

Edited by Toyin Falola, R. Joseph Parrott,  
and Danielle Porter Sanchez

# AFRICAN ISLANDS

LEADING EDGES OF EMPIRE AND GLOBALIZATION



# African Islands



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**Leading Edges of Empire and Globalization**

**Edited by  
Toyin Falola, R. Joseph Parrott,  
and Danielle Porter Sanchez**



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For those who lost their lives crossing the seas and  
those forced to forge new lives on distant shores



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# Introduction: Arbiters and Witnesses of Change

## Contextualizing Conversations on African Islands

Toyin Falola, R. Joseph Parrott, and  
Danielle Porter Sanchez



### I.1: Africa and its islands

Amílcar Cabral is the founding father of two countries: the island nation of Cabo Verde and the mainland state of Guinea-Bissau. As the first and most influential leader of the *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, or PAIGC), Cabral spent much of his life trying to achieve independence for two places that he considered home. While they are two separate countries today, the revolutionary Cabral envisioned a single post-colonial nation that would unite the former Portuguese possessions. The metropole had for centuries viewed the colonies as uniquely interrelated, using the more assimilated and racially mixed populations of the islands of Cabo Verde to help administer the mainland in Guinea, where relatively few Europeans had settled. Cabral was born in Portuguese Guinea to Cabo Verdean parents filling such intermediary roles, and it therefore seemed natural for him to envision a united struggle. Cabral fought to bring independence to two colonies connected—not separated—by water and shared history.<sup>1</sup>

Cabral's biography is important here because his revolutionary ideology owes much to his ambiguous relationship with his own island identity. Cabo Verde had not been permanently inhabited when the Portuguese first settled the archipelago in the fifteenth century. The culture that surrounded Cabral during his formative years grew from the intermixing of Europeans and enslaved Africans brought from the mainland. By the time of Cabral's birth, a majority of its population claimed a mixed-race heritage and received privileges associated with Portuguese citizenship, though insufficient education and dire poverty on the drought-prone islands prevented any claims to true equality with the metropolis. Rather, the archipelago existed somewhere between Europe and Africa. By embracing this latter heritage, Cabral rejected Portuguese domination, claiming an historically informed identity that tied the islands directly to the African continent despite centuries acting as an intermediary. This vision of unity proved vital for the success of the revolution. The archipelago was too closely controlled by the Portuguese to launch a large-scale guerrilla movement, so the PAIGC looked to Guinea-Bissau when planning its armed independence struggle. In 1963, the PAIGC launched a revolution on the mainland with an army of mostly local soldiers led disproportionately by Cabo Verdeans. The movement succeeded and Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau gained independence in 1974, but it could never fully overcome the distances of geography, identity, and culture that separated Cabo Verde from the mainland. By 1980, internal tensions—formed, in part, along island-mainland antagonisms—split the PAIGC and led to the two-state system.

During the revolutionary struggle, Cabral could not overcome the ambiguous relationship that existed not just between Cabo Verdeans and Bissau-Guineans, but also between islanders and African continentals more generally. For Cabral, the embrace of African identity meant a rejection of Portugal, the privileged position of his island within the empire, and the adoption of a wholly continental perspective that neither he nor his family had ever truly known. This was in many ways the origin of his famous call to “return to the source.”<sup>2</sup> This source was the African heritage and culture that he believed served as the hidden center of Cabo Verde’s cosmopolitan identity, lost from view by distance, time, and the long process of transculturation that resulted from the islands’ role as a point of articulation in Portugal’s global empire. Cabral was able to bridge this gap and lead the binational revolution due to his personal charisma and the sincerity with which he embraced a self-consciously African identity.

Yet what Cabral struggled to understand was that these differing identities and histories ran deep. The educated, globally conscious Cabo Verdeans who made the PAIGC an internationally recognized revolutionary party continued to view themselves as the natural and necessary leaders of both the islands and Guinea-Bissau. At the same time, some mainland soldiers continued to resent the predominantly island-born leadership as they had when earlier generations acted as Portuguese middlemen. The result was a tenuous unity dependent almost entirely on Cabral and the common struggle for liberation. His assassination in 1973—perpetrated by disaffected Bissau-Guinean party members who referenced the mainland-island divide—robbed the PAIGC of the glue keeping the binational experiment intact.<sup>3</sup> Unable to replicate his brother’s unifying personality, Luís Cabral presided over an increasingly divided transoceanic country before suffering a coup in 1980 that split the PAIGC and resulted in the formation of independent archipelago and mainland states.<sup>4</sup> The histories of these once-linked nations have since diverged. Cabo Verde reinvented itself as one of Africa’s most stable and democratic countries with the assistance of international aid and a growing tourist sector, while Guinea-Bissau has suffered from repeated military coups and a depressed economy.

The case of Amílcar Cabral and the Cabo Verde-Guinea-Bissau divide captures many of the historic themes of life on African islands. From Cabo Verde in the Atlantic to Zanzibar and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, geography and contingency made islands avenues for integrating Africa into wider networks of trade, migration, and empire—sometimes against the will of local populations. As centers for exchange and expansion, these islands historically occupied positions of importance far out of scale to their meager sizes. But so too did their inhabitants become part of a

series of complex regional and international relationships that have had lasting repercussions on island societies. Often, itinerant travelers and settlers from mainland Africa, Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East first interacted on these global nodes, which acted as liminal spaces to blur the borders between continents.<sup>5</sup> As a result, these islands became uniquely amalgamated spaces, creating distinct cultures and social relations that both reflected and continuously grappled with these intersecting forces. This volume seeks to explore these insular themes at a continental level, placing individual histories of all of Africa's major islands—and some of its minor ones—into conversation with each other across regional and chronological delineations.

## Outposts in Ocean Worlds: The Historiography of African Islands

This volume pushes away from narrowly defined nationalist histories and encourages larger conversations on the transnational as unique spaces of analysis for understanding the history and cultures of the African continent. Though there are few studies that consider Africa's islands in a broad comparative perspective, many scholars recognize the important role these lands have played in African and global histories. There is excellent scholarship on individual islands and archipelagos, including a number of works that expertly fit African examples into broad transnational networks.<sup>6</sup> Yet the volume of such studies remains relatively small since the national histories popular after independence, as well as the more detailed studies produced after the cultural turn, have understandably prioritized mainland states. The complex domestic interactions of more populous and politically powerful nation-states such as Nigeria or South Africa receive the lion's share of scholarly attention, marginalizing less populated and geographically isolated islands to the periphery. The key port-island of Zanzibar and the massive Madagascar are perhaps the most prominent exceptions to this rule, but even here the Arab-influenced cosmopolitanism of the former and the Austronesian-derived Malagasy culture of the latter often mark them as exceptional cases in African history.<sup>7</sup>

In overlooking these islands, scholars have missed an opportunity. Focusing narrowly on national and subnational histories has reified tendencies in postcolonial historiography to promote African history by downplaying connections to wider global trends and placing African developments in opposition to foreign imperial projects. While regional historiographies of Asia and Latin America have begun systematically exploring international

connections, Africanist scholars are only beginning to rediscover the role that African peoples played in shaping and adapting wider global forces. The continent's islands have the potential to be key components of such avenues of study. They were pivotal in forming the regional and global networks that linked the continent to the world before the age of steam, capturing an outward-looking African history that predates European exploration and continues to influence the evolution of contemporary societies.

The embrace of oceanic histories has led this redirection of scholarship, but even here a tendency to emphasize geographic distinctions obscures the extent to which the active participation of Africans in global systems of exchange produced common trends across time and space. Therefore, a primary goal of this volume is to understand the role islands played in Indian and Atlantic Ocean worlds, and to put these distinct areas of study into conversation with each other. Oceanic scholars have recognized the roles of islands as nodes in intercontinental networks, blurring the lines of center and periphery that long typified global history.<sup>8</sup> These growing fields have taken seriously pioneering Mediterranean scholar Fernand Braudel's challenge to move away from the national histories that dominate traditional historiographies and toward a scholarly center on what were literally seas of exchange between continents, revealing worlds populated by actors with outsized influence that often operated on or from coastal and island nodes.<sup>9</sup> The most prominent and well developed of these areas of study has focused on the Atlantic, but in the last thirty years an arguably more dynamic field has developed around the more ancient Indian Ocean.<sup>10</sup>

While this volume seeks to blur the regional and chronological limitations of oceanic world systems by placing Africa at their center, an overview of the extant historiography on the Atlantic and Indian oceans will contextualize the specific histories and terminologies of the continent's islands. Beginning with the more developed Atlantic World, we see that Africa's Western islands first gained prominence during Europe's Age of Discovery. Most West African peoples had limited their operations to the shorelines, primarily inhabiting islands accessible from the coast such as the Bijagos in modern Guinea-Bissau and Bioko in Equatorial Guinea. As a result, more distant archipelagoes provided fertile ground for European expansion as maritime empires searched for routes around Africa to gain access to Indian trade. The Canaries were among the first European conquests in the fourteenth century—populated by people likely descended from North African Berbers—and provided an important launching point for continental commerce and expansion to uninhabited islands.

Soon, the Portuguese and Spanish began the settlement of Madeira, the Cabo Verde archipelago, the Azores in the mid-Atlantic, and the islands of the Gulf of Guinea: São Tomé and Príncipe, then Bioko and Annabón.

These bases of operation—usually unencumbered by hostile populations and often possessing fertile volcanic soil—provided agricultural products and enabled exploration further south and west across the Atlantic.<sup>11</sup> John Thornton, among others, argues that Europe's use of islands proved especially vital for expansionist ambitions in and beyond Africa as they provided safe havens during early periods when Europeans struggled to establish preponderance on the continent's coastline.<sup>12</sup> Historians—most prominently Alfred Crosby in his seminal work on the Atlantic Exchange—note that the introduction of cash crops such as sugar to settlements in Madeira, São Tomé, and elsewhere demanded greater labor than the Iberian nations could supply, leading to the importation of mainland Africans and the emergence of a prototypical plantation slave agriculture that would reach its maturity in the New World.<sup>13</sup> Africa's islands served in many ways as the first stages in the creation of an Atlantic World, proving the value of both colonization and staple agriculture, as well as pioneering models of (forced) labor and commerce that would motivate European imperialism.

Even as European attention shifted toward the newly discovered Americas, continental islands grew in importance as nodes in the transatlantic trade networks of Europe's empires. After 1492, the islands held value for the material they produced and as points of transition between the Old World and the New World. The Canaries, Azores, and Cabo Verde islands, along with São Tomé further south, became final victualing stations as ships set sail across the Atlantic. Cabo Verde, the Gulf of Guinea archipelago, and offshore islands along the Western coasts became way stations for slaves waiting to be transported to labor in American plantations. As eminent historians Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene have argued, Africa's islands became "leading edges" of the Atlantic World and "stepping stones from one hemisphere to the next":

The archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries, Cape Verde, and the islands of São Tomé, Fernando Pó, Príncipe, and Annabón in the Gulf of Guinea assumed special importance in the Atlantic World. These islands were hubs for a series of complex commercial networks; they were points of articulation between North and South Atlantic, North and South America and the Caribbean, Africa and the New World, Africa and Europe, and Europe and America. (Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, "The Present State of Atlantic History," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 12–13.)

Africa's islands acted as bridges to link continents through global exchange of goods, peoples, and ideas, giving rise to unique sets of social and economic cultures that helped facilitate the growth of these networks. Yet for millions, they also acted as liminal spaces between independence and bondage, symbolized famously by Gorée's House of Slaves and its "Door of No Return" off the Senegalese coast.

These small islands, then as now, deserve attention for the pivotal roles they have played in an Atlantic World. As global historian Alison Games argues, Atlantic history "is a way of looking at global *and* regional processes within a contained unit, although that region was not, of course, hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world . . . the Atlantic can offer a useful laboratory within which to examine regional and global transformations."<sup>14</sup> Scholars have embraced this concept as a way of emphasizing the role Africans played in the development of commerce and relationships with Europe and the Americas, recentering the historiography away from imperial histories of oceanic expansion or national histories of resistance to one of oceanic exchange.<sup>15</sup> Major contributions by James Sweet, Kristin Mann, Robin Law, and Rebecca Shumway have revealed the ways that slavery, governance, and commerce all evolved within broad transnational contexts, while pushing new theses about the Atlantic's relationship with African practices of urbanism, medicine, and intellectual history.<sup>16</sup>

As geographically bounded intersections of oceanic networks, Africa's islands hold a special position in this search to identify and articulate the specific processes and legacies of interaction. They are individual experiments in Games's historical laboratory. Trends and themes, oceanic historian Michael Pearson argues, "are exaggerated and magnified when we look at them in an island context."<sup>17</sup> In these settings, historians can explore in great detail the various strands of commerce, political expansion, and migrations that influenced Africa, and the way these processes changed over time. Such trends can be obscured in mainland societies, where exchanges operating mainly at coasts and frontiers are overwhelmed or subsumed within dominant national trends. On Africa's islands, the ways in which African peoples built upon transnational interactions to forge new realities take center stage, rather than existing at the margins.

In highlighting processes of adaptation that occurred across time and space, this volume offers the opportunity to understand how the famed triangular trade that dominates Atlantic studies represented just one component of a long history of African engagement with foreigners. This is apparent in the burgeoning field of Indian Ocean studies, which like its historiographical predecessor is coming to appreciate the roles that islands played in facilitating patterns of economic, political, and cultural



exchange. Monsoon winds powered a regional cycle of migration and trade long before Europeans crossed the Atlantic, but serious study of this ancient Eastern exchange was slower to take hold in academia. Much of the scholarship originally pivoted around the projecting point of India and a perceived cultural dominance in the region.<sup>18</sup> Such continent-centered scholarship continued as emphasis shifted toward Arabia and, increasingly, East Africa, and the littoral societies that developed on the Swahili coast from the interaction between a core of Bantu-speaking peoples with Arab and Asian traders. While studies have focused heavily on mainland centers of foreign trade and offshore port cities, the importance of Zanzibar, Mauritius, and Madagascar is helping to push scholars toward a greater appreciation of the role that islands played in this network.<sup>19</sup>

As Edward Alpers has argued in his call to move away from strictly continental perspectives, insular societies were wholly created by an extended Indian Ocean exchange.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to Africa's Atlantic islands—which were largely unpopulated and therefore most noteworthy for the European conquests that helped open the Atlantic World—those of the Indian Ocean were part of a longer and more complex history. As a result, they offer important avenues for studying shifting trade and social networks in the region over thousands of years. At an indeterminate point during the first millennium CE, Austronesian sailors established permanent settlements on Madagascar long after Africans had begun to establish fishing camps on coastal islands such as Zanzibar. Long, thin-hulled dhows used monsoon winds to carry Indonesian, Indian, and (especially) Arab traders across the ocean, where they exchanged ivory, gold, and timber from the East African hinterland for cloth, glass beads, and other trade goods produced in India and the Mediterranean. A slave trade also developed along the coastline that Arab traders knew as the Zanj, with the Comoros archipelago possibly being used as a depot for Africans destined for locations further afield, including Madagascar, the Arabian Peninsula, and China.

These sustained interactions between Bantu-speaking Africans and foreign traders laid the foundation for Swahili culture and, after roughly the tenth century, enabled Islam to flourish along the coast as well as in the Comoros archipelago.<sup>21</sup> Both Arab seafarers and local Swahili established trading centers on offshore islands that were accessible by boats, but offered a defense against the mainland—including Lamu and Mombasa in modern Kenya, Zanzibar and Kilwa Kisiwani in Tanzania, and Mozambique Island—and this logic carried over to settlement in the Comoros and northern Madagascar. These islands became important for the diffusion of foreign ideas into the interior; increasing demand for ivory and gold encouraged local Swahili traders to press their networks further inland,

and Sufi orders established headquarters in places such as Zanzibar Town in the sixteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The Swahili coast, which stretched from modern Somalia south to Mozambique, became the first example of a truly Oceanic world in Sub-Saharan Africa, nourishing an extended interaction between African, Muslim Arab, and Indian migrants in particular.<sup>23</sup> As Indian Ocean studies have become increasingly decentralized, this reality has motivated scholars to propose alternatives to Indian Ocean naming conventions that better capture the region's complexity, most notably Michael Pearson's argument for the "Afrasian sea."<sup>24</sup>

Only in the sixteenth century did Europeans become active in the region, hundreds of years after Afro-Islamic societies established their own hybrid cultures. What these earliest explorers found when they rounded the Cape of Good Hope was a complex commercial society, with a handful of urban centers in major trading ports such as Mombasa. Yet this did not stop them from asserting themselves, adding yet more layers to the socioeconomic tapestry that found its clearest manifestations on a series of islands. As in the Atlantic, the Portuguese forcibly occupied mostly island ports such as Mozambique Island, Mombasa, and Zanzibar in order to benefit from trade with the interior, but faced opposition in the latter locations from Arab sultans, particularly the Omani, who took both Mombasa and Zanzibar in 1698. Other European powers focused on India and minimized conflicts with local peoples by establishing victualing stations on the uninhabited Seychelles and Mascarenes between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, with the Dutch, French, and British all competing for these strategic outposts. The importation of labor to work the agricultural land on these victualing stations—first in the form of primarily African slaves, later indentured Indians—helped create Creole societies around European foundations similar to those in the Atlantic World, though distinct in their integration of strong Arabic and Asian influences. The cosmopolitanism of this region and its legacies for contemporary nations have become central themes for Indian Ocean historians.<sup>25</sup>

The longer history of the Indian Ocean World and the greater complexity of both its cultural and economic evolution have marked it as distinct from the Atlantic World, which developed after the fifteenth century, but these facts should only reinforce the value of approaching these islands as laboratories. While part of the same Indian Ocean World and at the center of similar patterns of migration, the positioning of these archipelagoes in relation to the monsoon cycle, as well as the timing and character of migrations, has done much to define starkly different identities for islands such as the Islamic-dominated Comoros and more culturally European Mascarenes, which otherwise share similar characteristics. They

capture shifts in the dominant cultures, trading systems, ideas of political control, and transportation that operated in the region. These islands—as in the Atlantic—were spaces for imperial barter with Africa. They played important roles facilitating great power interaction with the continent, creating composite societies that continue to adapt to changing conditions and global networks.

## Patterns of Islandness Across Oceanic Divides

The rise of Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean historiography has greatly enriched African studies and justified attention to the continent's small islands, but it too has its limitations. With the exceptions again of the well-studied Zanzibar and Madagascar, the oceanic approach can reduce islands to mere nodes of larger Atlantic and Indian worlds, bounding these histories both geographically and temporally in ways that fail to capture their vitality and the commonalities of their experience. The result is a sometimes one-dimensional portrayal of islands that emphasizes individual aspects of their history, such as commodities trading or plantation agriculture, as mere illustrations of wider phenomenon. Underappreciated is the way individual islands reacted to external impositions, and how these sustained interactions across time and place illustrate Africa's fluid position in global networks.

Such utilitarian approaches to islands also tend to minimize the important effects that changing forms of transportation, agriculture, and governance had on islands themselves. Once excluded from the prime pathways of oceanic exchange—noteworthy in both the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean with the opening of the Suez Canal, the coming of steam-powered sailing, and later the development of air travel—islands stagnate in terms of their global historiography. Historians have been too quick to accept such pithy chronologies as J. R. McNeill's contention that "The Portuguese caravel opened the Atlantic World, and the railroad closed it," failing to pay serious attention to most of Africa's islands after their periods of prime importance passed.<sup>26</sup> Far from stagnating as once prominent avenues of exchange withered, Africa's islands and their societies continued to adapt and innovate. These responses often reflected and depended upon broader continental trends, but they also pioneered paths of their own.

At the same time, placing islands into neatly defined ocean worlds has limited the understanding of them as distinct spaces in the African context, overlooking what their comparative histories might reveal about ocean-centered processes in relation to broader continental histories. Linking

the experience of Africa's islands can help reveal two key insights. First, ocean winds and currents defined specific cultural and commercial worlds, but borders between these worlds were fluid. Indian Ocean historians have noted that American bullion was critical to European entrance into the spice trade, and Nigel Worden has explored the ways in which Cape Town acted as a hinge point between oceans.<sup>27</sup> As similar maritime centers and victualing stations, Africa's islands became, in the words of historian Reed Ueda, "interoceanic crossroads" where worlds often overlapped and avenues opened for African and foreign agents alike.<sup>28</sup> This is especially true in the case of Africa, where the continent's integration into the Atlantic World was itself a product of the European ambitions to access the Far East trade, and which stood at the center of a truly global system of enslavement and migration.

Second, linking the histories of Africa's islands can reveal broader trends in African history. The laboratory quality of insular settings helps distill how processes of empire, enslavement, migration, and integration transformed the cultures, economies, and politics of the continent from precolonial times to the present. The patterns through which trade acted as a centripetal force pulling disparate peoples together becomes more apparent, as does the tendency for these islands to encourage the penetration and, at times, colonization of mainland areas. Islands also prominently capture in a condensed setting the complex social and cultural exchanges that have occurred as local African peoples have expanded and made contact with subsequent waves of foreigners, producing a cultural and social layering that has taken different forms based most clearly on those contacted, the timing of this interaction, and the transformation of ideological and political systems. And while these factors differed between the Atlantic and Indian oceans, they nonetheless produced some surprisingly similar products, especially when historical relationships with the mainland are taken into account.

This volume explores these commonalities by putting scholarship centered in these two oceanic worlds into communication with each other. Borrowing from the emerging field of nissology—or the study of the history and sociology of islands as spaces with shared characteristics—we propose a few theoretical concepts that help illuminate these overlapping histories and their larger meaning for African studies. Though the nascent field continues to debate the full meaning of islandness, there is agreement that it applies most clearly to small landmasses that are isolated and bounded by water. Their small size generally limits their resources, making them dependent on the sea and often stronger powers, creating tendencies toward migration and the cultural mixing that accompanies conquests

and constant flows of people.<sup>29</sup> Oceanic littorals endow islands with distinct and immediately understandable borders, while making them vulnerable to penetration, effectively making each island a potential “frontier zone” defined, according to J. C. Heesterman, by their permeability.<sup>30</sup> The result, as anthropologist William Bissell notes in this volume, is that shores, and in particular island shores, have “long served as a shifting space for cultural exchanges and encounters that could not occur in the more settled spheres of *terra firma*.”<sup>31</sup>

While such instability and porousness might make islands seem less than desirable possessions, the history of Africa’s islands show that from small traders to great powers, these landmasses have consistently proved invaluable. The compact size, relative isolation, and historically small or absent populations have often allowed more powerful newcomers to reshape the islands to fit their specific needs, even as most extant cultures proved surprisingly resilient in their ability to absorb and adapt to new influences. As Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith have argued, “Boundedness makes islands graspable, able to be held in the mind’s eye and imagined as places of possibility and promise.”<sup>32</sup> It is exactly this faith in the ability of islands to be reshaped and reordered that has encouraged foreigners to use them to establish footholds in alien and enigmatic lands. In these interactions, scholars can follow the construction and replication of spaces, peoples, and practices that historian-anthropologist Greg Denning has characterized as “in-between” worlds, capturing the role of islands as not just political or economic intermediaries, but also sociocultural ones as well.<sup>33</sup> Importantly, it was through these islands’ networks and interoceanic exchange that new ideas of imperial governance, economic organization, and culture traveled from one region to another, helping to reshape African history in the process.

## Themes in the History of Africa’s Islands

The chapters presented here contend that despite individual oceanic histories, Africa’s islands share common characteristics.<sup>34</sup> Yet in identifying these commonalities, it is worth keeping in mind that oceanic histories influenced by geographic position and contingency mark categories of islands as distinct. In this volume, Edward Alpers argues for experiences specific to offshore, foreland, and “distant-water” categories in understanding the Indian Ocean, the first two of which are defined by stronger identification with Africa.<sup>35</sup> Offshore islands such as Mombasa and Zanzibar, easily accessible from the continent, provided a setting where

Africans mixed with foreign seafarers to create cultures and institutions closely linked to the continent, though heavily influenced by such outside forces as Islam. Foreland islands refer to those such as the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, which reflect linguistic and cultural traditions related to but identifiably distinct from the Swahili coast. While we can usefully extend Alper's approach to the Atlantic—Bioko and the Bijagos being offshore islands, Cabo Verde a foreland, and the Caribbean islands fulfilling the distant water variety—an additional factor will aid in comparing Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean experiences.

In adopting a continental approach to Africa's islands, a further distinction is apparent in processes of creolization. By this we do not mean an Indian Ocean versus Atlantic Ocean paradigm, but rather a juxtaposition between the extended interactions that informed the Swahili coast, complex social relationships of Madagascar, and the more historically recent plantation islands such as São Tomé or Mauritius.<sup>36</sup> When Europeans entered the Indian Ocean, they found dynamic hybrid cultures in Zanzibar, the Comoros, and Madagascar born of the fluid economic and political relationships carried by the monsoon winds. The cosmopolitan identities of these islands had formed over hundreds, even thousands of years by a mixture of wayward seamen, merchants, religious leaders, and empire-builders. Europeans contributed new elements to this ongoing process of exchange and creolization via imposed trade structures and imported labor, but historic traditions proved resilient in the face of these new forms of direct control, economic organization, and social engineering. Europeans were just a few of the many influences that mixed together to shape these societies, and were relative latecomers at that.

The experiences of these established cultures contrast with processes of creolization that occurred on the mostly uninhabited plantation islands whose modern histories began at the intersection of European colonization, slavery, and forced resettlement.<sup>37</sup> In such places as Cabo Verde, São Tomé, Príncipe, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, the importation at their founding of slaves and forced laborers—both from Africa and elsewhere—led to the purposeful creation of Euro-African societies to further the exploitation and conquest of the continent. Carefully defined power relationships shaped these island societies with the specific goal of enriching metropolitan empires. Individual identities took shape in relation to centers of power and culture on these island chains, which were themselves deeply influenced by their structural proximity to the metropolis and maritime lifelines. In comparing Zanzibar with Mauritius, or Guinea-Bissau's Canhabac Island with those of Cabo Verde, differences depend not only on geographic proximity to Africa, but the reality that foreign—specifically

European—control of the sociopolitical structures in which creolization occurred in the formerly uninhabited islands was more constant, lengthy, direct, organized, and globally integrated.

Importantly, the preponderance of power wielded by any one group or actor does not necessarily imply a uniform Creole identity across archipelagos or even within islands. As in the mainland, identities formed in relation to centers of local power and the extent to which they effectively adapted or promoted foreign influences. The chapters in this volume show that various factors guided—and continue to guide—the heterogeneous formation of Creole societies, including class, ethnicity, gender, geography, and many other contingent decisions. In Cabo Verde, for instance, people in the interior of Santiago have created a Creole cultural character more closely tied to African traditions than that long practiced by elite citizens of the capital of Praia, while the small island of Brava boasts extensive ties to the United States due to migration begun after decades of American whaling. Keeping such complexity in mind, there is little doubt that decisions and relationships on such plantation islands operated within the limits set by European powers who largely managed, if never fully controlled, the genesis of these island populations. These histories contrast with those of Zanzibar and Madagascar, where chronologies of colonization and processes of exchange were more comparable to the continent, though adaptation sometimes occurred more rapidly than on the mainland due to historic cosmopolitanism and their unique roles as depots of international economic exchange.

With these caveats about geography and historical circumstances in mind, the comparison between islands is nonetheless quite fruitful. Each of the authors in this volume presents a specific examination of an island or islands. They generally consider the complex internal and transnational dynamics that saw indigenous peoples resist and adapt to outside forces at the expense of deeper explorations of the commonalities that link each of these landmasses together. Therefore, this section of the introduction will attempt to highlight the linkages present and implied in these individual chapters and the wider literature, identifying some broad themes and the historical context that link the experiences of these islands.

### *Bases for Intervention and Expansion*

Africa's islands have historically operated as bases for penetration of the continent. They offered readily available outposts for foreign traders and their local collaborators that were both easily accessible by sea and



relatively defensible from the mainland. This allowed them to act as both administrative centers and entrepôts, where goods could be assembled and protected while waiting for shipment abroad or into the interior. In the Indian Ocean, this process operated more indirectly before the coming of Europeans. Regional centers such as Mombasa and, later, Zanzibar prospered by creating conditions conducive for attracting traders, which promoted the expansion of commercial networks deeper into the hinterland as demand for gold and ivory grew. The precolonial slave trade operated similarly, creating networks whereby people from the interior were exported via coastal settlements to Madagascar, the Comoros, Arabia, and locations more distant. Islam and goods from the Indian Ocean trade accompanied these caravans. For much of this pre-European period, the primarily Arab traders operated almost exclusively at the margins—on islands and littoral settlements—with acculturated Swahili middlemen controlling access to the African hinterland.

In the Atlantic, too, islands offered possibilities for entrance into the continent, but Europeans brought with them new ideas of governance and control of sea-lanes that slowly made their way into the Indian Ocean. Germán Santana Pérez notes in this volume that the Canaries operated initially as a base for Spanish ambitions in Morocco, though they later became more important for providing a launching port for exploration and colonization of the Western Hemisphere, as did Portugal's Atlantic islands. They also served as important waypoints on the way to India and the Far East. Yet Africa's islands quickly found similar uses to their better-established Indian counterparts, opening avenues for metropolitan expansion into Sub-Saharan Africa, even when imperial priorities sometimes dissuaded such behavior. Islands thus facilitated the commercial penetration of the African continent by providing safe harbors for foreigners, which traders and empires alike reshaped to meet their needs.

The Portuguese islands provide an example. Cabo Verde served as an administrative and ecclesiastical center safe from potentially hostile Africans that could deploy supplies and reinforcements to the small, widely scattered Portuguese trading posts stretched along the 2,000 miles of the Guinean coast. Gradually, both whites and Creole Cabo Verdeans became prominent among the intermediaries who facilitated European trade in continental Africa, adopting positions akin to the Swahili in the east. The islands also produced the textiles that dressed the upper class of Guinea and became a focus for the collection and distribution of goods that kept the hinterland open to Portuguese commerce, even as locals sometimes skirted metropolitan monopolies on such exchange. Creoles in São Tomé opened some of the first commercial contacts with Angolan



chiefs to acquire slaves in exchange for European goods, despite Lisbon's restrictions.

These exchanges—and inter-European competition—were promoted and protected by the might of Europe's naval arms, which introduced a maritime militarism largely unknown to Sub-Saharan Africa. Control of these islands meant control of trade routes, fueling competition from and invasions by European powers. Europeans gradually exported this ideology of oceanic sovereignty into the Indian Ocean, beginning again with islands. The Portuguese unsuccessfully (and somewhat inconsistently) tried to use early possession of Mozambique and Mombasa to forcibly direct regional trade through their ports, abandoning such strategies when local agents found that competing within the traditional monsoon trade proved more profitable. Yet Europeans remained committed to establishing clear, proprietary economic routes and blocks, which would eventually fuel colonization as ambitions to control trade expanded to include production as well. In the Indian Ocean, Mauritius and Réunion helped European states project their naval power in the region, with the former being a key component in Britain's naval dominance of the region into the twentieth century. The islands thus became centers for the application and enforcement of new rules of commerce, even as they continued to accommodate older economic patterns.

This island role of intermediary in the exploitation and integration of the African continent within shifting economic networks is perhaps most apparent in the slave trade beginning with the Swahili coast and extending to the modern transatlantic trade. Indian Ocean islands, including Zanzibar and possibly the Comoros, had long been way stations for the inland trade, operating as points of embarkation for Arabia, India, and even China. Europeans discovered a similar value in their Atlantic possessions, first in the reexport to the New World of slaves seasoned on African island plantations, and later as entrepôts where traders could acquire their human merchandise. Deep-water islands such as Cabo Verde and São Tomé became preferred ports because their established colonial administrations, milder oceanic climates, and lack of disease were more welcoming to slavers willing to pay extra to avoid the hostile and unhealthy mainland and foreland areas. Between 1809 and 1815 alone more than 33,000 slaves were shipped to São Tomé, most bound for destinations such as Brazil and Cuba.<sup>38</sup> Islands thus acted as important components in the process of slave export, helping to acclimatize, subjugate, catalog, and sell enslaved Africans destined for distant destinations.

As these islands prospered, they became models of a new kind of expansion. They legitimized the concept of extra-European political enlargement

and became centers through which European governments could manage trade, promote religious conversions, and ultimately extend their direct sovereignty over nearby regions. This emphasis on centralized political control differentiated these modern empires from earlier Arabic and Asian influences on East African culture and commerce. This began among Iberia's Atlantic islands, where the occupation and transformation of Madeira and the Canaries into plantation agricultures under direct European management established a prototype, which was replicated first in Portugal's African possessions, then in the Americas, and later in the Franco-British islands of the Indian Ocean. The application of this successful model of political and economic governance to the mainland would increasingly become a goal of most European empires, though one that proceeded slowly. Europeans faced strong opposition from mainland Africans and established island populations in Madagascar and the Bijagos, and for centuries settlement in the New World proved more attractive. Nonetheless, as historian T. Bentley Duncan argues regarding Madeira and Cabo Verde, it was on islands that "the Portuguese developed colonial structures—with economic, social, political and ecclesiastical features—that were applied on a much wider basis in Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, and elsewhere."<sup>39</sup>

As Europeans shifted their goals in Africa from establishing commercial arrangements to modern imperial domination, the plantation islands continued to operate as facilitators—and even advocates—of empire on both sides of the continent. The highly Europeanized Creole populations that emerged in the wealthiest islands of the Mascarenes became especially vocal in support of expansion. Mauritius helped settle and administer the Seychelles and provided expertise to develop sugar cultivation in South African Natal, helping to push the European plantation system inland. Creole elites in neighboring Réunion had long urged France to colonize nearby islands in order to open up new economic opportunities in the region, establishing early and influential settlements in Mayotte after 1841 and in Madagascar after a fourth military expedition finally led to its annexation in 1896. In the Atlantic, Cabo Verde, São Tomé, and Spanish Bioko all served as bases for Portugal and Spain to press into the African interior, then later as colonial administrative centers. Cabo Verde, of course, became noteworthy for providing middle administrators for Portuguese colonialism, with a large number of islanders working in Guinea-Bissau.

The small populations, sympathetic leadership, and clear borders of the foreland plantation islands provided Europeans with a sense of security. This was rare in settled mainland areas, where indigenous kingdoms resisted annexation, revolts were common into the twentieth century, and interventions by Arab and Malagasy polities repelled European

impositions on the Swahili coast. The trend of plantation island refuges would largely continue through the period of decolonization, when empires found their authority challenged across the continent. European control of the islands and their relatively privileged places in the colonial system constrained nationalist agitation, as did heavy economic dependence on metropolitan patronage. These realities forced some nationalist parties to operate in exile, as Cabral's example and the Tanzanian founding of the *Mouvement de la Libération Nationale des Comores* (National Liberation Movement of the Comoros) illustrate. It was in part for these reasons that Africa's islands—with the exception of Madagascar and Zanzibar, which more closely followed mainland time lines—experienced some of the latest dates for formal independence, and account for the only remaining European outposts south of the Sahara: Mayotte, Réunion, and the Chagos archipelago. As a result, islands continued to project foreign power into recent times. As late as the 1960s, colonial São Tomé became a base for foreign intervention in Nigeria's Biafran War, and the British forcibly depopulated the Chagos islands over local protests in order to facilitate the establishment of an American military base on Diego Garcia.

### *Plantation Agriculture and the Reinvention of Island Economies*

Africa's islands shared the experience of plantation agriculture with other areas of the continent, but this activity operated for a more extended period than on the mainland and witnessed numerous shifts in production as the islands adjusted to meet the demands of global markets. Indeed, the plantation system had its origins in islands and proved replicable as new territories came under European domination. Sugar was the first major product, helping colonizers to wring a profit from island possessions they occupied primarily as nautical waypoints. On Madeira, the Portuguese outlined what would become an exportable system: large plantations raised a labor-intensive cash crop worked by slaves imported from the African continent. The embrace of a fashionable monoculture reduced self-sufficiency on many islands, but it also led to short-term riches through exports, both of which were encouraged and made sustainable by the islands' positions as nodes of commerce. This model spread quickly throughout the island possessions of the Iberian world, with São Tomé becoming the world's largest producer of sugar by the sixteenth century.

This plantation system and the technology it used would become the foundations for the even more successful operations begun in the

Caribbean and Brazil. Sugar production, as well as that of coffee and other products that Europeans would soon introduce, benefited greatly from characteristics shared by many of Africa's islands. Settlers found virgin agricultural land and climates suitable for the crop, and an export-focused economic infrastructure was developed to service ports. Africa's islands also featured a readily available source of cheap labor in the form of continental slaves. Combined with the political stability that generally accompanied tight European control of clearly defined island borders, here was a clear economic formula. But islands were soon to find that mainland areas in the Americas and, later, Africa shared many if not all of these characteristics, and made up for shortcomings in security or location with the ability to expand production freely while being more self-sufficient due to a greater variety of resources. By 1600, for example, many of São Tomé's successful planters had left for Brazil in search of the greater profits possible in the New World. As much as islands offered opportunities to test and innovate systems of empire, most occupied precarious positions in this increasingly global system of trade and migration.

The evolution of this plantation model in the Indian Ocean reveals the extent to which the Eurocentric imperial economic system gradually integrated much of Africa, passing through island territories that so often represented the first sites of European control and transformation. As in the Atlantic, the future plantation isles were initially most important for their strategic value, offering first Dutch and then French navies the opportunity to press claims in Asia while harassing competitors, most notably the British. In these early decades, the islands were primarily places of resupply, valuable for water, foodstuffs (including turtle and the ill-fated dodo), and forests for shipbuilding. Yet as British domination of the region replaced great power competition, profit motives encouraged the embrace of staple monocultures alongside ongoing maritime activities in an attempt to replicate, and even replace, the wealthy Caribbean. In the early nineteenth century, the British allowed sugar production in Mauritius despite West Indian objections. France encouraged Réunion to shift from coffee production to sugar, hoping to replace the production lost from the Caribbean after the successful slave rebellion in Haiti (though Parisian authorities legislated the island simultaneously to maintain its ability to resupply ships). Even the small Seychelles found success growing cotton for a short period. The journey of the plantation labor model from Africa's Atlantic coast to the New World and back again to the Indian Ocean reveals the expanding global logic of empire, and how models of African labor exploitation came full circle as Africa was incorporated into an international system of production and trade.

Plantation agriculture also became prominent in Indian Ocean areas that remained independent of European rule into the nineteenth century, with islands once more playing a key role in the continental adoption of European economic models. The rise of Zanzibar's clove economy offers an example. While the origins of the plant's introduction remain open for debate, it likely came via the Mascarenes, testifying to the role these islands had in promoting the diffusion of European ideas. Prominent Omani merchants who governed Zanzibar at the time sought to replicate the success of the well-known sugar islands, using slaves who were more difficult to export as the British attempted to suppress the trade in the first half of the nineteenth century. The resulting clove mania greatly enriched Zanzibari elites and led to new plantings in the neighboring island of Pemba, but the market collapsed within a few decades. That Arab and other regional rulers adopted the plantation system not because of European imperialism but in order to compete with it demonstrates the power of the plantation system, as well as Europe's successful integration of the Indian Ocean World into a global economy.

Yet as these illustrations show, the dependence of islands on global market trends has created a tendency toward boom, bust, and reinvention. This predated the rise of plantation agriculture since oceanic trading outposts have, according to K. N. Chaudhuri, "prospered and declined in a pendulum motion of long-term cycles."<sup>40</sup> But the plantation agriculture reified this trend by discouraging self-sufficiency, making diversification yet more difficult, and inspiring local elites and imperial agents to envision the wholesale economic reorientation of islands as inherently possible. This approach has produced great wealth for landowners when islands have successfully anticipated or created global trends, but it has largely ignored the needs of local peoples and puts these same places at a disadvantage when patterns of travel shift or larger states begin to compete. Gerhard Seibert's chapter on São Tomé and Príncipe provides one example, tracking the islands' repeated reinvention of their economy around sugar, coffee, cocoa, and, finally, an oil boom that has never arrived. Islands like these have been, in Braudel's pithy phrasing, caught between the "poles of archaism and innovation," constantly reinventing themselves in order to prosper in changing continental and global contexts.<sup>41</sup>

As islands have once more sought to reinvent themselves in the contemporary age of long-distance shipping and mass agriculture, many have found a solution in tourism. As ports declined, the opening of new international airports allowed countries to attract foreigners, using the same pleasant climate and natural fecundity that once drove plantation agriculture for new ends. Over the past twenty years, tourism has become a prominent

part of the economy in the Canaries, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Réunion, and Zanzibar, and it is growing steadily in value for Cabo Verde and Madagascar. This industry has adapted or reinvented much of the traditional work that went into servicing maritime travelers but, now with a greater emphasis on luxuries, benefiting from cosmopolitan traditions long central to island identities. Yet so too has this shift toward tourism reified past inequalities. Though Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Cabo Verde rank highly in terms of both human development and gross domestic product per capita in Africa, these benefits have not been distributed evenly. Reinvention has not overcome traditional social, economic, or geographic divisions, merely reorienting the benefits bestowed by international exchange and travel to a new set of actors.

### *Acculturation and Creolization*

Given the place of Africa's islands as waypoints and end points in an increasingly globalized political economy, it is not surprising that they stand out most clearly from their continental neighbors in the unique social dynamics of their societies. From their earliest points, both plantation and the older island cultures of the Indian Ocean saw a diverse array of settlers due to their positions as oceanic crossroads, leading to polyglot demography that encouraged Creole societies. The Swahili coast provides an early and informative example. The monsoon trade linked African and Asian peoples into a regional network, creating conditions where cultural and linguistic elements interacted. As Islam spread through the Arabian Peninsula, it traveled with the ubiquitous Arab traders to Africa, where it gradually became essential to the emergence of a unique Swahili identity on the edges of the continent. While the process of conversion remains debated, adoption likely occurred in order to cement African links with these predominantly Muslim traders, providing a set of transnational incentives that encouraged assimilation and adaptation. Importantly, this form of coastal Islam—grafted as it was onto an already heterogeneous network of trade—proved tolerant of diverse traditions, allowing the Swahili culture to incorporate elements that not only distinguished it from nearby Africans but also from Arab or South Asian coreligionists. The result was the creation of “in-between” identities that were identifiably African but nonetheless looked outward from the coasts. As Ross Dunn has argued, “in the Indian Ocean lands where Islam was a minority faith, all Muslims shared acutely this feeling of participation. Simply to be a Muslim in East Africa . . . was to have a cosmopolitan frame of mind.”<sup>42</sup>

These interconnected ideas of international exchange and cosmopolitanism are central to understanding the unique characteristics of most African islands. Swahili ports such as Kilwa, Mombasa, Zanzibar, and later the Comoros operated at the center of this maritime network, meaning new cultural and economic inputs continued to shape this sense of openness. These cosmopolitan centers generally lacked the suspicions and wonderment that could greet outsiders in interior societies, allowing islanders to adopt and adapt more readily practices that benefited their societies. This ranged from the plantation agriculture described above to language, clothing, and styles of governance. Importantly, islanders felt motivated to adopt foreign characteristics because they simultaneously operated within regional and global spheres, as Jeremy Prestholdt argues in chapter 10. In essence, they measured themselves both by African and broader standards of wealth, privilege, and power. The creation of dominant cultures as a result of this diversity of inputs and as a way to manage participation in this interconnected world marked Africa's islands as distinctive in the larger continental experience.

Given the debate that continues to surround the origins of Swahili culture, the plantation islands provide an even clearer historical narrative of cosmopolitanism, capturing Alison Games's idea of the oceanic laboratory. From their origins in the Atlantic to their later settlement in the Indian, these islands featured the demographic hallmarks of the plantation system: a small group of European settlers imported an increasing number of mostly African slaves (and later indentured or impressed labor from India or nearby colonies in Africa) to raise crops and service ships. By the time Europeans began to populate the uninhabited islands of the Indian Ocean, this model was clear. The first settlers of the Seychelles, for example, included fifteen whites, eight slaves, five South Asians, and an African woman drawn from the plantations of Mauritius and Réunion.<sup>43</sup> Whites on these islands did not dominate by demographics, but rather through the political and economic institutions that controlled migration, labor, and international exchange. In São Tomé, for example, the white population never numbered more than a few hundred for much of the island's history, only breaking 1,000 during the coffee boom of the late nineteenth century, when the number of new laborers drawn mostly from Angola was more than ten times as much.<sup>44</sup>

The plantation islands thus evolved in a way not wholly unique to Africa, where a dominant African culture existed alongside a minority European population that controlled much of the official institutions. The need to communicate across these boundaries gave rise to a linguistic and cultural synchronicity, whereby local Creole languages and cultures displayed strong European foundations but with varying degrees of influences from



African, Asian, and even American sources. Since few European settlers to the islands brought families—and many settlements featured exiled convicts and itinerant seamen—sexual relations across racial and ethnic boundaries were common on all but a few islands, which further opened the door for cultural exchange. As a result, Africa's plantation islands came to resemble Caribbean societies, featuring large mixed-race populations speaking a Creole patois borrowed from the language of the metropolis, and practicing a culture that linked European aspirations with African custom.

Yet in contrast to the Caribbean, Africa's islands were unique in that the primary purpose of all but a few remained in the maritime realm well into the twentieth century, even on successful plantation islands like Mauritius and Réunion. Sailors from across the globe regularly passed through the victualing and later coaling stations established in the widely scattered archipelagoes, settling or leaving traces of their cultures, foreign goods, and—not uncommonly—children.<sup>45</sup> Locales at the center of global trade like Zanzibar featured “all the known races of the world,” as Bissell quotes an Anglican missionary in this volume, with smaller ports hosting populations bounded in their diversity by the specific routes that passed through them.<sup>46</sup> Locals fleeing poverty or seeking opportunity beyond the limited confines of the island often sailed with visiting ships as hired hands, only to return home later or send back remittances and letters. Such interconnections gave many islands an outward-looking, cosmopolitan identity that proved receptive and adaptive in the face of new socioeconomic exigencies. Cabo Verde, for example, established an especially influential diaspora in New England, which has continued to shape the language and culture of their home islands, as shown in this volume by Carla Martin.

This more fluid maritime identity combined with innovative attempts to replace slave labor with indenture from other parts of the various empires to reveal the complexity of island identities. São Tomé continued to import Angolan labor after slavery was officially abandoned and used short indentures to lure Cabo Verdeans fleeing famines, while Richard Allen notes in this volume that British Mauritius imported over 450,000 laborers primarily from India, but also from China, Madagascar, Southeast Asia, and Yemen.<sup>47</sup> The influx of indentured laborers added a further level of complexity to many islands, especially on Mauritius, where Hindu has become the dominant religion—the only such country in Africa. Generally, though, these new arrivals adopted the language and practices of the existing community, at least in the public sphere, most clearly evidenced in the continued usage of historically inflected Creoles as the *lingua francas*



of most islands. This process helps explain the situation in Mauritius, for example, where many in the Hindu-majority former British colony rely on a French-based Creole for regular communication. Well before most European empires began to divide the continent in the late nineteenth century, Creole societies had begun to take shape on the continent's islands from the intersection of diverse cultural traditions, which incorporated additional elements as sociopolitical developments demanded.

Importantly given this continuous influx of peoples, it appears that this process of acculturation on Africa's islands may follow a surprisingly common pattern. Early mass settlements created foundational cultures that modified the linguistic, political, and cultural aspects of subsequent waves of immigrants. The examples above—and in this volume—draw heavily from the plantation isles, whose more recent origins allow a greater sense of specificity for these historic interactions. But this process of adaptation rather than adoption has parallels with the Swahili coast and, notably, in the somewhat exceptional Malagasy example. In Madagascar, the interaction of early Austronesian immigrants with Africans and Muslims gradually defined social hierarchies related to slavery, geography, dialect, and political alliances. But even here, as Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis lyrically note, “The initial patterns of Madagascar's cultures have been robust enough to become a fugue, a musical form in which distinct lines combine to form a harmonious whole.”<sup>48</sup> Austronesian characteristics remain at the core of the mutually intelligible Malagasy dialects, reverence for ancestors, and Hindu-derived ideas of status or value, despite centuries of interaction with outsiders that added vocabulary, religious beliefs, and economic structures. While the specific methods through which extant cultures absorbed new influences remain topics of debate, it might owe a debt to patterns of cultural interaction promoted by maritime societies. Predominantly male newcomers must adapt to local traditions, not only to function within the established economic system but to find partners among island women. This constant layering of diverse cultures has contributed to the creation of uniquely complex island identities linked to economic, cultural, and social dynamics.

### *African Island Identity in Continental Context*

These maritime and Creole identities have meant that islanders often have a complicated relationship with Africa, especially beyond the immediate offshore areas. The mediating positions these more distant islands occupied both culturally and commercially have historically allowed their

citizens to at least imagine themselves as both part of Africa and somewhere else entirely. How this has affected specific cultural articulations of identity has varied across place and time, from the Malagasy's mythic origins on their island to Cabo Verdean claims to a strictly Portuguese identity. What is common is that a fluidity born of their complex cosmopolitan cultures has allowed islanders to adjust their self-identifications to pursue goals by staking claim to various spaces in the global social order.

The fluidity of these island identities can be traced back largely to the processes of ethnic interaction and acculturation described above. Though there were exceptions, the centrality of racial and ethnic identity on many of Africa's islands became less important, particularly after slavery was abolished. As the decades progressed and the number of self-consciously foreign settlers remained small, wealth and connections eclipsed ethnicity or race as the primary indicators of social status on many islands. The persistence of such identity politics in Mauritius and Madagascar owed much to their specific historical circumstances, namely the major influx of Indian laborers to an already stratified Creole society and the intersection of slavery with the Malagasy status system, respectively. Such processes preserved and racialized distinctions, as Denis Regnier and Dominique Somda note in chapter 11. Yet even in these divided societies, language and certain cultural aspects provide the basis for pan-islandic identities. Distinctions remain and occasionally create conflict, but most islands have moved toward a certain level of collective identity, especially over the past twenty years. This unity in diversity has been achieved based on a public culture that emerged from common—if not necessarily shared—histories, defined by clear borders and reinforced by the tendency of these maritime centers to absorb newcomers. The traditional de-emphasis, though not erasure, of ethnic or racial identity contrasted sharply with the increasing institutionalization of racial differences imposed by European colonialism on the continent, and would prove shocking to islanders who found equally strict delineations were made in most metropolises.

Gradual changes in self-perception were reinforced by the fact that, in many cases, islands were by far the most acculturated of African territories. Zanzibar and the Comoros reflected strong Arabic and Islamic influences, and plantation societies generally became the most Europeanized of the African colonies. This owed much to time and extent that extra-African influences wielded preponderant power on these islands. As Tony Hodges and Malyn Newitt have said of São Tomé, “no other area was so early and for so long exposed to European settlement and plantation capitalism,” but much the same could be said of the majority of Africa's plantation islands, or even of Arabian trade and religious traditions in Zanzibar.<sup>49</sup> So too did

the self-consciously European plantation culture take root so firmly during the colonial period in the Mascarenes that August Toussaint has argued that foreign attitudes, manners, and even architecture had fully taken hold of society by 1789, at least at the elite level: "Few other trading posts in the Indian Ocean were as completely European as [St. Denis in Réunion and Port Louis in Mauritius]." <sup>50</sup> As a result, outside influence became particularly ingrained in many of these islands, fueling foreign attachments and providing justifications for empires. As a result, Réunion and even the Muslim-majority island of Mayotte, for example, continue to envision themselves as extensions of France, maintaining ties to a distant metropolis that reflect their self-perceptions vis-à-vis the continent and their ambitions for future socioeconomic development.

While these final two examples are perhaps extreme, this blurring of racial and cultural distinctions has allowed islanders to lay claim not simply to a geographical and cultural identity as Africans, but also to assert membership in broader and more powerful political constellations. In the Creole islands this took the form most commonly of claims to European identity. In Cabo Verde, for instance, both light- and dark-skinned citizens have claimed Portuguese identity in specific contexts, a habit that continued to be noteworthy among island immigrants to New England, considered black by American custom. They did this not only because of the widespread racial mixing that occurred on the islands, but because many islanders received special privileges of empire, thereby defining themselves in opposition to continental Africans who were not Portuguese with varying levels of ease or comfort. And this phenomenon is not limited to the European Creole context, with both Indian and Arab groups attempting to parlay once-privileged Indian Ocean positions into continued advantage. Ian Walker argues in this volume that despite affection for France, the Comoros have increasingly benefited from membership in the Arab League, along with participation in the international Organization of Islamic Cooperation. <sup>51</sup> Semiautonomous Zanzibar also joined the latter organization in 1993, but protests from the majority Christian population of Tanzania forced an end to this brief association, revealing the extent to which cultivating such foreign ties can place islands at odds with mainland Africans.

Islanders have thus positioned themselves between worlds. This extra-African identity has provided benefits, but it has also fueled a complex relationship with the continent, which was placed under a stark light by decolonization. As nations abandoned colonialism and embraced African nationalist ideologies, islanders had to grapple with their historic roles as intermediaries and possessors of "in-between" cultures. A sense of

alienation fueled Cabral's revolutionary ideology, but so too did it produce the eventual collapse of his binational vision for Cabo Verde. As with political leaders, cultural producers have also grappled with this reality of being both of and distinct from Africa, including the Cabo Verdean Cesária Évora, Francisco Tenreiro of São Tomé, and Bi Kidude in Tanzania. Yet for every Kidude who finds her voice in the intersection of African and Arab tradition, there are others like Cabral whose ultimate goal of reconciling island cosmopolitanism with African nationalism has been frustrated. The inward-looking ideology of the nation-state has clashed with the outward gaze of island societies and led to the targeting of their polyglot societies as vestiges of imperialism, especially in offshore areas. This has manifested not only in Guinea-Bissau's split from Cabo Verde, but also in the anti-Indian and anti-Arab violence that has occurred on Zanzibar and the subjugation of Bubi of Bioko by Fang mainlanders. These tensions between traditions of cosmopolitanism and African nationalism have provided unique pressures that have simultaneously pulled islands toward the continent while reinforcing a sense of distinction from it.

The ambiguous positions of contemporary islands are especially apparent in issues of migration. Islands have, like their mainland counterparts, experienced growing populations in the last thirty years, but limited opportunities for social advancement born from their small, often precarious economies have encouraged emigrations. Flows have often followed historic pathways, using diasporas produced by maritime and imperial traditions to facilitate a consistent exchange of peoples primarily with non-African states. As Michael Lambek notes in his chapter on Mayotte, financial remittances from emigrants to Europe and other more economically successful states, along with the related ideas of exodus and return, have become central to island identities. While these ideas have historic precedents, it is worth noting that decolonization and the shift from sea to air travel has affected historic patterns of migration. Immigration in the Indian Ocean region has especially pushed the limits of insular traditions of incorporating new peoples, notably in the hostile treatment of Comorians in Madagascar and Mayotte. While past and current ties to international networks have continued to offer islanders successful avenues for migration, there is no doubt that the shift from empire to nation-states has challenged the traditions of cosmopolitanism central to Africa's insular histories.

Yet it is worth noting that, despite the occasional tensions that have been created by these political shifts, Africa's independent islands have largely defined their national identities in ways that contrast with their continental neighbors. Much of African history and historiography over the

past five decades has been dedicated to engineering national unity based in large part on the creation of a mythic—and sometimes contested—origin identity, often defined as predating or opposing colonialism. To be sure, these social constructs operate with varying levels of importance on African islands, including the central role of a common Malagasy ancestry in Madagascan nationalism, mythic Comorian references to Arabic and Portuguese origins, and the popularity of Rei Amador's slave revolt in São Tomé. Yet many islands have chosen a different path, especially those Creole cultures whose history began with foreign colonization and has since reflected a regular influx of new peoples. They have found greater success engineering unity through appeals to widely cosmopolitan identities. In this process, most island states have embraced a complex nationalism. A unity in diversity has arisen based on shared cultural elements and goals, with common language offering a key component in the creation of a pan-islandic identity. This cosmopolitan nationalism, combined with the profitable historical and ethnic ties to wealthy nations, has helped Africa's island states claim disproportionately stable political and social relationships despite common problems of ecological limitations, economic frailty, and population pressure.

## Structure of the Volume

While it is impossible to assemble in one volume a comprehensive overview of Africa's islands, we have made an attempt to reflect both the diversity of island experiences and the common themes that bind them together. We have done so by replicating the oceanic approaches that have so far best integrated these islands into African history, ordering the chapters so that they build on each other while highlighting parallels that exist across the continental divide. Part 1: Atlantic Ocean Islands offers a multidisciplinary exploration of African islands. The first three chapters in this section focus on the intersection of economics and identity in the long history of Africa's islands. Germán Santana Pérez focuses on the Canaries, a Spanish territory that played a key role in opening the African continent to Europeans, but has since continued to seek economic relevance by linking the two continents through tourism and the distribution of aid. This history, which stretches from the fifteenth century to today, challenges the chronological boundaries of the dominant Atlantic World scholarship, while highlighting how Canarians have juggled contested European and African identities as a way of staying afloat in an economically turbulent world. In contrast, Gerhard Seibert focuses on São Tomé and Príncipe's struggle to move beyond

its colonial commodity economy. At the leading edge of sugar and cocoa production during the colonial period, attempts to exploit its offshore oil resources have demonstrated the limitations of relying on the expertise and cooperation of nearby states competing in the same global markets. In this way, it pushes African scholars to consider how the economics of minor states have been influenced not just by foreign empires, but by more powerful neighbors that have adopted the mantles of regional hegemon. Joshua Forrest moves closer inland to examine the social-military history of Guinea-Bissau's Canhabac Island, which demonstrates that even successful resistance to conquest has not prevented islands from integrating into wider international networks.

The next set of chapters in this section looks closer at the way the complicated legacies of imperialism have influenced the political cultures of African islands. Enrique Okenve's chapter on the Equatorial Guinean island of Bioko asserts that the Bubi people, who built their autonomous society at the peripheries of the continent, found themselves increasingly marginalized as their island became important for foreigners, first as an imperial administrative center and more recently in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as the seat for a postcolonial government dominated by mainland interests. In so doing, he provides a stark example of how postcolonial states often inverted the ethnic politics of the colonial period, unleashing the animosity of peoples considered by imperial powers as more "African" and less acculturated. For Michael Ugarte, Equatorial Guinea—and indeed similar mainland states—are examples of the literary concept of the "repeating island." International and domestic structures maintain experiences of subjugation, isolation, and penetration despite the political transformations launched by decolonization and globalization, simply gaining a new master equally focused on retaining power through domestic division. Ashley Jackson's chapter evaluates the role of Africa's coastal waters, ports, and islands during the Second World War and describes the military activity that took place there. In doing so, it offers a unique account of the continent's strategic importance in a global conflict. Linguist Carla D. Martin concludes the section by arguing that a unique Cabo Verdean identity depends greatly on its Creole language, which has been formalized not in an African context but through connection with schools for expatriates in the United States. As in Equatorial Guinea, the experience of Cabo Verde demonstrates that, for many African states, the adoption of a singular identity remains deeply intertwined with international trends that go beyond historical colonialism.

Part 2: Indian Ocean Islands moves to the other side of the continent to consider the diversity of experiences on Africa's eastern coast. Edward

Alpers begins the section by considering a general classification of Indian Ocean islands discussed above. He finds that the strong, constantly changing ties of the Indian world operated with increasing strength as one approaches shore, while the neat segregation of oceanic spheres breaks down as one considers the African influence on more distantly related islands facilitated primarily by global European empires. In contrast with this metanarrative, William Bissell considers Indian Ocean connections in his case study of songstress Bi Kidude and the changing economics of Zanzibar. He finds that Kidude's famed interpretations of *taarab* and *unyago* music emerged from the cosmopolitan space of the monsoon-driven dock life that has increasingly evolved into a tourist destination, revealing in concrete terms the tendency toward transculturation and adaptation in littoral societies spread along the Swahili coast.

Next, Richard Allen considers how multidirectional labor migrations tied the Mascarene islands of Mauritius and Réunion to Africa and the wider Indian Ocean World. In so doing, he reveals in microcosm how the massive movement of peoples reshaped and expanded the diversity of the continent's ocean-looking population. Jeremy Prestholdt's chapter finds that nineteenth-century Zanzibar became an economic and social nexus that linked East Africa to global consumer trends that stretched beyond the Indian Ocean to Europe and the Americas, inspiring Zanzibaris to use the display of imported goods to both define and challenge local hierarchies. The legacy of slavery in Madagascar provides the subject for the contribution from Denis Regnier and Dominique Somda, who explore the contested meanings of this sometimes stigma in local societies. Iain Walker provides an engaging study of the Comoros from the dawn of European exploration to the present. He finds the archipelago experienced four distinct eras defined by shifting foreign alignments over the last 500 years, offering conclusions about the bounded agency of islanders. Finally, Michael Lambek considers France's Indian Ocean outpost of Mayotte. He finds that the full integration of the island into the metropolitan state has promoted noticeable social change and "intranational" migration, as evidenced by a number of women who used travel to advance their autonomy.

Ultimately, one of the key goals of this volume is to move African islands away from the margins. We hope the volume navigates the intricacies of these insular histories and cultures to create a compelling case for understanding these maritime spaces on their own terms. Yet, we must also reiterate the fact that one cannot disconnect African islands from the larger field of African studies. The histories of the continent's islands emphasize the profound significance of the movement of ideas, people, and commodities over space and time. Thus, scholars of continental Africa would do



well to recognize the importance of these small landmasses as both arbiters and witnesses of change, and dynamic spaces worthy of comparative study in a meaningful way.

## Notes

1. For biographies of Amílcar Cabral, see Patrick Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Gérard Chaliand and Michel Vale, "Amílcar Cabral," *International Journal of Politics* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1977–78): 3–17; Julião Soares Sousa, *Amílcar Cabral: Vida e Morte de um Revolucionário Africano*, 2nd ed. (Lisbon: Vega, 2012), 41–118.

2. Amílcar Cabral, "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle," in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amílcar Cabral*, ed. African Information Service (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 63.

3. For more on the event and the reasons for the assassination (which remain hotly debated), see António Tomás, *O Fazedor de Utopias: Uma Biografia de Amílcar Cabral*, 2nd ed. (Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2007), 265–75; Sousa, *Amílcar Cabral*, 430–34, 505–20.

4. Joshua Forrest, "Guinea-Bissau," in *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 250–51; Rosemary E. Galli and Jocelyn Jones, *Guinea-Bissau: Politics, Economics, and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), 31–32, 92–99.

5. Many of Africa's islands have been known by various names, some of which are discussed in individual chapters. For the sake of simplicity, we try to refer to islands and archipelagos in this introduction by their current preferred names.

6. See, for instance, Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedman and Indentured Laborers in Colonial Mauritius* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ashley Jackson, *War and Empire in Mauritius and the Indian Ocean* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Catherine Higgs, *Chocolate Islands: Cocoa, Slavery, and Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013); Tony Hodges and Malyn Newitt, *São Tomé and Príncipe: From Plantation Colony to Microstate* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).

7. See Gwyn Campbell, *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750–1895: The Rise and Fall of an Island Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jane Hooper, *Feeding Globalization: Madagascar and the Provision Trade, 1600–1800* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017); Erik Gilbert, *Dhows and the Colonial Economy in Zanzibar: 1860–1970* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005); Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001). Both islands, particularly Madagascar, have also attracted the attention of anthropologists.

8. For example, see Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, "African Islands and the Formation of the Dutch Atlantic Economy: Arguin, Gorée, Cape Verde and São Tomé, 1590–1670," *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 3 (2014):



549–67; Martin Lynn, “Commerce, Christianity, and the Origins of the ‘Creoles’ of Fernando Po,” *Journal of African History* 25, no. 4 (1984): 257–78; John R. Gillis, “Islands in the Making of an Atlantic Oceania, 1500–1800,” in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, ed. Kerry Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Karen Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 21–37; Christopher Eberg, “European Competition and Cooperation in Pre-Modern Globalization: ‘Portuguese’ West and Central Africa, 1500–1600,” *African Economic History* 36 (2008): 53–78.

9. In reference to islands, Braudel—with his characteristic tendency to think in timeless and often literary terms—spoke of the “one physical law . . . that the life of the sea, a vital force, would first of all have taken control of the smallest and least weighty fragments of land, the islands and coastal margins.” Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), 166.

10. For example, see Edward A. Alpers, “Recollecting Africa: Diasporic Memory in the Indian Ocean World,” *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 83–99; Gwyn Campbell, “Madagascar and Mozambique in the Slave Trade of the Western Indian Ocean, 1800–1861,” in *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gervase Clarence Smith (London: Frank Cass, 1989), 166–93; Nicole Boivin, Alison Crowther, Richard Helm, and Dorian Q. Fuller, “East Africa and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean World,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 26, no. 3 (2013): 213–81; R. Harms, B. Freamon, and D. Blight, eds., *Indian Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Edward A. Alpers, *East Africa and the Indian Ocean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2009); Gaurav Desai, “Oceans Connect: The Indian Ocean and African Identities,” *PMLA* 125, no. 3 (2010): 713–20; Gwyn Campbell, ed., *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Cass, 2004).

11. For a good overview of this period, see Kenneth J. Andrien, “The Spanish Atlantic System,” and A. J. R. Russell-Wood, “The Portuguese Atlantic, 1415–1808,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81–109.

12. John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chap. 1.

13. See Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 4, particularly 78–79; J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from Its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 50–61, 70–78; and articles by Germán Santana Pérez and Gerhard Siebert in this volume.

14. Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 741–57.

15. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*; David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa*

1550–1750: *The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

16. James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving “Port,” 1727–1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014).

17. Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 258.

18. As recent as 2006, the American Historical Review Forum on “Oceans in History” excluded the Indian Ocean World as a topic of conversation, focusing exclusively on the more developed historiography of the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Pacific. See *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006). Early Indian Ocean studies emphasized the subcontinent since in many ways it was the pivot around which other regions interacted in a much different way than in the Atlantic. For the origins of Indian Ocean historiography, see S. Arasaratnam, “Recent Trends in the Historiography of the Indian Ocean, 1500 to 1800,” *Journal of World History* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 225–48; Sebastian R. Prange, “Scholars and the Sea: A Historiography of the Indian Ocean,” *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (2008): 1382–93.

19. See, for example, K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of the People and the Sea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); There were some early exceptions pushed mostly by nationalist historians from Indian Ocean islands. See, for instance, Auguste Toussaint, *History of the Indian Ocean*, trans. June Guicharnaud (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

20. Edward A. Alpers, “The Islands of Indian Ocean Africa,” in *The Western Indian Ocean: Essay on Islands and Islanders*, ed. Shawkat M. Toorawa (Port Louis, Mauritius: The Hassam Tarawa Trust, 2007).

21. For John Middleton, the adoption of Islamic practice is the essential characteristic of Swahili identity, differentiating them from neighbors and linking them to Arab traders. John Middleton, *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 36–37.

22. See Tor Sellström, *Africa in the Indian Ocean: Islands in the Ebb and Flow* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 1–16; David C. Sperling, “The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa,” in *History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 273–302; Alpers, “The Islands of Indian Ocean Africa.”

23. See Alpers, *East Africa and the Indian Ocean*; Abdul Sherrif, *Dhow Cultures and the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce, and Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

24. M. N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), chap. 2.

25. See Megan Vaughan, *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011); Ned Bertz, *Diaspora and Nation in the Indian Ocean: Transnational Histories of Race and Urban Space in Tanzania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015); Edward Simpson and Kai Kress, eds., *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Abdul Sheriff et al., *Transition from Slavery in Zanzibar and Mauritius* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2016).

26. J. R. McNeill, "The End of the Old Atlantic World: America, Africa, Europe, 1770–1888," in *Atlantic American Societies: From Columbus through Abolition, 1492–1888*, ed. Alan L. Karras and J. R. McNeill (London: Routledge, 1992), 246.

27. See, for example, Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, chap. 5; Nigel Worden, "VOC Cape Town as an Indian Ocean Port," in *Cross Currents and Community Networks: The History of the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Himanshu Ray and Edward A. Alpers (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 142–62; Nigel Worden, ed., *Cape Town between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012).

28. Reed Ueda, "Pushing the Atlantic Envelope: InterOceanic Perspectives on Atlantic History," in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2007), 163–74.

29. Grant McCall, "Nissology: A Proposal for Consideration," *Journal of The Pacific Society* 17, no. 2–3 (1994): 1–14; see also R. Gerard Ward, "South Pacific Island Futures: Paradise, Prosperity, or Pauperism," *The Contemporary Pacific* 5, no. 1 (1993): 20; Pete Hay, "A Phenomenology of Islands," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 19–42. For some competing considerations on the common experiences of islands, see S. A. Royle, "A Human Geography of Islands," *Geography* 74, no. 2 (April 1989): 106–16; Philip Conkling "On Islanders and Islandness," *Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (April 2007): 191–201; Godfrey Baldacchino, "The Coming of Age of Island Studies," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 95, no. 3 (July 2004): 272–83; Godfrey Baldacchino, "Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal," *Island Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3–18.

30. J. C. Heesterman, "Littoral et intérieur de l'Inde," in *History and Underdevelopment: Essays on Underdevelopment and European Expansion in Asia and Africa*, ed. Rudolf von Albertini et al. (Leiden, Netherlands: Leiden Centre for the History of European Expansion, 1980), 87. See also Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 16.

31. William Bissell, "Monsoon Metropolis: Migration, Mobility, and Mediation in the Western Indian Ocean," chap. 9 in this volume.

32. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith, eds., "Editors' Introduction," *Islands in History and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

33. Denning, *Beach Crossings*, 16.

34. The following section attempts to draw transcontinental connections from the chapters in this volume, as well as historical works cited above. Except where specific quotes or numbers are cited, we have limited the use of notes to minimize clutter.

35. Edward A. Alpers, "Africa's Indian Ocean Islands, Near and Distant," chap. 8 in this volume.

36. Pearson makes the distinction in the Indian Ocean between settler regions (Australia, South Africa) where Europeans displaced indigenous inhabitants; plantation societies (Mauritius, Réunion) created by the importation of labor; and mixed areas (Zanzibar, the Comoros, Madagascar) where Europeans imported labor and ideas into areas where they largely ruled indigenous peoples. The idea of the plantation society is useful even in the context of islands like Cabo Verde, where the climate and environment hindered the growth of a true plantation system because there existed similar power relationships even if imported slaves eventually worked in ports or service industries as much as in agriculture. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, 223.

37. As anthropologist Derek Pardue notes, rather than becoming Creole, uninhabited islands like Cabo Verde and Mauritius were "were born as creole." Derek Pardue, "The Role of Creole History and Space in Cape Verdean Migration to Lisbon, Portugal," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 42, no. 1/2 (2013): 98.

38. Hodges and Newitt, *São Tomé and Príncipe*, 26.

39. T. Bently Duncan, *Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 23.

40. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, 99.

41. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, 150.

42. Ross Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 116.

43. Marcus Franda, *The Seychelles: Unquiet Islands* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 7.

44. Hodges and Newitt, *São Tomé and Príncipe*, 49.

45. Even nominally European ships featured international crews, adding to the cosmopolitanism of Africa's islands.

46. See chap. 9.

47. See chap. 10.

48. Randrianja and Ellis, *Madagascar*, 6.

49. Hodges and Newitt, *São Tomé and Príncipe*, 17.

50. Auguste Toussaint, *History of Mauritius*, trans. W. E. F. Ward (London: Macmillan Education, 1977), 41.

51. Illustrating just how fluid identities can be, the island of Anjouan seceded from the Comoros in 1997 as part of an unsuccessful attempt to rejoin France alongside Mayotte, though it has since returned to the Comoros.

