Note to readers

Until the late 1990s, when the community collectively adopted the term Chagossian, islanders born on Chagos had been known in Mauritius as *Ilois* [islander], a generic term which became increasingly derogatory. Throughout this book I refer to people born on the Chagos Archipelago as Chagos islanders rather than as *Ilois*, regardless of the time period under discussion. I use the term Chagossian to refer to members of the extended Chagossian community, which includes not only Chagos islanders but also their descendants born in exile.

I identify socio-politically active research participants by their real names, but I assign others first-name pseudonyms and describe them anonymously in terms of some of their characteristics, such as place of birth, age, sex, and profession. During interviews, I either took detailed notes or recorded the proceedings for later transcription into my field notes. All quotations from speech derive from interviews or conversations in Kreol, which I have translated into English.

Kreol in Mauritius is a French-based language also influenced by East African and South Asian languages. There is no official orthography, and there have long been tensions between the French-based orthography devised by the Catholic Church and the various phonetic orthographies favoured by radical political groups such as *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* [Education for Workers], which produced a useful phonetic Kreol-to-English dictionary (*Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* 1993). When quoting other texts in Kreol I follow the original orthography, but otherwise I use LPT’s phonetic orthography and translations. I also use LPT’s phonetic principles to transcribe distinctively Chagossian Kreol words that are not found in Mauritian Kreol dictionaries. Most Kreol vocabulary comes from French, and French-speaking readers may find that reading Kreol quotes phonetically enables them to understand a high proportion of the words, although the grammar is different.

I also follow the (non-phonetic) practice, common amongst researchers working in Mauritius, of distinguishing between Creole (an ethnic category comprising those of partially, primarily or wholly African descent) and Kreol (the language) in order to avoid the tendency to assume a connection between the language (which is the first language of the vast majority in Mauritius) and one particular ethnic group (Baker 1972; see also Eriksen 1998: 21 note 27; Miles 1999: 221–223).