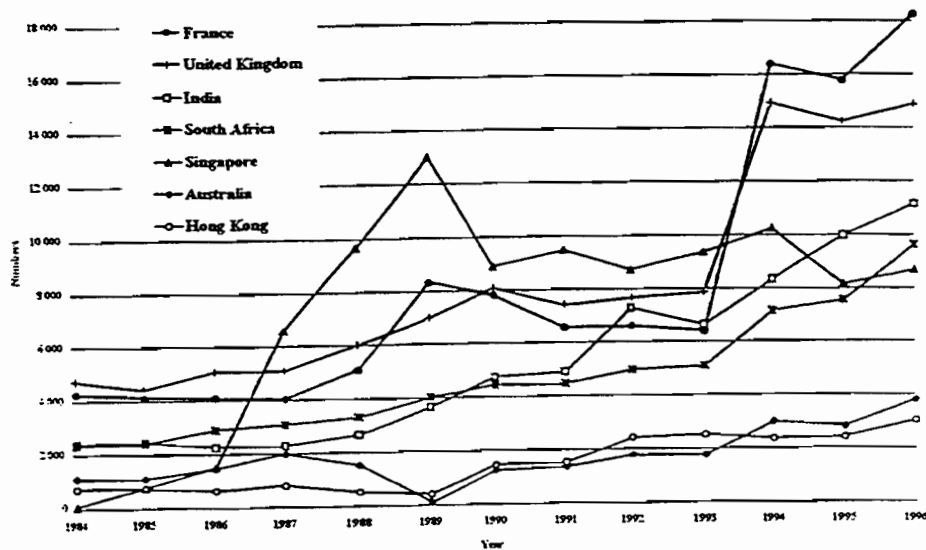
<sup>64</sup> HEIN stipulates that this Gini coefficient indicates that the polarisation of income has decreased, whereas in European countries it has tended to increase, thus indicating a better relative distribution of growth in Mauritius.

<sup>65</sup> Table 2.7 illustrates foreign investment, by country, in the free trade zone, from 1985 to 1992.

Africa and Australia which have opened up to African markets through recent investments.

The relocation of the Asian markets in the sphere of preferential relations between the dominant Atlantic maritime countries (MAESTRI : 146)<sup>66</sup> is to be observed by comparing annual migration departures of Mauritian residents towards the seven main destination countries from 1984 to 1996.

**Figure 13. Mauritius (1984-1996) – Departures of Mauritian residents each year by final declared destination (for the 7 countries accounting for more than 3,000 departures per year in 1996, excluding Reunion Island)**



Source : CSO

In figure 13 there are three pairs of curves with similar profiles, whilst the curve representing the evolution of departures towards Singapore is totally different and significant of the this new, complementary, and antagonistic, relation between the new markets. The curves for France and the United Kingdom continue

<sup>66</sup> MAESTRI presents a map giving a « strategic world belt view » which shows the emergence of a developed central belt with Mauritius and Reunion in a central position.

to lead the way, recording the highest numbers of departures. On the other hand, the rapid growth of Singapore from 1986 on, coincides with the opening up of European markets to Asian products. Hong Kong, having moved from textiles into electronics since 1980, increased its investments in the Mauritian free trade zone. When the drop in the textile industry affected Mauritius the island invested in electronics. The Singapore curve represents these new South-South-North relations, in the capital investment markets which are open to the world economy. The reason for this is that Singapore is a hub for routes to India, Asia, the United States, and to Europe from the southern hemisphere. This situation is a sign of the partial integration of Asian markets with northern markets. Singapore and Australia have a common function, the objective of which is the stabilisation and redistribution of new markets. Stabilisation sets up complementary relations in a wide Atlantic maritime belt whilst redistribution gives rise to a tightening of the regional complementarities which have been developing since 1990<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, the complementary relations of the Asian markets, compared to the preferential markets of the North, leads to competition between the two. This competition is indicated by the significant independence of the evolving departures curves towards India and South Africa : these curves are quite distinct from the other curves. The curves for India and South Africa have increased exceptionally and decisively since 1990. The numbers of departures have steadily increased. They go from 4,000 departures for each country in 1990, to about 10,000 for South Africa, and almost 11,000 for India, in 1996. The new economic sphere which has been developing since 1990 is based on former local economic complementarities for all markets. The variation and change of recorded departures towards the various destinations identified may be explained by the insular position of Mauritius which leads its population to a certain mobility and thus to anticipate, follow, or accompany the path lines of market force integration.

It is here that Mauritius' insular vocation reveals its real importance. In and through this vocation are to be found the limits of the island's development, stemming from the balance between the natural tendency towards limitless capitalist extension on the one hand, and the necessity for a local island-centred development on the other.

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<sup>67</sup> The ocean route was developed in the period preceding the colonial partition of the Indian Ocean : trade between different parts of India was reactivated between 1870 and 1904 during the period preceding the colonisation of Madagascar.

Is it not the case that present day Mauritius is in a position to take « insular revenge », as MAESTRI has put it (1994 : 132), by transforming the commercial openings of the 1970s into an « instrument of modernisation » (ADDA 1998 : I/42). The lines of influence of the former ocean route (from India to Africa via the Mascarene Islands) which are becoming stronger today, are the result of a policy of international openness. Philippe HEIN reminds us that Mauritius joined the OAU (the Organisation for African Unity) at Independence, became a founding member of the Preferential Exchange Zone<sup>68</sup> in 1981, is a member of the Indian Ocean Commission (1982), and has been admitted as a member of the South African Development Community (SADC). The Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) was created in 1993 (HEIN : 17). The geopolitical organisation of past relations, based on exclusive links between the African countries in their relations with Europe<sup>69</sup> has been transformed. Mauritius, far from world markets and protected by preferential markets<sup>70</sup>, is hoping, and indeed moving towards becoming the meeting point of the different markets of the continental and maritime countries of the Atlantic rim, whilst placing itself at the forefront of the new African markets. The emergence of Mauritius among the newly industrialised countries is based on a local regional integration which corresponds to a geostrategic belt development vision of the world which includes « this developed austral belt » (MAESTRI : 146)<sup>71</sup>.

### Conclusion

Taking advantage of all forms of investment and trade exchange, Mauritius has built an economy that is internationally recognised as having become the « little dragon » of the Indian Ocean. Whether Mauritius take unhesitating anticipatory activity, or engage in introspection before acting, its sphere of reference is definitely that of the world market with its dominant North/South relations and its lines of influence to be discovered, or followed, in the direction of India, the other Asian countries, and Africa, while

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<sup>68</sup> For countries in East and South Africa.

<sup>69</sup> Edward MAESTRI presents the world map in accordance with Haushofer's geopolitical view (p. 145).

<sup>70</sup> Lomé and multi-fibre agreements.

<sup>71</sup> Map of the « geostrategic belt vision of the world ». Map by C. MAESTRI. Source : CHALLAND et RAGEAU *Atlas Stratégique*.

the island's plural cultural references remain a useful social value for all Mauritians who have settled abroad. This is the reason why Mauritians abroad quite naturally picture themselves in the transnational sphere, and any analysis of Mauritian migratory flow needs to take into account this intermediary location between trade movements and investments, a location which is linked to delocalised production zones functioning as a multi-polar attraction for preferential local-regional migrations for South/North migrations.

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