

Editorial

The first issue of 2021 opens with a reminder that the previous year marked the 250th anniversary of the permanent settlement of Seychelles. In an interview with the Seychellois author, Robert Grandcourt, questions are asked by Anne-Berenike Rothstein that reveal thoughtful insights about this distant past. Grandcourt is an economist by background and the interview is based on his novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, which he wrote as a way of describing his own family history. Like many families in Seychelles, his ancestors were victims of slavery, before the gradual emergence of a distinctive Creole culture that is the basis of today's society. In the words of the interviewer, Grandcourt 'is, himself, an epitome of créolité... his novel is a great and convincing testimony of living history.'

One of the most stimulating aspects of editing an interdisciplinary journal, without the certainties of designated themes, is that one can never be sure what will arrive for the next issue. In this one, an invisible hand has been at work, orchestrating the production of three fascinating articles that each contribute further to our understanding of Creole language and culture.

In what I believe will be acknowledged in their field as a seminal contribution, Pascal Nadal and Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen show how Mauritian Kreol is acknowledged as an important language in its own right. Their wider argument is that it illustrates that local languages and their associated cultures need not be swept aside in the interests of dominant, international languages like English and French. Globalization may not always have the last word.

Two other articles which explore different aspects of this general theme are those by Penda Choppy and Anne-Berenike Rothstein. Choppy acknowledges the importance of African and European influences on creole identity but she also draws attention to a missing element, namely, the part played by the Indian Ocean region itself. In turn, Rothstein shows how the oral tradition has made its own contribution to our understanding of the evolving nature of Creole culture.

On the geopolitical front, Jean-Pierre Cabestan offers a detailed analysis of changing relationships, especially those between India and China, in the Indian Ocean. In a meticulously-sourced article, he shows how Seychelles finds itself in the middle of a major power rivalry. This can work two ways for our small island state: it can either make Seychelles subject to the dictates of the larger ones, or, alternatively, it can offer a source of leverage to extract much-needed benefits. Cabestan carefully weighs up the options and concludes on an optimistic note: 'one should not understate the Seychelles agency and more generally the

ability of small island states to influence events, especially events that concern their own security and future’.

My own contribution also stems from an interest in geopolitics but focuses on the specific issue of food security. The ongoing pandemic has, amongst many other impacts, seriously disrupted global supply chains and questioned whether a small island state like Seychelles, highly dependent on food imports, can secure sufficient supplies for its needs. In whatever way one looks at the problem, more must be produced locally, and the article suggests broad target numbers to guide a national food security strategy.

Finally, flying the environmental flag on her own this time, Malshini Senaratne writes about seagrass as an under-rated source of carbon storage. As Senaratne explains, ‘research suggests that an acre of seagrass could store about three times as much carbon as a terrestrial rainforest. In line with these preliminary calculations, seagrass meadows may be responsible for more than ten percent of carbon storage in the ocean’. Research is still quite patchy but there is enough evidence to encourage further work on this important subject.

A further note on the journal itself is that, following a successful application based on the evidence of our first two years of publication, the journal has been accredited by the Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers. This body is one of several international bodies that verify standards, and accreditation in our case means that we have provided evidence that our processes are sound and that more than 50% of our articles are from sources outside UniSey. For present and future authors this is an important index of international credibility that can be cited.

Finally, I am delighted to record that the locally-based East Indies Co. Ltd. has agreed to sponsor the journal. This present issue is entirely funded by the company, giving voice to the idea that ‘fine wines and good research’ are natural partners.

For all this, we are always seeking new material for our upcoming issues. So, if readers of this editorial are able to contribute something new and/or otherwise spread the word, please send in your ideas.

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