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## Lineage Rivalry and Colonial Control: The Dynamics of War in a Globalised Space

One might suggest an elementary subaltern principle of historiography: that no assertion of an imperialist discipline can be received as an event of colonial history without the ethnographic investigation of its practice. We cannot equate colonial history simply with the history of the colonizers. It remains to be known how the disciplines of the colonial state are culturally sabotaged.

Marshall Sahlins, 'Goodbye to *Tristes Tropes*: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History', 1993, pp. 485–86.

I open my argument with an account I was given in Houaïlou in 1995 by Narcisse Kaviyöïbanu, who had himself heard it from Gilbert Népörö, his mother's husband:

I'll tell you a story, it was when the Canala chiefdoms formed an alliance with the Whites ... In their history, the Néjâ and the Népörö [Houaïlou chiefdoms] were the seniors, and the others in Canala, the Bwaxéa and their families, were the juniors, the ones who come after ... When they formed an alliance with the Whites, the first thing they did, they decided they had to neutralise the people of Houaïlou. Because they wanted to be above both the chiefdoms in Houaïlou. So, what they did was, they sent a [European] ship to go and neutralise the two chiefs in Houaïlou.

The ship sailed from Canala, it entered the Parawiè channel, and when it entered the channel ... there are lookouts in the chiefdom, and the lookout at the harbour, that night when he was asleep, he had a dream. In his dream,

he saw a shark coming towards him, and then it came up onto the beach, then it struck like that with its tail ... then it says: 'Are you awake or asleep?' Then the old man answers: 'No, I'm awake.' The shark says: 'Quick, go and blow the *tutu* [conch], because there's a ship coming into the harbour with people from Canala on board, they're coming to kill the two chiefs.'

...

He runs from Parawiè to Warai ... there's a ford between Parawiè and then Warai ... he crossed that ford, he went up the other side onto the ridge ... and there he blew the conch. Usually people know, it's a signal that's understood, when the *tutu* sounds there, it means that there are people coming into the harbour down below. So when he blew, straightaway the warriors guarding the harbour ran to their pirogues, and they got into the pirogue, they went to the harbour with spells, they cast spells. The spells they cast made fog, so they called up the fog; that meant that when the ship entered the Houaïlou channel, they couldn't see anything, it was all covered in mist. And the pirogues came, they arrived, they came alongside the ship, they boarded and then they killed the people on board, the people from Canala and the Whites who were there. And then they took the bodies, and then they made an oven over there, there where the Nékvé church is, there's a big oven behind the chapel, they cooked all the people. When they finished cooking them, they took [the bodies] down to the house of Félix, the Népörö elder, and they cut them into portions. When they finished cutting them up there, they went down to the house of my two younger brothers [the two sons of Gilbert Népörö], to the house called Ka-öi, the Ka-öi alley, that means the place where people eat, and they ate them there in the alley, they ate the people from Canala and the Whites who came. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, September 1995)

I shall have occasion to address this text on several levels including anthropophagy, representations of ancestry and the powers of action (here called 'spells') pertaining to it and the local forms of ceremonial apportionment. In this first chapter, I propose first to explore what can be known of the political meaning of war and the evolution of the chiefdoms in the region of Houaïlou during the second half of the 19th century, particularly but not exclusively on the basis of a close and critical reading of colonial sources on colonial wars. I shall therefore trace the appearance of Houaïlou in writings, accounts and French 'sources', at the time of the first repressive operation conducted there in 1856. The use of the term 'repression', and even of the name 'Houaïlou', derives from an entirely Eurocentric perspective, a strongly biased view of the local social situation. For what took place at that time and became memorialised as

a significant date in ‘local’ history – a repressive operation carried out in 1856<sup>1</sup> – is also embedded, on a variety of levels, in multiple series of events and Kanak discourses of which those newly arrived from Europe were entirely unaware, and of which today we can only have a very partial perception. The Europeans who wrote reports, memoirs, letters or notes about what was happening in the Houaïlou region were entering *in media res*, into a multiplicity of Kanak and Oceanian histories; they themselves were embedded in a global history of trade (which involved, among other things, the search for sandalwood, gold, nickel and other minerals in New Caledonia) and the development of European imperialisms. While I make no claim to opening out the enormous complexity of these histories and this flow, I would, nevertheless, like to try to reconstitute one part of it.

The French takeover of New Caledonia on 24 September 1853 was ratified by several chiefs, in central Grande Terre, on the east coast, and in Kwawa and Canala – but not in Houaïlou. Who were these ‘chiefs’? Which families did they belong to? What was their understanding of a document written in a language they did not know, which used concepts of sovereignty peculiar to Western nation-states? What meaning could they give to the cross they inscribed at the bottom of this document? Greg Dening has explored the convoluted meanings of takeover in the case of Tahiti,<sup>2</sup> and a number of discussions have subjected the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand to similar analysis;<sup>3</sup> we can, then, safely posit that misunderstanding was the constitutive register of the colonial relations thus instituted. Be that as it may, at the time of taking possession, the French had had no contact with the Kanaks living in the territory now designated as Houaïlou, and controlled absolutely no part of it. Previously, from 1843 onwards, French Catholic missionaries had taken up residence in Balade, and then in other places in the north of Grande Terre (Touho and Wagap), during the course of sojourns marked by a series of crises and expulsions. The colonial power’s state control of Grande Terre at the time of ‘taking possession’ was in truth limited to Nouméa and the surrounding area (and that not without difficulty: wars continued in the Nouméa region throughout the 1850s),<sup>4</sup> to the Catholic missions in the north, and to a few isolated points of contact on the coasts (made during the military circumnavigation of the islands).

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1 See Dousset-Leenhardt 1970; Saussol 1979.

2 Dening 1996.

3 Kawharu 1989.

4 Dussy 2000 and 2012; Dauphiné 1995.

## 1847–55: Sandalwood traders, ‘Houailou’ and the Oceanian world-system

### Contact through trade and war

Dorothy Shineberg has demonstrated the importance of the links established in the second half of the 1840s throughout Grande Terre by sandalwood collectors, mainly British and Australian, particularly during the sandalwood rush of 1846–49.<sup>5</sup> Examination of the logs of a number of the ships involved<sup>6</sup> reveals that they wove a network of commercial and military relationships with the Kanak inhabitants of Houailou well before the French did so: there was certainly contact in August–September 1849 (*Eleanor*, Captain Edward Woodin, in ‘Whalo’), between 27 April and 7 June 1851 (*Eleanor*, Woodin, in ‘Wylow’), and on 24 January 1854 (*Louisa*, Captain Beresford, in ‘Wilo’).<sup>7</sup> In Houailou these were trading relations. The *Louisa*’s log of 24 January 1854 reports the ship’s sojourn in ‘Wilo’, where she arrived at six o’clock the previous evening:

Daylight turned to clear away the Boats ready for lowering, 2 hands employed repairing the Jib, at 9 lowered the Boat and proceeded up the river in search of sandalwood and shells, Noon fine and cleared NNE. P.M. Steady Breeze and clear, at 4 returned with the Boat with no wood. Bought 8 shells for 1 musket, at 6 hoisted up the boats. At 8 set the watch, night light, breeze and cloudy at 4 am hove short and got under weigh and proceeded down the coast. (Beresford 1853–54, 24–25 January 1854)

A recently collected account refers to a similar commercial relationship:

Old Baudoux<sup>8</sup> told me about when the first rifle arrived in Houailou. In the olden days, there was a boat that was going round Caledonia looking for sandalwood. It stopped to take some down in Nérhô lands, at Warai. The sailors asked them for their war weapons, spears and axes;<sup>9</sup> they gave them to them. Another day, the captain came, he asked them for their war

5 Shineberg 1967.

6 Woodin 1846–53; Beresford 1853–54.

7 While Philip Vigers sailed past ‘Wylow’ and probably made land in Poro bay (‘Red Harbour’) on 20 October 1850.

8 I shall return later to the figure of Georges Baudoux, surveyor in Houailou and New Caledonian writer (see Chapter 2). It is noteworthy that the Kanak ‘oral’ tradition can on occasion pass through the mediation of a colonist.

9 The fact that exchange could involve not only natural goods, like sandalwood and shells, but also ethnographic curiosities, particularly weapons, is a point to which I shall return (Chapter 2).

weapons, they gave them to him. In return he gave them a rifle. Then, by the sea, he taught them to shoot. They learned to shoot. (Eurit in 1990, p. 9; my translation)

These relations can probably be traced back even further than 1849. For example, the as yet unpublished manuscript by William Diaper reveals that he was present in Houa ilou in mid-1848.<sup>10</sup> Shineberg also reports that Woodin in his two ships, the *Eleanor* and the *Spy*, explored all the rivers of the east coast in 1846–47 in search of sandalwood, and left a number of men at different points along the coast to collect the precious timber.<sup>11</sup> It was during this exploration that a skirmish took place between some Kanaks from Houa ilou and the sandalwood collectors:

Thursday, 25th November [1847]. – Arrived on the east coast of Caledonia, anchored in a bay, where the brig *Spy*, Captain Whyte, was lying, found that the party I had left on shore and the crew of the brig *Spy* had had a desperate encounter with the natives, in which five of the crew of the *Spy* were severely wounded; fortunately no one killed. From the best information I could obtain, nine or ten of the natives were killed, and a great many wounded, as several of them applied to me to extract the balls out of their arms and legs. It appears that this encounter arose from the jealousy of the Wiloian tribe against my friends, (natives), caused, I suppose, by my friends getting rich in trade. The Wiloans are a very numerous tribe, and have great influence for many miles along the east coast. I am of opinion that great provocation had been given by some of my party, who remained on shore. (Woodin 1850, p. 298)

Unfortunately, the *Eleanor*'s log for this period of November 1847 is missing from the State of Tasmania archives,<sup>12</sup> and I was unable to locate the log of the *Spy*; there is nothing to indicate that it was preserved in any archive collection. Nevertheless, it seems to me very likely that this episode recounted by Woodin can be identified with one of the 14 armed incidents between Europeans and the inhabitants of the New Hebrides, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands between 1841 and 1848, which John Erskine, captain of the British warship HMS *Havannah*, listed in a letter written from on board in October 1849. Erskine's criticism of the lack of discipline and provocations by the sandalwood collectors in this text testifies both to a degree of understanding of the indigenous people

10 I await William W. Emilsen's forthcoming edition with great interest.

11 Shineberg 1967, p. 75.

12 The log held in the Crowther collection covers the periods April 1846 – June 1847 and March 1848 – August 1853.

on the part of a liberal officer, and to his sense of order, as a representative of the British state: his criticism of the anarchic nature of the sandalwood collectors' individual initiatives is not unmarked by distinct class prejudice.

All kinds of excesses have been committed by the undisciplined crews, who always carry arms, and are but too ready to make use of them. It is not surprising that the natives of the different islands (anxious though they are to traffic with Europeans) consider themselves justified in taking every advantage of men who treat them in such a manner. During the last few years, accordingly, constant disputes, attended with loss of life on both sides, have taken place. [A list follows, including:] 10. An expedition undertaken by the boats of the barque 'Spy' of Hobart Town, up the river Kanela, in New Caledonia; one man wounded, and many natives said to have been killed. (Erskine 1851, pp. 235–36)

It seems plausible that these two converging texts relate to the same event: in this reading, some of the members of the *Spy's* crew who had been left in Canala, and Kanaks with whom they were in contact, were attacked in late 1847 by warriors from 'Wilo'. Woodin's article in the *Nautical Magazine* of May 1850 represents the first published reference to the inhabitants of this region, which was to become 'Houailou'.

Contacts between sandalwood collectors and Kanaks seem to have been even more extensive in the neighbouring language area, or *xârâcùù* (around Canala), where it appears that dozens or even hundreds of rifles were exchanged;<sup>13</sup> this contributed to the development of wars and the emergence of a single dominant chiefdom that took control in Nakéty and Kwawa, with the support of whites. According to Nicholas Thomas,<sup>14</sup> trade with Europeans contributed throughout the Pacific region to the increasing pre-eminence of chiefdoms or families living in the coastal zones over those in the interior. It should be added that Shineberg, in her article 'Guns and Men in Melanesia', demonstrates that the social and political significance of the introduction of firearms should not be overstated on the technical level, since the firearms used in the Pacific in the mid-19th century were sometimes less effective than indigenous weapons. Two comparative advantages of firearms are often highlighted: their capacity to kill at close range and the psychological effect of the noise, smoke and powder flash. But this picture should be balanced against the slow and difficult process of reloading, the frequency of misfiring, and the powder's sensitivity to damp,

13 Dauphiné 1990a.

14 Thomas 1989a.

particularly problematic in a tropical maritime zone. Technical progress only began to alter this situation in the latter half of the 1860s.<sup>15</sup> Following Shineberg's argument, Kerry Howe shows that:

The assumption that firearms had a devastating effect when introduced into hostilities in the Pacific is not supported by events on the Loyalty Islands. There, Europeans and their technology did not change the tactics and techniques of warfare as long as it lasted and, in particular, firearms were responsible for killing only a small proportion of those who died in the fighting. (Howe 1974, p. 38)

Marshall Sahlins made a similar point in relation to Fiji: 'it was not European muskets that historically made Fijian chiefs powerful so much as the chiefs that made muskets historically powerful' (Sahlins 1993, p. 22).

In any case, the sandalwood trade in the central area of the coast developed out of Canala, and may thus have contributed to the 'jealousy' (Woodin 1850, p. 298) of the people of Houailou, by shifting the political and economic balance of relations between these neighbouring areas. The attack on the *Spy's* crew could then be understood against a background of tensions between Houailou and Canala.

## The name 'Houailou'

The uncertain origin of the name 'Houailou' has been pointed out more than once:<sup>16</sup> the region's inhabitants tend rather to make reference to their linguistic identity, speaking of the *Ajië* area. The name 'Houailou' is not found in any of the earliest written sources available on this region. The great bay and anchorage situated between Kanala-Kanela-Canala and Kwawa-Kouaoua (in the south-east) and Tiwaka-Wagap-Suaka (in the north-west) are referred to by the following terms: 'Whalo' (Woodin, log of the *Eleanor*, 1849); 'the Wiloian tribe', 'the Wiloans' (Woodin 1850); 'Wylow' (Vigers 1850); 'Wylow' (Woodin, log of the *Eleanor*, 1851); 'Wilo' (Beresford, log of the *Louisa*, 1854); 'Ouailo' (Foucher 1988); 'Wuailo' (Testard 1856, cited in Pannetrat 1993); 'Wailou' (Le Bris 1856); 'Wuailo' (Pannetrat 1993); 'Uailo' (Poupinel 1857); 'Wailu' (Laurent 1857); 'Vailu' (Du Bouzet 1858); 'Waillo' (Grimoult 1859); 'Uailu' (Montrouzier 1862); and 'Uailo', 'Wailo' (Vieillard and Deplanche 1863). It happens

15 Shineberg 1971.

16 Jacqueline de La Fontinelle, papers presented on 2 November and 18 December 1990 at Inalco, cited in Naepels 1998.

that the most sheltered anchorage in the Houaïlou region, particularly for deep-draught ships like those used by the sandalwood traders, lay at the entrance to the bay known today as Lebris Bay, and is often (but not exclusively) associated with the Nérhò clan,<sup>17</sup> in the immediate vicinity of what were the two coastal hamlets of Bailöö and Bwawi, near the mouth of the river Tü.

When you look at the bay there and you look at the coast, it's the most accessible point, that's where it's a bit calmer, you see. And then in relation to Parawiè, to explain, in Parawiè it's difficult to get in because of the fringing reef there, but there at Bailöö, it's really open to navigation, it's quite accessible to navigation. And then if the people coming in were afraid ... I mean, the space down there, you've got a view over a big space, the space is clear, strategically, it's a [very suitable] place. (Jean-Jacques Ayawa, extract from interview, July 2006)

Thus Bailöö is a place known locally as having been an anchorage or a landing for Polynesian pirogues coming from Ouvéa. It seems reasonable to hypothesise that the names 'Wilo', 'Wylow', 'Wailo', 'Wuailo' [Wailöö] are a corruption or an approximation of Bailöö.<sup>18</sup> As the sphere of reference of this toponym was extended in the sandalwood traders' accounts, by the middle of the 19th century the name encompassed the whole of the coastal region around the anchorage, including the delta or mouth of the main river of Houaïlou and that of Néawa. It was only through a subsequent corruption in French texts that the term 'Houaïlou' appeared, initially referring only to the coastal region and never used as a name to designate the whole of the present-day territory of the district. It was thus through this anchorage, used in earlier times and concurrently by other Oceanian migrants, that the sandalwood traders inserted themselves into an Oceanian system of political-commercial and, as we shall see, matrimonial exchange, as it was manifested in the Ajië area.

17 This clan is mentioned in the text by Nissol Euritéin, cited above in connection with the sandalwood trade and the exchange of weapons.

18 Or, conversely, that the name 'Bailöö' used today evolved from the older 'Wailöö'. Constructing hypotheses on the basis of what Anglophones, and subsequently Francophones, grasped of the complex phonology of New Caledonian Kanak languages is obviously problematic. We may nevertheless note that for the first syllable the English 'wi' or 'wy' and the French 'ouai', 'wuaï', 'uai' and 'wai' incontestably give [wai]; and for the second syllable the English 'lo' or 'low' transcribes a long, open 'o' sound (as in the English 'willow' or 'halo'), which corresponds to the French 'lo' but certainly not the phoneme 'ou' [u]. Wailöö thus seems to me the best transcription of what is recorded by these various early notations.

There are several texts reporting migrations from Polynesia (particularly from Wallis, Samoa and Tonga) to Ouvéa and Grande Terre during the 18th century.<sup>19</sup> It seems legitimate in this respect to speak of an ‘Oceanian world-system’ (to adopt Immanuel Wallerstein’s concept),<sup>20</sup> returning us to the key insight in Epeli Hau’ofa’s essay ‘Our Sea of Islands’, that the pre-colonial Pacific Ocean unified a network rather than isolating islands.<sup>21</sup> Bwawi and Bailöo represented important nodes in this network.

## George Wright, first European in Houaïlou, and the Néjâ chiefdom

James Paddon, the most active of the sandalwood traders during the 1850s, set up trading stations at which the sandalwood was gathered and prepared in the interval between calls by the collecting ship, in various locations on the east coast. One of these was the large station in Canala; another was established in Houaïlou around 1855.<sup>22</sup> The settling of a sandalwood trader, in the person of the English sailor George Wright, thus constitutes, to the best of my knowledge, the earliest lasting European presence in Houaïlou. Jean Cacot, himself the son of a Houaïlou colonist, wrote in his ‘Notes sur Houaïlou’ [‘Notes on Houaïlou’]:

Of the earliest Whites to arrive in Houaïlou, the first was Captain Wright, who commanded a sandalwood ship belonging to Paddon. It was shipwrecked at the mouth of the Houaïlou river, and the crew swam to shore and was welcomed by the ancestors of Mindia [a member of the Néjâ family]. The 16 sailors rejoined Paddon on Nou island, and Captain Wright remained with this tribe on the coast, where he married a member of the Chief’s family. (Cacot 1985, p. 41)

Patrick O’Reilly also mentions Wright in his biographical note on Thomas Wright:

Born of an English father, Georges [*sic*] Wright, former captain in the merchant navy, settled in Houaïlou towards 1855 (?). His mother was the daughter of a Houaïlou chief named Fonwiwé. He [Thomas Wright, the son] had three sisters and a brother, John. (O’Reilly 1953, pp. 410–11)

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19 Rochas 1862; Jouan 1865; Priday 1950; Hollyman 1959; Guiart 1963.

20 Wallerstein 1980, 1983 and 1984.

21 Hau’ofa 2008.

22 Knoblauch 1903 and 1988, p. 46.



The civil register for the district of Houaïlou shows that George Wright had several children: Thomas (born in 1868), Sarah (1869), Ruth Anne (1871), Nancy (1875), Mercy (1877) and John Powers (born in 1880). Notes in the margin show his date of birth as 1827 and indicate that his registered professions were farmer, merchant and trader. I have so far been unable to identify George Wright's Kanak companion, Bawiri<sup>23</sup> or Pûwiri,<sup>24</sup> and do not know to which lineage she belonged. However, statements gathered by the Protestant missionary Philippe Rey-Lescure do tell us that John Wright (George's younger son) married a woman from the Gôwémëu family:

Later, Kapea said to Samoa: 'Father, I think we are going to see John Rayek (Wright)'. This was an Englishman in Neuio, a Protestant, he had married a woman of the Gouemeu family. (Rey-Lescure 1967, pp. 87–88)

This Gôwémëu lineage seems to have brought together individuals of Samoan origin who had come via Ouvéa,<sup>25</sup> or from Ouvéa itself, around the Nêjâ chiefdom; this is also suggested by the fact that its totem is the shark<sup>26</sup> (whose role we have noted in the account cited at the start this chapter, in the war between the inhabitants of Houaïlou and Europeans in alliance with Canala Kanaks). It is not impossible that the Gôwémëu, by virtue of this fact, bore the role of administrators of the chiefdom's external contacts on the seaward side – and hence with the newly arrived sandalwood traders.

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23 In the civil register, Baououi or Baouioui or Baouinouï.

24 In the civil register, Pouwini or Pouwiri. The consonant 'f' does not occur in the Ajië language, and thus her name cannot be Fonwiwé, contrary to O'Reilly's 1953 report.

25 Pillon 2001, p. 184.

26 Pillon 2001, p. 189; Guiart 1949, 1953 and 1963, p. 618. William Diaper also mentions Ouvéa speakers living in Chief Wanga's area.

## October 1855 – March 1856: Gold prospectors, Canala and the European world-system

### Martin Pannetrat and his companions

It was into this setting that at least 11, and more probably 15 ‘colonists’, travelling directly from Sydney and led by Martin Pannetrat, arrived in Canala in October 1855.<sup>27</sup> The arrival of this cosmopolitan group (one German, Ferdinand Knoblauch; one Sardinian; one Swiss and a number of French men)<sup>28</sup> in New Caledonia resulted from a phenomenon of global significance:<sup>29</sup> the gold rush.<sup>30</sup> ‘Gold fever’ prompted major migrations to California and Mexico from 1849, and to Australia in 1851.<sup>31</sup> During the same period, the first half of the 1850s, the sandalwood trade declined owing to a shortage of available sailors, since the workforce had moved on to searching for gold. The French takeover of New Caledonia aroused a degree of interest among prospectors, who anticipated the possibility of major mineral resources: in February 1855, a letter from governor Joseph Du Bouzet reported a fruitless visit by gold prospectors who had travelled from Australia to New Caledonia without result.<sup>32</sup>

The new arrivals from Canala came as a direct result of this gold fever. A number of French people, mainly working-class individuals disappointed by the way the second Republic had developed,<sup>33</sup> left France for San Francisco.<sup>34</sup> In this passage from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx, while commenting ironically on Bonaparte and his government, testifies to the Californian interests of a proportion of the proletariat:<sup>35</sup>

27 The first figure is cited by Laurent (1857), the second by Le Bris (1856).

28 According to Pannetrat (1993).

29 For a comparable example, see Clifford 1997.

30 Le Bris 1988.

31 Blainey 1963.

32 Gold was discovered in New Caledonia in 1862, however, in the far north of Grande Terre.

33 The French republican government between the revolution of 1848 and the 1851 coup by Louis Napoléon (Napoleon III) [trans.].

34 Le Bris 1999.

35 It was through reading Le Bris (1999) that I was led to this passage.

On December 20, Pascal Duprat interpellated the Minister of the Interior on the ‘Goldbar Lottery’ ... Seven million tickets, a franc a piece, and the profit ostensibly destined to the shipping of Parisian vagabonds to California. Golden dreams were to displace the Socialist dreams of the Parisian proletariat; the tempting prospect of a prize was to displace the doctrinal right to labor. Of course, the workingmen of Paris did not recognize in the lustre of the California gold bars the lack-lustre francs that had been wheedled out of their pockets. In the main, however, the scheme was an unmitigated swindle. The vagabonds, who meant to open California gold mines without taking the pains to leave Paris, were Bonaparte himself and his Round Table of desperate insolvents. (Marx 2005, pp. 53–54)

On 9 September 1850, California became part of the United States of America, following the conclusion of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of February 1848, under which Mexico ceded Alta California, Texas and New Mexico (while Baja California, Chihuahua and Sonora remained Mexican). At this point, the English speakers in California turned on the foreign, Spanish- and French-speaking prospectors, forcing them to pay a tax on any gold they found. Following this measure, and the ensuing discontent, the Count of Raousset-Boulbon attempted, with a handful of French people, to create a new independent colony in the Mexican province of Sonora: he landed there twice, in 1852 with 250 armed men and, again, in 1854. He was taken prisoner and executed in 1854.<sup>36</sup> Pannetrat was a close associate of the count; he claimed to own the latter’s rifle, and acted as the executor of his will.<sup>37</sup> It is worth dwelling a moment on the figure of Raousset-Boulbon: he constitutes an entirely remarkable example of the reformist colonial entrepreneur, who settled in Algeria in 1845 and owned property in Mitidja:

who turns out to be a fervent colonist because he is a quite radical reformer, concerned to improve the lot of the poor and the labouring classes in France ... It was thus that this republican, particularly concerned to work towards improving the living and working conditions of workers, linked the social question to the colonial question (Le Cour Grandmaison 2005, pp. 303–05).<sup>38</sup>

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36 Le Bris 1998; González de Reufels 2003.

37 Moreover, Lachapelle’s tribute to the Count of Raousset-Boulbon (1859) includes poems by Pannetrat.

38 See Raousset-Boulbon 1848.

Following the failure of the second expedition to Sonora in 1854, Martin Pannetrat returned to San Francisco before leaving for Sydney, whence he set sail for New Caledonia and then, accompanied by Knoblauch, journeyed on foot from Canala to Nouméa and back, principally to inform the colonial authorities of the group's arrival. These working-class men, 'these colonists, recruited mainly in the poor districts of Paris, from among weavers, shop-boys and printers' apprentices' (Laurent 1857), 'indigent artisans' (Le Bris 1856), 'painter and decorator ... joiner-engineer ... tanner' (Pannetrat 1993), initially set up in Canala as farmers: they grew 'cotton, sugarcane, tobacco and vegetables' (Laurent 1857). Some of them, however, were impatient to find the gold that they had come to seek: a few months after they arrived, seven of them decided to set out for the north of Grande Terre, on 1 March 1856.

## The ambush of the gold prospectors

Six of them were never seen again; the fate of the seventh is disputed. The received account of this episode claims that the first six were killed and eaten in Houailou, while the seventh remained a prisoner for a while, employed in maintaining firearms, before escaping.<sup>39</sup> The sources relating to this episode are, however, highly problematic: let us consider the first accounts of the ambush. Anatole Bouquet de la Grye, a naval hydrographer who had settled in New Caledonia in 1855, offers an account that was not published until 1891:

Their journey was not long; as soon as they had left the territory of Kanala and entered the mountains, Kanaks from another tribe set fire to the hut where they were sleeping one night, and killed them with axes as they crawled out. (Bouquet de la Grye 1891, p. 16)

Émile Foucher, a naval adjutant, who arrived in Nouméa in May 1856 on board *La Bayonnaise* (a vessel to which we shall return), reported:

They went first to Ouailo, where they were well received by the natives; for a few days they advanced into the interior, digging holes in various places. The natives followed them in a friendly fashion, and soon the colonists thought they had nothing to fear from them. They were moreover armed with rifles and revolvers, and were all determined men. Trust was their downfall, for the Kanaks had long been planning an attack, and were waiting for a suitable moment to execute it without exposing themselves

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39 Dousset-Leenhardt 1970; Saussol 1979.

to danger. Finally one day, after an extremely taxing march, the colonists arrived at a place that was very difficult to cross. Burdened with their packs, which they had not yet resolved to entrust to the natives, they struggled to walk on. The natives offered to take on some of their baggage: their scheme duly succeeded; it consisted of three or four of them gathering around each defenceless colonist and, when a shout gave the signal, attacking all of them at once.

Several Kanaks therefore approached each colonist to take some of his baggage, and at the point when each of these unfortunate individuals was occupied in passing it over, a shout went up and six colonists fell at the same time, mortally wounded by blows from axes and clubs.

The seventh was only slightly wounded; he was not finished off, thanks to the intervention of a chief who kept him to make him a servant tasked with maintaining and repairing a few firearms. (Foucher 1988, pp. 123–24)<sup>40</sup>

Father Poupinel, procurer for Oceanian missions in Sydney, wrote during his voyage between Nouméa and Sydney on the same ship, *La Bayonnaise*, in 1857:

Our poor unfortunates fell into the hands of a tribe in the interior, where six of them were killed and eaten. The last, armed with a revolver, defended himself bravely and was taken under the protection of a chief, saving him from death. (Poupinel 1857)<sup>41</sup>

We also have two identifications of the geographical location, the origins of which are unknown, in the account by Ulysse de la Haüitière (a naval officer who, in November 1863, became chief clerk to the government, secretary of the colony's council of administration, librarian and conservator of the colony's archives), published in 1869:

It was in the village of Boughoat,<sup>42</sup> that six Europeans, who had departed from Kanala, searching for gold-bearing lands, were massacred and eaten, in the month of March 1856. The tragedy occurred in the village of Atoumoa, on the right bank of the Ouailou river. (de la Haüitière 1869, pp. 56 and 104)

'Boughoat' and 'Atoumoa' do not obviously point to any toponyms known today in the zone referred to by de la Haüitière, apart perhaps from Bwéwa.

40 The account given by Legrand (1893) is drawn directly from Foucher's text.

41 I am grateful to Bronwen Douglas for alerting me to this reference.

42 Six nautical miles (around 11 kilometres) up the Houailou river.

How can we know what happened? And what was known at the time, between March and July 1856, when the fate of the expedition was determined? Unless it is entirely fictitious, which is not impossible, the account of the ambush, with the detail of its three contradictory versions (fire in the hut, or crossing difficult terrain?) has only two possible origins, since there were only two categories of eyewitness to the events: the Kanaks who were responsible, who did not confide in Europeans, and the prisoner who escaped murder – but I have found no trace of any account he might have given. Moreover, anything he may have said is highly compromised, since published accounts of his story report that he went mad (see inset).

**'Atribat, having lost his wits, could give no information'**

'After two months, he contrived to escape and took refuge with our missionaries in Uagap.'<sup>1</sup> (Poupinel 1857)

'The one who was saved remained struck by the terror he had experienced and his intellectual faculties suffered. We learned of this massacre from missionaries who made approaches to the chief to urge him to release this colonist. The chief lived in the interior, but nevertheless quite close to the west coast. In 1857, this colonist managed to escape.' (Foucher 1988, p. 124)

'The seventh was kept prisoner a long time and was later saved by an English coaster, alas without happy outcome, for his reason had been deranged and the government of the time sent him to France.' (Knoblauch 1988, p. 48)

'A..., taking advantage of a dark night, fled, and having wandered for two days and two nights, prey to the torments of hunger, in constant fear, met one of the many Englishmen who had settled on the Caledonian coast at this time:<sup>2</sup> the latter, seized by pity, took him to Ouagap, where there was already a Marist missionary station. But so many moral and physical shocks had weakened the unfortunate man's brain: when he was questioned, on arrival in Ouagap, it was evident that he had lost his wits. Since then A... has roamed Caledonia, living at the expense of the tribes he visits, and respected by all.'<sup>3</sup> (de la Haüitière 1869, p. 105)

'One of our unfortunate compatriots, who was their prisoner for three months (Mr Napoléon Atribat) says that he suffered almost constantly from hunger, although they never omitted to give him his share, and often served him a double portion, because they saw him wasting away.'<sup>4</sup> (Rochas 1862, p. 145)

'This man finally succeeded in escaping during the night, and after wandering for two days, arrived in a tribe where he met an English adventurer who led him, after two further days' walk, to the Catholic mission in Ouagap. Atribat, having lost his wits, could give no information.' (Anonymous 1988, p. 289)

1. It should nevertheless be noted that there is no mention of the event in Marist publications, except for Poupinel's letter itself [Michel Naepels].
2. There is no way to know for sure, but could this have been George Wright? [Michel Naepels]
3. According to de la Haüitière, he was seen in Kanala in 1866.
4. According to Rochas, he had been adopted by a chief who was keen to take advantage of his assumed skill in repairing firearms. This man, who had escaped the massacre of his six companions who, like him, were searching for gold and found only death, finally managed to escape.

So where did the news of the disappearance of the prospectors and the account of the ambush come from? I believe that these accounts come first from Kanak intermediaries who were in contact with Martin Pannetrat, the leader of the group of proletarian settlers in Canala. In fact, Pannetrat learned of the disappearance of his former comrades from a Canala Kanak, and informed the French authorities. A version of his account ('A letter from a friend in San Francisco'<sup>43</sup>) was published in the *Journal du Havre* newspaper in May 1857:

A few days later, the Indian<sup>44</sup> Merah came to me looking sad, and told me: 'Your white men were killed and eaten in Wuailo by Alikì Wangà's tribe.'<sup>45</sup>

...

By dint of prayers and presens [*sic*], after four days I assembled three men who offered to brave all the dangers and go to seek information. They left by sea, in canoes, and returned only eight days later; their report only confirmed that of Merah; six Whites had been killed and eaten; the description of the seventh, whom they themselves had known in Kanala, was so exact that I could make no mistake about him: he had been spared. The good fortune of this lucky individual derived from the fact that he had been offered as a gift to a tribe in the interior, who are keeping him prisoner. His name is Apollon Abribat, of Sainte-Croix, in the department<sup>46</sup> of Ariège. (Pannetrat 1993, pp. 31–32)

Some Canala Kanaks, like 'Marah', thus acted as mediators. We need to examine their position in order to understand the account they gave to the French, both because they had chosen to welcome the latter in Canala, and because they were free to identify the guilty and the enemy as they chose, in line with their own interests.

43 This title refers to his time in California as a gold prospector.

44 'Indian' meaning native, again referring back to Pannetrat's Californian experience.

45 *Alikì* is a Polynesian (Futunian) term usually translated as 'chief', and used in interactions between Europeans and Kanaks since the time of James Cook.

46 French administrative region [trans.].

## 10 July 1856: War

### Colonial war and the terrorist tools of empire

Martin Pannetrat informed the colonial authorities in Nouméa about this ambush. Until 1860, New Caledonia was administered by the *Établissements français d'Océanie* (French Oceanian Administrations) (whose head office was in Tahiti): the joint military governor travelled between the two locations (a journey of some 4,500 kilometres, made by sail). Joseph Du Bouzet held this post from January 1855 to October 1858. In his absence from the territory of New Caledonia (notably from June 1855 to May 1857) there were two individuals who stood in for colonial authority: the senior commander of New Caledonia (É. Le Bris from May 1856 to May 1859), and the special commander for New Caledonia, who headed the general service (Jules Testard from January 1855 to December 1858).<sup>47</sup> At the time that they received Pannetrat's message, their military manpower was small, their control over the territory limited and their presence was already being contested in the Nouméa area. Moreover, at that point, the soldiers had not yet mentioned the prisoner: Testard wrote to Pannetrat in April 1856: 'I cannot contemplate waging war on Wuailo, since there are no longer any lives to be saved' (cited by Pannetrat 1993, p. 32); and, in August, Le Bris writes: 'A few days after they left, those who had stayed in Kanala learned from natives of their comrades' sad end, they had been murdered and eaten by a tribe not far away' (Le Bris 1856). They therefore waited for reinforcements, expected with the impending arrival of the sloop *La Bayonnaise* (a large ship bearing cannon with a 1,000-metre range) and its soldiers.

The policy then espoused demonstrates that the French military were convinced of the necessity of bloody reprisal. Le Bris sums up the principles motivating his action thus: 'I therefore resolved to give them a lesson that would remain in the tribal memory [of the Houailou tribe responsible], and would have an impact that could only be favourable to our position in the midst of these savage tribes' (Le Bris 1856). It was imperative to demonstrate to the colonised that they would never have the upper hand. This was a terrorist policy in the true sense of the word, one that aimed to inspire terror in order to assert sovereignty; it recalls Michel Foucault's reading of public execution under the French Ancien Régime:

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<sup>47</sup> See Savoie 1922.

Its aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, at its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength ... The ceremony of punishment, then, is an exercise of 'terror' ... What had hitherto maintained this practice of torture was not an economy of example, in the sense in which it was to be understood at the time of the *ideologues* (that the representation of the penalty should be greater than the interest of the crime), but a policy of terror: to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power. (Foucault 1995, pp. 48–49)

Testard also writes: 'The revenge may be delayed, but it will be taken if I am granted permission, and I shall make it as terrible as I can' (Testard 1856, cited in Pannetrat 1993, p. 32); and Le Bris notes 'the principle that against savages, all action must be firm and fearsome' (Le Bris 1856). The justification given for the repressive operation conducted against the inhabitants of Houaïlou was summed up most clearly by Laurent, the captain of *La Prévoyante*, who arrived in Nouméa in October 1855:

The truth cannot be overstated, that any hostile demonstration on our part that is not fully followed through, any expedition that results only in making the natives flee into the forests, burning huts that will be rebuilt the following day, or cutting down a few isolated coconut palms, will have entirely missed its target, increasing the boldness of the savages and completely discrediting us in their eyes. It pains me to say so, but if a decision is made to punish, the punishment must be complete and must leave a lasting memory: a single incidence will suffice. (Laurent 1857)

The second singular aspect of the colonial war, which also testifies to the circulation of models of colonial government,<sup>48</sup> was the reliance on local auxiliaries (in this case, originating from Canala). 'It was very important that we had natives with us in fighting our enemies on the island; it was simply an application of the policy that is the order of the day in Africa'<sup>49</sup> (Pannetrat 1993, p. 36). Thus, according to Pannetrat, for the operation against Houaïlou, 'more than four hundred savages' (p. 37) were mobilised. This reinforcement served a dual purpose: both military – it helped to facilitate victory (given that the French knew nothing of

48 Partly because officers circulated between various colonial locations, but more generally because the conventions of state violence were taught as theory and tested in practice, their application was not restricted to colonial regions and occasionally extended into metropolitan France: see Maspéro 1995; Le Cour Grandmaison 2005; Dewerpe 2006.

49 In the French colonial vocabulary of 1856, this means in Algeria.

the terrain, since they had never been to Houaïlou, their numbers were limited, and the superiority of their weapons only relative, particularly at close range)<sup>50</sup> – and ‘pedagogical’ (that is to say, terrorist), since the violence inflicted also made an impression on the auxiliaries. Le Bris acknowledges this in his report to the ministry, though he magnifies his own part in the proceedings: ‘Rather in order to generate spectators who would also benefit from the lesson than to recruit auxiliaries, I allowed a hundred or so warriors from Kanala to accompany us in their pirogues.’ The Kanak fighters (400, or 100, auxiliaries) should be set beside the 20 soldiers or the ‘sixty men’ (Le Bris 1856) on board *La Bayonnaise* at that moment. As Bouda Etemad writes in his analysis of the technologies of European imperialism: ‘In the final analysis, the white coloniser won the colonial wars thanks to better organisational abilities and the adaptation of his fighting techniques, but also to the liberal use of indigenous recruits’ (Etemad 2007, p. 78). Although the term ‘auxiliary’ was incorporated into colonial vocabulary, here it was not a legal concept or a status. The second half of the 19th century was precisely the period when the legal framework of the colonies was being progressively put in place; during this period concepts had not yet become fixed and were often rather vague. Sometimes a legal framework existed for the employment of these backup troops – a native company was formed in 1857 in the Nouméa region – but usually not. Whether denoting official status or not, the term formed part of a deprecatory mindset in which these fighters were a subcategory of the category ‘native’: in the colonial wars, the terms used were almost always ‘rebels’ and ‘auxiliaries’, rarely ‘enemies’ or ‘allies’.

We have a number of primary sources on the repressive operation itself: the report by Le Bris and Pannetrat’s letter, written in the months following the event, and the memoirs of Knoblauch. Pannetrat and Knoblauch both participated in the operation, backing up the soldiers. We also have many historical secondary sources, for example a letter from Poupinel (who was transported to Sydney on *La Bayonnaise* by Le Bris shortly afterwards), and the recollections of Foucher. The operation consisted of a cannonade, the landing of troops, the pursuit and murder of the inhabitants, and destruction of property. Here is Poupinel’s summary:

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50 I have already referred to Shineberg’s analysis on this point. To quote Bouda Etemad: ‘At least until the end of the nineteenth century, the colonisers’ victory did not stem from their technical superiority’ (2007, p. 75).

*La Bayonnaise* left with a company of marines, under the command of Captain Testard. The inhabitants of Uailo did not know what the ship's intentions towards them were, and as they had no suspicion and were gathered in large numbers, there could have been real carnage. But as the whaleboats moved towards the shore to land the troops, several cannon shots sowed terror among the savages, who scattered and fled as fast as they could. Our soldiers set off in pursuit of the fugitives, and killed a number of them at a river crossing. There was no reason to follow the Kanaks across their mountains, where they run and climb like mountain goats, and which offer them inaccessible hideaways. During this time, our native allies from Kanala were burning huts, destroying plantations, knocking down coconut palms, and were very joyful, because there was much to eat. These wretches did worse: they fished out the bodies of those who had been killed and withdrew to an islet to eat them, despite the vigilance exercised at the behest of Captain Testard. (Poupinel 1857)

Le Bris gives a total of 30 dead, compounded by the destruction of plantations and pirogues:

Their losses must have amounted to about thirty men. An unprecedented number in any Caledonian war. Adding to this the destruction of their plantations, their pirogues, in a word of all their means of subsistence, there is reason to hope that they will in the future refrain from cruelty like that of which they were guilty. (Le Bris 1856)

Pannetrat quotes three villages destroyed (including those of 'Alikì Wanga' and 'Alikì Ykà', his 'vassal'), and 50 dead: 'We had burned three villages and killed about fifty of the enemy, when our soldiers' bugle call sounded the retreat once more' (Pannetrat 1993, p. 37). Clearly recognisable here is the theory of total war developed for the conquest of Algeria by the French officers Thomas Bugeaud, and subsequently Louis de La Moricière, from as early as 1840: the practice of the 'razzia' [raid], the destruction of crops and pasture<sup>51</sup> that, in Lucien de Montagnac's view, constitutes an entire 'system of destruction of all their means of existence' (cited in Maspéro 1995, p. 194).

[In Algeria], the French decided to alter their methods of warfare and considerably increase the size of their forces. From 1840 on, the military leaders (La Moricière, Bugeaud) recommended the 'razzia' or raiding technique. 'The Arabs', said Bugeaud, 'must be prevented from planting, harvesting or grazing without our permission'. This technique, which

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51 See Maspéro 1995, pp. 177–79.

postulated that the coloniser was fighting, not ‘against an enemy army, but against an enemy people’, degenerated into a method of systematic devastation. The correspondence of the French officers gives an idea of this methodical sacking: ‘We lay waste, we burn, we pillage, we destroy houses and trees. Battles, few to none.’ (Etemad 2007, p. 76)

In Houaïlou in 1856 there was much fighting and also extensive destruction.

## The Kanak war

The meaning of this ‘repressive’ operation must have been hard to fathom for its victims: it took place on 10 July 1856, more than four months after the disappearance of the prospectors, and on the coast, whereas a range of later sources point to the killings having taken place in locations at least 10 kilometres from the coast: in 1869 de la Haüitière speaks of a place situated 11 kilometres up the Houaïlou valley, Émile Foucher describes the prisoner being held by a chief living ‘nevertheless quite close to the west coast’ (Foucher 1988, p. 124), the paramount chief Joël Mèèjà, in an account collected by Bernard Brou in the mid-1970s, locates the event near Poya (Nérá or Gwapâ<sup>52</sup>), and Jean Guiart ‘in the upper Houaïlou valley’ (Guiart 2004, p. 94). Further evidence in support of this theory emerges from the record by Knoblauch, who participated directly in the repressive operation: ‘The “collective murder” followed by anthropophagy of the six colonists was committed *perhaps much further away than Houaïlou* but the chiefs of these regions were ashamed and disconcerted because they recognised the wrongs, the crimes perpetrated on their lands’ (Knoblauch 1988, p. 49, my emphasis).

We must therefore resolutely distance ourselves from the viewpoint of French sources on this aggressive violence that was deemed a ‘repressive’ operation: there is no reason to believe that any of the Kanak actors involved made the justificatory link established by the military between the disappearance of the gold prospectors on the one hand, and the devastation of coastal villages and massacre of some of their inhabitants on the other. In this respect, the French accounts, however diverse (written by colonists, missionaries, soldiers) are a pure artefact relative to what was played out between the Kanaks of Houaïlou and Canala in this war, and to the temporality peculiar to these relations. Here we should

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52 Brou 1988, pp. 119, 266.

recall the conflict that probably took place in 1847 between the 'Wilo tribe' and some of the crew of the sandalwood ship *Spy*, assisted by their 'native friends' from 'Kanela'. We do not have a detailed chronology of these earlier relations. While there is no doubt that the French military instrumentalised their Kanak auxiliaries for the benefit of their imperialist drive, there is every reason to believe that the Canala Kanaks themselves steered the French military action in line with their own political interests, if not exactly co-directing it.

As we have seen, the people of Canala, through the intermediary of the man named 'Marah', identified those 'guilty' of the murder of the gold prospectors and guided the French soldiers to the villages they wished to 'punish'. We may even hazard, if we are to believe Le Bris, that they might first have fanned the anger of the French to guarantee their engagement, by transmitting or inventing 'words of threat and challenge':

The tribe of Wailou, which is the name of the guilty tribe, not seeing anyone seeking revenge for their unfortunate victims, eventually stopped believing in the arrival of a warship, with which some of their neighbours, more aware of our means of repression, had tried to frighten them. Proud of their temporary impunity, the chiefs of this tribe dared to utter words of threat and challenge against us, should we set foot on their territory. I therefore resolved to teach them a lesson that would remain in the tribal memory and would have an impact that could only be favourable to our position amidst these savage tribes. (Le Bris 1856)

The repressive operation seems also to have been a Kanak war, through the application of Oceanian practices of war. The destruction of crops and coconut palms was not inspired purely by the Algerian *razzia*: there is widespread evidence of it in the anthropology of the South Pacific, as there is of anthropophagy (there is no proof of the abduction of women in this attack in July 1856, but we shall encounter examples below).

## A note on anthropophagy

Following William Arens, some authors argue that anthropophagy is not a historically documented fact, but rather a colonialist cliché designed to cast the colonised as savages, to attribute to them an intolerable violence, in order to justify the policies of repression and colonisation (while masking their own violence). Arens condemns the 'double standard' (Arens 1979, p. 21) whereby accounts of European cannibalism are subjected to harsh criticism, contrasting with the positivist acceptance of all accounts of

non-European cannibalism. He presents case studies of famous incidences from the anthropological literature. After deconstructing Hans Staden's 'testimony' about the Tupinamba, Arens examines and criticises a case attesting forms of anthropophagy among the Kanak people – the testimony of the Rarotongan evangelist Ta'unga – pointing out two particular internal contradictions in his account: 'If the natives of New Caledonia ate everyone, from distant enemy to close kin, then how did Ta'unga escape this fate?' (Arens 1979, p. 33); and how could he report a conversation between a father and son about a victim to be devoured, yet be unable to intervene because he did not know enough of their language?<sup>53</sup> We should note that these two arguments are not entirely unanswerable: we have no sociological account of Ta'unga's local social relations that would allow us to understand what support there was for his presence; and we can also imagine him having a stumbling linguistic capacity that would enable him to understand without giving him the means to speak, and to have a passive understanding of the language. But more broadly, it is the generalised suspicion with which Arens concludes that has been most contested, and which led Pierre Vidal-Naquet to compare the logic of his argument with that of Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson.<sup>54</sup>

The debate was subsequently reignited in an unexpected development of the bitter dispute between Gananath Obeyesekere and Marshall Sahlins. In a study on Fiji Obeyesekere, while not categorically denying the practice of anthropophagy, whether ritual or alimentary, nevertheless argued that the vast majority of cases of alleged cannibalism reported in European accounts (by sailors, missionaries and soldiers) are fantasy, and that a number of anthropological analyses (notably that of Sahlins) make the mistake of relying on these accounts wholly uncritically.<sup>55</sup> While it is based on a similar principle, his analysis is certainly more sophisticated than that of Arens.<sup>56</sup> His demonstration using the case of Fiji centres on a critique of the account by John Jackson, alias Cannibal Jack, alias William Diaper, who we have already encountered as the first sandalwood trader to have left an account of his time in Houailou.<sup>57</sup> Sahlins responded by reasserting the importance of cross-verifying sources, pointing to

53 Arens 1979, pp. 34–35.

54 Vidal-Naquet 1992; see also Lévi-Strauss 2016.

55 Obeyesekere 1998. He develops this argument in his 2005 book.

56 Arens wrote a glowing review of Obeyesekere's book (Arens 2006).

57 See Diaper 1928 and 1999; Diaper 1951; Erskine 1853.

the multiple testimonies of anthropophagy in Fiji, and the necessity of examining the entire body of such accounts: the fact that one of them is unreliable does not mean that they are all delusional.<sup>58</sup>

Arens' position has been defended more convincingly by historian Alice Bullard in the case of New Caledonia: 'The legend of Kanak cannibalism ... took on a determining role in colonial culture' (Bullard 2000, p. 173).<sup>59</sup> Indeed, until the mid-20th century, there was widespread use of the trope of cannibalism to stigmatise the Kanaks as savage, from the Kanak cannibal village exhibited at the Paris Colonial Exposition in 1931<sup>60</sup> to *Cannibal Island*, the American book offered as an introduction to New Caledonia when it served as a support base during the war in the Pacific.<sup>61</sup> Isabelle Merle has demonstrated the weaknesses in this analysis.<sup>62</sup> More surprisingly perhaps, Jean Guiart has recently come over to this position, asserting that Kanak anthropophagy was extremely limited in scale and ritual in nature: 'Cannibalism has never been proven in New Caledonia ... The only verifiable historical accounts speak of the ingestion of part of the heart of an enemy during war, by the war leader alone' (Guiart 1998, p. 124).

Unless we are to give up on any possibility of writing about the past, it is difficult to discard a number of historical testimonies,<sup>63</sup> and particularly to brush away the multitude of accounts passed down in the oral tradition, with the claim that the Kanaks themselves have internalised the missionaries' prejudices (during the contemporary period), or the assertion that they used these accounts to frighten Europeans (in the 19th century). For the Kanaks readily offer accounts of anthropophagy in their tales of old wars, like the one cited at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>64</sup> Maurice Leenhardt himself brought together examples 'recorded in the present-day conversation of the natives' in his dictionary of the Ajië language (Leenhardt 1935, p. v.): I shall cite two. In the article on 'Wenena' [*wênénââ*] (heart):

58 Sahlins 2003.

59 See also Bullard 1998.

60 Dauphiné 1998.

61 Priday 1944.

62 Merle 2005.

63 For example Moncelon 1885, p. 363–64.

64 See also the articles by Bensa and Goromido, 1996, 1997 and 1998.

*Na pè wenena xie ma ara ma oi ro nemè re wanii ere, O kamo re ye oro go ye oi unu a wenena xie* (He took his heart, cooked it and ate it before all of them, saying: whoever flees, I will eat his heart as I eat this one). (Leenhardt 1935, p. 353)

In the article on ‘Kamosari’ [*kâmöyaari*] (servant): ‘*Na ki oi kamo kere e, nè oi dexe boè kamosari* (If he eats a relative, he will eat a woman from the younger generation)’ (Leenhardt 1935, p. 131). Moreover, Leenhardt repeatedly associates anthropophagy with greed, on the basis of a statement by Bwêâyöuu Ērijiyi, one of his clerical pupils (see Chapter 2), which describes the season when the guaiacum trees are in blossom as the best time to consume human flesh:<sup>65</sup> ‘*Na moke mii na mù nedaa ne ke dè rhère I kamo* (The guaiacum is yellow – flowering – it is the day when man is really fat, the season of murders or raiding sorties for anthropophagous purposes)’ (Leenhardt 1935, p. 261).

Rather than pursuing this reflection on an abstract level, I shall return to the material available on the events of 1856, cited above. The vast majority of authors assert that the gold prospectors who disappeared were eaten: this was a prejudice – not based on any evidence or investigation – that effectively justified a particularly harsh repression. They were ‘murdered and eaten’ (Le Bris 1856), ‘massacred and eaten’ (de la Haüitière 1869), ‘killed and eaten’ (Poupinel 1856); in the same letter Poupinel describes ‘a horrible scene of cannibalism’. But, as we have seen, the information did not derive from any eyewitness, and was no doubt rooted partly in the strong hold it had on the Europeans’ imagination. But we should not forget that the original account came via the Canala Kanaks: ‘Your white men were killed and eaten’, Marah is alleged to have said, if we are to believe Pannetrat (1993, p. 31). One thing is certain: the French colonists’ firm belief that they were dealing with anthropophagi removed the need for any real investigation of the alleged facts.

By contrast, a number of those who participated in the repressive operation in July 1856 left direct testimonies of these events. Pannetrat reports a scene of anthropophagy that he claims to have witnessed himself, carried out by Canala auxiliaries on the night before they disembarked:

One of the chiefs, Romoneko, said to me in a low voice that they were eating four or five prisoners who had been captured on the coast a few hours earlier. I shall not describe the scene in question. Hundreds of black

65 Quoted in Leenhardt 1930, p. 95; 1935, p. 190; 1937a, p. 151.

bodies slipping like shadows through the trees, the light of the fires, the corpses that were cut up, the cries, the dances, all of this together was enough to strike terror in the heart of even the most battle-hardened man. (1993, p. 37)

He goes on to describe the collection of limbs of victims in Houailou (for the purposes of consuming them) during the conflict:

I had just hit an enemy who was swimming across the river with a rifle shot. It took one of our Kanala men only moments to seize the corpse, drag it through the mud, place it in the bottom of the canoe, cover it with banana leaves and return to the fray, looking as if butter would not melt in his mouth. I later found out that he had collected three other bodies in the same way. (1993, p. 38)

This scene is reported by Pannetrat's contemporaries Foucher and Popinel, who did not witness it directly, but were in direct contact with the soldiers who participated in the operation:

In the evening, we noticed that a small pirogue that we imagined was full of taros or yams, covered with many banana leaves, seemed to be an object of particular attention among some of the Kanala men, who asked permission to go and spend the night on a nearby islet.

This seeming suspicious, we went to look at the pirogue and found a hundred or so arms and legs of natives who had been killed, which the Kanala men had brought, covering them with grass and banana leaves to make them look like taro and yams.

We towed the pirogue out into the open water and threw the contents into the water. (Foucher 1988, pp. 125–26)

They went to recover the bodies of those who had been killed and withdrew to an islet to eat them, despite the vigilance of Mr Testard. (Poupinel 1857)

These texts have to be read with the vigilance demanded by critical discourse analysis: while we can have no way of knowing the fate of the bodies of the six gold prospectors who disappeared, the written and oral documents available do seem to confirm that, in the mid-19th century, anthropology formed part of the register of action in war.

## 1857–78: The alliance with the French and the auxiliaries' investment

The violence of the massacre of 10 July 1856 in the coastal zone of Houaïlou had long-term consequences for relations between the chiefdoms of this zone and the French colonial authorities. In order to understand the contemporary situation in New Caledonia, it is important to note that the chiefdoms in this region were in large part shaped by their military relations with the Europeans, and subsequently by the rules and practices associated with 'native peoples' status'.<sup>66</sup> The concept of 'chief' should not, therefore, be construed as an ahistoric, purely taxonomical category, assuming continuity from the pre-colonial period to the present.

Following the devastation caused by the operation conducted by *La Bayonnaise*, its colonial troops and its allies from Canala, the Kanaks in the coastal zone of Houaïlou sought to build contractual relations of alliance with the French through exchange, in all possible ways: with the French missionaries in Wagap, with the colonists and administrators in Canala, using both Oceanian and European exchange goods (respectively a small tapa or bark cloth, and a penny acquired from the sandalwood traders):

After that day, the people of Uailo were struck by terror, they ever thought they saw the great ship arriving, and they had not dared to come down from their eyries to rebuild their huts and restore their plantations. Finally they sent to Kanala to ask if the great ship would return and exterminate them; the reply came that if they were good, no harm would be done to them; at this, the chief sent a deputation to our fathers in Uapag with quite unusual gifts, a small tapa and a penny; they went to ask for missionaries, because they wanted to be the ally, the friend of the French. It was thus in these circumstances that *La Bayonnaise* recently set off once more for Uailo: the inhabitants were not greatly reassured. The chief was summoned and admonished: a pardon was granted, and peace concluded to the great satisfaction of this tribe, who came to rebuild their huts and once again requested missionaries. (Poupinel 1857)

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66 Code de l'indigénat: the system of colonial government adopted in 1881 and imposed throughout French colonies from 1887 until 1947, subjecting indigenous people and immigrant labourers to forced labour, curfews, requisitioning and capitation taxes, among other conditions [trans.]. See Merle 1995; Bensa 2000.

At the same time, as Poupinel's account indicates, the French political hold over Houaïlou and the 'pacification' of this zone – which, as we shall see, in no way signified the absence of war – was reinforced by visits from a number of ships in 1857, with Du Bouzet on the *Styx* and Le Bris on *La Bayonnaise*.

In Vaïlu the tribe previously punished by *La Bayonnaise* for having participated in the massacre of Mr Pannetrat's companions, the Natives are calm, last year they were permitted to rebuild their villages. This is one of the most beautiful and most populated parts of New Caledonia. They offered Captain Le Bris land for the colonists, but as the population is large there is little space available. (Du Bouzet 1858)

It is worth noting that the name of Le Bris is today inscribed in the landscape and toponymy of Houaïlou: 'Lebris Bay', previously known as 'Lebris Harbour' (*Moniteur*, 30 August 1863), is the name of the gulf enclosed by the Mévéxô (or Mwâxa) peninsula or Cap Bocage, and the shore running from Ba to Nékwe and Warai: 'That is Lebris Bay, named after a navy captain, you know his history, he's the one who came with those militia, to destroy all our villages' (Guy Mèbwèdè, extract from interview, July 2006).

The alliance thus concluded had lasting effects: in the years afterwards, men from Houaïlou were recruited as auxiliaries in their turn, in 1863–64 against Kanaks from Ponérihouen (in the north), under the leadership of chief 'Ai'; in 1867 and 1868 against Kanaks from the upper Houaïlou and Bourail valleys (in the west), under the leadership of chiefs 'Ai', 'Kambo' and 'Ica'; in 1878 against inhabitants of Poya (in the north-west), under the leadership of chiefs 'Peuh-Peuh' and 'Dimagué'; and finally in 1917, against the inhabitants of the far north (especially in Koné and Hienghène), under the leadership of chiefs 'Mindia' and 'Mandaoué'. In addition, they supplied 'volunteers' in the two world wars, and policemen and orderlies for Nouméa.

### 1863–64: The recognition of Ai on the coast

Paradoxically, the military operations of the 1860s in which auxiliaries and chiefs from Houaïlou were involved are more difficult to describe than that of 1856. This is because there are fewer sources available and they become standardised, partly because, as French political control became more established, correspondence with the government ministry responsible grew less frequent; similarly, with the increase in the French

military and administrative presence, officers – who tend to make up the majority of those writing testimonies – were less systematically involved in all operations. The expansion of the administration also included the establishment of the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (*New Caledonia Monitor*), which became virtually the only source on the history of this period. Classic historiography refers extensively to it, usually uncritically.<sup>67</sup> Rather than repeating these easily accessible accounts, I would like to emphasise the link between the mobilisation of auxiliaries and the administrative recognition of chiefdoms, and to highlight a number of points.

The French military authorities based in Napoléonville – the name given to Canala at that time – visited Houaïlou and Ponérihouen twice in early 1864. The purpose of the first visit, from 25 to 27 January, was to create an impression; the second, from 28 March to 5 April, was a repressive operation. The local stakes involved in the conflicts that arose in the coastal zone between Houaïlou and Ponérihouen in 1863–64, between inhabitants and chiefs from Ponérihouen and those from Monéo, are related in particularly obscure and anecdotal form in the *Moniteur de Nouvelle-Calédonie*: ‘There are constantly new versions of the story in the struggle between the chiefs of Panariva and of Monéo, which we reported in a recent issue’ (*Moniteur*, 4 October 1863). The context in which the chiefdoms of Houaïlou became involved in this conflict located further north is also unclear. We are never told the primary source of the information given, nor how reliably the circumstances are reported. The military were themselves aware that they knew very little about the local issues:

The commanders of two posts on the east coast [Wagap and Napoléonville] constantly reported new conflicts between tribes. The almost insurmountable difficulty they had in communicating with all these places prevented them from finding out the precise truth ... [On 25 January 1864] Lieutenant Carrey, captain of *La Gazelle*, landed straightway and questioned the colonists; but there, as subsequently in the bay of Monéo, he was unable to decipher the motives for the wars we have mentioned. Some claimed they were instigated by Catholics; others that abduction of women and above all the desire to eat human flesh were the pretext for a war which has continued almost since time immemorial

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67 Dousset-Leenhardt 1970 and 1976; Saussol 1979; Dauphiné 1989.

between the two bays. With a caution that can easily be understood, each colonist holds back a part of the whole truth about the chief of the territory in which he is resident. (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864)

The reasoning behind the repressive action, on the other hand, is clear: 'In January [1864], the schooner *La Gazelle* was sent to the east coast to try to pacify the natives and make them understand their duties toward the colonial authorities' (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864). In March–April, the repressive operation was undertaken 'in order once again to settle differences between the natives and to provide effective protection for our colonists' (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864). The aim was both to put an end to (real or presumed) cases of physical violence, murder and anthropophagy in conflicts between Kanaks, and to protect 'our colonists' property' (the phrase is used twice in the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* on 1 May 1864), which had been destroyed or threatened in September 1863 and February 1864. The confirmation, in late March 1864, that these two principles of civil peace and respect for colonisation had been violated was the immediate trigger for the military operation in early April:

Information obtained on his visit to Houaïlou having confirmed that the tribe of Monéo, notwithstanding its promises, had destroyed the plantations of the people of Nékoué and that the tribe of Mou, by means of harassment, had forced the colonists Peter Grundy and Lecaille to leave their homestead. (*Moniteur*, 8 May 1864)

Local interventions by the French were always backed up by an appeal to 'chiefs' and by the mobilisation of auxiliary troops. Thus, on 25 January 1864, the schooner *La Gazelle* 'anchored in Houaïlou, with on board, in addition to the infantry detachment, the chiefs Gélisma and Kaké, from Kanala, and the native Sandoli, as interpreter'. It was the military operation itself that most directly involved the warriors from Houaïlou:

On 28 March, 20 men of the naval Infantry and 12 people of Kanala, under the command of Sub-lieutenant Scellos, left Napoléonville on the schooner *L'Étoile*, captained by Leleizour, and disembarked that evening in Houaïlou. The following day 150 volunteers from this area, of Nékoué, and from Houaraye and Ba, joined them and all journeyed towards Monéo, while the *Étoile* sailed close to shore ... On 3 April ... at three o'clock, the soldiers entered the encampment after having fought a thousand men for ten hours, killed or injured about sixty of them, and destroyed more than 600 huts. As we have already noted, the auxiliaries took charge of destroying the plantations. (*Moniteur*, 8 May 1864)

The operation also left a number of auxiliaries wounded: 'From Houaïlou, 8 natives; from Nékoué, 3 natives; from Houaraye, 1 native' (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864).

In considering the Kanak involvement in this operation, a number of features need to be highlighted: on the one hand, it was once again mediated through relations between the chiefdoms on the Houaïlou coast (Houaïlou strictly speaking at that time designating the region of Lèwèö, where the sandalwood trader George Wright had settled and which was becoming an administrative centre, as were Warai, Nékwé and Ba), and those of Canala (the chiefs 'Gélima' (Nôme) and 'Kaké' (Bwaxéa) are mentioned). On the other, we have a system of events that all tend in the same direction: the man identified by the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* as the chief of Houaïlou was seeking full recognition from the French colonial authorities. Here are a few salient moments: in August 1863, the chief of 'Ouailou' participated, alongside other chiefs and native workers, in the Emperor's Day celebrations that took place in Nouméa (*Moniteur*, 23 August 1863). This chief seems to have had difficulty in establishing his authority locally: '[The population of Houaïlou] previously had a single chief, who died two or three years ago ... The subaltern chiefs of Nékoué, Houaraye, Bâ and others liberated themselves by separating from the heir of the paramount chief; since then, this region has resounded with war cries' (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864). In November 1863 and February 1864, the latter appealed to the military base in Napoléonville, receiving ceremonial recognition in January 1864, before supplying auxiliaries in mass numbers in March–April 1864:

[In November 1863] the commander of the post at Napoléonville received an emissary from Aï, the heir of the paramount aliki [chief] of Houaïlou, who requested our intervention to put an end to the constantly revived hostilities between populations now resistant to his authority.

...

[On 26 January 1864], before troops and sailors in battle formation on the coast, proceedings were opened with a bugle call, and Captain Carrey, in the presence of chiefs and natives from the various tribes of Houaïlou, declared, in the name of the Government, that Aï, the heir of the former chief, was recognised as supreme chief of the whole of the territory lying between Cap Kouha and Cap Bocage. Taking advantage of the assembled numbers, he informed them they were ordered to end the war with Monéo: the chiefs agreed and promised him that they would treat the Whites with friendship, that they would in the future bring any

dispute before the commander of the post in Napoléonville, and that they would prevent their people from engaging in acts of anthropophagy ... The schooner weighed anchor, announcing that a ship would come soon to verify whether these promises were being kept. Returning then to Port-de-France, it also took the chiefs Ica, from Houaraye, Kamb'bo, from Nékoué, Polind'do, from Bouéhoua who, on the advice of the captain, were coming to present themselves in submission to the Governor.

...

On 21 February [1864], the death of the chief of Pounérihouen triggered renewed hostilities targeted particularly at the property of our colonists, who were not spared death threats. On this occasion, the chief of Houaïlou reiterated his appeal for assistance from the base at Napoléonville. (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864)

It thus emerges that chief Ai was successful in his attempt to win recognition from the French military of his pre-eminence over the other chiefdoms on the coast between Wagap and Canala.

## 1867–68: Control over the valley

Similarly, the colonial wars that took place in the region of Houaïlou and Bourail in 1867–68 can be seen as a translation of the extension of the colonisers' political control, by means of recognition and unwavering support granted to a few individuals who were able to supply substantial numbers of auxiliaries, and the quest by the latter for a degree of ascendancy in the local social context, derived through military support received from the French and their auxiliaries.

In 1867, a conflict appears to have arisen among the chiefdoms on the Houaïlou coast (Lèwèö-Houaïlou, Warai, Nékwé) that had allied themselves with the French in 1864:

At the beginning of 1867, the people of Nécoué, taking up a dispute over the possession of a woman that arose between Cazaouimans, junior chief of Houaïlou, and Ica, chief of Houarail, and led by Djannou, brother of their chief Cambo, who was absent, attacked the natives of Houarail; the latter were supported by their friends and neighbours from Houaïlou. Sub-lieutenant Marchal, sent by Captain Garin, restored order on the coast and reconciled the enemies; and in order to teach them a lesson, Ica was interned for one month in Canala, and Cazaouimans for six months in Nouméa. (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868)

The end of 1867 was marked by a large-scale military operation conducted across the Houailou valley and its tributaries. We have today no way of confirming or refuting the accounts produced by colonists and auxiliary chiefs that justified the use of force. But we may note that the violence employed followed the same conventions as in the preceding military operations, in terms of justification (reacting to violence between Kanaks, particularly when auxiliary chiefs were involved; protecting colonists) and practice (relying on auxiliary troops, destroying residences and crops).

On 2 December [1867], at two o'clock in the afternoon, the small detachment disembarked at Houarail, on the property of Mr Pichard, where the colonists were gathered ready to defend themselves. Chiefs Aï, Ica and Cambo, under the command of Mr Marchal, arrived shortly afterwards and gave the following report:

Since the month of February 1867, chief Polinda of Bouéoua had been defending himself against Catamouino, chief of Méa, who had been joined over the year by people from several other villages, including those of Houinbé and Bouin-oué. In November 1867, chief Ponindo of Bouin-oué sought to form a coalition with the aim of expelling the natives from the Houailou coast and, they say, killing the Whites who had settled on the shores of Lebris Bay.

...

The Bouin-oué burned a number of huts in Houailou and Houarail, prompting the Europeans to take refuge in Mr Pichard's boat.

...

On the evening of the day they disembarked, at eleven o'clock, our contingent from Canala, accompanied by the tribes of Houarail, Houailou and Nécoué, made their way to Bouéoua; close to this point lies the village of Bouin-oué, which was attacked from three sides, the fourth not having been attacked owing to a delay in the march led by chief Polinda, who had been charged with responsibility for this side.

...

While Ica's and Cambo's men pursued them, Bouin-oué was delivered to the flames; at the same time, the people of Houailou, led by junior chief Cazaouimans, who had returned to nobler sentiments, mounted a vigorous attack and destroyed Nindié, which lies at the foot of a hill topped by a huge rock that contains deep caves, with two very fine peaks pointing heavenwards. Seven of the inhabitants of this village were killed. (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868)

The inhabitants of Mèaa and the Houaïlou valley, forced by the repressive operation to flee to the west coast and threatened by French soldiers accompanied by Ai's, Ica's and Cambo's warriors, seem to have taken refuge in the upper valleys of Bourail, among Kanaks identified as members of the 'Houin tribe', or among the mountain Houin also known as 'Honrôés': 'The governor had the villages of Bouin-oué, Nindié, Houinbé, Méa, etc. burned. The Houaïlou from the interior were sheltered among the Honrôés' (*Moniteur*, 30 August and 6 September 1868). The French perception of the events at Bourail in 1868 is entirely shaped by the plan to bring the coastal auxiliary chiefdoms of Houaïlou, Canala and Bourail into conflict with the chiefdoms that were resistant to French presence in the mountains, in the middle Houaïlou valley, in Mèaa and in the upper valleys of Bourail. Thus the murder in Bourail of freed prisoner Bridon 'by men of the tribe of Houin' was attributed to their desire to win the release of Dialicouyo, 'one of the most influential instigators of the insurrection' (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868), 'the uncle of Ponindo, chief of Bouin-oué' (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868), 'imprisoned in the Penitentiary on Île Nou for 6 months' (*Moniteur*, 9 August 1868). Similarly, the attack on the Kanaks of Nékou, who were allied with the French, was attributed to people from the mountains (Houaïlou, Bourail, Mèaa); the repression was therefore – according to the logic of this system – led by auxiliaries from the coast, the Kaké (Bwaxéa, from Canala) and Houaïlou.

In addition to the description and interpretation they offer of a series of events, the articles in the *Moniteur* also testify to the increasingly marked intention to identify places and proper names as accurately as possible, and to set them in a one-to-one relationship wherever possible. Thus the following were identified:

The tribes of Houaïlou (chief Ai), of Houarail (chief Ica) and of Nécoué (chief Cambo) ... Behind the village of Nécoué lies that of Bouéoua, chief Polinda. Further upstream, in the direction of Bourail, lay the villages of Bouin-Oué (chief Ponindo), Nindié (chief ...), Houinbé (chief Nécha), Crouin or Houin (chief ...), etc.; on the left, near mounts Couaoua and Page, lived the people of Méa (chief Catamouino), of whom the people of Canala have often had cause to complain, even after the Napoléonville post was established. (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868)

These identifications are to be sure approximate, based on indications given by the auxiliaries themselves. The transcription of the Ajië language, in particular, varies widely, and the Kanaks are identified only by their given name, with no reference to their lineage name or clan. At that

time, toponyms were localised without any kind of mapping. There is evidence of this in the great confusion that surrounds two ‘chiefs’ who appear in the accounts of 1867–68 in the following form: chief Polinda, of Bouéoua, allied with the French, is mentioned as being in conflict with chief Ponindo, of Bouin-Oué or Bouen-Oué, an enemy of the French. Given that, as we learned above, the former’s ‘delay’ allowed the latter to escape capture by the French, there are clearly grounds for questioning the dualist reading of social relations put forward by the military, in terms of friends or enemies. Moreover, to add to the confusion, the latter was finally identified as ‘Polinda (not Ponindo) of Bouin-oué’ at the time of his ‘submission’, which took the form of allowing two of his children to go to school in Canala.<sup>68</sup> But, regardless of these vagaries, this project formed part of a pragmatic will to knowledge aiming towards political control of the territory.

## 1878: On the side of the victors – coast and upper valleys

The great colonial war of 1878–79, which directly involved almost half the territory of Grande Terre, confirmed the alliance between the chiefdoms of Houaïlou and the French colonial authorities, to the great advantage of both sides. With a more detailed reading, some important mechanisms can be identified. Initially, when the Kanak war broke out in the south of Grande Terre, the administration sought to stabilise its alliances by intervening to settle an internal conflict in the coastal zone of Houaïlou-Ponérihouen:

In the beautiful and prosperous valley of Monéo ... two tribes were in conflict, one led by chief Segou and the other led by chief Tehen. The tribe of Tehen, reinforced by men from the tribe of Cambo, attacked the tribe of Segou and took away four women of this tribe. Chief Segou ... therefore went to complain to military supervisor Hory, who was stationed at Houaïlou. Hory, with the support of chief Peuh-Peuh, of the tribe of Malvino, and warriors from Poulvano, organised ... an expedition against Tehen and Cambo ... These two chiefs and eight of their warriors were arrested and transferred to Canala, where they were put in prison.

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68 *Moniteur*, 30 August and 6 September 1868.

The others managed to escape and some of them took refuge in Bâ Bay (or Lebris Bay), on the land of the colonist Moncelon, who refused to give them up. (Dousset-Leenhardt 1976, p. 101)<sup>69</sup>

These relationships were further stabilised by reinforcing the French military presence, at a time when no sign of hostility towards the French had been observed in this part of Grande Terre:

On 28 June Captain Merlaud, commander of the 7th naval infantry company, landed at Houaïlou to reinforce the garrison. (Bierman 1992, p. 522)

When the French mobilised further auxiliary troops on the west coast, as the hostilities increasingly spread northwards, the Houaïlou tribes were mobilised mainly through the alliance that some of them had with Canala, which had already played a part in the earlier military operations. Particularly noteworthy is the mediating role played by ‘Sandouli’, who had previously acted as intermediary between Canala and Houaïlou in 1864:

[In early September 1878] the tribes of Houaïlou sent to Mr Servan, in Canala, fifty warriors under the command of the war chief Dimagué. [...] On 14/9 in Oua-Tom] the Kanaks of Houaïlou were under the orders of Dimagué and Sandouli. (*Moniteur*, 25 September 1878)

In contrast to the specifically targeted actions of 1856 and 1864, the military operations in which Houaïlou auxiliaries participated in 1878 made systematic use of a practice that had already been employed in the Houaïlou valley in 1867, though its use in the colonies dates much further back: this was the mobile column, which accompanied the *razzia* in Algeria from the 1840s onwards. These were units usually composed of an officer, between 10 and 40 French soldiers, and from 100 to 500 Kanak auxiliaries, who marched for several days at a time to kill presumed enemies, destroy their means of subsistence, and take women and children prisoner. Father Hillereau, a missionary at Bourail who fled to Ourail (La

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69 The source of this information is a copy of supervisor Hory’s letter of 20 June 1878 to the governor and the director of the interior, Houaïlou, Centre de documentation sur l’Océanie (Centre for Documentation on Oceania) 2, 67. Since the Centre’s collection, created by Jean Guiart when he was director of the musée de l’Homme (Museum of Mankind) in Paris, has been lost, I was unable to find the letter in question, and can only base my conclusions on the summary given by Rosèlène Dousset-Leenhardt. Confirmation is, however, found in a report from the *Moniteur*: ‘[In early August 1878] the dispute between the tribes of Monéo, which had given rise to armed attacks between natives, was referred to the council of the paramount chiefs of Canala’ (*Moniteur*, 4 September 1878).

Foa) when the war became too intense in his mission area, offers a succinct summary of this mode of operation: 'An expeditionary column leaves from one place or another and goes man-hunting!' (Hillereau 1878). Clearly, the auxiliary troops had a degree of autonomy in these sorties. On occasion, mainly on the west coast, these mobile columns were reinforced by other representatives of the social landscape of the colony: colonists, Algerian Kabyles (members of the tribe of El Mokrani who had been deported from Algeria following their rebellion against the colonial authorities), and transported convicts sentenced to hard labour (especially people who had participated in the Paris Commune of 1870–71). Extensive participation by Houaïlou auxiliaries in actions against groups hostile to the French presence in Bourail and Poya was a typical feature of local social life throughout the period from September 1878 to late February 1879:

Captain Merlaud, who left from Houaïlou on the 16th [September 1878] with twenty soldiers and two hundred allied Kanaks, returned on the afternoon of the 22nd. (*Moniteur*, 25 September 1878)

[On 7 November 1878] two hundred Kanaks, led by Peuh-Peuh, from Houaïlou, Toroboro and Ni, asked to march against Ninday and Hiro, and left with 40 soldiers under the command of Mr Rochel. (*Moniteur*, 13 November 1878)<sup>70</sup>

There is an excellent description of the way these mobile columns operated in the account of what, from the point of view of the colonisers, constituted the Houaïlou auxiliaries' greatest military feat during this period, the taking in November 1878 of the rocks of Adio, in the upper Poya, following a failed first attempt in October.

On the 25th [October] Captain Merlaud departed from Houaïlou, with 30 soldiers and 200 Kanaks from the allied tribes, for Naïgon, an Adio village. (*Moniteur*, 30 October 1878)

On the 25th, Captain Merlaud, who had departed from Houaïlou, camped at Nérin. At noon on the following day he attacked the Ningou who were perched up in the rocks. The Houaïlou war chief, Dimagué, with his warriors, launched an attack on the Adio. He was supported by fifteen soldiers under the command of Mr Monniot, but he was unable to penetrate into the cave enclosure, which is enclosed by a strong wooden gate. The auxiliaries killed three rebels and wounded many more. In the

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70 For other examples of such involvement, see also the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* of 9 October 1878, 18 December 1878 and 26 February 1879, as well as the 'Rapport sur les opérations militaires (Report on Military Operations)' for the period 22 November – December 1878.

battle five of them were wounded, one by a gunshot and the others by stones. The soldiers also killed or wounded a number of rebels. The enemy kept up their resistance until nightfall.

[On 27 October] the Houaïlou burned the villages of Nego and Gorodni, and chased a number of rebels armed with rifles. Dimagué himself killed chief Malambru, who had delivered the first axe blow to Mavimoin, the chief of Nékliäi, on the day of the massacre at the Houdaille farm. (*Moniteur*, 6 November 1878)

On the 22nd [November], Colonel Wendling went to the Adio rocks. They had been removed on the 21st by Captain Merlaud and the Houaïlou Kanaks. Five rebels were killed. Five women and a rifle were taken. Three soldiers and twelve auxiliaries were slightly wounded by stone shrapnel. One auxiliary received a spear in his right arm. Wendling's column and that of Captain Merlaud, who joined forces on the 22nd in the territory of the Ningous, continued to search the caves: two men were killed and twelve prisoners taken, including two children. The auxiliaries from Ni, Koné and Houaïlou completed the destruction of the Ningous' huts and crops. The columns spent the night at the Houdaille outpost. On the following day, the 23rd, they ... searched the whole of Poya, with the Kanak auxiliaries. Chief Dimagué, from Houaïlou, who had stayed with the Ningous, killed two rebels and two women. The Kanak contingents then returned to their tribes.

On the 26th, Merlaud's column returned to Houaïlou. (*Moniteur*, 27 November 1878)

Another new aspect of the conventions of use of force during the repression of 1878–79 was that auxiliaries were encouraged to bring back the decapitated heads of their victims:

On 16 October [1878] around fifty Houaïlou who had been sent on reconnaissance at the request of chiefs Peuh-Peuh and Dimagué brought back the heads of two insurgents, that of Kaoumorani from Greater Nékou and that of Kapourani from Lesser Nékou, these two rebels having been killed in the valley of the tribe of Bouiro. On the 21st some allies from Monéo and Ponérihouen who had been sent to the Adio lands on reconnaissance returned with the heads of three rebels they had killed at Ouari, near Panemat. ('Rapport sur les opérations militaires' for the period 28 September – 24 October 1878)<sup>71</sup>

71 See also the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* of 23 October 1878 for a further example.

This practice also emerged directly from the modes of colonial government established in Algeria, and was accompanied by a bounty paid to the auxiliaries for each head or pair of ears cut off.<sup>72</sup> The auxiliaries' booty also included captured women and children:

A reconnaissance mission conducted by Houaïlou auxiliaries towards Ninday brought back 3 women and 6 children as prisoners. (*Moniteur*, 20 November 1878)

On the 14th [December], Houaïlou auxiliaries brought to Bourail by Captain Merlaud, and led by Dimagué, killed three rebels and took 23 prisoners, women and children, in the environs of Ouanho and Néra. ('Rapport sur les opérations militaires' for the period 22 November – 22 December 1878)<sup>73</sup>

The administrative sources, in the form of reports in the *Moniteur*, are notably silent on the women and children, who appear only passively, as booty or cause of conflict, and generically, without individual identity. It is only by searching elsewhere, in the missionaries' correspondence and in the margins of the few Kanak sources we have on the war, that we find some traces of their modes of engagement in, or against, the war. There is, for example, a striking contrast between the presentation of one particular fact in two reports, one administrative and one from a missionary (Father Lecouteur, a missionary at Bourail):

Two dozen Kanaks from Houaïlou who remained behind ... took a woman from Nékou. (*Moniteur*, 16 October 1878)

[On 15 October] the woman Catherine, a Christian Kanak lawfully married to a native of La Conception was given to one of the chiefs of Houaïlou. This Catherine led the life of a prostitute. I warned Commander Chausson, but Catherine had already left for Houaïlou. (Lecouteur, cited in Cornet 2000, p. 174)

The authorities' tolerance of the abduction of women is confirmed by the testimony of Léon Moncelon:

72 See Maspéro 1995, p. 339.

73 See also the *Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* of 18 December 1878, and the 'Rapport sur les opérations militaires' for 16 January – 5 February 1879 for further examples.

Following the events of 1878, the authorities left the women captured on the west coast to the attentions of the Kanak auxiliaries from the east coast, who shared them out and treated them like their other women. (Moncelon 1886, p. 367)<sup>74</sup>

Bronwen Douglas has shown that women's role as mediators in war, in famine and in situations of depopulation, can be read in these documents.<sup>75</sup> Hillereau's letter testifies to this mediating function, particularly in relation to the missionaries: 'Many enemies were killed and the native women also say that wounds and diseases have led to still more deaths' (Hillereau 1878).

It is in fact in the context of a serious demographic crisis that the choice made by Kanak actors either to attack European colonists in 1878, or to become auxiliaries of colonisation, needs to be situated. There is unfortunately very little information on the history of the general material conditions (climate, demographics, economy) of these political events. The question of the extent of Kanak depopulation during the century following the first contact with Europeans (that is, with James Cook and his crew in 1774, in the north of Grande Terre), and still more in the years following the French takeover, is therefore highly disputed.<sup>76</sup> According to the lowest estimate,<sup>77</sup> the Kanak population fell by more than 40 per cent; Christophe Sand, on the other hand, has put forward a number of arguments suggesting a much higher figure for the reduction in the Kanak population over the 19th century. Whatever the case, it is likely that the gender ratio was at this time seriously unbalanced, to the disadvantage of women. We might surmise that the ravages of new diseases were interpreted locally as the result of powers of attack wielded by local actors. On the level of global economic dynamics, Mike Davis has shown that the great famines and political uprisings that occurred simultaneously in several tropical regions throughout the world in 1877–78 can be explained in terms of a particularly strong El Niño, combined with methods of managing the crisis that were extremely deleterious to colonised populations.<sup>78</sup> He cites

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74 Léon Moncelon also picked up a young Kanak man, Gayouman, 'who was one of the Kanak rebels from the west coast', who was less than eight years old in 1878, and who he presented as a live specimen at the meeting of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris (Paris Anthropology Society) on 7 May 1885 – by which time Moncelon had become the senior delegate for New Caledonia to the Conseil supérieur des colonies (Supreme Council for the Colonies).

75 Douglas 1998.

76 Rallu 1990; Kasarhérou 1991; Shineberg 1983; Sand 1995; see Rivers 1922.

77 Rallu 1990.

78 Davis 2001.

New Caledonia as a specific example. Among the ‘cruel ordeals that the colony has suffered’, Hillereau does indeed mention ‘locusts, drought’ (Hillereau 1879).<sup>79</sup> It is only by resituating the Kanak rebellion in the context of the demographic and economic crisis the Kanaks were then suffering, exacerbated by the increasing European control over land, that we can gain a sense of the numbers of victims of the repression (2,000 in Grande Terre?) – amounting, even in the most conservative estimate, to over 5 per cent of the population of Grande Terre in less than a year.

If peace and security depended only on our own military forces, years might pass before the country was habitable. Fortunately they come to us of their own accord, driven by hunger and deprivation of all kinds. Harried, hunted each day, though they cannot be caught, seeing their camps destroyed, their plantations ravaged, the coconut palms cut down in many places, the natives have entered a period of the most dire poverty. Those who are less involved in the revolt, who still hope to escape punishment, have no trouble in surrendering completely, once they are assured their lives will be spared. (Hillereau 1879)

As we have seen, much more is known about the military operations of 1878–79 than that of 1868. This abundance of sources, for example the reports published in the *Moniteur*<sup>80</sup> (the main historiographic source on the subject), is due to the importance of this information in the administrative and military management of the crisis, given its wide geographical spread and, particularly, in coordinating the repressive operation at a time when more and more Europeans were settling all over Grande Terre. The quality and number of reports obtained by Nouméa and published in the *Moniteur* are due above all to the communication network that had recently been established in New Caledonia through telegraphy, one of the instruments of imperial control. Hence, the local news and reports of operations were edited by none other than Charles Lemire, the head of the telegraph service, who had overseen its installation between 1874 and 1875. Even more than the *chassepot*,<sup>81</sup> the telegraph and the mobile column emerge as the significant innovations in the repression of 1878–79.

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79 See Saussol 1979 on this point.

80 Douset-Leenhardt 1976; Latham 1978; Cornet 2000.

81 A breechloading rifle used by the French army from 1866 onwards; there is limited evidence of its usefulness in the repression, since most of the Kanak victims were killed by Kanak auxiliaries.

The specific contextual factors determining Kanak actors' choice of whether or not to act are obviously much more difficult to establish than the general background. It can, notwithstanding, be stated with certainty that the crude dualism of the military sources (the Kanaks are either auxiliaries or rebels, over whom 'chiefs' are deemed to have uncontested authority) masks a much greater social complexity. The undifferentiated mass of the fighters, on both the auxiliaries' and the rebels' side, is particularly difficult to identify, to localise, and therefore to analyse. To recall Hillereau's hypothesis: 'perhaps entire tribes have been drawn into the insurrectionary movement against their will' (Hillereau 1879). In the same letter, he cites the complex position of 'Naounou', a Kanak from Bourail, 'allegedly the war chief most feared and most terrifying in the eyes of the people of Bourail', who went over to the side of the French.

Still more telling is the example of how the Houaïlou auxiliaries protected the tribe of Ni, in the upper Bourail valley, and directed the war toward the Kanak villages on the Bourail coast. There are various accounts of this episode, with a number of different protagonists. The oldest known version, written up about 1919, appears in the notebooks of Bwèyëöü Ęrijiyi:

In some ceremonies in Bourail, Ni and Bwiru, yams are added to the pile of foodstuffs for the Mèyikwéö and the Bwéwé. They are a reminder of how the lands of Ni, Kikwé, Bwiru and Ayarhe were saved during the war of 1878, when Ni was changed to Nédi. The French wanted to attack Ni and the commanding officer was looking at a map of the regions that were at war. An elder from Mèyikwéö, of the name of Pienô Unayi Ęribwa, then whispered to Pepe Bwéwé Gwâê that he should tell the commanding officer that this was not the land of Ni, but Nédi. And the commanding officer asked where is it? – Down below, by the sea. And Ni was saved! This yam bears witness. (Ęrijiyi in Aramiou and Euritéin 2003, pp. 11–12, my translation)

It is worth noting in passing that this text helps to identify the lineage of 'Peuh-Peuh', one of the two principal 'war chiefs' of the Houaïlou auxiliaries in 1878 (the other being 'Dimagué').

The military operations conducted by the Houaïlou auxiliaries in 1864, 1867–68 and 1878–79 incorporate elements that some of them or their families had suffered as victims in 1856. Viewed in retrospect, some of the actions of a group of Houaïlou Kanaks, confirmed by various sources, form a system that defines a general trend of political approach:

we can thus say that, in the alliance with the French between 1857 and 1879, there was a negative interest, resulting from the colonial and repressive terror; there was also a positive interest in continually seizing opportunities to win greater freedom, more room to manoeuvre and more power by maintaining the alliance with the French colonial authorities, allowing them to eliminate adversaries, capture women and children, and hence to reinforce local chiefdoms. I do not suggest a deliberate strategic calculation but, in retrospect, it is possible to reconstitute a sort of guiding orientation, as well as noting that this re-reading is also offered by our informants themselves. The point I make here is simply a descriptive and analytical choice, rather than imputing belief or establishing causality. Thus the action can be considered on a register that is not psychological: we need only adopt Elizabeth Anscombe's analytical rule as our methodology – intention, in a nutshell, is what people do.<sup>82</sup>

My point, then, is not to claim that all the inhabitants of the coast and valleys of Houailou became wholehearted supporters of colonisation, but rather firstly that some of the individuals perceived by the French as 'chiefs' committed themselves decisively, in increasing numbers, to colonisation, and secondly, that the cost of publicly expressing a different opinion, of hostility towards Europeans or the auxiliary chiefs, became increasingly high between 1856 and 1879. In this sense, the various colonial wars conducted with or against the people of Houailou can be viewed as so many stages in the construction of increasing French control over the territory of New Caledonia. But these were also local conflicts, in which the stakes for the fighters themselves remain largely unknown to us. And we must hypothesise that there were many forms of abstention, of playing off both sides and of distancing themselves from their role that have left not the smallest trace in the colonial archives.

## 1875–81: Local control and globalisation

### The colonists of Lebris Bay

While I have focused on the relationship between war, the capacity to mobilise fighters and the political recognition (accompanied by means of coercion) obtained by auxiliary chiefs from the colonial administration,

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82 Anscombe 2002 [1957].

it should immediately be added that the period from 1856 to 1879 in Houaïlou was not only one of confrontation or agreement between Kanak warriors and the French military: it was also the period when the first colonists began to settle there. There are indications of this even in the accounts of repressive operations; for example, in March 1864, the colonist Guillaume Maradhour, who had settled in Lebris Bay, offered soldiers from Napoléonville (Canala) a hut for storing supplies and munitions, and the means to install a military outpost near to ‘the little village of Néha, which is part of Nékoué, at the mouth of the Bâ Bay (Lebris Bay)’ (*Moniteur*, 8 May 1864). In the same year, a delegation that was prospecting around Grande Terre on board the ship *Fulton*, to investigate the possibilities for immigration of settlers from Réunion who were suffering from a serious economic crisis, devised a plan to settle in Houaïlou: ‘The town could be built at the back of Le Bris harbour, with houses and public buildings in the valleys, on the very gentle slopes of Cap Bocage and of the coastal plain, from the Rock to the harbour mouth’ (*Moniteur*, 6 November 1864). And, in effect, this part of the coast, from Ba to Warai, was where the first colonists settled, including settlers from Réunion, who were known in New Caledonia at that time as the Bourbonnais.<sup>83</sup> Thus the colonist Pichard, who in December 1867 offered shelter on his boat to colonists from Lebris Bay who felt threatened by the conflicts on the coast, was a Bourbonnais, as was Léon Moncelon, who intervened in the conflicts of June 1878.<sup>84</sup> It is also known that the Kabar family, who arrived in New Caledonia in 1868 and introduced lychees to Houaïlou, settled in the lower reaches of the principal river of Houaïlou.

Settlement, however, remained an individual affair during the 1860s, limited to the coastal zone and close to the centre of a very rudimentary administrative network. This was still a frontier situation: the first colonists had to negotiate their positions just as the sandalwood traders had had to – though with the additional support, as we have seen, of the intermittent but formidable presence of the French military, supported by their Kanak auxiliaries.

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83 From ‘l’île Bourbon’, the former colonial name for Réunion [trans.].

84 ‘I even had the good fortune to save the skin of *Aouënda*, when he was about to be executed by mistake, in *Kanala*, following the gruesome events of 1878’ (Moncelon 1887, p. 270).

## The second globalisation of Houaïlou

The opening of the Bel-Air mine in the lower Houaïlou valley in 1875,<sup>85</sup> very close to the delta and the Néjâ chiefdom that was based there, therefore altered the situation considerably. It led to a clear statement of the state's hold over Houaïlou, in terms of both territorial control and local social organisation. Here are some of the key dates leading up to this takeover: in 1876, operations are undertaken to demarcate and limit the Kanak lands.<sup>86</sup> In June 1879 New Caledonia is divided into five administrative regions; the third with Houaïlou as its administrative centre, and Jules Moriceau as administrator. In July of the same year, a number of municipal committees are established, including that of Houaïlou; the first electoral registers are drawn up in 1881, in preparation for the first elections to this committee.

The link between demarcation of lands and the development of mining was explicitly stated in the deliberations of the colonial Privy Council<sup>87</sup> of 4 and 6 March 1876, which laid down the principles for delimiting native reserves:

The discovery of mines, the extension of cattle-rearing, exposed the New Caledonians [Kanak] to daily invasions; the best way to ensure they are protected from this is by defining their territory. This operation, which is essential in order to reassure a population that is of interest to us, will also make it possible to determine the country's land resources, so that the administration can have greater freedom in making them available for colonisation. (Privy Council of 4 and 6 March 1876)

The Privy Council's discussion ended with a question about mines:

Mr Marchand asks what will be the situation of the tribe thus demarcated in relation to the miners? The head of the Estates Service replies that, in this respect, the property of the tribe shall be held under the same conditions as individually owned properties. Moreover, where mines are discovered, the demarcation may if necessary be modified, and compensation given. (4 and 6 March 1876)

85 Thompson 2000, p. 83.

86 See Dauphiné 1987, 1989.

87 Consultative and jurisdictional body that existed in some French colonies [trans.].

To complete this account of the link between mining exploration and demarcation of Kanak lands, we may note that the next item on the agenda for this session of the Privy Council is the 'presentation of a draft decree on mines'. It tells us notably that the first boundaries were drawn not throughout New Caledonia, but only in Houaïlou, Canala and Nakéty: these were precisely the areas with chiefdoms that had good relations with the administration, and where the first nickel mines had recently been opened (John Higginson's Bel-Air mine in Houaïlou, and Jean Louis Hubert Hanckar's Boa-Kaine mine in Canala).

Cartography is the immediate corollary of the demarcation of reserves and mining development, unless the reverse is the case: the first maps we have of Houaïlou were made by the surveyor Martin between 1874 and 1877; these were precisely detailed for the coastal zone (which, as we have noted constitutes, on one side of the main valley, by Lebris Bay, the colonists' main area of settlement and, on the other side of the river, the principal mining zone). Here cartography did not primarily serve for the purposes of war; it was moreover of little use during the repressive operations of 1878. Like telegraphy, however, it was a key tool of imperial governance, because it made it possible to identify the various components of the colony: 'Questions are urgent and demand a solution. Space for natives, space for Europeans, justice for all. With everyone in his place, said Governor de Pritzbuier, the ship stays on course' (Privy Council of 4 and 6 March 1876).

Following the glut of nickel caused by the introduction of New Caledonian ore onto the European market, the mining crash of 1876 and the failure of the Bank of New Caledonia (also known as the 'Banque Marchand'), which financed mining investment, mining at Bel-Air was halted. It was resumed, however, when Higginson and Hanckar founded the Société Le Nickel (Le Nickel company, SLN) in 1880; André Marchand, who we encountered above intervening in the Privy Council's discussions on boundaries, then became secretary to the company's board of directors, and subsequently its director from 1889 to 1904. As he had when the Bel-Air mine first opened, Higginson summoned a workforce from the New Hebrides and those individuals were the victims of 'human flesh contracts'. We know of this mainly through the remarkable research of Dorothy Shineberg.<sup>88</sup> This labour force was recruited under extremely

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88 Shineberg 1999; see also Jolly 1987.

violent conditions, of which we learn mainly because of the diplomatic incident caused by recruitment for the Bel-Air mine: in the wake of the violent forced recruitment conducted in the New Hebrides by Mr Madézo (captain of the *Aurora*), which was accompanied by a murder at Api and various assaults, New Hebrideans killed a number of Europeans in revenge when the next ship arrived. This led to the Australian government lodging a complaint with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported the following year in articles in *The Times* and through the protest by French senator Victor Schoelcher, with the result that the French minister for the navy and the colonies asked the governor of New Caledonia, Amédée Courbet, to set up a commission of inquiry, which heard 80 witnesses and submitted its report in December 1880. The commission determined that ‘recruitment of New Hebrideans is frequently conducted through threats, ruses or surprise’, that none had come of their own free will, that ‘almost all these Kanaks<sup>89</sup> [were] put on shore in Houaïlou to work in the mining industry’, the *Aurora* having arrived there on 23 August 1880 (*Affaire des navires Aurora et Lala*).<sup>90</sup>

The conditions of recruitment can be discerned between the lines of the summary of the register of births, marriages and deaths (civil register) in Houaïlou: four New Hebrideans aged 17, 18, 22 and 30 (Keloï, Halülo, Boulleouari and Mahaïte) are recorded as having died on board the *Aurora* in August 1880; five others, aged 17, 18, 25, 30 and 45, died at the Bel-Air mine in September 1880 (Sangaratta, Boulelli, Ousin Moili, Mansiou and Couit); two more, aged 17 and 50, died in October (Veounon and Tauli); and a 13-year-old child (Paccarou) died in November. Other deaths of New Hebrideans had been recorded between June 1876 and April 1878, during the first period of operation of Bel-Air, and the deaths continued through 1881 and 1882. It is reasonable to assume that the *Aurora* affair was a major factor in the decision by the Ministry of the Navy and the Colonies, in June 1882, to forbid recruitment of workers in the New Hebrides.<sup>91</sup>

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89 In the 19th century this term, derived from the Polynesian (Hawaiian) word *kanaka*, meaning ‘human being’, was used for all Melanesians from New Caledonia to New Guinea – in this case denoting the New Hebrideans.

90 The records of the commission of inquiry’s sessions give details of the methods of constraint used; see *Affaire de l’Aurora*.

91 Thompson 2000, p. 263.

Following the exploitation of sandalwood in the triangular trade between Australia, China and New Caledonia during the 1840s, the late 1870s effectively constitutes a second globalisation of Houaïlou through the extraction of nickel destined for Europe, the importation of contract labour for the purposes of this mining, and the expropriation of land to enable the immigration of European colonists.<sup>92</sup> The very fact that Houaïlou was presented at the international Universal Exposition in Paris in 1878 testifies to this recent situating of the region in a world that was no longer limited to Oceanian networks:

In Houaïlou, major nickel mines, the principal one being the Bel-Air mine (yield 15 to 17%). Houaïlou municipality was incorporated in 1874. Fine coffee, rice, manioc, pineapple and banana plantations, etc. As throughout the island, coconut palms are abundant; they are used to make oil and copra, used widely in fine soap-making. Sponges of mediocre quality, and trepang or sea cucumber, have been harvested. (*Exposition universelle internationale de 1878*, pp. 310–11)

By this time, the name 'Houaïlou' had stabilised around the European administrative and economic centre (although the territory of the municipality had not yet been clearly defined). The description Charles Lemire gives of the village and the Bel-Air mine is particularly illuminating about the changes brought by this mining globalisation in the lower Houaïlou valley:

Most of the miners engaged in this mining are English, or rather Australian; ships take on the ore at Houaïlou, bound for Nouméa. These large ships anchor at outer anchorage. Only small boats can come up the *Boama* [the main river of Houaïlou] at high tide. On the beach there are nickel depots, and a number of stores or warehouses much better provisioned and constructed than those in Canala. It is only a short distance to the centre of Houaïlou, where all the dwellings are strung out along the right bank of the river. First there is the residence of the head of the third district. There is a native police station, a telegraph office and the post office, a well appointed hotel, with restaurant and very well supplied shops; finally, the buildings of the Bel-Air mine (drying kilns, wharves, warehouses, stores, offices, dwellings, outhouses and stables, cattle paddocks). The huts of office employees and labourers are grouped together here. Water pipes serve these buildings, which are linked to the mine by a 3-kilometre mule track. An hour's walk up the mountain, we come to the freed prisoners' village. On the right are the villages of free

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92 Merle 1995.

individuals and the English people's neat houses. Opposite are the forge, the warehouse and the main entrance to the tunnels. This mine, which was opened in 1875, employs white and 80 black workers, many of them from the New Hebrides. (Lemire 1884, pp. 181–82)

This description makes clear the way in which the categorisation of individuals (English and Australians, free and emancipated, Black and White, native and New Hebridean) and the spatialisation of the differences thus constructed contribute to the establishment of a system of segregation. We may add that the absence, or the minimal presence, of Kanaks from Houaïlou in the mine is probably due to the fact that the mine owners did not have the powers of coercion over them that they had over the New Hebrideans, and that the people of Houaïlou had little interest in becoming part of the proletariat. Thus the status of Houaïlou around 1878 was paradoxical: while European settlement remained concentrated around the coastal zone and the lower reaches of the principal valley, the social system as a whole was marked by the deployment of tools of empire that took over the local population and set them in a globalised colonial space, in the midst of spatial and ethnic categorisations that defined and limited their possibilities of action. Bouda Etemad's analysis sheds light on this development: 'During [the] last great act of modern colonisation, the white conqueror did indeed lay railway lines and erect telegraph poles at the same time he was establishing his hold over the space and the people' (Etemad 2007, p. 80). In New Caledonia, plans for a railway were short-lived, and never involved Houaïlou. Between 1856 and 1881, the situation thus shifted from a fairly minimal colonial hold over local social organisation, supported by military control (based on the association of the gunboat, the *razzia* and the call for auxiliaries), to the institution of territorial and administrative control in order to enable expropriation of land, and mining (through the telegraph, demarcation of lands, cartography, and the introduction of municipal and regional committees). Roads, running into the interior, came shortly after, in order to roll out this system of control. The 'Houaïlou' that emerged at this point was less a place than the result of this colonial process of localisation and enclosure, categorisation and subordination.

Subsequently, these systems of control and segregation became more rigidified, through the introduction of the Code de l'Indigénat in 1887,<sup>93</sup> the internment of Kanaks that ensued,<sup>94</sup> and then the policy followed by governor Paul Feillet. The auxiliaries' liberty and Kanaks' freedom of movement largely disappeared at this time.

## Wars and the constitution of 'chiefdoms': A rereading of colonial sources

At this point, I would like to complicate the picture of the participation of a certain number of men from Houailou among the auxiliary troops by changing perspective, and also by drawing on some new sources. By focusing on the figure of the 'chiefs' referred to in the colonial documents cited above,<sup>95</sup> I enter into a prosopographic history of particular individuals and particular families. Through them, I aim of course to grasp the social structures more generally, and to make clearer the solid reasoning behind the Kanaks' actions. But I should like first to emphasise two points. Firstly, this reading, based on a critique of sources, sets up a mechanism of authority whose analytical coherence, it must be borne in mind, only has the status of a hypothesis. I have stressed elsewhere the divergence of versions of history that can be gathered through ethnographic research, the link between this divergence and contemporary social conflicts, the difficulty of collecting these versions, and the margin of uncertainty in an enquiry that is, by its very nature, endless.<sup>96</sup> I shall try to leave as much space as possible for doubt and silence, the incompleteness of the enquiry, while noting that my propositions here are not only potentially but necessarily subject to future revision. One way I make my hypothesis available to critique is by publishing the documents themselves on which I base my propositions, whereas in the discipline of anthropology, silence as to sources and authoritative discourse are more often the rule. Secondly, it is crucial to note above all the violence inherent not only in reducing divergence and fragmentation, but simply in breaching the private nature of these local versions of history. While I never quote statements that my informants have asked me not to quote, or which I understand might

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93 Merle 2002 and 2004.

94 Muckle 2010.

95 See Bensa 2000.

96 Naepels 2000a.

disrupt contemporary social relations,<sup>97</sup> the dynamic of understanding that I am attempting to introduce partially contradicts the social logic of forgetting that Wolfgang Sofsky showed to be so important in *Violence: Terrorism, Genocide, War*, where he points to the catastrophic potential of remembrance:

A society that never forgot anything would be intolerable. If human beings were not so made that most of what they experience disappears from their minds forever, they would be bound to an endless chain of the balancing of accounts, setbacks and retribution. They would be entirely occupied to the last with paying each other back for their actions. (Sofsky 2003, p. 215)

This remark seems to me highly pertinent to the Kanak case, where the polemical dimension of historical knowledge is easily mobilised.

## Wanga: The Néjâ chiefdom

I begin with the case of the Houaïlou chiefs who were victims of the 1856 repression, ‘Alikì Wàngâ’ and ‘Alikì Ykà’, as they are called in Martin Pannetrat’s account, as I seek to articulate participation in colonial wars with local political strategies. In order to do this, we need to overcome an enormous problem of identification in colonial sources: as I have already noted, these do not give clan names, and are barely aware of the phonological subtleties of the Kanak languages. Moreover, the Kanak practice of having several personal names, and reusing given names within the same clan after a gap of a few generations, adds problems of identification that ethnographic investigation can nevertheless be of some help in resolving.

The first example is that of chief Wanga. Apart from Pannetrat’s text, the only occasion I have found where his name appears is in William Diaper’s unpublished manuscript on his stay in New Caledonia; he calls the chief with whom he spent several weeks in 1848, in the coastal zone of the right bank of Houaïlou (the place now known as Lèwèö or Nèwèö), by this name. We may also note that this given name, Wanga, is currently borne by a resident of the same place, whose family name in the civic register is ‘Mindia’. Finally, and convincingly, the name Wanga appears

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97 Similarly, I use several kinds of anonymity (for the speaker or the names of individuals or places described by her/him) in all cases where I believe the mention of proper names might be harmful to individuals involved in the social situation described. See Naepels 2011, pp. 61–62.

in a manuscript notebook written by the missionary Maurice Leenhardt, which I was able to photocopy at the house of Geneviève Leenhardt, his daughter-in-law, and in which Leenhardt establishes the genealogy of the family of the paramount chief Mindia. Leenhardt himself describes this genealogical volume in a letter to his parents:

I therefore went to Néouéo. I sought for three weeks to engage Mindia, who is so difficult to meet with, about his family, and each Friday I went to spend a long morning with him, in the house of the *nata* [Kanak evangelist] in Néouéo. The first time, it was difficult to get him to unbend, as he told me that we Whites are too stupid to understand their family relationships, and we *missis* [missionaries] too concerned for their souls to be interested in their obscure fleshly bonds. Through a few questions, I was able to lead him to the heart of the matter. On the second Friday, he had prepared a little sheet which he brought, after keeping me waiting for an hour. This time he was waiting for me at the *nata's* house, and had written four large pages, inspired by the genealogy in Matthew, X begat Y, Y begat Z. We have 7 and 8 generations, and all the descendants who died when the Whites settled in the centre can clearly be seen. It is so striking that it seems a crime. I shall go again next Friday to complete the task, but my real aim was to draw this poor Mindia closer in. I have not yet succeeded ... this goodhearted and poor, duplicitous and sincere Mindia. (Leenhardt, Lettre à ses parents, 29 January 1914)

This genealogy was taken up by Jean Guiart in a report for the Institut français d'Océanie (French Institute for Oceania),<sup>98</sup> and then again in his thesis, published in 1963. I am extracting part of it in my turn and filling in some elements on the basis of a reading of the manuscript. Kanak historical and mythical accounts cannot, however, be analysed independently of the political situation in which they are articulated,<sup>99</sup> given that there are so often competing and sometimes contradictory versions of the same local histories, even if they take exaggeratedly metaphorical form. Similarly, we cannot take a positivist approach to the genealogy collected by Leenhardt as forms of written knowledge based on the materialisation and decontextualisation of data, the genealogical table, like the entry in the land register, constitute procedures for establishing a legitimacy that is very different from the present-day production of a local consensus.<sup>100</sup> Maurice Leenhardt, a Protestant missionary heavily

98 Guiart 1955.

99 Bensa and Rivierre 1988.

100 See Goody 1977; Backouche and Naepels 2009.

involved in the life of Houaïlou, was not entirely independent of these lineage conflicts and there is little doubt that, through him, some Kanaks also sought forms of social recognition.

It emerges not only that this genealogy allows Wanga to be identified as a member of the Néjâ clan, and more precisely of the Wâpwé lineage descended from the ancestor Nemwanô, but also that it enables us to link together a large number of individuals whose names appear in the colonial sources I have cited in this first chapter, devoted to their involvement in auxiliary forces. Thus, in addition to Wanga, the following names are found:

- Ai, who appears in the *Moniteur* of 1 May 1864 because of the appeal he made to French officers in Napoléonville in November 1863; the latter recognised him as ‘supreme chief of all the land between Cap Kouha and Cap Bocage’ in January 1864. He continues to supply auxiliaries in 1864 and 1867–68. His name also appears on the first map of Houaïlou, in the village of ‘Pèta, village of chief Aïe’ (see Figure 1). He is mentioned in Lemire’s 1877 text as the ‘late chief Hai’ (Lemire 1877, p. 170) and then as ‘Hai, who died some years ago’ (Lemire 1884, p. 179). On 4 September 1914, Leenhardt records statements by Mèèjâ about his father Ai, which testify to the colonial alliance concluded by the latter: ‘My father told me that of all countries only France loves natives, everything good we have comes from France’ (Leenhardt, Journal, 4 September 1914).
- Kayövimwâ, who appears under the name ‘Cazaouimans, junior chief of Houaïlou’, condemned to six months’ internment in Nouméa in 1867 for a conflict with ‘Ica, chief of Houarail’; subsequently he leads part of the repressive operation in the Houaïlou valley in late 1867 (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868).
- Jëmaxé, son of Wanga. He appears under the name ‘chief Simagué’ (Lemire 1877, p. 170), but mostly as ‘Dimagué’, an auxiliary in 1878, who was the principal Houaïlou chief recognised during the repression of 1878–79.<sup>101</sup> It was for this reason that the dispatch of 21 December 1878 proposed him ‘for the award of a gold medal first class with a stipend of 100 francs per year’ (‘Rapport sur les opérations militaires’, p. 315).

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101 See Amouroux and Place 1881.

- And, finally, Mèèjà (Mindia). To my knowledge, his name appears in a text published for the first time in the second edition of Léon Gauharou's *Géographie*,<sup>102</sup> which mentions 'Houaïlou, chief Mindja' (Gauharou 1892, p. 77). More particularly, he was recognised as the paramount chief of all Houaïlou in 1897, at the time of the reform of the Native Affairs Service, headed by Paul Feillet until 1912, when four districts were created (see Chapter 3). Close to the Feillet administration and to Leenhardt, a supplier of auxiliaries in 1917 and of infantrymen for the First World War (including his son Apupia), he was the first Kanak from New Caledonia to receive the French Legion of Honour medal.<sup>103</sup>

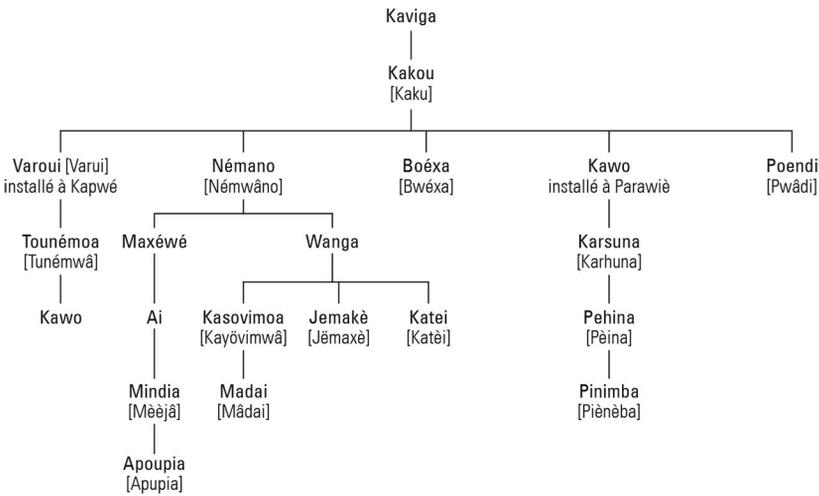


Figure 2. Extract from the genealogy of the Nèjâ family

Source: Author's research, from information collected by Maurice Leenhardt in 1914.

Thus, after the terrible destruction wrought on their village in 1856, Ai, Kayövimwâ, Jëmaxè and then Mèèjà won unquestionable recognition and support from the French administration by resolutely integrating themselves, generation after generation, in the French colonial system. This integration was not without its tensions, particularly in the case of Mèèjà (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, it enabled this Wâpwé branch of the

102 The official candidate in the elections for the first delegate from New Caledonia to the Conseil supérieur des colonies (Supreme Council for the Colonies) (O'Reilly 1953, p. 184), Gauharou was beaten by Léon Moncelon, the Houaïlou colonist whose career I outlined above.

103 Leenhardt and Vasseur 1987.

Néjà clan to considerably increase its influence and its capacity for coercion of others. In Leenhardt's genealogy, it is remarkable that their recognition by the French is accompanied by elimination of the elder line (of Varui) – which nonetheless continues to exist up until today.<sup>104</sup> Guiart, partly on the basis of data from Leenhardt's study, asserts that this elder branch was chased out of Houaïlou before returning:

The elder branch, of Varui, perhaps because of misconduct, and in any case because their offspring came much later, lost the chiefdom to the descendants of Nemwano. The Varui had to leave and go to Nemwano, south of Kapwe, and then moved on to Wa, Kwawa, Mea, until they were recalled and returned to Kapwe (Bwayo), after a stay in Wa. (Guiart 1955, p. 5)

One might then surmise that, in the clan's internal conflicts of legitimacy for the chiefdom, the arrival of the Europeans allowed the younger members to marginalise the elder. This proposition must, however, remain hypothetical, and we should avoid the temptation to attach the legitimist self-evidence of right of primogeniture to a pre-colonial social situation that may have been more complex.

## Ika: The Népörö chiefdom

The second chief mentioned in the repressive operation of 1856, 'Ykà', can be identified by the same means: we know that he was chief of Warai (his name has already appeared in accounts of the repressive operations of 1864 and 1868). A list of names of chiefs identified by colonial sources in this village, and in the neighbouring village of Nékwé, can be compiled, and compared with another genealogy drawn up by Maurice Leenhardt, that of the chiefdom of Népörö, which I found in the same notebook as the lineage of the Néjà.<sup>105</sup>

104 Today, in the civil register, the junior branches bear the family name 'Mindia', from the forename of the late 19th-century paramount chief Mèèjà, while the senior branch bears the name 'Nédia', from the name of the Néjà clan.

105 I present a more detailed analysis of this genealogy in Naepels 2010b.

## 1. LINEAGE RIVALRY AND COLONIAL CONTROL

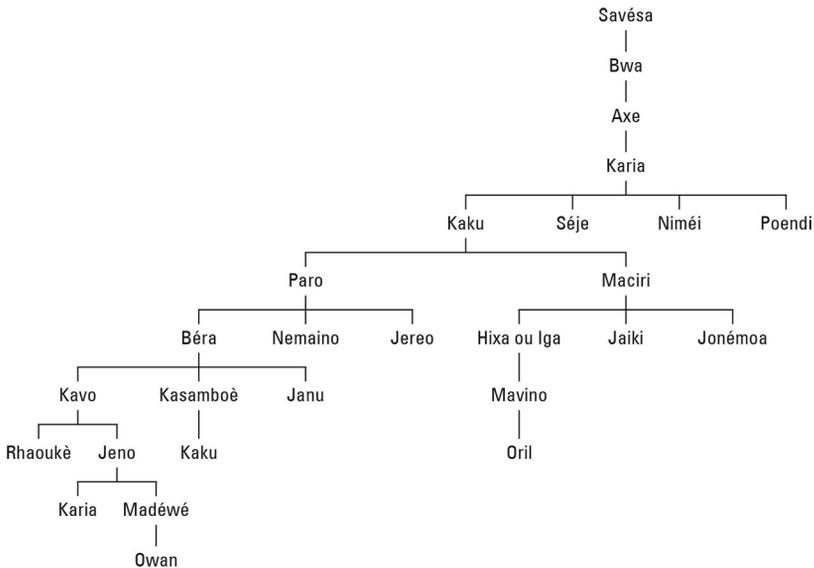


Figure 3. 'Néporo lineage'

Source: Author's research, after Maurice Leenhardt, n.d. (c. 1914–26). In 1914, Maurice Leenhardt stated that he had reconstituted the genealogy of the paramount chief Mèèjà Néjà. In 1915 his students began to edit his notebooks. The year 1926 marks the end of his third mission to New Caledonia, which was probably also a research visit to gather material for his three monographs for the Institut d'ethnologie (French Institute of Ethnology).

On the basis of this genealogy, we can identify a number of individuals mentioned in colonial sources, and read the competition between the two branches of the Néporö family, descended from Parö and Mwâciri, the two sons of the ancestor Kaku, to obtain recognition from the French. On the Warai side we can recognise chief Ika (correct linguistic transcription) Néporö (Ykà, Hixa, Ica, Iga (all forms found in colonial sources)) who, in addition to being named as one of the targets of the 1856 operation, appears several times in the colonial sources. In January 1864, 'Ica, of Houraraye', performs an 'act of submission' to the governor in Nouméa (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864). In 1868, following 'one month's internment in Canala' (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868), he participates in the repression aimed at eliminating the refugees from the valley who had settled in Bourail. He is succeeded as chief of Warai by 'Mavino', who is recognised in the deeds

of demarcation of lands,<sup>106</sup> according to Charles Lemire: ‘Tribe of Ouraye, chief Mavino’ (Lemire 1877, pp. 170 and 309; Lemire 1884, p. 180), and Léon Gauharou: ‘Mavino (between the rivers of Houailou and Dû)’ (Gauharou 1882). It is therefore not surprising to see him recognised as one of the chiefs of the third arrondissement, ‘Ouarai, chief Mavino’, at the Privy Council session of 12 November 1886.

On the other side of the Tü river, in the neighbouring hamlet of Nékoué, ‘Kamb’bo of Nékoué’, Kavo Népörö, also performs an ‘act of submission’ to the governor (*Moniteur*, 1 May 1864). He participates as an auxiliary in the colonial wars of 1864 and 1868. He is recognised as chief in the principal administrative documents of the late 19th century.<sup>107</sup> Lemire also identifies him as chief: ‘Tribe of Nékoué, chief Kambo’ (Lemire 1877, p. 170; Lemire 1884, p. 180), or ‘Cambo’ (Lemire 1877, p. 309 and 1884, p. 179), as does Gauharou, who mentions ‘Kambo, in Nékoué (left bank of the Dû)’ (1882). He also seems to have been an intimate of Léon Moncelon, who mentions ‘chief Cambo, of Houailou, whom I have had the honour of receiving often at my table’ (Moncelon 1885, p. 363). This recognition is ratified when his name is included among the chiefs of the third arrondissement at the Privy Council session of 12 November 1886 (‘Nékoué, chief Cambo’). The identification of ‘Cambo’ with the Kavo in Leenhardt’s genealogy is confirmed by two additional mentions: the *Moniteur* of 2 August 1868 refers to ‘Djannou, brother of Cambo’, while Lemire speaks of ‘Kaiamboé’, ‘brother and deputy to Cambo’ (Lemire 1884, p. 179). These are certainly Kayabwé and Janu, the two brothers of Kavo in Leenhardt’s genealogy. Similarly Gauharou, in the second edition of his *Géographie*, mentions ‘Dionon’ as the chief of Nékoué; this is Kavo’s younger son Jénô.

Although they participated together as auxiliaries in the colonial wars, the chiefs of Nékoué and Warai seem to have had a relationship of open hostility: ‘At the beginning of 1867, people of Nécoué ... led by Djannou, the brother of Cambo ... attacked the natives of Houarail’ (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868). We may therefore surmise that, in their participation in the auxiliary troops,

106 ‘Ouraye, chief Mavino’ (*Bulletin officiel de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Official Bulletin of New Caledonia)*, decree no. 211 of 17 May 1876 relating to the boundaries laid down in the decree of 6 March 1876) and ‘Tribe of Ouraye, chiefs Mavino and Maou’ (*Bulletin officiel de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, decree no. 375 of 17 November 1876 relating to the demarcation of the Kanak tribes of Houailou, Canala and Nakéry).

107 During the demarcation of lands in 1876 – the official records of which mention ‘Nékoué, chief Combo’ (*Bulletin officiel de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, decree no. 211, 17 November 1876) and the ‘tribe of Nékoué, chief Cambo’ (*Bulletin officiel de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, decree no. 375, 17 November 1876).

their position was not so much one of alliance within the auxiliary forces, as one of competition for recognition from the colonial authorities. One remark by Moncelon suggests that this hostility might have emerged from a dispute over legitimacy and inheritance: ‘The father Mahou shared the great chiefdom of Houaïlou among all his sons, and Kambo, *his adopted son*, received the chiefdom of Nékouè’ (Moncelon 1886, p. 366, original emphasis).

Finally, when the great chiefdom of Houaïlou was divided into four districts in 1912 (see Chapter 3) it was Jénô’s son ‘Mandaoué’ (or ‘Madéwé’) who was named chief of the district, confirming his administrative pre-eminence over the branch of the family settled in Warai (the descendants of ‘Maciri’), but also over the senior branch of his own lineage (the descendants of ‘Rhaoukè’). These forms of recognition thus testify to the same segmentary relationships that we have seen in operation in the relations of the Néjâ chiefdom with the administration: among all the families living in the coastal zone, the numerous ‘chiefs’ mentioned in colonial sources come from only two families, Néjâ and Népörö; and both the dominance established by some lineages over their seniors (in both cases) and the rivalry between collateral branches (in the case of the Népörö family) are evident. Jean Guiart, for example, describes ‘the internecine disputes aroused by competition for prestige and authority, and hence by the junior line’s challenge to the senior line. Examples are the Varui or Nejë Gwê è, in Neweo, replaced by the Nejë Gowe; the Neporo Gowe in Nekwé, who took the place of the Neporo Gwé’ (Guiart 1987, p. 176). In the engagement with the French a doubly segmentary practice develops: the quest for pre-eminence of one clan over the others, and, within this clan, of one or several lineages over the other lineages. This strategy made use of the French presence to inscribe relations of power operative at the time in law.

## Models of the chiefdom

In order to gain deeper understanding of the position of the Néjâ and Népörö families, we may consider the wars that had, a few generations earlier, at the time of their ancestors Kaku Néjâ and Kaku Népörö, brought these clans into conflict with a number of families in the Houaïlou valley in what is generally known as the war of Néajjië or Nindiah.<sup>108</sup> It is interesting

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108 I have collected several accounts of the origins of this war. Through identification of the two Kakus, the genealogies of the two families (Figures 2 and 3) indicate that it took place during the second half of the 18th century.

to speculate to what extent the repressive operation of 1867 might have furnished the Nėjâ and Népörö families with an opportunity to settle the scores of this pre-colonial conflict. As colonisation progressed from the coast towards the interior of the island, the French administration recognised other chiefs, but the pre-eminence of the coastal chiefdoms was assured. Mèèjâ had four wives, from different parts of Houaïlou: this illustrates both the desire of these women's families to ally themselves with a chiefdom with connections to the European power, and Mèèjâ's quest to reinforce the dominance he was establishing with the Europeans, through matrimonial alliances (see Chapter 2).

All the evidence I gathered from interviews during my research indicates that the Nėjâ and Népörö chiefdoms are agnatically related. For example, the two Kakus are always described as being related by blood (conventionally) and agnatically, in short as classificatory brothers. More broadly, the Nėjâ and Népörö clans are said to be related, and to have moved around the land together before they separated in the lower valley or coastal zone of Houaïlou. This helps us to understand why Martin Pannetrat used the concept of 'vassal' to translate what the people of Canala told him in defining the relationship between 'Alikî Wangâ' Nėjâ and 'Alikî Ykâ' Népörö. The feudal vocabulary, widely used by the French in their early descriptions of Kanak 'tribes', testifies here to the fact that the Népörö were considered by many local people to be junior to the Nėjâ. A comparable relationship, of virtual consanguinity, is sometimes identified in the relations between these two families and the coastal chiefdoms of Canala.

I should like to add one final remark to broaden out the question of the form of pre-colonial chiefdoms. Some of my informants mentioned the fact that these families, or some of their founding ancestors, came from Polynesia, probably Samoa, passing via Ouvéa and possibly via Canala: 'The Népörö, the Népörö family, they're guys who come from Samoa' (extract from interview, September 2002); 'the first of the Mwâdewé who arrived here came from Samoa, they're Samoans (extract from interview, June 2006); 'Because in the 17th century, you see, my clan took in some of the first people to migrate from Polynesia ... the Nėjâ and the Népörö' (extract from interview, July 2006). Two remarks may be added: firstly, the name of the primary ancestor of the Népörö in the genealogy compiled by Maurice Leenhardt (see Figure 3), Savésa, sounds Polynesian, even Samoan; secondly, I have already noted that many sources report migrations from Polynesia to

Ouvéa and Grande Terre during the 18th century.<sup>109</sup> Jean Guiart writes of ‘people from Samoa who came to Ouvéa with the migration of the people of Wallis, who journeyed on to Parawiè, on the Wailu coast. The members of this group know one another, and maintain relations between Teuta, on Uvea, and Parawiè’ (Guiart 1953, p. 95). The relationships between families in Houaïlou (such as the Nėjâ and Népörö), Canala (particularly the Bwaxéa) and Ouvéa, into which both the sandalwood traders and the French military inserted themselves, thus offer evidence of the complexity of pre-colonial social dynamics. In the light of this analysis, let us return to the text with which this chapter began:

In their history, the Nėjâ and the Népörö were the seniors, and the others in Canala, the Bwaxéa and their spouses were the junior ones, they come after ... When they formed an alliance with the Whites, the first thing they did, they decided they had to neutralise the people of Houaïlou. Because they wanted to be above the two chiefdoms in Houaïlou. So, what they did was, they sent a [European] ship to go and neutralise the two chiefs in Houaïlou.

Such hypotheses are clearly highly conjectural. They are, nevertheless, illuminating in terms of how we are to understand the historicity of the chiefdom form. One of my Kanak informants, for example, spoke of the coastal Nėjâ and Népörö chiefdoms as holding a different conception of the chiefdom, distinct from that of the strongly independent small chiefdoms of Grande Terre; a more territorial chiefdom, more akin to a state, which hence found a reflection of its conception of chiefly dominance in the apparatus of the French state. One thing seems certain: the territorial aspect of the chiefdom was reinforced under the influence of the colonial model and through the recruitment of auxiliaries.

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This first chapter has centred on the description of a repressive operation conducted in Houaïlou in 1856. In order to understand it, we need not only to assess the reliability of the documents available to us, but also to set it in the context of the changes in the contacts between Europeans and the Kanaks of Houaïlou from 1847 (with the sandalwood traders) to 1881 (the end of the first mapping of Houaïlou and the importation

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<sup>109</sup> With all due reservations as to the reliability of legitimising dynastic genealogies, it is worth noting that, if we go by the genealogies of the Nėjâ and the Népörö compiled by Leenhardt, we can estimate the date of birth of the two Kakus, who lived in Houaïlou, to be around 1760, and that of Savésa (whose date of birth and place of residence are unknown, to say nothing of whether he actually existed) a century earlier.

of New Hebridean contract labourers for the mine). This has led me to present a brief history of the thinking behind repression and the military techniques used (*razzia*, mobile column, recruitment of auxiliaries), and also to reflect on the tools of imperial control (cartography, demarcation of land boundaries, telegraphy, the press, the administrative apparatus, law), and finally to understand how Houaïlou is defined by flows that are at once political and commercial, whether within Oceania or linked to the European trade in sandalwood, gold and nickel. I have also shown how the imperial relationships with Algeria, Bourbon Island (Réunion) and the New Hebrides played a part in the transformation of this remote part of the east coast of Grande Terre. Finally, I have sought to shift the perspective on this event in 1856 in order to show that the colonial war was also a Kanak war, to give a sense of the reasons for the auxiliaries' involvement, and to understand the lineage strategies at play in the military relationships between some chiefdoms and the French colonial authorities. In order to do this, I have made substantial use of genealogical sources. In this way the analysis of the 'chiefdoms' laid out here extends from the mid-17th century (the probable date of Polynesian migrations to Houaïlou) to the very end of the 19th century (with the administrative recognition and reconfiguration of the chiefdoms, to which I shall return).

The investigation I have undertaken here is incomplete – being based essentially on colonial sources, which I have begun to cross-reference with Kanak accounts – but it seems to me sufficient to show how important it is for anthropology to understand its categories and its objects, such as the 'chiefdom', within a historical process, particularly in colonial situations. 'Houaïlou' is a result of the intersection, in a highly unstable period, between movements, exchanges and conflicts bound up with the fluid functioning of the Oceanian world-system in the mid-19th century (Houaïlou–Canala–Ouvéa, but also the relations of Samoa and Tonga, and perhaps Fiji, with New Caledonia) and the movements, exchanges and conflicts linked to the expansion of the European world-system, in the competition between imperialisms (commercial, political and religious) – in which New Caledonia, all things considered, plays a marginal role. 'Houaïlou' is the new name, created between 1865 and 1875, of this globalised space. The inventiveness and opportunism of all involved is deployed here in ways that can only be very partially grasped; the blind spots of the 'sources' are particularly striking as regards all the subaltern positions (women, children, subjects of the chiefdom) and some which are not ('holders of the land' or 'founding guardians of the land').

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