

The Search for Makak: A Multidisciplinary Settlement History of the Northern Coast of Le Morne Brabant, Mauritius

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Published online: 18 June 2014
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Abstract Le Morne Brabant is an important mountain landscape in the living memory, colonial history, and national identity of Mauritius. This paper presents a kind of salvage project to understand Makak, an elusive, “mythic” settlement along Le Morne’s northern coast. This detailed analysis brings together wide-ranging oral, written, and material evidence to show that Makak is an informal place name for an area first settled by French colonists in the 1700s, then by several prominent “Free Colored” families in the 1800s, and finally depopulated as residents were forcibly removed in the 1940s. The investigation suggests that Makak is a serial settlement, which seemingly was not eking by at the edge of the Indian Ocean, but thrived as a multicultural community, tapped into global trade networks. The project thus provides a new way of framing Le Morne’s history and heritage, while also providing a potential research model for the nascent field of Mauritian historical archaeology.

Keywords Cultural landscape · Colonialism · World Heritage Site · Indian Ocean

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Introduction

The island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean is celebrated today as the “Rainbow Nation,” a land of dynamic cultural tensions and fusions (Laville 2000). The rainbow was born from the successive waves of migrants from Europe, Asia, and Africa that settled the unoccupied isle, by choice or by force, starting in the seventeenth century (Allen 2006; Teelock 2009; Vaughan 2005). The Dutch founded the first permanent settlement in 1638, and after they abandoned the island were quickly replaced by the French in 1715 who established the island’s strategic role in international trade and its lasting plantation-settler society. In 1810, Mauritius became part of the British Empire. Twenty-five years later, the island’s slaves, predominately from Madagascar and East Africa, were freed. Their labor was soon replaced by indentured workers, mostly from South Asia. Throughout the nineteenth century, the island’s sugar plantations blossomed feeding the global market, while losing its strategic importance. In 1968, the Republic of Mauritius gained its independence. Today, the country of 1.3 million people is made up of about 50 % Indo-Hindus, 16 % Indo-Muslims, 3 % Sino-Mauritians, and 31 % consisting of Creoles (the descendants of slaves and of mixed ethnicities; Kreol is the island’s French-based lingua franca), a small number of Franco-Mauritians, and others (Suet 2011, p. 24). In essence, the human history and contemporary socio-politics of Mauritius have most fundamentally been shaped by its history of settlement.

This article reports the effort to detail the history of one settlement known in the Kreol language as Makak, and in English as Macaque, an elusive, barely documented place situated in Mauritius’ far southwestern corner of the Black River district (Fig. 1). To date, Makak has not been firmly identified; it is widely considered a “mythic” place (Editors 2007). The search for Makak is not merely a chore in determining its existence, but provides a broader opportunity to investigate the diachronic processes of community formation, and land occupation and tenure on the island: the shifting and sometimes contested uses and claims of place through time by different Mauritian communities. This chronicle can be located in different forms: historical documents, material remains, and collective memories. As such, our work takes a multidisciplinary approach to settlement history while also seeking to contribute to the nascent field of Mauritian historical archaeology (see Seetah et al. 2011a).

Makak, as a *lieu-dit* (place name), is primarily known through oral histories, spoken of by a handful of elders, who locate Makak along the gentle sloping plain between the sea and the northern summit of the mountain Le Morne Brabant (Fig. 2). It joins L’Embrasure and Trou Chenille as one of the three main historic settlements immediately around Le Morne Brabant (Fig. 3). (Other important sites in the area include Îlot Forneau, a modest island just southwest of Le Morne used for fresh water and other resources, and the “Old Cemetery” at the eastern edge of Trou Chenille.) Although there is some disagreement about its exact boundaries, the community members who speak of Makak all concur that it is a real place that was once the home of their forebears. To Mauritians who trace their descent from slaves, Makak’s significance is heightened by its location within the buffer zone of Le Morne Cultural Landscape, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 for its connection to escaped slaves, to “Free Colored” communities, and the history of land dispossession. It is within this charged symbolic and political space that the potential heritage claims to Makak unfold

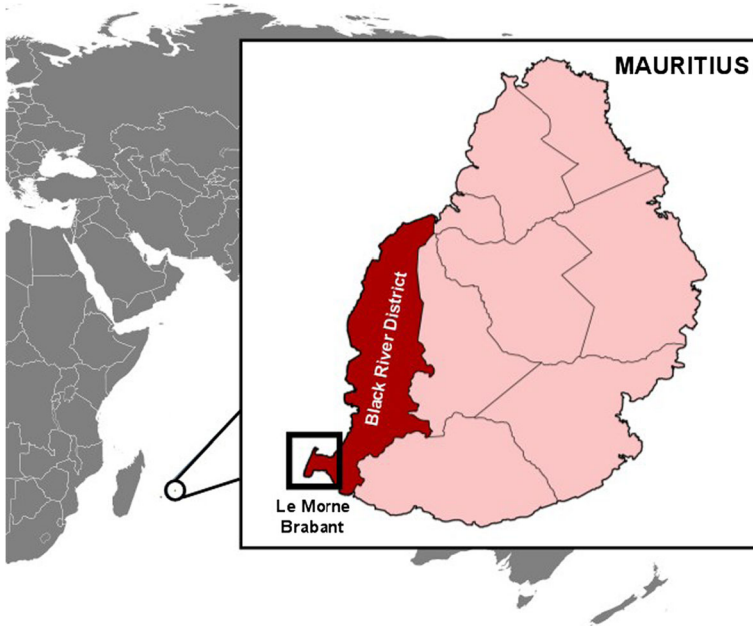


Fig. 1 The region of Le Morné Brabant is situated in the southwest corner of Mauritius' Black River district. (Courtesy, Wikipedia Commons: Kingroyos)

(Bakker and Odendaal 2008; Boswell 2008; Lowe and Gopauloo 2010; Teelock 2005). Indeed, especially in the years preceding and following the country's Truth and Justice Commission—a governmental authority established in 2008 to investigate the consequences of slavery and indenture during the colonial period—Mauritians have gained a keen awareness about the social, economic, and cultural importance of property ownership and the implications of land dispossession (cf. Meshtrie 2000).

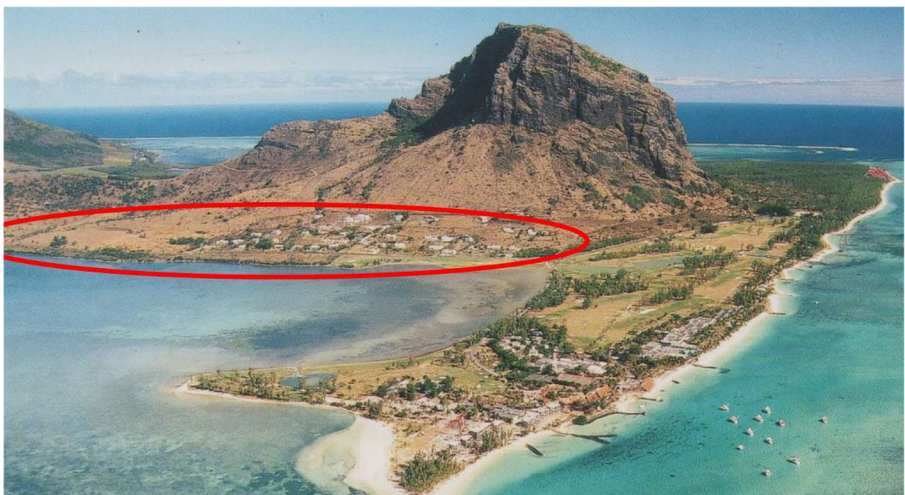


Fig. 2 The Le Morné peninsula, looking south, with the Makak area circled. (Courtesy, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 License)

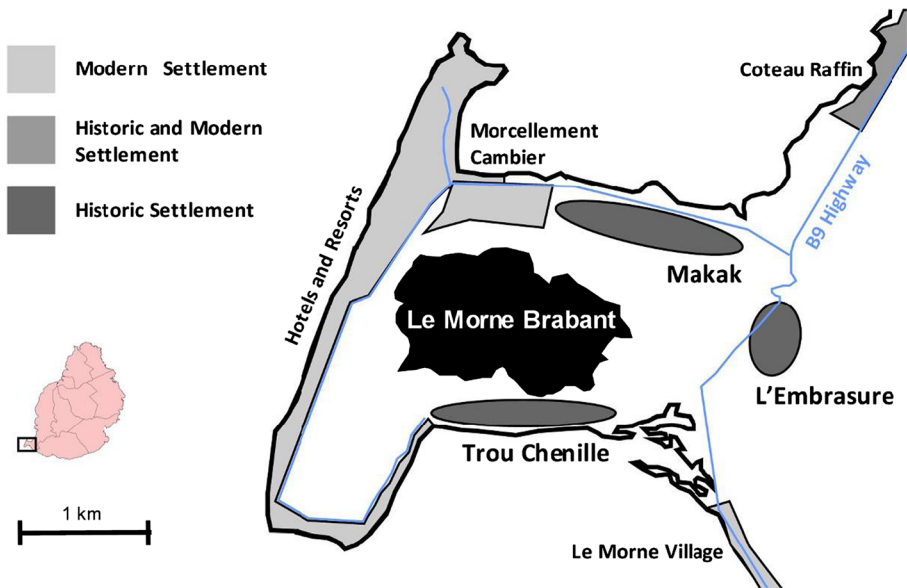


Fig. 3 The major modern and general location of Le Morne's historic settlements (Map, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Makak almost always goes unmentioned in books of Mauritius' history or place names (e.g., Hollingworth 1961; Moutou 2003), although it is sometimes mentioned in passing (Forget 2004, p. 178). Makak's elusiveness is also evident in the archives: it is not denoted on any known map, nor specifically mentioned in any known colonial document or extant land deeds. And yet, even as these records fail to affirm the place name Makak, they establish that settlers have lived around Le Morne Brabant since the late 1700s. The existence of inhabitants in this region during the colonial period was further verified in 2007, when a brief and limited archaeological survey was undertaken in the area that elders describe as Makak (Medhi 2007). Numerous artifacts were collected, and although not studied at the time, they nonetheless provided initial material correlates with oral traditions and documents pointing to settlements on the northern coastline of Le Morne Brabant.

In 2013, we launched a project to begin untangling these different strands of evidence, to provide the first attempt at a cohesive, comprehensive, and multidisciplinary understanding of the place called Makak. For this work we depended on three sources of data. First, extensive archival research was conducted at the National Archives of Mauritius, the Mauritius government's Ministry of Housing and Land, Registrar General's Department, Civil Status Division, online databases, and the extensive reports of the Truth and Justice Commission. Second, interviews were conducted with community members and previously published interviews collated. Third, we used archaeological data, mainly analyzing the artifacts collected during the abbreviated 2007 survey, but also a half-day of reconnaissance work in 2013 when the private landowner agreed to provide brief access.

This triad of sources ultimately proved to be complementary, especially in that each data source filled in gaps for particular periods: the historical documents give evidence of the earliest inhabitants in the region in the 1700s, provide good geographical and

temporal information on settlements and changing land tenure, and specify family names; the ethnographic interviews provide insights into the late 1800s and especially good information on the final inhabitants of the area who left in the 1940s; and the archaeological evidence provides a means to document specific use areas, offer an independent dating source, and give insights into the inhabitants' lifestyle.

And yet, each data source had limitations. The ethnographic interviews are of limited use because of the small number of people we could find with knowledge about the settlement. Makak is fading from the collective memory. The few who know of Makak are elderly. Most were only told fragments of Makak's history because, as one interviewee explained, her family was always too busy surviving to worry over history. Some Creole children were even forbidden to question elders about the past, which was considered traumatic because of the stain of slavery. Furthermore, we were told, long ago people were not conscious of the importance of history and the preservation of a collective memory. Previous publications of oral traditions are useful, but limited in that they were always collected for research projects that had a different focus than Makak.

The archaeological work is impeded by its brevity, and also because the 2007 report was overly concise, field notes and maps were not kept, the collected artifacts were not recorded systematically, and many of the most important artifacts were separated from their provenience information when they were removed from their field bags (and then not individually catalogued) for an exhibit. Furthermore, although the current private land owner generously allowed a half-day informal reconnaissance, repeated requests for access to conduct a formal survey by the authors were not granted.

Our archival research was also greatly encumbered. Some of the most important archival materials, such as maps, are not inventoried and degraded because of storage conditions. Additionally, for various reasons, many of the archives in Mauritius are incomplete, missing whole years or records of entire governmental sections. Even when information is present, it is often difficult to make sense of and trust as fact. For example, the country's Truth and Justice Commission found many land transaction documents were fraudulent (Boraine et al. 2011, pp. 311, 352).

In a sense, then, this project became a kind of salvage operation. All of the sources of data are fragmentary, fading, or increasingly unavailable. The archives are deteriorating; elders who bear the collective memory of Makak are dying without passing on their knowledge; most of the land is privately controlled. Thus, an important motivation of our work was to record and analyze in detail what information does exist of Makak before it is perhaps forever lost.

Oral Traditions

Living oral narratives provide a key source of data. Our interview methodology followed a semi-structured format, with a list of questions seeking to elicit recollections about Makak's founding, social and cultural life in the settlement, and why people left their homes there. After canvassing the region, we found only three people today who were born in Makak and carry detailed stories about it: Louis Stephane Auguste (born 1917), Isnar Verloppe (born 1938), and Evariste Laboudeuse (born 1939) (Fig. 4). A few other residents in the region with general knowledge of Le Morne, like Elizabeth

Louis and Nicole Papeche, were also interviewed. While some aspects of these oral histories are conflicting, in general they corroborate the existence of the place and its inhabitants. Although these oral narratives constitute a small sample, they are valuable because they give insights into some historical aspects of Makak that could not be found in documents or material culture (like the origins of the place name), they provide alternative perspectives and interpretations to archival sources (like the dispossession of the last residents), and they draw links between Makak as part of the cultural landscape of Le Morne to the living values and memories of descendant communities.

There is disagreement about the origin of the place name “Makak.” Some believe it comes from the family name Macaque whose ancestors supposedly once lived in the region. Mr. Auguste was born in Makak and remembers as a child playing in an old wooden shingle house that was next to a banyan tree, which he believes belonged to a slave-owner named Mr. Macaque who lived in the region during the French period (1715–1810). However, extensive archival research did not reveal any reference to a European colonist named Mr. Macaque living in the region either during or after the French period. Still, Macaque is indeed a patronymic name of Mauritians of Afro-Malagasy origins, and there are people with this name living in other districts around the country.

Others believe the place name refers to the makak tree (*Mimusops petiolaris*), whose leaves are a traditional medicine, flowers bear edible fruit, and wood is used for making furniture (Gurib-Fakim et al. 2005, p. 50; Lafleur 2012, p. 11; Owadally 2009, p. 131). Mr. Laboudeuse always heard that this place was named as Makak because there were two makak trees at the beginning of the road in the area, known as Sime Makak (Makak Road).

At least a few other locals believe the name comes from the presence of macaque monkeys (*Macac fascicularis*)—likely introduced by Dutch sailors in 1602 (Cheke and Hume 2008, p. 76)—which, some have noted, previously lived in large troops in Black River district (Proust 2002, p. 14). Mrs. Louis also opined that, in the past, places that did not bear any official names were called Makak.

Oral histories generally locate Makak on the northern flank of the mountain Le Morne Brabant stretching to the coast; however, testimony varies to its exact boundaries (Fig. 5). One version (Boundary 1), as told by both Mr. Auguste and Mr.



Fig. 4 Mr. Evariste Laboudeuse, born in 1939 in Makak, interviewed in his home (Photo, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Verloppe, holds that Makak refers to a small plot of land at the foot of the mountain, beginning about one kilometer after the limekiln and located on the left side of the road leading to the hotels. A second version (Boundary 2), as told by Mr. Laboudeuse, holds that Makak extends along the entire southern side of the road, including the area known as Morcellement Cambier. For still others who have heard of Makak (Boundary 3), they define it as extending from the roundabout to the hotels and stretches on both sides of the road to include the coastline. The different spatial representations of this place name in memories is understandable in that fenced and gated properties are modern features in the landscape, which are tied to more recent attempts to control spaces and land use for exclusive benefits.

Despite such changes, the collective memory consistently recalls how Makak is part of a rich and larger cultural landscape on the northern side of Le Morne Brabant, filled with places for economic activities, settlements, and paths and roads (Fig. 6). Two roads pass by or through Makak. One connects the limekiln and hugs the coastline heading westward. The other road extends from a spot known as Laport Rouz (although laport translates literally as “door,” the name is used figuratively to describe a gate, and thus it is best translated as “Red Gate”) to the salt pans that were once located on the current site of the Le Paradis and Dinarobin hotels. This old road is believed to roughly parallel the current asphalt road that heads west towards the hotels from the B9 highway. Today, these roads are informally known in the Kreol language as Sime Lotel (Hotel Road) or Sime Makak (Macaque Road). Although Sime Makak seems to be the older road name—because the first hotel in the area, Le Morne Plage, was not built until 1954 (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 46)—it is unclear which road (the coastal road or the current road) the name refers to. Two other older paths are known in the area: Sime Frederic (Frederic Road) leading to the northeast from Makak, and Sime Konbava (Combava Road, named after the fruit also known in English as kaffir lime)

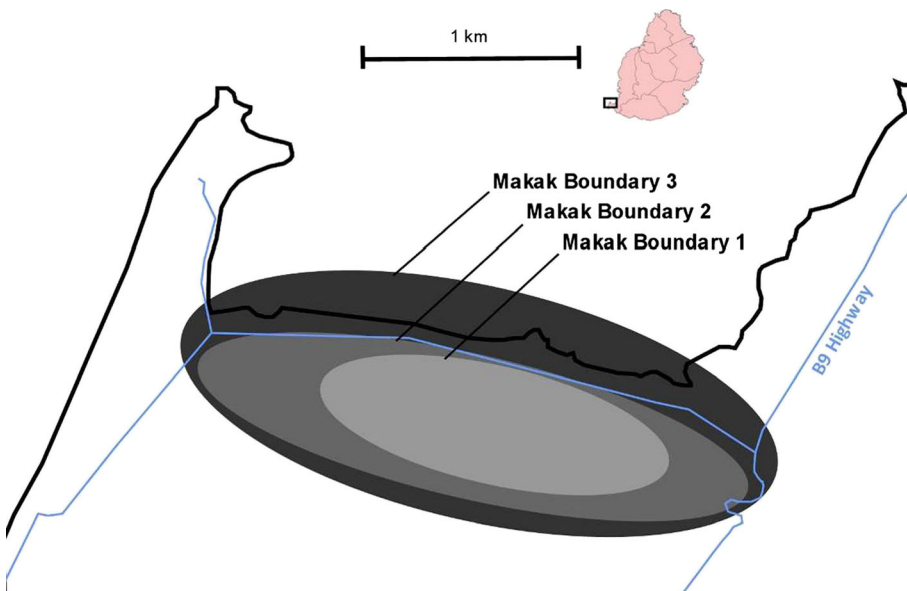


Fig. 5 The three possible approximate boundaries of Makak, based on oral traditions (Map, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

leading to the south connecting Makak and Trou Chenille (de Salle-Essoo and Le Chartier 2008, p. 147; Forget 2004, p. 177).

One prominent landmark today is an abandoned limekiln located near the coastline (Fig. 7). The kiln burned coral, using charcoal made from planted filao trees. The lime produced was reportedly mostly used as mortar in construction (Lafleur 2012, p. 13). There are various stories surrounding the kiln that form part of the local folklore. For example it is believed that maroons once hid there, and during the Second World War people and soldiers hid there as well. Everyone interviewed was unanimous that the limekiln belonged to the Keisler-Cambier family who moved into this area in the early 1900s. They also told us that in the 1960s or so, the Keisler-Cambier family built a house adjacent to the kiln after it was abandoned for the cattle keeper, a man known as Baba Bago; however, he never lived there, though Mr. Veloppe moved in for a time. Just north of the kiln is Pos Nicolo (Nicoleau Post), which is likely a remembrance of Mr. Charles Adolphe Nicolau (also spelled Nicholeau) who owned a plot of approximately 392 ac (159 ha) in Le Morne Brabant and other land in the region (RG n.d.-h). Mr. Laboudeuse told us the place where the kiln is situated is known more generally as Lamar Makak (Macaque Pond).

Reportedly, the area towards the west that today is known as Morcellement Cambier was previously a kan (camp). For Mr. Laboudeuse, this site formed part of Makak, whereas for the others it was outside the borders of the lieu-dit (see above on Makak's differently conceived boundaries). There were some four families living there: the Auguste, Verloppe, Pirogue, and Labeauté families. Additionally, some said this plot of land was for the Louise family. We were told that Mr. Louise, also known as “Yves For You,” was the illegitimate child of Marcel Keisler. Purportedly, the Louise family received this plot of land from You but Alan Cambier allegedly expelled them in the 1940s because he needed the land for development.

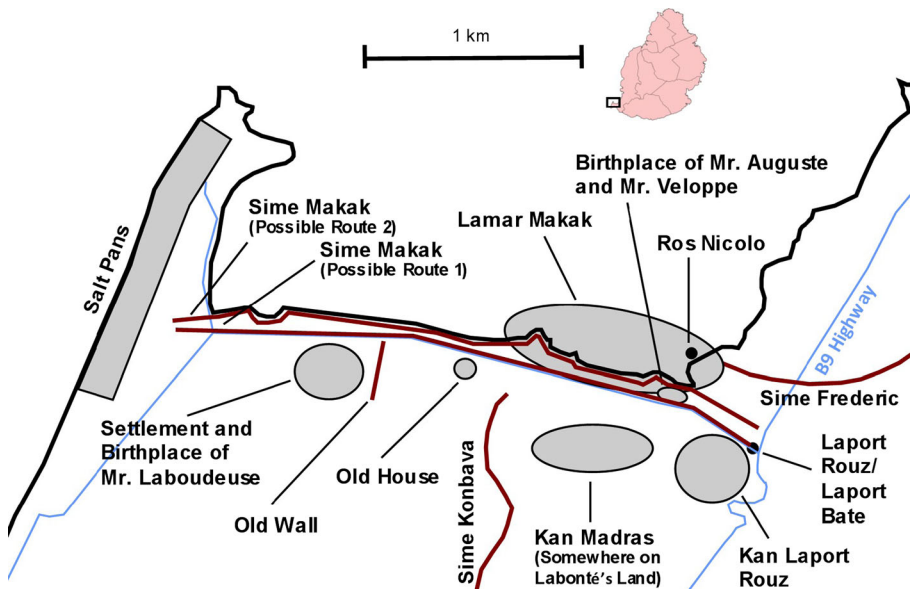


Fig. 6 Schematic illustration of the cultural landscape of Makak, based on oral traditions (Map, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)



Fig. 7 The lime kiln at Makak, in 2013 (Photo, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Oral histories are unanimous that by the early 1900s, most of Makak became pasture land for the Keisler-Cambier family's livestock and later for some maize cultivation. Mr. Verloppe used to work as a laborer for the family. Two interviewees, Mrs. Louise and Mrs. Papeche, also stated that in the twentieth century people used to make wood charcoal in this area. Today, it is widely known among the region's inhabitants that the land on the south side of the highway is privately controlled and predominately used as grazing land for deer. The land to the north side of the highway along the coast—a type of reserved state property in the coastal zone called *pas géométriques*—is government owned, largely left undeveloped.

As a settlement, Makak itself is said to have consisted of just five to six houses, without electricity. At least some of the houses were likely *maizon kaka vas* (cow dung houses), made from thatching and a mortar from cow dung mixed with red and white soil, a traditional house for middle and lower class families across the island. The inhabitants cultivated maize, manioc, sweet potato, and songe root, and had poultry, ducks, pigs, and fished and hunted animals like monkeys, hare, wild boar, deer, and tang (an insectivorous mammal, similar to a hedgehog) (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 34; Lafleur 2012, p. 11, 16, 18). The collective memory recalls that the Béguinot and Labonté (sometimes spelled La Bonté) families were Makak's main residents. (Of note, people today do not associate the family name Lecordier with Makak, but there are residents with the patronym Lecordier in the nearby village of Chamarel.) When he was a child, Mr. Auguste's grandparents told him that the land on the left side of the limekiln belonged to a Mrs. Labonté, but they never saw the woman. He remembers the estate land was divided between four or five proprietors including the Keisler family; each plot of land was separated by a stone wall. Oral traditions speak of life there in positive terms, with "solidarity, attachment, trust, and equality among the people at that time" (Lafleur 2012, p. 20).

All around Makak, small and large settlements were established, as remembered in oral histories. Most informants also know of a smaller settlement known as Kan Madras (Madras Camp), which people believe was somewhere on the Labonté family's land (i.e., in the center of the area believed to be Makak). The camp's inhabitants were from Madras, immigrants from Chennai, India. Mr. Auguste told us that for religio-cultural ceremonies people used to perform Hindu rites like chicken sacrifices, fire walking, and

traditional dances in this camp (see also Lafleur 2012, p. 20). (Some of these activities perhaps provide future avenues to archaeological identify this Hindu settlement from others.) Kan Madras is remembered in spatial relation to Kan Laport Rouz (Red Gate Camp), also known as Kan Laport Bate (Swinging Gate Camp), which as the names suggest was a red swinging gate the Keisler-Cambier family erected. Others note that a small group of Marathis settled at Le Morne sometime in the 1930s or 1940s, mainly working on the Cambier estate growing beans, maize, and onions (de Salle-Essoo 2012, p. 47). Most of the Marathi eventually moved nearby to La Gaulette.

More substantial settlements immediately by and contemporaneous with Makak were Trou Chenille (in Kreol: Trou Sini) and L'Embrasure. Important social and economic links interconnected these settlements surrounding Le Morne Brabant. Many of the inhabitants worked on the Keisler-Cambier estate. They formed a large extended family since they inter-married (endogamy being natural given Le Morne Brabant's remoteness). There was also constant movement between the settlements. People from Makak and elsewhere used to go to the famous Sega nights, a kind of night-long song and dance celebration, in Trou Chenille. And when the last inhabitants from Makak were displaced, some moved to Trou Chenille, Coteau Raffin, La Gaulette, L'Embrasure, and other surrounding settlements (see also Lafleur 2012, p. 11). For example, Mr. Auguste moved to La Gaulette; Mr. Verloppe settled in Trou Chenille around 1945; Mr. Laboudeuse headed to L'Embrasure around 1945, he told us, following Alan Cambier's demand to move away from Makak.

All informants testified that they experienced first-hand, forced displacement in that they were expelled from their modest plots of land. However, their experiences of displacement differ by individual perceptions; memories and experience of loss are idiosyncratic and are marked by differing life experiences and conceptions of victimhood. For example, testimonies vary about the brutality of removal without proper resettlement plans and consideration of their opinions, feelings, and financial situations. In one of the more traumatic narratives, an elder named Mrs. Maurice, told one researcher:

She was born in 1936 and lives [in] La Gaulette but her grandparents lived in Macaque ... [She said] my aunt's husband, Joseph Désiré, owned land at Macaque. All families were living at Macaque. At Macaque there were small houses, maize and sweet potatoes plantations. When Alan [Cambier] saw charcoal he took hold of Macaque. The estate forced the inhabitants to leave with swords. The inhabitants had to live at their families' place at Chamarel. Alan took [the] land of our family, fenced [it] up and put [a] watchman [there named] Ramalingum (Veerapen 2008, pp. 38–39).

Mr. Auguste narrated that Alcide Béguinot, his father-in-law, used to tell him that the Béguinot family had a plot of land in Makak next to the Labonté family. Mr. Béguinot claimed that the Keisler family stole their land. He also alleged that Marcel Keisler had an affair with his daughter and they had a stillborn child. Later a girl was born from this relationship who was declared by her mother only. His family strongly believes that Marcel Keisler illegally and fraudulently took possession of their land but unfortunately they misplaced the title deeds to prove that they are the owners of "Terrain Béguinot." Testimony presented during Mauritius' recent Truth and Justice Commission hearings

provide more claims of forced displacement from not only Makak, but also Trou Chenille and L'Embrasure between the 1940s and 1970s (see also Boswell 2006, pp. 198–199; Chazan-Gillig and Ramhota 2009, p. 76; David et al. 2011; de Salle-Essoo 2012, p. 48; Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 33; Hookoomsing and Parahoo 2003, p. 113).

For the descendants of these three historic communities around Le Morne, the mountain is wedged between history and memory, between pride of survival and sadness over loss. Le Morne, as a cultural landscape, “is a place of refuge, of resistance and of freedom of the maroon slaves but also a sacred place, a place of reminiscence which establishes a link with their ancestors and their roots” (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 92). In this context, it is understandable how Makak may serve as a point of pride about the survival of their ancestors, but also a deep sadness over the losses that resulted from imprudent sales, alleged thefts, and, ultimately, dispossession.

Historical Writings

Published historical writings provide significant insights into the settlements around Le Morne Brabant. Although they typically lack detailed descriptions or specify exact locations, they nonetheless are important when they affirm the presence of specific people, describe the living conditions and land uses, and discuss the infrastructure and social organization of Le Morne communities.

Among the earliest published writings is the series of letters Jacques Bernardin de Saint-Pierre wrote during his time in Mauritius between 1768 and 1770. In a small entourage, Saint-Pierre traveled on foot around the island's coastline. In letter 17 he describes Black River district “deserted, with only two plantations” known as a place where “the runaway slaves hide” (Saint-Pierre 2003, p. 157). (Indeed, Black River would never prove to be as productive for sugar cultivation as other regions of Mauritius.) As he approached Le Morne Brabant night was falling; he decided not to walk around the mountain along the coast, but to take a shortcut over a saddle to Le Morne Brabant's east. There he was made a guest of one of a plantation owner named Monsieur Le Normand, whose farm was located in area known as L'Embrasure and made up of eight slaves and nine family members. Saint-Pierre describes Le Normand's house as a “miserable dwelling” yet he passed an enjoyable and comfortable night there, made easier, he wrote, by Le Normand's pretty wife, an agreeable dinner, and the Arcadian surroundings (Saint-Pierre 2003, p. 158).

Yet he also portrays Le Morne as a place of danger because of the maroons, reporting that he loaded his gun before sleeping since “a few years back, 40 maroons escaped to the Morne where they planted their food” (Saint-Pierre 2003, p. 159). A later visitor, Maximillien Wiklinsky, who was in Mauritius at the same time as Saint-Pierre detailed further that Le Morne's maroons had built cabins, planted crops, and followed an elected chief, before a local planter destroyed the community (Allen 2006, p. 48). Several infamous maroons later escaped there, including “a Maroon chief named Bellaca” who took “possession of Le Morne Brabant between 1797 and 1802,” and three slaves named Pompée, Azor, Gaspard, who for a year lived at the base of Le Morne Brabant in 1805 until they were caught in Le Morne's thick forest (Hookoomsing and Parahoo 2003, p. 83). Later writers would also consistently reference Le Morne Brabant and its neighboring mountains as a citadel of the maroons (e.g.,

Fleming 1862, p. 124; Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 70; Norvill and Bell 1864, p. 13; Palmer and Bradshaw 1859, p. xxviii).

Over the next half-century, only a few passing references in the published literature are made to Le Morne Brabant. Le Normand's plantation is fleetingly mentioned again (Grant 1801, p. 496), while others generically describe the sugar plantations "interspersed among the wood of the plains" in Black River district (Backhouse 1844, p. 58). By 1851, the only sugar estate in Mauritius with a water-powered mill is reported to be owned by "Nicholas" (Bolton 1851, p. 292). This family name seems to be the English rendering of the French, Nicolau, mentioned in another book published eight years later:

Along the sides of the bay formed by the peninsula in which the Morne stands, is a fishing village in which are a school and chapel supported by the Mauritius Church Association. . . . The estate called "Le Morne," situate[d] at the foot of the mountain, which belongs partly to it, is perhaps the most solitary in the island. The sugar house is near the sea, and the plantation succeed[s] well. The traveler who may visit this retired spot will be sure to find a kind welcome from Mr. Nicolau, its proprietor (Palmer and Bradshaw 1859, pp. xxvii-xxviii).

This passage thus suggests that by the 1850s, the community around the peninsula had grown substantial enough to include a church and school located at the Le Morne estate, which according to a map dating to the 1800s was another name for the L'Embrasure concession. (A concession was a plot of land the French government offered to settlers in exchange for its development. The concession process was later replaced by "morcellement," literally translated as "fragmentation," a key legal mechanism by which the British colonial government partitioned the land to settlers. Petite morcellement between 1839 and 1859 was followed by grande morcellement which began in the 1870s and continued into the twentieth century (Allen 2006, p. 74, 117).) It is also noted later in this book that the "Schools supported by the Church of England" in 1858 included the "Creole School, Morne Brabant, Public and Free" with 34 male and 21 female students (Palmer and Bradshaw 1859, p. 223). It seems likely that any young people at Makak would have also attended this school.

In 1855, the Anglican Bishop of Mauritius visited the L'Embrasure school, noting that "until lately [it] was in a very wild, uncultivated state. Many of the residents are of Malegache extraction" (Ryan 1864, p. 28). He then describes his travels by boat, seemingly headed to L'Embrasure where he met several residents associated with the school:

On the isthmus, between the Morne and the land, was the house to which we were going. Children and adults were to meet us from the plain on the seaward side of the mountain. We were welcomed by Madame La Bonté, mother of Madame Béguinot, in whose house the school is kept and the assembly held, Mons. Béguinot [sic] acting as school-master. Between fifty and sixty persons were assembled—Europeans, French Creoles, Mozambique ex-apprentices [former slaves given a trade], and Malagasy Christians. I examined the young people and several of the old, and found that very few could read (Ryan 1864, p. 29).

He later adds that instruction at the school was in French and English, though “chiefly French” (Ryan 1864, p. 72). In 1860, he returned to consecrate “a chapel at the Morne, chiefly for the use of Malagasy Christians” (Ryan 1864, pp. 268–269). This is possibly the chapel known as “Stella Maris,” known locally along with Le Morne’s first school (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 31; Lafleur 2012, p. 24), although other sources indicate that Stella Maris was built in 1933 by the Cambier family in Trou Chenille, and destroyed by Hurricane Gervaise in 1975 (de Salle-Essoo 2012, p. 48). By at least 1870, the community also comprised a private (but open to the public) cemetery (Kyshe 1870, p. 268), possibly a reference to the “Old Cemetery” on the southern coast of Le Morne Brabant (Appleby et al. 2014).

In the late 1860s, Nicolas Pike, an American consul to Mauritius, describes the people of Le Morne Brabant as far less developed and far more reclusive and unwelcoming to English speakers. Though it is unclear where exactly he passed through in the area, it is perhaps possible he simply did not see the school, church, or cemetery, and the presumably large or numerous families that sent the more than 50 children to the school. Pike wrote:

We came out of this road [Military Road, ringing Le Morne] into a grove of lofty Filaos. . . . As we pushed on we came suddenly upon an old man hoeing a small patch of maize; we saw no habitation and from the curt replies we got to our questions as to our whereabouts, he seemed to think us intruders. . . . The spur of the mountains terminates here abruptly. . . . Under the craggy cliff two or three Creole fishermen live with their families in miserable thatched shanties. . . . We offered to pay the Creoles to let [our men and horses] have an empty hut for the night but they refused as they said they did not want anything to do with “les Anglais.” However on [my companions] Sumna and Baboo explaining that the horses belonged to them they were immediately taken in and all comfortably provided for (Pike 1873, p. 307).

A visitor during the same period to somewhere in the vicinity of Le Morne also painted a less drastic portrait of the people there. In his note-like style of writing, he describes his “first acquaintance with a Creole ‘Intérieur’ ‘pur sang’ [a pure-blooded Creole from the interior] kind people; no attempt at display; a good solid simple repast and the table amply supplied by ‘bassecour’ [barnyard] and ‘potager’ [garden]—cheerful, quiet talk; the only disturbed thing being a servant unused, it would seem, to a sudden influx of company” (Boyle 1867, pp. 68–69).

Historic Maps

Another important source of information on settlement patterns around Le Morne is historic maps. In total, we found 18 maps that depict the Le Morne region, spanning nearly two centuries, dating from about 1754 to 1950 (Table 1). Although these maps are not equivalent—for example, some maps at the Ministry of Housing and Land are not meant to be comprehensive but only to demarcate particular property boundaries—they nonetheless provide key visual and textual insights into the development of the land, changing land ownership, and the overarching spatial organization of Le Morne.

Table 1 Description of names and features of historical maps depicting Le Mome Brabant

Date	Archive ^a	Map author or description	Person names on map	Features and toponyms on Map
c. 1754	NA	Abbé de la Calle	[none in Le Mome]	[none in Le Mome]
1768	NA	Quartier de la Riviere Noire	[none in Le Mome]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road passing east of Mome • L'Embrasure concession drawn (not labeled) • Coteau Raffin
1772	NA	Plan Général de L'isle de France	[none in Le Mome]	[none in Le Mome]
c. 1800	NA	Black River district	[none in Le Mome]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coteau Raffin • L'Embrasure concession drawn (not labeled)
1803	NA	Le Mome region	• Souriac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coteau Raffin • Rue de Chamarel • Embrasure concession
1860	NA	Le Mome region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mad. [Madam] Souriac • La Bonté • Vaudagne • Milard (?), Denise Beguinot • Jean Francois (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemin du Chamarel • La concession l'embrasure • Three boxes [possible houses] by name La Bonté
1874	MHL	Le Mome	• M. David Labonté	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route conduisant au Mome Brabant • Pas Geometrique [on north side of Mome]
1878	MHL	Property boundaries of Labonté	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concession Souriac/ D. Labonté • Concession LeNormand/ D. Labonté 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concession Le Mome [previously called Concession Embrasure] • Concession Contesse de la Mark • Main road to Baie du Cap • Crown Land
1878	MHL	Pas Geometrique of Labonté	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. D. Labonté • Médar, Denis • Frères, Renaud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pas Geometrique • Pas Geometrique leased to Mr. David Labonté, 14 arpents
1880	MHL	Pas Geometrique of Lecordier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medar, Denis [note, not on next map, or same Denis, different last name?] • Beguinot • Lamoureux • A. Lecordier • Laborée • Demmerez 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pas Geometrique leased to Medar Denis • Pas Geometrique leased to A. Lecordier
1880	NA	Map of Mauritius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Con. Souriac/David Labonté • Polidor, Denis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road to east of Mome • Con. L'Embrasure • Houses at "Le Mome"

Table 1 (continued)

Date	Archive ^a	Map author or description	Person names on map	Features and toponyms on Map
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beguinot • Lamoureux • Lecord. [Lecordier] 	<p>[The settlement known today as Trou Chenille]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown land • The cemetery • Coteau Raffin
1882	MHL	Pas Geometrique of Lecordier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Labonté • A. Lecordier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pas Geometrique leased to David Labonté • Pas Geometrique leased to A. Lecordier [what was previously leased by Denis Medar]
c. 1899	MHL	Black River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widow Labonté • A. Lecordier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coteau Raffin • Le Morne Estate [previously called Concession L'Embrasure] • Empty square of land btw Labonté and Lecordier • Charley (?) [a dot on coast, meaning what is unclear] • Main road to Baie du Cap and Morne Brabant
c. 1900	MHL	Le Mome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widow Lecordier • Mr. J. (?) Keisler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown lands • Mountain reserves
1910	NA	Black River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labonte/Keisler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coteau Raffin • Road drawn • L'Embrasure • Anse des Pêcheurs • Pas Geometrique drawn, not labeled
1912	MHL	Property boundaries of Keisler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michel Keisler • Messrs. Léon and Michel Keisler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown land over which the perpetual right of grazing has been granted to Hon: E. Antelme or those in his rights • Crown land in mountain reserve
1928	MHL	Property boundaries of Keisler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Leon Keisler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coteau Raffin • Route Publique • L'Embrasure • Crown land de Fouge
1950	NA	Black River	[none in Le Mome]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road drawn east of morne and looping around mountain • Three boxes to SW of mome, perhaps indicating houses • A "village" in the Concession L'Embrasure

^a NA National Archives of Mauritius, MHL Ministry of Housing and Lands

The first map, dating to around 1754 shows a blank expanse in the island's southwest; however, by 1768, Black River district is shown with extensive developments, filled with a network of roads and a patchwork of property lines. The Le Morne region only has one north-south road crossing to the east of Le Morne Brabant, and also the (unlabeled) outlines of a land concession, which is first called L'Embrasure and later Concession Le Morne. In a map dating to 1803, L'Embrasure is clearly labeled for the first time. This 1803 chart also is significant because it presents the property lines of another land owner named Souriac, whose land is situated on the plain between the sea and the northern summit of the mountain Le Morne Brabant, the area that would later be called Makak.

The next map dates to 1860, and shows a much changed Le Morne from the early 1800s (Fig. 8). This map includes the road along Le Morne Brabant's eastern flank now called "Chemin du Chamarel." "La Concession Embrasure" is demarcated—in addition to the saddle on Le Morne Brabant's east simply called "Embrasure"—along with at least seven houses or other such structures, indicating a substantial settlement there. Just west of the road, at the beginning of Makak area is "Mad. [Madame] Souriac" but now, immediately below it, is the name "La Bonté" and three squares, possibly symbolizing houses or other structures. Three more names are faintly penciled in stacked like three blocks along the northern plain of Le Morne Brabant: Vaudagne, Mildard (?) Denise; Béguinot; Jean Francois (Colin?); and again Vaudagne. When this 1860 map is laid over a contemporary map, they are difficult to fully align because the early map's scale is skewed and the shape of the peninsula is wrong; still, it is obvious



Fig. 8 A digitally enhanced 1860 map of the Le Morne, illustrating the increasing land use around the peninsula (Map, National Archives of Mauritius, B9/A4.1/8)

that five names—Souriac, La Bonté, Vaudagne, Béguinot, Jean Francois—are the land owners or occupants of the area along Le More Brabant’s northern plain.

By 1874 it would seem that the main section of land that is supposed to be Makak came to be controlled by a man named David Labonté. In this period, it is noted that the land was originally conceded to both Souriac as well as Le Normand. In 1878, Labonté was also given a lease of 14 ac (6 ha) along the beach, the pas géométriques, starting at what is today the roundabout off the main highway that leads to Le Morne Beach. Labonté’s immediate neighbors at this time are listed on two maps at the Ministry of Housing and Land as Renaud Freres, both towards Coteau Raffin and to the south (at L’Embrasure), and Denis Médar immediately to the west.

Two maps in 1880 show that the property lines along the northern side of Le Morne are drawn as they were in 1860, in a generally north-south direction. By 1880, the land ownership east to west was: David Labonté, Denis Polidor (a.k.a. Denis Médar), Béguinot, Lamoureux, Laborée (soon bought out by Lecordier), and Madame Demmeréz. By 1882, the pas géométriques along the entire northern coast of Le Morne has been leased to Labonté and Lecordier (Fig. 9).

By the turn of the twentieth century, the maps indicate another change. Labonté’s land is indicated by the “widow Labonté,” telling of David Labonté’s death; Polidor’s land is only indicated by a blank square, while it appears that Lecordier has acquired the land westward from there (formerly owned by Béguinot and Lamoureux) (Fig. 10). By 1900 the name Keisler appears for the first time, a family which would go on to consolidate ownership of nearly all of the lands along the northern flank of Le Morne Brabant (Owadally 2009, pp. 59–64).

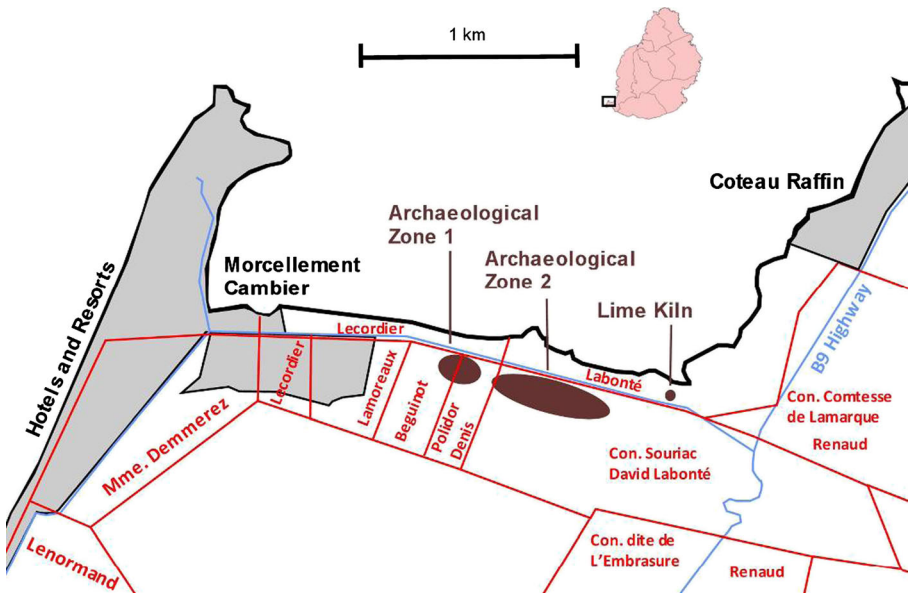


Fig. 9 A composite of an 1880 map of land ownership with an 1882 map of the pas géométrique leases (along the coast), overlaying the modern roads and towns, the lime kiln, and the two main archaeological zones associated with Makak (Map, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

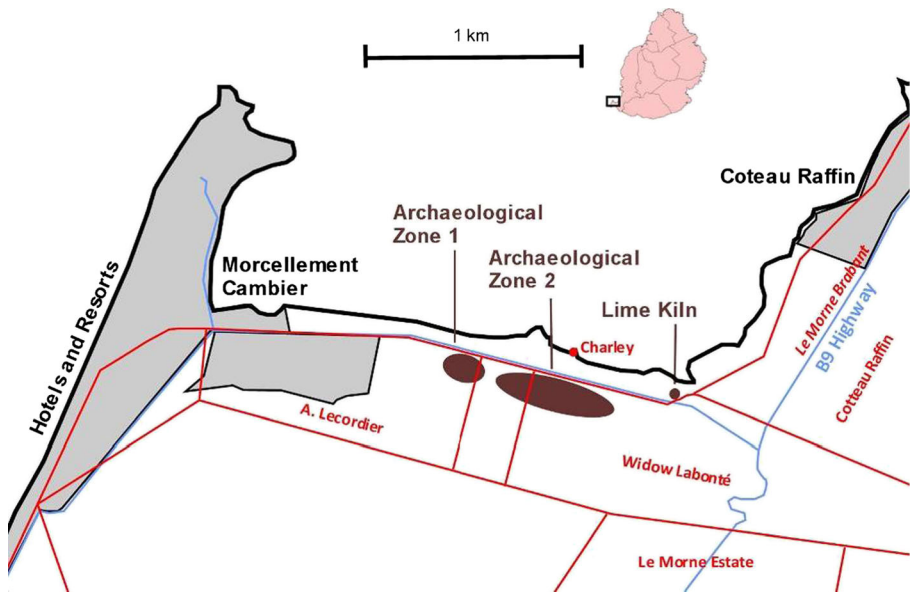


Fig. 10 A map circa 1899 of land ownership overlaying the modern roads and towns, the lime kiln, and the two main archaeological zones associated with Makak (Map, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Land Ownership and Genealogical Documents

Archival information reveals that the Le Normand (also Lenormand) family was among the first to receive a large land concession around Le Morne, during the French period (Teelock 2008, 41). Although Pierre Marie Le Normand seems to have first come to Mauritius in the 1760s, his first official concession of land came in 1780 to start a cotton and palm tree plantation (Veerapen 2008, p. 21).

Pierre Le Normand died in 1802. His daughters married into neighboring families in Black River: Jeanne Benjamine Sophie Le Normand married Pierre Anne Dubois Dunillac (also D’Unillac) in 1794; Melanie Le Normand married Francois Marie Colomb D’Ecotay (also known as Collon, Colomb, Decotay) in 1795; and Reine Benjamine Le Normand married Laglaine D’Anzor Jean Eusebe in 1801 (Teelock 2008, p. 50). During this period, more than 100 concessions were awarded in Black River, including 1,000 ac (405 ha) allotted to Countess La Marque (or de Larmarque) just north of the Makak area (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 38, 43).

After the death of her first husband, Jeanne Benjamine Sophie Le Normand married (though later divorced) Jean Baptiste Souriac, another major landowning family in Black River district (NA n.d.-a). From her first marriage with Dunillac, Jeanne had at least one son, named Dubois, after his father. Dubois junior inherited a 196-ac (79-ha) plot of land from Jeanne, who in turn had inherited it in 1796 from her father, Pierre Le Normand (RG n.d.-e).

It seems that the LeNormand and Souriac clans might have been ethnically “Coloreds” as stipulated in the sales transcriptions registers (RG n.d.-u). Archival documents also show that subsequent landowners around Le Morne were Coloreds, namely the Béguinot, Labonté, and Lecordier families.

In colonial Mauritius, the term “Colored” was used as a social classification based on a person’s biophysical attributes and perceived origins, namely based on skin color, phenotype, and patronymic name. It was a local taxonomy used to designate Mauritians that did not have unquestionable “White” or “Black” physical traits. In contemporary Mauritius, Coloreds are not considered Creoles but a distinct category, not only because of not their mixed racial characteristics but also because they may refuse to speak Kreol (Boswell 2011, p. 552). Even still, the loaded term “Colored” is not a fixed concept but, on the contrary, has diverse conceptualizations that are socially, politically, historically, culturally constructed. While difficult to give a fixed universal definition, it is useful to have an overview of the origins of the “Colored People” and of the evolution of the term, since they were central actors in the history of Makak, as revealed in our project.

Numerous historical and ethnographic studies have stressed that, as a key aspect of early French colonization, Mauritian society has been stratified along racial lines and social classes (e.g., Teelock 2009, p. 52). Mauritius has been built on racism with “pigmentocracy” underpinning discriminatory practices and laws, which continue in many regards today (Boswell 2011, pp. 534, 559–564; Rivière 2011, p. 453).

The label *Gens de Couleur*, as a socio-racial classification, was perhaps first officially used in the 1790 French National Assembly decision to grant Coloreds the right to vote (Teelock 2009, p. 153). The term “Free Colored” soon entered the local discourse, used to describe a large community of men and women on the island who were not slaves but were of mixed heritages. By the end of French period in Mauritius, Free Coloreds outnumbered Whites in Mauritius (Chan Low and Reddi 2000; Teelock 2009, p. 153).

The Colored community was by no means uniform. In a travelogue published in 1825, Milbert P. Brunet divided Mauritian society into racial classifications, noting that “The Colored people may be divided into mulattoes, born of Black people and free Whites; freed slaves; and mulattoes or Colored people from India” (in Rivière 2011, p. 451). Historically, Colored people have also been pejoratively referred to as *métis* (mulattos), half-breeds, bastards, or Creole Bourzwa (Creole bourgeoisie), that is “people of mixed blood born from interracial relations and that were ‘non-whites’ but that were ‘Free Blacks’” (Rivière 2011, p. 453). In this way “Colored” constituted a distinct social group—illegitimate hybrids but with some social standing—in Mauritius.

Even in Contemporary Mauritius, this community still forms a distinct category because they do not have the full suite of phenotypic characteristics to be accepted by Creoles. Today, Coloreds may tend to identify themselves as Whites (commonly referred to as “Franco-Mauritians”). But, they are not accepted by Franco-Mauritians who consider them Blacks based on outdated notions of racial purity and the so-called “one-drop rule,” which stipulates that any person whose genetic heritage includes a “single drop” of Black blood is considered Black (Boswell 2011, pp. 558–559).

In the colonial period, the one-drop rule served to reinforce the “Color Bar,” as officially proclaimed in the Code Decaen in 1803. Hence, although they were “free,” Coloreds could not enjoy equal civil rights, and thus experienced frequent victimizations. They were socially and politically marginalized, rejected by both the Whites and Blacks because of their hybridization. For example, when a colored person died they could not be taken to a Church and had to be buried in their own cemetery.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Colored citizens enjoyed far more rights than slaves—since they themselves were often slave owners—like access to education and land ownership (Teelock 2009, p. 321). A Colored elite community emerged in the 1800s that played a crucial role in the local political life, with important political figures, such as Remy Ollier and Léoville L’Homme, who are still alive in the national collective memory.

Labonté

In 1852, a Colored man named Jean Baptiste Labonté bought a large piece of land, which was located in the heart of the area today remembered as Makak. Labonté bought the land from Jean Fortellier and Joson Babet, who in turn had bought it in 1842 from Ajax Joseph Dubois D’Unilac and his spouse Emilie Frappier (RG n.d.-f, g, j, k). However, a dispute broke out among the heirs of Jean Baptiste Labonté. Specifically, the dispute was between Jules Labonté (represented by his lawyer Aldor Rohan) and his other siblings, over the sale of this property, leading to a legal case that was not settled until a Supreme Court ruling in 1865 (RG n.d.-i). According to court records, Jean Baptiste Labonté’s heirs were (RG n.d.-i):

- Jules Labonté, a medical doctor
- Joseph David Labonté (brother), Port Louis chief fire man
- Nathalie Labonté, wife of Jean Charles Béguinot
- Pamela Labonté, wife of Jean Baptiste Marjolin
- Euphenie Labonté, wife of Alexis Poulet
- Amande Labonté, a spinster
- Jeanny Labonté, widow of Jerome Mongelard

The Supreme Court ruled that the land, valued at £2,500, should be sold to the highest bidder. It seems that in 1870, Joseph David Labonté (also known as Joseph David Lauvergne) was the highest bidder, becoming the land’s owner (RG n.d.-b). To make this history even more complex: it is unclear whether this Joseph David Labonté was Jean Baptiste Labonté’s brother or his son. (The authors deposited genealogy charts for the Labonté family with the Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.) According to the land deed records, Joseph David was Jean Baptiste’s brother. But according to documents in the Civil Status Office, Joseph David—Superintendent of the Port Louis Fire Brigade—was the son of Jean Baptiste and Aurore Vilbro (CSO n.d.). Hence: (1) it is possible that the information in the land deeds and court records is erroneous and there is only one Joseph David Labonté, or (2) it is more likely, we think, uncle and nephew had the same name, which was not an unusual practice in nineteenth-century Mauritius. In any case, it is clear that by 1870 a Joseph David Labonté became the sole proprietor of a major section of land that is known today as Makak.

After the death of Joseph David Labonté (either one), the trail of archival documents continues to be labyrinthine and confusing. In 1899, it seems Joseph Keisler purchased 210 arpents (177 ac; 71 ha) from Antony and Arthur Labonté for £4,676 (David et al. 2011, pp. 163–164), although there is also a transaction record from 1893 detailing Keisler’s purchase of 210 ac (note, not arpents; 84 ha) from the guardian of Antony and Arthur Labonté, who apparently were children at the time (RG n.d.-n). This transaction

also notes that the purchased land was surrounded by government reserves and land owned by Cyrus Autard, Bazile Alexandre, Sir Virgile Naz and Mr. Constantin, and A. Lecordier.

According to land archives, Arthur and Antony Labonté were the sons of Joseph David Labonté, born from his second marriage with Marie Clemence Payal (or Gayral). (Joseph David was first married to Françoise Alexina Lebret and had a daughter named Pauline Labonté.) In 1891, the Labonté land at Makak was sold by his children and widow. The widow is presumably Marie Clemence Payal, represented by attorney Aldor Rohan (likely the same Aldor Rohan mentioned above). The children were apparently minors at this time; they were under the guardianship of Albert Rohan. Some believe this transaction in itself was fraudulent because, it is claimed, under the law at the time, land under a guardianship could not be sold (Vijaya Teelock, pers. comm.). There is also an additional 20 ac (8 ha) that descendants claim were illicitly appropriated by Keisler's descendants (David et al. 2011, pp. 163–164). More confusing still, while civil documents clearly confirm the filial relationship between David Labonté and Pauline, genealogical inconsistencies arise about the life-spans and descendants of Arthur and Antony Labonté.

Given these various irregularities and discrepancies, further research is needed to document the genealogy of the Labonté family and its descendants, to better reconstruct the history of this alleged land dispossession. But whether legal or not, it is clear is that by the start of the twentieth century, Labonté's land was wholly controlled by the Keisler family.

Béguinot

Official colonial documents corroborate that the Béguinot family owned a 30-ac (12-ha) plot of land in the Le Morne Brabant region, a plot that is intimately connected to the area known as Makak. In the deeds, the land is referred to as “Terrain Béguinot,” and seems to have been occupied starting in the early 1800s until the mid-1880s (RG n.d.-a). The two main families identified as landlords were Bathélemy Béguinot (married to Marie Graziella Rivet) and Jean Charles Béguinot (married to Nathalie Labonté) (RG n.d.-m). Other documents suggest other family members held shares in the land, including Jean Baptiste Alfred Béguinot (married to Marie Ernestine Mondor, aka Marie Ernestine D'Espagne) (RG n.d.-d). Still other documents suggest Jean Charles Béguinot had a brother named Pierre Béguinot (first married to Jeanine Vaudagne, then to Angelina Hilouvert or Marie Angelina Frichot) (NA n.d.-b). In fact, the earliest land document we could find on the family dates to 1810, recording a sale of the 30 ac, which included “The buildings and annexes erected ... a herd of 64 ‘horn animals’ and 7 donkeys, 3 pirogues [boats] and a variety of fishing tools and 20 slaves” (RG n.d.-c).

Although Colored citizens of Mauritius were legally free by the late 1820s, discrimination continued. In 1830, Jean and Pierre Béguinot—both described as fishermen living in “Le Morne/Anse des Pêcheurs” (Le Morne/Fishermen's Cove)—both signed a petition fighting for the right of Coloreds to access to schools, White cemeteries, and other public resources (Teelock 2008, p. 67). A decade later, a store owned by Pierre was forcibly displaced by the White aristocracy in retribution for Béguinot's demands of equal rights for Coloreds (Teelock 2008, p. 67). However, the Béguinot clan had a

complex relationship with justice; in 1835, when slavery on the island was abolished, documents show that Jean owned 26 slaves and Pierre owned 44 (Teelock 2008, p. 55; Veerapen 2008, p. 29).

Starting in the 1880s, parts of the Béguinot plot began to be sold, seemingly mostly by the children of Charles Béguinot and Nathalie Labonté. Sale transcriptions indicate that in 1885, a family member named Alcide Béguinot sold a portion of 30 acres of land to A. Lecordier (RG n.d.-m). Of note, that transcription states that, “There is no building on the said plot belonging to them,” suggesting that by the 1880s the buildings that existed in 1810 were no longer standing (or possibly, this sale transcription is for another piece of land in Black River). Additional portions of the 30 ac (12 ha) were sold by the heirs of Jean Baptiste Béguinot to A. Lecordier in 1885 (RG n.d.-l); and as late as 1903 by Barthelemy Béguinot to the “widow Lecordier” (RG n.d.-p).

In turn, the Keisler family acquired all of the land that Lecordier had bought from the Béguinot family. The widow Aimé Lecordier sold 80 ac (32 ha) of land and leasing rights to Leon, Joseph, and Ange Keisler in 1900; and another 146 ac (59 ha) in 1903 (RG n.d.-o, q). Of note, some of these acquisitions are presently being contested in court following allegations of forced and illegal dispossession and fraudulent acquisitions.

Keisler-Cambier

Joseph Keisler appears to be the first of his family to have bought the land known as Makak, in 1893 or 1899 (RG n.d.-n). Through the generations, the Keisler family has grown into one of the main property owners around Le Morne Brabant, through marriage and the acquisition of more land. Joseph Keisler married Marie Le Guen. Together they had ten children, five girls and five boys: Etienne, Anna, Fernande, Marie, René, Hollanda, Andre, Fernand, Alexandre, and Marcel (Teelock 2008, p. 49). Fernande married Sebastien Fredric who was a property owner in the region and when she died, he married Fernande’s sister Marie. It appears that there were many sales transactions within the family, such as the sale of 160 ac (65 ha) at Black River from Joseph to Leon in 1911 (and see RG n.d.-r, s, t). By 1915, the various children sold their parts to Alexandre and Marcel. By 1922, Dr. Leon Keisler and Marcel Keisler were the main landlords and sold their land to a company they created, Société Morne Brabant (Teelock 2008, p. 49). Today, the company still owns or controls the leases on a substantial area of southwestern Mauritius.

It was said that Dr. Keisler and his kin employed most of the inhabitants in the area, harvesting salt, cultivating agricultural products (cotton, coconut, and maize), raising animals, leasing land plots for vegetable gardens, and making charcoal (see also de Salle-Essoo and Le Chartier 2008, p. 144); a man named Hugh Cambier sold the charcoal, and this is how he met future wife, Mauricia, a daughter, depending on the source, of either Dr. Keisler or a relative named Policlet Keisler (de Salle-Essoo 2012, p. 45; Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 44; Owadally 2009, p. 59; Teelock 2008, p. 49). They had a son named Joseph Raoul Alan Cambier who married into the De Chalin family. At the death of Dr. Keisler, Hugh Cambier started to plant manioc and cotton and rear cattle and deer; later, his son Alan took over the plantation’s management (Gopauloo et al. 2010, p. 45).

Some of the living descendants maintain a slightly different history. One has stated for the record that land around Le Morne has been “in the private ownership of the Cambier family for over 200 years. Antecedents of the Cambier family have been present in the area since mid-1800 and the land which is the focus of various development schemes has been in their ownership since 1877 . . . Société Morne Brabant has been registered by Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Cambier on 14 October 1952” (Owadally 2009, p. 60). In the years since, the descendants have continued to use and seek development of the land. Major housing development schemes proposed by Société Morne Brabant and its partner companies were launched in the 1980s, and continue to today (Owadally 2009, p. 64). If these ever come to pass, they will be built on the ruins of Makak.

Material Culture

Archaeology in Mauritius is still in an embryonic phase, with only a handful of serious archaeological projects completed and published. This holds especially true for Le Morne Brabant, which has been the focus of just several glancing studies.

One important and ambitious study in Mauritius was the Maroon Slave Archaeological Investigation Project, which systematically sought to locate material evidence of escaped slave sites, a challenge given the few possessions maroon would have had and their great motivation to leave few traces behind, as well as the island’s ruinous tropical weather (Hookoomsing and Parahoo 2003, p. 28). This project focused on surveying covered sites like caves, and thus did not investigate the open area of Makak as a possible hideaway for escaped slaves. However, of note, three rock shelters on Le Morne Brabant’s summit were excavated in 2002, documenting one human-made wall (or “screen”), evidence of small fires, and broken animal bones, mainly goat, but also rodent, bird, and deer (Hookoomsing and Parahoo 2003, pp. 175, 213–228, 314). Although tentative, this project established a framework to begin to understand the elusive material evidence linked to maroon sites around Le Morne.

The second project in the region was also part of a larger study, this one to archaeologically investigate the impact of colonialism on Mauritius and also to study the legacies of slavery (Seetah et al. 2011a, 2011b). This work involved the excavation of a cemetery at the eastern edge of Trou Chenille. However, excavations are ongoing and data collected is so far inconclusive on exactly who was interred and when in the cemetery. The 2010 excavation recovered a small sample of six children and five adults. Generally they were in good health, consuming a relatively good diet (Seetah et al. 2011b, pp. 247, 259). Physical evidence suggests they likely ate substantial portions of maize or animal protein, seafood, and sweet potato (Seetah et al. 2011b, p. 255). Yet, the population apparently lacked medical care, which might have resulted in a high infant and child mortality rate (Appleby et al. 2014).

The only other known archaeological study of Le Morne was the brief but important survey of Makak. In 2007, several elders pointed a research team to two large banyan trees (*Ficus benghalensis*) on the plain sweeping down from north side of the mountain (Fig. 11). Artifacts were soon identified, and a two-week intensive survey was launched (Medhi 2007). The team focused on two zones with concentrations of artifacts including ceramics, glass, metal, stone, and construction materials. In zone

1, situated at the western end of the plain, 4x4m grids were laid down, covering a total area of 1,280 m². Reportedly, all surface artifacts from each grid were mapped and then collected. A metal detector was used for some portion of this work. In zone 2, the team ran out of time for an equally systematic survey; instead they took only a “sample” of artifacts, and focused on mapping 39 circular features of piled stone and the remnants of a possible road. The total site sizes and their exact boundaries remain unknown, mainly because thick grass in the area renders much of the surface invisible.

This research led the team to conclude that zone 1 exhibited the “strong possibility of habitation” (Medhi 2007, p. 19). Although no structures were identified, they documented a concentration of domestic artifacts and the presence of some building materials, including the remnants of lime mortar on basalt stones. Zone 2 was less clearly understood, as the function of the 39 stone features could not be ascertained. Additionally, because only a sample of artifacts across the entire area of zone 2 was collected, only a tentative conclusion could be made that the zone is a possible settlement given the range of domestic artifacts present. Although the team did not analyze the collected artifacts, they informally observed that many were “luxurious objects,” and thus concluded that the site was unlikely to be a maroon or ex-slave settlement, but on the contrary, a settlement of wealthy families who even might have been slave owners (Medhi 2007, p. 27). The precise connection of the settlement to slavery could not be reasonably deduced, however, in part because the team did not attempt to date the site to the slavery period, pre-1835.

Medhi’s research is vitally important for being the first attempt to confirm the oral traditions of Makak. The limitations of using this research now are mainly that only zone 1 was systematically collected; all field maps and forms have been lost; and some of the most compelling artifacts were removed from their field bags and thus disassociated with their provenience data. Nevertheless, in 2013, we were given the opportunity to study all of the artifacts. A total of 638 artifacts across five material categories—ceramic ($n=284$), glass ($n=198$), metal ($n=147$), brick and tile ($n=8$), and stone ($n=1$)—were collected during the 2007 survey. Additionally, we were provided a half-day of access to the site, and were able to confirm Medhi’s general conclusions about the two zones, although our efforts to



Fig. 11 One of the banyan trees at Makak, with the summit of Le Morne Brabant in background (Photo, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Table 2 Summary of ceramic types from the 2007 survey of Makak

Type	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 1 or 2
Canaryware	1		
Ironstone, embossed	7		
Ironstone, lusterware with color bands	3	3	
Kaolin (Pipe)	1		
Mochaware, with machine turned bands	5		4
Porcelain, blue on white	34	1	4
Porcelain, brown underglaze	3		
Porcelain, glazed industrial	4		3
Porcelain, green glazed		1	
Porcelain, overglaze polychrome	1		
Porcelain, polychrome	1		
Porcelain, white	8	1	3
Redware, plain	1		5
Spongeware, underglaze blue on white	1		
Spongeware, underglaze polychrome on white	3		3
Spongeware, underglaze red on white	1		
Stoneware, tan and white glazed	7		
Stoneware, glazed	4	2	2
Stoneware, salt-glazed	3		6
Stoneware, unglazed brown	2		
Unidentified	10	4	1
Whiteware, hand-painted yellow and pink floral motif	1		
Whiteware, plain	20	8	5
Whiteware, shell-edged (Impressed bud)	1		
Whiteware, shell-edged (Impressed straight lines)	2		
Whiteware, underglaze blue transfer print, “willow pattern”	32	7	3
Whiteware, underglaze blue transfer print	39	1	9
Whiteware, underglaze green transfer print	13		
Whiteware, underglaze purple transfer print	1		1
Totals	209	28	47

identify specific boundaries were similarly hampered by the area’s dense grass. Even with Medhi’s collection, hundreds of artifacts are still visible across the area, an especially impressive density given the site’s location next to a well-traversed road and the no doubt intense natural formation processes of constant rain, eolian forces, and regular cyclones that it is subject to.

The ceramics from the 2007 survey constitute a wide range of types (Table 2), although they uniformly appear to be imports from Europe and Asia. Some of the ceramics’ temporal and geographic context could be identified based solely on type, but six maker’s marks are especially useful for diagnostics:

- “K et G Lunéville France”: is the mark of Keller and Guérin ceramics, an earthenware factory established in 1728 (Info-Faïence 2011). The factory was awarded royal status in 1749, due to its financial and artistic successes, and soon became one of France’s main production centers to rival its English and German competitors. Given the mark style, this one dates between 1890 and 1920;
 - “Macao; T.S.K.[...]”: This mark is on a distinctive plate fragment, a whiteware with an underglaze purple transfer print. The mark could not be identified further, in part because the fragment does not include the entire mark, but is helpful at least in indicating the country of manufacture;
 - “San sheng ding tao”: A tea cup base has a maker’s mark in Chinese. Based on conversations with specialists in Chinese archaeology, all that can be said at this point is: “Assuming that they are to be read from top to bottom, right to left, the four characters read ‘San sheng ding tao’ (or, possibly, ‘San cheng ding tao’—the second character has two possible readings). They can be translated in any number of different ways, . . . in any case, ‘tao’ at the end means ‘pottery.’ One thing is certain, however: this is not an imperial reign mark. Most likely, they render the name of a non-official workshop” (Lothar von Falkenhausen, pers. comm.);
 - “J & M.P.B. & Co.”: This is an earthenware pottery made in Glasgow, Scotland, by John and Matthew Perston Bell since 1841. The oval mark on the piece from Makak dates between 1870 and 1880, a dinner plate fragment with a “willow pattern” design, an immensely popular design produced by numerous factories (Kelly 2006, p. 24). A similar plate is in Scotland’s South Lanarkshire Museums (2013), whose online catalogue notes that the Bell ceramics became fashionable with middle class Scottish families and were also exported worldwide;
 - “C & M”: A cup fragment made by an established English factory known as “Castleford Pottery,” operated in the early 1870s by two business partners, Hugh McDowall and John Masterman (Jewitt 1878, p. 486). They produced “ordinary” types of printed earthenwares using the mark “C & M” in 1878 (Blacker 1911, p. 420);
 - “Pommade de Sain-Bois; de Ls. Dubouais; Mo. Lechaux Phen.; Suc; Bordeaux”:
- This is a small container, nearly complete, with the mark on the underside. The earliest found reference to this balm is a book from 1825 titled, *Pommade de sain-bois de Louis Dubouais* (pharmacien de l’Université de Paris, Fosses de l’Intendance, No. 47, à Bordeaux). It seems the container held a balm derived from

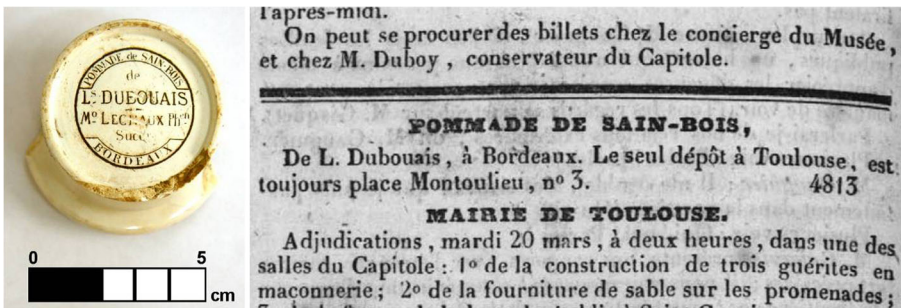


Fig. 12 The Pommade de Sain-Bois jar from Makak (left) and an 1838 advertisement for the balm in the *Journal Politique et Littéraire*, March 16, no. 38, 27th year (right) (Photos, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

cantharides, used as an aphrodisiac, to induce abortion, a diuretic, and for the treatment of warts and tumors. Dubouais advertised the medicine in 1838 (Fig. 12);

- “Creil [...]”: During our 2013 site visit we found one additional fragment of note, in zone 2, a ceramic plate fragment made by the French factory, Creil et Montereau. In 1840, the Creil factory, founded in 1797, merged with the Montereau factory. The “Creil” mark on the fragment we found is consistent with the marks produced between 1840 and 1920 (Bontillot 2013).

Some 23 % of the ceramics collected are porcelain, suggesting a substantial portion of the ceramics is of higher value. Only some 3 % of the ceramics are possible cooking vessels, implying that either a kitchen was not immediately in either of the archaeological zones, or perhaps more likely, metal vessels were used for food preparation. (Traditional housing in rural Mauritius had a kitchen outside in the yard, covered by a ramada made of iron sheets or straw.) Most of the ceramics appear to be household table dishes, with plates predominating (Table 3). A few fragments point to the lifeways of the inhabitants: an intricate tobacco pipe, the base of a small statue, a porcelain head of a toy doll (Fig. 13).

The glass assemblage is quite fragmentary, with only one complete bottle collected in 2007 (Table 4). We know of no glassmaking factory in Mauritian history—there is no naturally occurring silica on the island—and thus presumably all of the glass was imported, and would have been of substantial value when first purchased and when the glass objects were subsequently reused. Two glass base fragments discovered during our 2013 reconnaissance work are diagnostic:

- “K - A Nationals Product - Est. 1923”: Found on the surface next to the limekiln, a purple glass bottle; the “K” is surrounded by the rest of the text;
- “CW & Co.”: In zone 2 we found an additional glass bottle with this embossed maker’s mark. This black glass bottle has been found around the world—from New Zealand to Puerto Rico—and appears to date between the 1860s and 1900 (Campbell and Harris 2008, p. 26; Museum-Victoria 2013).

Of the identifiable bottle types, 81 % are beverage bottles (likely for wine or beer, though also possibly soda or mineral water), 8 % are containers (mostly tablewares) for household uses, and 11 % are bottles originally made for medicinal or household purposes. Of the total bottle fragments collected, 81 % are round bottles. The remainder consists of a range of square, ovoid, or irregular containers. In terms of color, a few glass fragments are amethyst, aqua, silver, and pink, but the majority is black (48 %) or a green hue (37 %). Various glass-making technologies are apparent on some fragments, which provide especially useful clues about when the glass products might have been made (see below). Taken together, these features suggest that most of the recovered glass artifacts originally served to hold alcoholic beverages, but there is also a discernable presence of household and medicinal containers and vessels.

The metal artifacts cover a broad range of activities: construction, agriculture, cooking, clothing, and currency (Table 5). Hand wrought iron nails are found in both zones, notable since many nineteenth-century plantations had their own ironsmiths. These small but valued objects, likely made before 1890, might have been used for

Table 3 Summary of ceramic forms from the 2007 survey of Makak

Form	Definite	Possible
Bottle	1	2
Bowl	10	11
Container	1	–
Cup	11	24
Ink Bottle	4	–
Jar	7	12
Pipe	1	–
Pitcher	–	9
Plate	120	7
Serving Dish	1	2
Statue	1	–
Toy	1	–

housing, sheds, fences, boats, or in other types of construction (Wells 1998). The only other materials associated with buildings are five small fragments of “Mauritian red bricks” and three fragments of possible ceramic roof tiles (cf. Summers 2011, pp. 11, 19), all recovered in zone 1. Agricultural activities are evidenced by the presence of an ax, three hoes, and another unidentified iron tool. Of note, the sole stone object collected is a possible hoe. Fragments of iron vessels, called by some marmite from the French term, which is known today as a “traditional” cooking vessel, was also collected in both zones. A belt buckle is the only artifact associated with clothing. A final metal object is a coin from Great Britain, a King George IV half-penny, dating to 1828 or 1829.

The 2007 survey collection provides a key line of independent if tentative evidence for dating Makak’s settlement history. For dating the ceramics, we depended on several archaeological reports, with ceramic typologies, from the site of Aapravasi Ghat (Calaon 2010; Summers 2011) in the capital, Port Louis, as well as other publications analyzing European and Asian ceramics outside Mauritius during the colonial period (e.g., Samford 1997). Although Calaon’s and Summer’s excellent reports are often complementary, they also at times contradict one another. For example, Calaon (2010,

**Fig. 13** Ornate clay pipe collected from Makak settlement in 2007 (Illustration, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

Table 4 Descriptive summary of glass from the 2007 survey of Makak

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 1 or 2
Pieces			
Base	49	9	7
Blob seal	1		1
Complete	1		
Fragment	72		4
Heel	26	2	
Neck	5		
Rim	1		
Rim and Neck	9	5	3
Shoulder	3		
Type			
Beverage	72	6	7
Household		3	5
Medicinal or household	8	4	
Unidentified fragment	88	3	2
Shape			
Decorative facet	1		
Drinking glass	4	2	1
Oval bottle			1
Round bottle	144	8	8
Round tray		1	1
Square bottle	19	2	
Unidentified fragment	5		1
Color			
Amethyst			3
Apple green	1		
Aqua	3	1	
Black	85	5	6
Clear green	1		
Colorless	12	6	1
Dark emerald green	2		1
Green	13	1	
Light green	19	1	2
Light pink			2
Olive green	26		1
Silver	1		
Yellow olive green	5		
Identifiable technology			
Base, bare pontil iron mark	5		3
Base, cup bottom mold	1		
Base, dip mold	4		
Base, free-blown or dip mold	19		

Table 4 (continued)

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 1 or 2
Base, machine made	1		
Base, molded	2	1	3
Base, open pontil	2	1	
Base, pattern mold		1	1
Base, sand pontil	1	1	
Base, turn mold?	1	1	
Base, two piece mold		1	
Body, dip mold	6		
Body, free-blown or dip mold	22		3
Body, free-blown	6	3	
Finish, applied	1		
Finish, applied flared	2		1
Finish, applied ring			1
Finish, grooved ring	1		
Finish, laid-on ring	2		
Finish, mineral finish	2	3	1
Finish, tooled?	3	1	

p. 183) identifies one ceramic fragment as a “refined earthenware” and further a “Pearlware, hand painted late” made in England and dating to 1800–1840, while Summers, looking at what appears to be the exact same type, calls it a “Underglaze polychrome on white Spongeware bowls” (Summers 2011, p. 54) belonging to a “distinctive class of glazed earthenware was made in Scotland and England from about

Table 5 Descriptive summary of metal objects from the 2007 survey of Makak

Object type	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 1 or 2
Ax head (Iron)			1
Belt buckle (Brass?)			1
Coin (Copper)	1		
Door hinge (Iron)		2	
Hoe head			3
Fragment (Iron)	8	109	1
Fragment (Lead)	2		
Fragment (Steel)	1		
Marmite vessel	1	1	2
Nail (Hand wrought iron)	4	3	2
Parts, for a Wagon? (Iron)			3
Strap (Steel)	1		
Tool head fragment (Iron)			1

1830 to 1880” (Summers 2011, p. 51). In turn, where Calaon (2010, p. 187) does label ceramics as spongeware he dates them to “1825-Today” instead of Summer’s “1830–1880.” It does seem that spongewares date from the mid-1830s with their peak in the 1840–1880, though they continue to be made by contemporary factories (Kelly 1993; Orser 2010, p. 95). Our main point here is not to criticize these important research projects, but rather to point out that until archaeologists take on the vital but colossal task of establishing a uniform ceramic typology for Mauritius, correlated with importation documentation and typologies in the countries of manufacture, it is prudent to view any ceramic analysis as provisional.

For glass, we depended on the Society for Historical Archaeology’s Historic Glass Bottle Identification and Information Website (Lindsey 2013), while attempting to compare to the literature on European glassworks (e.g., Jones 2010) and through informal conversations with European and Mauritian archaeologists. Several metal pieces could also provide rough dates. In all cases we attempted to be “conservative” in our estimates, that is, using the broadest time frames unless we were sure of the specifics (e.g., in the case of the half-penny) and leaving out potential diagnostic sources that remain unsubstantiated (e.g., the end of the production of black glass, which is not well established in England or France or its former colonies). One other note is that we did not include any of the diagnostic artifacts seen during the 2013 reconnaissance work, since these objects could not be easily included in any future re-analysis. The distribution of dates presented here must be seen as tentative, at best.

The distribution for zone 1 suggests that this area of Makak was likely occupied in the 1800s (Fig. 14). Only one ceramic type (of which there were two fragments) must have been made in the 1700s. In turn, only one glass fragment definitively was made in the 1900s; it seems more likely that this object was deposited after the inhabitants left, perhaps tossed from the nearby road. The far majority of all diagnostics date to the

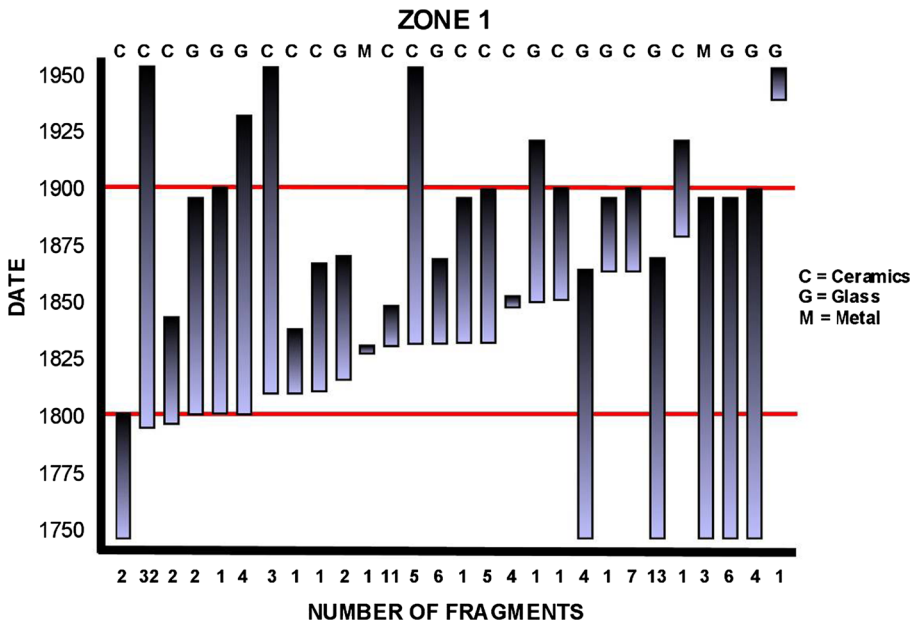


Fig. 14 The distribution of dates, derived from artifacts in Makak’s zone 1

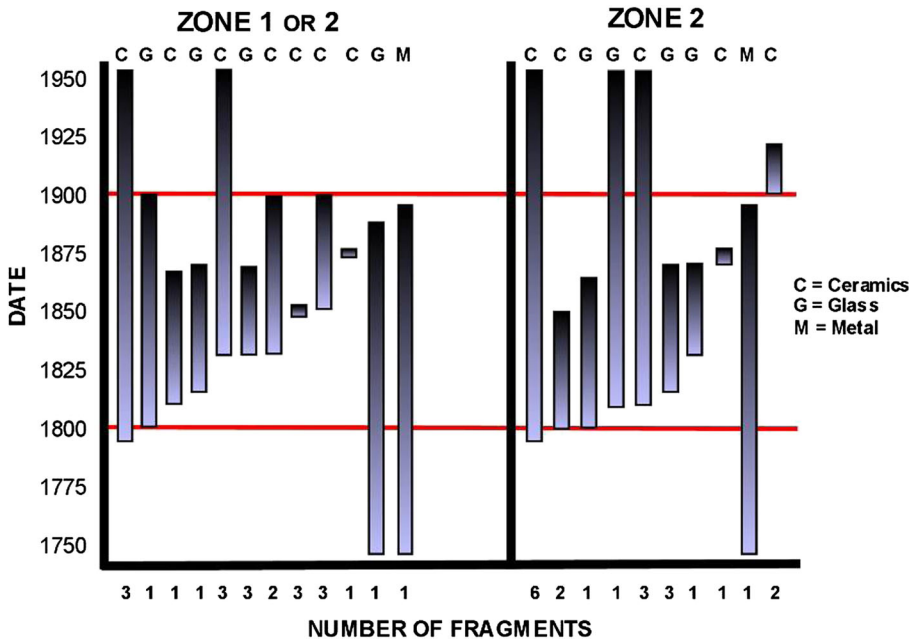


Fig. 15 The distribution of dates, derived from artifacts in Makak's zone 1 or 2, and zone 2

1800s. However, given our understandings of time lag (Adams 2003), it is possible that the inhabitants could have continued living in this area into the early years of the 1900s. The distribution of artifacts from either zone 1 or 2, and those from zone 2, echo the scatter of dates for zone 1 (Fig. 15). The dates concentrate in the 1800s, spread across the early part of the century to its end.

In sum, the analysis of the artifacts from the 2007 survey substantiates Medhi's initial conclusion that there likely were settlements in zone 1 and zone 2. These settlements likely date to the 1800s and were probably in disuse by the early 1900s. Zone 1 has the direct evidence of five fragments of "Mauritian red brick" and three likely ceramic roof tiles (cf. Summers 2011, pp. 11, 19), in addition to the lime-covered basalt Medhi observed in situ. Iron nails were collected which could have served a variety of functions (e.g., for boats or fences), but are quite possibly associated with the construction of housing. Additionally, an iron door hinge was collected from zone 2. It seems possible that house foundations have not been located because of various cultural and natural formation processes, including salvaging of building materials, destruction from cyclones, and the difficulty identifying foundations without removing the thick grass in the area or sub-surface excavation.

Although zone 1 seems to be spatially distinct from zone 2, in terms of artifact types and dates, the zones appear quite indistinguishable. We would hypothesize that either the two zones actually constitute one large contiguous site, or the two habitation areas were occupied more or less concurrently and inhabited by people with the same lifestyles and class status.

The range of artifacts collected further supports the hypothesis of permanent settlements at Makak, instead of just field camps or temporary shelters, although

there is currently little material evidence for the size or type of dwellings that likely were in these areas. The hundreds of ceramic and glass fragments are consistent with a long-term and enduring occupation, and the high proportion of higher-status porcelain wares and valued imported glass indicate the houses were unlikely to be merely a temporary settlement. Additionally, the presence and number of medicine or household bottles as well as the ink bottles, further suggest that the site was more than a temporary shelter.

The artifacts present in both zones offer tantalizing hypotheses about the social life and class status of Makak's residents. The handful of agricultural tools suggests some agricultural work was done by the inhabitants. But of the ceramics collected, only a tiny percent are undecorated stoneware or plain redware (8 %). Many of the other types found in Le Morne such as transfer printed, shell-edged, spongewares, mochawares, and the more general categories of creamwares and whitewares all “appear in middle and even lower class domestic contexts” around the world (Lima 2003, p. 230). One of the most common types in Makak—the willow pattern pearlware and whiteware, first produced in 1792—has been described as one of the cheapest transfer print ceramics on the market in the 19th century and a firm middle-class tableware around the world (Noël Hume 1969, p. 261; Miller 1980, p. 4; Samford 1997, p. 3) (see Fig. 16). Similarly, spongewares should be considered as one of the least expensive wares (after undecorated vessels) and commonly found in poorer households, and were specifically made for “out-markets” ranging from Belize to Canada (Orser 2010, p. 96). In contrast to these ceramic types associated with lower and middle class households, a substantial 23 % of ceramics collected were porcelain, generally a more expensive ceramic type in the 1700s and 1800s. Also present are the several fragments of fine stemmed glassware, suggesting more formal drinking habits (Fig. 17).

Significantly, though, the use of ceramics at all must be put in the context of an island isolated at the edge of the Indian Ocean. In Mauritius elders today often describe *all* imported ceramics as prestige items during the colonial period since ceramics were still more expensive than perishable vessels (like wood) which



Fig. 16 An example of a complete “willow pattern” plate, one of the cheapest transfer print ceramics on the market in the nineteenth century (Courtesy, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 License)



Fig. 17 A fine stemmed drinking glass collected from Makak settlement in 2007 (Photo, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

would have been used by the country's lower classes. Indeed, it is vital not to merely project our understandings of value onto the past, because consumers were still making the choice to consume different kinds of objects (Cabak and Loring 2000; Webster 1999).

That 81 % of the glass fragments likely originally contained imported beverages (wine or beer) also indicates that Makak's residents could likely afford these imported



Fig. 18 A blob seal is imprinted with “VIEUX COGNAC; N NEYRAUD; GRANDE CHAMPAGNE,” found during the 2013 reconnaissance (another one was collected in 2007) (Photo, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh)

drinks over local rum, which would have been abundant given the island's booming sugar cane industry through the 1800s (Fauque 2002, p. 19). The presence of the ink bottles, also indicates that at least some of the inhabitants were likely literate. (Although absent residue analyses or other data, an alternative hypothesis must be maintained that the residents did not purchase and consume the contents of these vessels but only procured them for re-use.)

The lack of local redwares or other simple and cheap earthenwares also points to how the area's inhabitants were tied into national and world markets. Nearly all of the ceramic types on the northern coast of Le Morne have also been found in Port Louis, at excavations in the fill used at Aapravasi Ghat, a colonial immigration depot dating between 1834 and the 1920s (Calao 2010; Summers 2011). In turn, essentially all of these goods came from other countries. Maker's marks identified on the 2007 collection point to imports from, at minimum, five countries: England, Scotland, France, China, and Macau.

The global reach—and high value—of the consumable goods at Makak can be seen further with several wine bottle fragments. One blob seal is imprinted with “VIEUX COGNAC; N NEYRAUD; GRANDE CHAMPAGNE,” which indicates the contents were a first growth of Cognac with finer eau de vie and then aged (Jean-Yves Le Lan, pers. comm.) (Fig. 18).

Another blob seal reads “Pauillac Médoc,” a wine produced in the Bordeaux region. Pauillac is one of the most famous controlled labels from Médoc, stretching over nearly 1,100 ha, and contains 37 wine estates of which 18 were top quality wines in 1855 (Jean-Yves Le Lan, pers. comm.). Slightly different blob seals impressed with “Pauillac Médoc” have been documented at Bent's Fort, in Colorado (dating to 1828–49) and Fort Pierce, in Florida (dating to 1837–56) (Clausen 1970, p. 5; Comer 1985, pp. 198–199).

Conclusions: A Preliminary History of Makak

The goal of this paper is to draw a preliminary outline of Makak's history, with a particular focus on identifying the settlement's place name, approximate location, inhabitants, social and economic dynamics through time, and links with the surrounding communities in southwestern Mauritius. Based on multidisciplinary methods that sought to salvage a diverse range of data, there is sufficient evidence to sketch such an initial portrait of Makak.

Although the name Makak does not appear on any known colonial document, it does seem that it is a “real” *lieu-dit* or place name, used locally and informally, to describe a series of human settlements over nearly 200 years along the northern flank of Le Morne Brabant. We believe, on balance, that the place name most likely is derived from the presence and use of makak trees in the area. Its general location is on the north side of Le Morne Brabant; its north-south axis is between the base of the mountain and the coast, while its east-west axis is approximately between the turn-off from B9 to Morcellement Cambier or a bit farther west.

Escaped slaves in the early 1700s were among the first to live in the general area of Le Morne, although the current evidence suggests that they lived closer to Le Morne Brabant's summit in hidden caves and overhangs rather than the mountain's exposed

northern plain. The first permanent settlement in this area was likely the Le Normand family in the 1760s; although their first home and plantation was at L'Embrasure they would have used the resources available around the area that would become known as Makak. By 1803 the Souriac family—intermarried with the Le Normands—is the first to claim express ownership over Le Morne's northern coast.

In 1810, at the start of the British Period, more families began to move into the region, most notably the Béguinot and Vaudagne clans. They were prominent “Free Coloreds,” though they owned slaves themselves, and began building the infrastructure to maintain plantations. These Colored families also seem to have thrived as fishermen; the area was also informally known as Anse des Pêcheurs (Fishermen's Cove). In the 1840s, these families were joined by the Labonté kin. It seems possible that the artifacts in zone 1 mainly relate to “Terrain Béguinot” while zone 2 relates to the Labonté settlement. In any case, the lifestyle suggested by these artifacts are essentially indistinguishable; and by the 1850s the Béguinot and Labonté families were intermarried, so probably interacting regularly and exchanging many material goods. By the 1850s, Charles Adolphe Nicolau was also living nearby Makak; he is remembered through the place name Pos Nicolou.

By the 1850s, the Le Morne community—consisting of Makak, L'Embrasure, Trou Chenille, and likely other points between—is diverse, with a mix of Europeans, French Creoles, Mozambique ex-apprentices, and Malagasy Christians. Within the next decade, the community has a school, church, and formal cemetery. While the American visitor Nicolas Pike describes the people as reclusive and poor, more consistently they are described as sociable and prosperous. If the cemetery at the east end of Trou Chenille holds the remains of some of these community members from this period—an assumption that could be revised with the ongoing research—they lacked good medical care but were not undernourished and “not without means” (Seetah et al. 2011b, p. 254). Oral tradition, supported by some archaeological evidence gleaned from the cemetery, suggests the inhabitants cultivated maize, manioc, sweet potato, and songe root, and had poultry, ducks, pigs, and fished and hunted animals like monkeys, hare, wild boar, deer, and tang. If some of the most distinguished objects recovered to date—the porcelain ceramics, ink bottles, clay pipes, and wine bottles, particularly the cognac and Pauillac Médoc—were consumed by the Béguinot and Labonté families, then they likely lived well, a middle-class existence firmly tapped into global trade networks. These artifacts fit with the Béguinot and Labonté families' occupations, and it seems possible that as land-owning family of successful professionals would have the resources and inclination to consume such products. However, given that the collection lacks firm contextual and temporal data, this hypothesis requires further archaeological research.

Although, one cannot but help wonder if the assorted mishmash of ceramics in Le Morne settlements, close to what was used by the nineteenth-century Irish poor—transfer-print patterns, polychrome floral patterns, shell-edged ceramics, and the willow pattern—might have fostered a similar belief by outsiders that the Free Colored residents “were uncivilized as they did not have what was considered the acceptable material signs of modernity” (Brighton 2011, p. 41). Still, if the higher value objects were purchased and consumed by those in Makak, and if descriptions like that of the Anglican Bishop of Mauritius in 1855 were true, then it seems that historians must begin to consider how Le Morne in the mid-1800s was not an isolated, struggling

community at the edge of the Indian Ocean, but a thriving and cosmopolitan community making a life for themselves.

By the 1880s, a slow decline began to take hold. Terrain Béguinot was likely sold to the neighboring Lecordier family, who in turn sold all of their holdings at Le Morne to the newly established Keisler-Cambier clan. Labonté's land, the heart of Makak, was purchased, perhaps illicitly in part or full, also by the Keisler-Cambier clan, several of whom might have had relations with local women. At the start of the 1900s, Makak was mainly used for economic purposes, for making charcoal and some farming. People continued to live at its peripheries, however, in the area known as Morcellement Cambier, by the limekiln, and in Kan Madras (somewhere on Labonté's old land, but not likely in zone 1 or 2, given that few artifacts date to this period). Some of the people in these areas remember hearing about Béguinot and Labonté, and remember seeing and playing in the remains of one of their abandoned homes—also described in archival documents—by the big banyan trees.

By the 1940s, Keisler-Cambier family members were consolidating their properties and allegedly inviting people to leave the area. The last residents of Makak moved to Trou Chenille, Coteau Raffin, La Gaulette, L'Embrasure, and other surrounding settlements. By the 1970s, the residents of Trou Chenille and L'Embrasure were also dispossessed, many moving on to Le Morne Village. Makak is now on contested land owned and leased by Société Morne Brabant, with a small portion in the high-end housing area of Morcellement Cambier and along the coastline controlled by the government.

Today, Makak is symbolically tied to Le Morne Brabant as a World Heritage Site representing the struggle for freedom from slavery and its aftermath. For the descendants of Makak families, they see the settlement through the lens of displacement and dispossession, set against the larger backdrop of Mauritius' history of colonialism and class conflict. As echoed in the country's Truth and Justice Commission, the narratives of loss are alive among community members, having been transmitted across generations because of their power to speak to the abuse, exploitation, and injustices that in many cases still prevail. In Mauritius, land has powerful symbolic meanings representing wealth, prosperity, and freedom. But deprived of access to land, most of the contemporary descendants of Makak, Trou Chenille, and L'Embrasure have been unable to secure a thriving livelihood, equal educational opportunities, and protection from classism and racism (Bakker and Odendaal 2008, p. 229). The collective memories of Makak reveal much about the construction of the descendants' identity and their perception of victimhood and historical discrimination.

While this project cannot resolve this contested past, it can at least provide a foundation to expand our understandings of Le Morne's story. We are hopeful that with further research, particularly historical archaeology, this preliminary analysis can be expanded and deepened. Makak is not a myth, but a real place, whose history we are now only beginning to tell.

Acknowledgments We are very grateful for the generous assistance of: Colette Le Chartier, Vijaya Teelock, Geoffrey Summers, Jocelyn Chan Low, Jean-Yves Le Lan, Yann von Arnim, Diego Calaon, Anwar Janoo, Nicole Papeche, Leo Couacaud, Benjamin Moutou, Corinne Forest, Bertrand Giraud, R. Chung Sam Wan, James Symonds, Paul Shackel, Alasdair M. Brooks, Sarah Tarlow, Lothar von Falkenhausen, and Ellen Hsieh. Two anonymous reviewers provided especially thoughtful and helpful comments, for which are appreciative.

Analysis of the Makak artifacts from the 2007 survey was facilitated by the students and the moderator of the 2013 Museum Management Course at the University of Mauritius: Amirchandsing Teerbhooan, Anwar Janoo, Dreesha Teelwah, Ghirish Bissoon, Indira Gyaram, Joanna Donice-Louis, Leena Ramduth, Marie Paule Félicité, Marie Vanecia Geraldine Andon, Pinky Pooneeth, Vijaya Teelock, and Vijayalutchmee Beejadhur. We are further grateful to the National Archives, Ministry of Land, and Registrar General; for the financial support of the US Fulbright Program; the logistical support of University of Mauritius; and the official support Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund.

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