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Objects of War

Near us sits the young English scientist who is to enlist for the war in fourth months' time ... Recently he, Laffay and I used a rare magic stone to cast a spell against the Kaiser. Let us hope that this will bear fruit ...

Maurice Leenhardt, Lettre à ses parents, 11 December 1914

I propose to continue this investigation of the conventions of the use of violence in Houaïlou by introducing a second thread of analysis, opening the way to a deeper understanding of the wars and repressive operations that took place there during the 19th century. To this end, I move away for a moment from the written sources dating from the earliest days of colonisation of Grande Terre, to focus on material drawn from the interviews I conducted on local modes of preparation for war.

War stones

Mourners and propitiatory stones

In the accounts of war I gathered during my research in the Houaïlou region, a key role is played by a symbolic device – a propitiatory mechanism – that is absent from the old European texts examined in Chapter 1. These present-day accounts ascribe the efficacy of the warriors of the past to a number of procedures for purification and propitiation. I should like to focus particularly on two forms of propitiation for war.

Several inhabitants of the Houailou valley make reference to a process of selection and propitiation using a cooking pot. The first notable feature of the two interview extracts cited below is that they ascribe success in war to the power of the ancestors. The second is that this scene is set within a broader landscape of invocations in the smoke or steam from a cooking pot, a common method of communicating with the ancestors.

Down there, there's the lizard. This lizard will come and will spit blood into the pot ... in the sacred place ... What will they do the other heads of the other huts? They will come, they will dip arrows, slingshots; this one will dip his arrow, this other one will dip his slingshot, I'll do the same ... Then [when] war [comes], when there are enemies on the other side ... all the fighters are with me, they have already dipped in my pot, because I dipped the blood ... Then we will hit the target every time, like crack shooters. That's for sure, there won't be any bullets wasted. We won't ever miss, because it is the *bâö* [ancestral power] that is fighting. (Extract from interview, May 1991)

In this pot, they put medicines ... and then they set it to boil. And before they go to war, all the men line up like this, then each one comes with his spear, and he plunges it in, and he takes [it] out. If the drops that fall from the spear are drops of water, he is eliminated automatically. He can't go to war. The next one who comes, who comes after, [if] blood drips from his spear, he is kept on. (Extract from interview, July 1995)

The second, much more widespread practice of propitiation described by contemporary informants is the use of war stones (*panyaö* or *pè-paa*), which are believed to bring the best chance of success: 'The title of war chief is always bestowed on someone who also holds ... the war stone' (Raphaël Wéma Nèèè, extract from interview, August 1993). Their efficacy is held to be specifically dependent on certain rules of use: 'There are rituals to be carried out, there are things to do with the revelations that were made at the moment when it was given' (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, July 1995). These stones are unique, specific to particular families and are named. Another account describes a process of selecting warriors using a war stone very similar to that described above with the cooking pot:

Like us the XX, we have a pebble that is held by the Y family and the Z, it's a hole like that, it's a stone but it has a hole. Before they leave for war, people who are going to go to war, they come with their spear, and then they're going to put it in the hole like this. When they take the spear out, when there is blood on the end of the spear, that one can go off to war,

but if it comes out and there is no blood, he has to stay at home. So that means that if there are fifteen who have blood, those ones will go to war, they will all come back. And stones like that when they start, it's the soul of a fellow who is skilled. (Extract from interview, 1993)

The negative obverse of this warrior power in war is the constant urge to war that some of these stones are believed to stimulate. Several of those that embody the ambivalence of the desire to kill are therefore known as *Katââyèi*, literally 'weeping all the time', because of their thirst for blood. An account of another stone describes this phenomenon:

This war stone, there was nobody who could stand up to it, every time people struck a blow, it produced victims. So in the end, they were all the time moving from place to place, because of this war stone. And every time they attacked a tribe, a country. Well, they were forced to in fact, because this war stone, it had to be fed, and it had to be fed with blood. So every time it was fed, there was peace for a few years, one year, two years ... Every time the stone started to get hungry, then the stone wept ... and then they had to kill, they had to kill more enemies to feed the stone, or else the stone would turn against the clan, it might eat the guardian of the stone. So that's why they moved about during the different phases of their moving. (Extract from interview, July 1993)

The accounts that follow, which also offer evidence of contemporary experience of contact with such objects, describe how the war stone was effectively 'fed' by the blood of a victim:

For example, me, I've seen some, you know, out of all the stones we have ... My father took me to a place where there are small bushes ... But it's frightening when you go in, you don't go in there just like that, there are herbs you have to take, and then you have to blow each time you take a step forward ... So he took me up to that place, and there there is the skull of some of my ancestors, people who were very strong, very powerful. And then there among these skulls, tiny little pebbles, then there were stones that were underneath ... My father told me to hold one, I held it in my hand, I looked at it, but it was heavy ... And then next to it, there's a little stone the shape of a slingshot stone, smaller, but it looks like a slingshot stone. And that's the stone they used to take when they went to war, and they put it in a little pouch.¹ Then when they killed someone, they would dip it in his blood. So that's what fed the mother

1 The Ajië word used here is *mwaawè*, a term to which I shall return (see below, note 8).

[the principal war stone]. They came back from war and they touched the mother with the stone and the mother sucked out the person's blood. (Extract from interview, July 1995)

These stones, they always have to be fed with blood. And it cries like a baby. Me, I've heard these stones with my own ears, we had one at home. Where we stayed. Just before X died, for example, the stone cried all through the house. It cried several evenings before the old man died. Because there are places where there are these stones. And people for example who make medicines [who use powers of attack in sorcery], when they hold these things, they have to be killing people all the time, or else the stone eats them afterwards. Very often you hear that in the stories, the legends the elders tell, the people who held the stone, they always had to feed them, they always had to be massacring people. (Extract from interview, July 1995)

So the other day we talked about *panyaö*. Well they're the ones who are the guardians, of the *panyaö*, of a pebble this size. There's a hollow that's red, it's the blood there is inside, but when they go to pick up the peelings, I told you about that the other day, they will put them in, they will pack down [crush] with a piece of bone, and then, you know, they will call your name [addressing the interviewer]: 'Michel, you will die little by little.' And that's how it is, every week they will do that, and you will catch a disease, you'll start to cough, and then you'll go down, down, down, until you die, you know. (Extract from interview, July 1995)

These war stones form part of the larger set of propitiatory stones; notable among these are horticultural stones (especially yam stones, *pè-mëu*, and taro stones, *pè-mwa*, which are believed to make the corresponding crops more productive, or their cultivation easier, and stones that summon rain, *pè-kwa*) and seduction stones.²

Accounts of the origin of these propitiatory stones take a characteristic form. They describe the capture of the spirit (*ko*) of a person who has died, who is revered for his personal prowess (military, agricultural or other) and the transformation of it into a propitiatory stone through the action of a mourner (*âvii*). In the past, when a person of importance died, his body was rolled in a mat and laid on a platform (*néyapè*) in a tree – it is said, a banyan. A mourner (*âvii*), usually represented as a junior member of the deceased's family, would keep watch over the body. Steeped in

2 Stones whose form resembles male or female genitals: 'The aphrodisiac stones are also figure-stones, feared on account of the immediate privileges they confer, during festivals, on the individual whose sadistic imagination has become excited through seeing or touching them' (Leenhardt 1909a, p. 294).

black dye from the candlenut tree (*tâi*),³ and obeying a certain number of prescribed restrictions, he would pour water over the body to accelerate the process of decomposition. He was also responsible for ensuring that the deceased's skull was not stolen by any enemies who might have wanted to appropriate it and thus capture the spirit (*kô*).

The *âvii* is someone who does not bathe [does not wash], who does not have relations with women [especially sexual relations], who lives alone and is in communication with the afterlife, you see. And for example his food mustn't be contaminated by women's hands ... Well, that's in the sense of a dead person, but the *âvii* is also the person who transforms the dead person's spirit into a war stone, a taro stone, a yam stone. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, July 1993)

The term *âvii* seems to be derived from the verbal suffix *-vii*, denoting the idea of breaking, rupturing, detaching, separating, which confirms the liminal character of the mourner. The transformation of the spirit into stone passes through a number of stages: the dead person's spirit appears to the mourner in material form, for example in the form of an animal. The mourner catches it (sometimes after a fight or a spiritual test), and immerses it in the water of a river, from which it emerges in the form of a propitiatory stone:

The *âvii* keep watch over their dead, after the third day or the fourth day, the spirit of the [dead] person comes to disturb the body, the human person. He feels something like an animal or a lizard ..., and then him, he catches it and that's it, it becomes a stone, and it's immersed in the water. You immerse it in water and it becomes a stone, either a taro stone ... or a rain stone, that makes rain ... I wanted to tell you that because my grandfather told me ... His grandfather's skull⁴ is up there among X's stones. Then him, he told me: 'I kept watch for my grandfather, then when his spirit came into the body [the corpse], yes the spirit came up like that, it's like a wind.' ... He caught it, it's a lizard that fell from the cliff, it's a big cliff, at least 20 metres, without a scratch, even into the stones. Then down below, there is water, there's the river, he went to dip the lizard in. But when he dipped it in the water, the lizard there became a stone pebble. You see, then after when it was finished, it's a war stone for us the Y family, that's it ... I tell you that because it was my grandfather who told me, you see, he told me about [mourning] his grandfather who he went to keep watch over there on the other side. (Extract from interview, August 1993)

3 *Aleurites moluccana*, a tree of the family Euphorbiaceae.

4 In other words, the skull of the speaker's great-great-grandfather.

Another interviewee emphasised the agonistic aspect of the reputed interaction between the mourner and the spirit of the dead person:

[The *âvii*] doesn't keep watch over all the dead, he only watches over the [prestigious] dead people, like a spear thrower or a slingshot thrower, or a cultivator of yam or taro. He will come, he will lie down with the dead person, the *âvii*, he will come and lie down alongside the dead person. On the third day, according to them, the spirit of the dead person will come out of him to leave, and that's when he will catch it, and they will fight ... And finally, it's him [the mourner] who overcomes it [the spirit of the dead person], and it will become a pebble. And that pebble, it's for planting yams, and when you go to plant yams, you take the yam and you touch the stone like that there, then you go to plant, then it will produce big yams. Or if the fellow was a warrior, you take your spear and you touch the pebble before you go off to war, or the slingshot stone, and the spear or the slingshot stone will never fall on the ground, it will always hit its target. (Guynemer Karé, extract from interview, August 1993)

One final text adds a further dimension to these descriptions of the origin of propitiatory stones in the capture of the spirit of prestigious dead people – that of transmission of a practical knowledge. The acquisition of a stone is said to be accompanied by communication of medicinal herbs and sometimes of invocations that are required to ensure full efficacy of the propitiatory mechanism:

Me, I give some examples, the house where I lived in X. Well, that was my *âvii* place, that was where my ancestors lived. And there the one who is *âvii* [mourner] brought the dead person's body and then kept watch over it. And then often it was in five days ... and there he will see the spirit of the dead person arriving, you know, then thanks to the power of the weapons he has, he will catch the dead person's spirit. And at that point, there will be a fight between him and the dead person's spirit. So it's a challenge in fact to challenge the courage of the one who is *âvii*, and it will transform itself into all kinds of animals, it will try to frighten him. Until the point when the other proves he is not frightened. At that point, the spirit says to him: 'You have won.' And he catches the spirit, he immerses it in the water, and when it comes into contact with the water, the spirit becomes a stone. But before it becomes a stone, it tells him secrets ... like how he can communicate with it. And to get into contact with it, it will teach him the herb or the tree that will be used for communicating. I'll give you an example, if it's a taro stone, say you want me to make the taro grow, you will bring your cutting, you'll touch the stone, but you will, for example, chew the leaves of a particular tree, you'll place them this way or that way, you know. That's the language, you see,

so it's a code. So that one, he learns the code at that moment, he puts the soul in the water, so the soul becomes a stone. If it's for taro, the stone has the shape of a taro, if its for yam, it takes the shape of a yam, if it's a war stone, it will have the shape of a war stone for spear, slingshot or axe. (Extract from interview, July 1993)

This set of accounts poses a problem of temporality: they refer practices or representations in an ahistorical and abstract way to a specific cultural identity, rather than a clearly defined social situation.⁵ I personally have never seen anyone make use of a propitiatory stone, but this obviously does not prove they are no longer used at all.⁶ Several of the interviews quoted mention present-day experience of these accounts, through the relationship some of my interviewees describe with ancestors' skulls or stones. It has been definitively established, however, that this process of mourning and this treatment of the dead body are no longer practised, particularly since the conversion of the inhabitants of Houaïlou to Christianity during the first half of the 20th century. Likewise, mourners (*âvii*) disappeared nearly a century ago.

1918: 'Jopaipi'

It is worth pointing out that these various tales – which hence cannot be considered descriptions of current practice, despite the fact that they were collected in the 1990s – broadly converge with what Maurice Leenhardt wrote on this issue. In one of his very first published scientific articles, during his first mission leave in 1909, he already describes propitiatory stones:

This stone may be found by chance, but it is often revealed to the Kanak by an ancestor who visits him while he is asleep and tells him that he has left a stone with a particular property for him in such and such a place. At dawn the Kanak will go to find this precious stone.

The value of the figure-stone depends less on how closely it resembles the desired object than on its origins, the way it was revealed, and whatever tradition it may inherit. (Leenhardt 1909a, pp. 292 and 295)

5 Thus illustrating what Jean Bazin has called an 'ethnographic explanation' (Bazin 1996, 2000a, 2000b).

6 There are reports of war stones being used during the 'events' of the 1980s.

This is an interesting point at which to return to a classic of New Caledonian anthropology, written by Bwêëyöuu Ęrijiyi in 1918, translated and published by Leenhardt under the title ‘Jopaipi’ in his 1932 *Documents Néo-Calédoniens*, and on which Leenhardt commented several times. This text describes a variant of the process of acquiring a war stone that I considered above:

Jööpwaipi was given a herb [*deewi*] when he was in a second state [*vinyéê*]⁷ at Népèru. He had gone to seek the spirit of a long-dead ancestor of the Mèyikwéö family, by the name of Rhabwê. He had a band of beaten bark [*mwaawè*]⁸ around his wrist so he could look for the spirit, and catch it so that it could become a *panyaö* war stone. For there was a war at that time, a war between the Mèaa and the Mèyikwéö. This is how he entered the ecstatic state. He went to the place where the ancestors are invoked [*ka-mwârö*] at nightfall and sat in the deepest darkness. He was overtaken by a feeling of disorientation as if he was drunk, then he was in a second state and he flew; he didn’t feel as if he was walking any more, but his heart kept hold of a little strength and was thinking. When he was close to the place of invocation of the ancestors [*ka-mwârö*], watching over the pot he was boiling, he saw the spirit of the ancestor he was seeking. Immediately, crouching, bent over so the spirit wouldn’t see him, he jumped on it and seized it. And the two thrashed about; but Jööpwaipi held on and captured the spirit of old Rhabwê. Then the spirit said to him: ‘You fought well with me, learn to recognise this pole on the altar, for this is the wood that covers me, so that I can act when there is illness. If a god strikes, if a spear pierces, in case of sudden death, you will take this wood, this plant and this herb to chew, and these are the corresponding prohibitions.’ He spoke in this way. Jööpwaipi then took the ancestor’s spirit and immersed it in the water so that it became a stone. The Ęribee mâ Boè keep that stone, and Bwêëyöuu Ęrijiyi knows this medicine [*deewi*]. (English from author’s French translation after Leenhardt 1932, pp. 334–36, and the text reconstituted by Aramiou and Euritéin 2003, pp. 22–23)

It is to be noted that here the process of acquiring the war stone occurs in the place of invocation of the ancestors (*ka-mwârö*), in the immediate crisis of a current war, and not when a mourner is watching over a dead

7 The translation of the term *vinyéê* poses a delicate problem of interpretation, to which I shall return. As an initial indication, it covers the semantic field of distraction, madness, ecstasy – in short an altered (second) state of consciousness, though the nature of this alteration is difficult to define precisely. It can be compared to the term *nyényé*, meaning distraught, disoriented.

8 This band can also be used to roll up or carry objects, hence one of my interviewees’ reference to a ‘little pouch’ in which a war stone can be carried (see above, note 1).

body – thus differing from the accounts I was able to record directly. There are nevertheless a number of by now familiar elements: the invocation of the ancestors in the steam from a pot, within a sacred place; the agonistic transformation of the spirit into a stone; and the revelation of plants, herbs or medicines (*deewi*) that reinforce the stone's efficacy.

The context in which this text was written up helps to grasp its meaning:⁹ it forms part of the first notebook in the second series of Bwêyöüu Ęrijiyi's writings, in which he is responding, paragraph by paragraph, to the 'Questionnaire for information on clans' formulated by Maurice Leenhardt in the Houailou language in March 1918.¹⁰ The questions, drawn up when Leenhardt thought he was about to leave New Caledonia for good and addressed to his pastoral pupils, relate to the internal organisation of the clans, the relations between the chief and the founding ancestor of the country, the offerings of yams made to the founding ancestor and accounts of the origins of the clans, war stones, ancestors and totems. More specifically, the text on Jööpwaipi forms part of one section, numbered '6', and is thus a direct response to the sixth question in Leenhardt's questionnaire: '6. All of these clans have gods ... What is the power of each? What are the sicknesses each one can send? What is the (healing) herb for each one, and where does this herb come from? Who is its guardian?' (Leenhardt 1977, p. 91). Hence the text published under the title 'Jopaipi' in *Documents Néocalédoniens* constitutes part of Ęrijiyi's response to a question on the origin of medicinal herbs (*deewi*),¹¹ specifically those he personally holds. In the original notebook, the text 'Jopaipi' immediately follows these statements by Ęrijiyi:

There are medicinal herbs for each ancestral power [*bäö*] ... These herbs are found through dreams: the man who dreams receives them from the spirit of the dead person ... Men in ecstasy [*vinyêê*] can also find these herbs, the name is revealed to them as they sleep, along with the way they are to be used and all the prohibitions on food, meat, sugar cane, everything they should not eat ... Seers [*mêrhî*] also find them, those who dream awake or sitting: when the voice comes to them when they are awake, their vision is disturbed. (Aramiou and Euritêin 2002, pp. 21–22, English version after author's French translation)

9 I began analysing this context in Naepels 2007b, some elements of which are taken up here.

10 Leenhardt 1977; Naepels 2007b.

11 See Salomon 2000a.

Here, the acquisition of the herbs is linked to that of a war stone, allowing Ĕrijiyi to complete, through this text, ‘Jopaipi’, his response to Leenhardt’s previous question that specifically related to war stones, *panyaö*: ‘5. Show the clans which have a panyao stone. What is this stone and where does it come from?’ (Leenhardt 1977, p. 91).

Inner experience and technologies of the self

The two types of experience of meeting with the spirits of the dead, that of the mourner (*ávií*) and that of invocation at the ‘altar’ (*ka-mwàrö*), constitute accounts of visionary experiences bound, within the accounts themselves, to a degree of disturbance of the senses, an alteration of consciousness (*vinyêê*). They are inscribed within a set of existing means for communicating with the spirits of the dead and acceding to a higher knowledge and power (*arinadó*), the other great domain of which is through dreams.¹²

Despite many attempts at clarification,¹³ the descriptive vocabulary used in anthropology to describe such subjective experiences – possession, trance, ecstasy, shamanism, mediumship – is neither fully stabilised nor truly satisfactory. These terms are difficult to dissociate from their normative connotations of monotheist denigration and devaluation or New Age rehabilitation.¹⁴ I propose nevertheless to outline a few elements of typology: according to Erika Bourguignon, in trance the subject’s spirit is said to leave his body to travel in the realm of the spirits or the dead, the subject remaining in a state of deep sleep or profound calm; when he ‘returns’ he is able to recount his experience. In possession, by contrast, a spirit speaks to an audience via the body of a subject who shows violent motor behaviours and incarnates the spirit; when she comes out of it, she remembers nothing.¹⁵ For the Oceanian examples, Edward Schieffelin proposes a congruent classification: the soul of the shaman travels out of his body to effect a cure, while the spirits speak to those present through the mouth of the medium they are visiting.¹⁶ The most detailed and, probably, the clearest definition is that proposed by Gilbert Rouget in *Music and Trance*, where he contrasts ecstasy (characterised by

12 On dreams in the transmission of knowledge, see Naepels 1998, pp. 135–36; and Stephen 1979.

13 Bastide 1972; Geertz 1973; de Heusch 1971; Juillerat 1975; Lewis 1971 and others.

14 See Hamayon 1995.

15 Bourguignon 1972 and 1973.

16 Schieffelin 1977.

immobility, silence, solitude, the absence of crisis, sensory deprivation, memory, hallucination) with trance (marked by movement, noise, taking place in company, crisis, sensory overstimulation, amnesia and absence of hallucinations).¹⁷

Albeit with major variations in the vocabulary used, we thus have a general distinction between that which relates to ecstasy on the one hand (the spirit of the subject leaves her body to enter into contact with the world of the spirits – shamanism in Schieffelin, trance for Bourguignon, ‘transport’ for Leenhardt)¹⁸ and that which relates to possession on the other (the spirit speaks through the man it visits: mediumship for Schieffelin, trance in Rouget).¹⁹

In what can be grasped of the Kanak case through the accounts available, the experience described does not relate to public ‘possession’, the incarnation of the spirit of a dead person in the agitated body of a living person, followed by amnesia and absence of control over one’s actions. Most of my interviewees instead describe internal experiences, isolated in the singularity of the *ka-mwârö* or – for the mourner (*âvii*) – the solitude of the forest, which are subsequently reported, narrated, and thus relate to the category of ecstasy in Rouget’s classification. In this sense, the fact that I did not directly observe the process of acquisition of stones, or the work of invocation conducted in the steam from the cooking pot, and more generally the absence of reports of direct observation of these situations in the ethnographic texts on the Houaïlou region, are perhaps not so far removed from the experience that many of the inhabitants of Houaïlou themselves might have had: the central element seems not so much the experience itself as the account of it and, still more, the power it engenders.

This broad-brush outline leaves many questions unanswered: what precisely were the techniques of ecstasy? Were they based on the hallucinogenic properties of certain plants? In particular, what was the significance of the anointing with the dye from the candlenut tree? In the texts quoted, modes of communication with the ancestors are connected with technologies of the self, among which prescriptions of abstinence

17 Rouget 1985.

18 Leenhardt 1937b.

19 It will be noted that the term ‘trance’ is the least precisely defined, and appears on both sides of the opposing pairs; it is for this reason that I avoid it in my translation of ‘Jopaipi’, whereas Leenhardt used this word to translate *vinyée*.

are pre-eminent. We also need to examine the accounts of these practices, by comparing them to the healing practices described by Christine Salomon,²⁰ questioning to what extent they were made public, and what degrees of scepticism and pragmatism they arouse. Furthermore, we know nothing of the discursive content of the invocations.

This glimpse of the subjective experience associated with the invocation of ancestors and their power opens the possibility of considering another dimension of war: the emotions bound up with combat and preparation for it. This is a point emphasised by Maurice Leenhardt in his description of war in the Houaïlou region. In particular, he sees anger (*rhôê*) as a significant political sentiment (see Chapter 5).

Preparation for war, among the Kanak, will consist ... of creating the state of excitation necessary to accomplish it, of holding oneself in a state of warrior perfection, and also of maintaining one's equipment in the same state, and all the possible imponderables that might play a role at decisive moments. There is no training or organised exercise. 'War,' says the Kanak, 'is an individual matter, it is the effect of an anger that you stoke up inside yourself.' ...

Well before the fire in the hut is lit, a man tasked with preparing for war has made himself ready to fulfil this role. This is the youngest member of the clan, the priest who holds the stones containing the ancestral spirits, the *panyao* stones ... The priest's task is to propitiate the warrior ancestors. For a long time he will make sacrifices, all alone, in a tiny pot that he must have made himself ...

The hour of combat has arrived. The priest touches his spear to a virility stone or a magic ring; on his left arm he wears a *moawe* band that is wrapped around a pebble selected from among the *panyao* (ancestor-spirit) stones,²¹ and at the moment of setting out, he dances up and down on the spot, possessed by a sensation of burning in the soles of his feet that forces him to leap forth. (Leenhardt 1930, pp. 38–39, pp. 40 and 41)

These texts may be compared with Leenhardt's first article on the stones:

As soon as his weapon touches this part of the stone [here Leenhardt is referring to a phallic stone], he is as if possessed. 'The soles of my feet are burning,' he says; he ties a long band around his left wrist, binding a small

20 Salomon 1993 and 2000a.

21 Here we encounter the dual sense of the word *mwaawé*, a band or pouch of beaten bark, which holds the stone chipped from a principal war stone (see above, notes 1 and 8).

stone into it; this is as if it were a representative of the sacred stone which is not taken, and he runs to the battle, shouting, gesticulating, bringing all the warriors with him. He will go on until he has killed an enemy. Stopping immediately, he cuts the finger that holds the spear-throwing cord off the dead man, and runs back with his trophy to lay it before the protective phallus, as a sign of gratitude. The warriors, intoxicated by his success, certain of the spirits' approval, display their greatest valiance. If, by chance, the priest should be killed at the start of the battle, their courage would fail all of them, crushed as they would be by the thought that the spirits were no longer with them, owing to the transgression of their priest, who must have broken his vow of chastity. (Leenhardt, 1909a, p. 295)

This spiritual and emotional aspect of war is also pointed out by some of my interlocutors, who thus likened the figure of the war chief to that which appears in the descriptions of the mourner (*âvii*) or the person who invokes the ancestors at the *ka-mwârö*. It will be noted, too, that dye from the candlenut tree (*tâi*) was used by both warriors and mourners.

When it comes to war, there are all the prohibitions, so your wife shouldn't be pregnant, you had to bathe and prepare yourself several weeks before, you had to sleep on your own, cook your own food, there was the consultation of the seers [*mêrbî*]. There was all that, then, and then there were the ceremonies you did yourself, I mean your opponent ... you were already putting him at a disadvantage, it was magic, you know. Then when you set off to war, like that ... you're possessed by a spirit. The warrior, like the war chief for example ... he is completely possessed by the spirit, he is no longer master of his actions. These are things you can trigger at any moment, for example us, when we make our war speeches. (Extract from interview, June 1995)

The story of a war

Who is Jööpwaipi?

Following this exposition of modes of propitiation for war, which are entirely absent from the colonists' and military officers' texts (see Chapter 1), I should like to complete my analysis of the 'Jopaipi' text by attempting to answer some sociological questions raised by this essay. First of all, who are the people mentioned, in terms of their social relations? Who is Jööpwaipi? Who is Rhabwê? Through these questions,

a number of the wars described in the preceding chapter re-emerge, thus shifting the focus from the symbolism of war stones to their sociology, before refocusing on the colonial wars.

The first thing to be noted in terms of identifying the individuals named in this text is that in the language of Houailou, the name Jööpwaipi²² literally means ‘worn, spoiled, ancient pipe; old pipe’.²³ We are thus dealing with a name that postdates the sandalwood traders’ introduction of clay pipes as objects of exchange. It therefore follows that the person whose experience is recorded in this text was born in the second half of the 1840s or after (or at least that this nickname was bestowed on him at that point).

The second thing to note is that the name of the ancestor whose spirit was captured by Jööpwaipi and transformed into a stone, Rhabwê, appears on several other occasions in the notebooks in which Ērijiji wrote down the tale of ‘Jopaipi’. The first mention comes in the second notebook of the first series, in two ceremonial speeches (*vivaa*) that present the ancestors of the Mèyikwéö tribe: section 8 refers to ‘the descendants of Nörö and Gwâmee and Rhabwê and Wainô and Mâjaa’, and section 10 to ‘the descendants of Nörö and Gwâmee and Rhabwê and Wainô and Varui and Kuayè’ (Aramiou and Euritéin 2002, pp. 33 and 36). Moreover, the name Rhabwê occurs in a more detailed context in the same notebook in which the ‘Jopaipi’ text was written down, in section 4, in a paragraph headed ‘The Mèyikwéö clan’ (Aramiou and Euritéin 2003, pp. 14–15). This passage thus constitutes a response to the fourth question in Leenhardt’s questionnaire: ‘What is the origin of each clan? Describe the tales, *vinimo*, and the myths, *virhénô*, of each one’ (Leenhardt 1977, p. 91). This section was translated by Raymond Leenhardt, the missionary’s son, at an unspecified date, and revised by Jean Guiart and Gayô Karé before being published by Guiart in 1972, and again in 2003. In this text, Ērijiji makes Gwâmee the founding ancestor of the maximal clan bearing the name Mèyikwéö. Gwâmee is said to have had five sons (Mâjaa, Bwa, Rhabwê, Jïibwa and Mèvorhau) who founded a number of the clans in this tribe, and Rhabwê is identified as a member of the Kaviyöibanu clan: *Aè wi-a Rhabwê, wè née mwâârö xie na Kaviyöibanu* – ‘That man, Rhabwê, the name of his clan is Kaviyöibanu’ (Aramiou and

22 I have followed the spelling proposed by Aramiou and Euritéin in their editions of Bwêëyöou Ērijiji’s notebooks (2002, 2003), as it is phonetically more accurate than Leenhardt’s version.

23 From *jöö* – old, worn-out, outdated – and *puaipi*, derived from the English ‘pipe’.

Euritéin 2003, p. 15, English version after author's translation). There are other versions of the history of this Mèyikwéö tribe. The important point here is that this is the version Bwêâyöuu Ęrijiyi recorded in the same notebook as the 'Jopaipi' text.

These two pieces of information can be linked on the basis of the genealogical summary Narcisse Kaviyöibanu and I drew up during our first recorded interview, in June 1991. Starting from his grandfather Janô, who was born around 1900, two generations earlier there is an ancestor called Pwaiipi, and four generations before that an ancestor named Rhabwê. Moreover, I conducted this interview in the village of Népèru, where Narcisse Kaviyöibanu was then living and which is very widely understood to be part of this clan's lands.²⁴ The fact that Ęrijiyi locates the acquisition of this war stone in Népèru confirms this clan identification. Today, Rhabwê is a given name still used in the Kaviyöibanu family. Thus, both the text in Bwêâyöuu Ęrijiyi's notebook and my genealogical research indicate the social location of the actors: the war stone was acquired by an individual in the Kaviyöibanu clan, which forms part of the Mèyikwéö maximal clan, and to which Jööpwaiipi and his ancestor Rhabwê belonged.

1867: The Koro war

One further point requires clarification: while the identity of the protagonists seems established, what is the 'war between the Mèea and the Mèyikwéö' mentioned in Ęrijiyi's text? Contemporary studies in the Houaïlou valley have much to say on this matter, for at least two reasons: firstly, this war and the movements of clans it gave rise to contributed to the current geographical distribution of families in the Houaïlou valley and the social structuring of this space between 'people of the valley' (*pâ nériwâ*) and 'people of Mèaa' (*pâ Mèaa* or *pâ tèvo*).²⁵ Secondly, all of my interlocutors located this 'war between the Mèea and the Mèyikwéö' at the confluence of the Koro valley and the main Houaïlou valley – it is also known as the Koro war. The fact that stories relating to this war can

24 At the time of writing, the area in question is occupied by another individual from this family; however, it forms part of the territory overseen by the organisation responsible for land reform, within the set of lands in the zone known as Dâô, the reassignment of which is a source of major conflict: see Naepels 1998 (see also Chapter 5).

25 Despite the fact it has been shown that some clans came down from Mèea to various places in the Houaïlou valley and its tributary valleys prior to this war.

still be collected is no doubt due partly to the context of conflict over land in this Koro valley, in which I conducted my initial research during the 1990s (see Chapter 5).

This war arose between a group of clans then living in the Houaïlou valley (particularly, but not exclusively, the Mèyikwéö), gathered together in a small fort or protected by a barrier made from large wooden stakes (*mwâwêbé*), and families originating from the Mèaa plateau (particularly but not exclusively the Wéma family), who had come down to the outskirts of the Houaïlou valley via the Koro valley, for reasons that today are the subject of diverse and contradictory accounts. Given that these historical accounts form the basis for contemporary land or statutory claims, I have no intention here of putting forward a definitive version of the Koro war, nor obviously of imputing responsibility, since these reconstructions are also extremely hypothetical. It must be emphasised that a given protagonist can today set any localised account within a broader history, which links the episode to earlier accounts and justifies a given act by setting it in the context of a broader temporality. Despite the fact that much is uncertain about the causes and the precise sequence of events of this war, and notwithstanding the existence of differing versions, a certain number of protagonists and episodes are well known, as are the principal interpretations of the families concerned. I present here some excerpts from the accounts I collected:

There, there is what was known as the *mwâwêbé*, it's like a fort, there are big stakes made of hard wood. And when the Wéma had trampled the fields, the Wéma, the Gowé, well all those who were called the Mèaa, you know, they also want to go and chase out the Mèyikwéö. But us, we had guns already. And they hid behind the stakes, you know. And then they waited for the chief to come and throw down insults, there opposite, on the other side of the river, he came to insult the Mèyikwéö, then it's from there they shot, then the chief fell ... but only he wasn't killed. But it was above Koro up there that a warrior chief from X arrived ahead of the Mèyikwéö and killed the last one, it was the injured man, he killed the last one then he put his foot on him, then he waited for the Mèyikwéö to arrive, you know. He said: 'Oh! It's not worth running [chasing] them, here's your meat.' And that's where they stopped [chasing them], if not the Mèaa would have bene exterminated, that's the tale that all the elders told. (Guynemer Karé – whose clan forms part of the Mèyikwéö group, extract from interview, March 1999)

So I will just say that if we left Koro, it was because there were gunshots, but I don't think we were going to leave if there weren't guns, because X was a hell of a warrior, he had already won plenty of wars in the valley, but if they left, it's because of that. (Gilbert Wéma Gwâê, extract from interview, August 1995)

Maybe you've heard the story of Koro, if people tell it to you. I mean, we're in it too, we also chase away the people of Koro. And why do we chase the people of Koro away? It's to do with pride.

—Pride?

Yes. When they trampled the yam fields, they dug up and cut the yams [of the people of the valley]. The Wéma, they have to acknowledge their history, and even the Gowé, they have to tell the story of Koro to the end. Why did the people of Koro leave Koro? (Maurice Mèèvâ, extract from interview, December 1991)

They went to the others' fields, then they did bad things, they dug up the yams ... Then they left Koro, that family, they did bad things in Nérhëxakwéaa, so in the end, I think they left one of their people there in Nérhëxakwéaa in the battle ... So that's where all the family comes from, and then they ran away. (Joseph Wéma Nirikani, extract from interview, August 1995)

The Koro war has also been the subject of a literary account, 'The symbolic hole', courtesy of New Caledonian writer Georges Baudoux, in which the Coula tribe and its chief Sioupé come into conflict with the tribe of Nessakoaya, who are protected by 'a strong stockade made of stakes', also described as a 'fortress' (Baudoux 1949, pp. 50, 54). This version, which focuses on the use of rifles and the anecdote of the hole in a coconut palm created by one of the shots fired, has a number of traits in common but also some that diverge from the versions I collected.²⁶ For example, 'Sioupé' is indeed the name of a chief of the Wéma family, which was involved in this war. But locating this chief in 'Coula' and 'Boréaré' is a retrospective illusion, since it was precisely after they left Koro and following a complicated journey that the members of this family settled in Coula and Boréaré, where they were based when Baudoux lived in Houaïlou.

26 Baudoux 1949, p. 62. The same anecdote appears in an article published in 1956 by the Protestant missionary Raymond Charlemagne (see Chapter 4).

Contrary to Baudoux, who attributes the rifle concerned purely to the sandalwood trade and implicitly dates the conflict to this period,²⁷ some of my interlocutors insisted that the Koro war took place after Europeans were firmly established in New Caledonia – and even that they were directly involved in the conflict.

The Koro war is from the time when the Europeans were already here. (Joseph Wéma Nirikani, extract from interview, February 1999)

This war, for example, that took place in Koro, which started from the *mwâwêbé*, that's a different story, that's already in the colonial period ... That story, you shouldn't believe it, there are not only Kanak stories. (Narcisse Kaviyôbanu, extract from interview, June 1995)

One version I recorded offered detailed information on the relationship between the use of the rifle, the French military presence, and the auxiliary commitment of the Néjâ chiefdom (see Chapter 1):

The version that is told at home, is that in the history of Koro, this story of the rifle, it's a rifle that came from Canala, it's through the relations of the Néjâ chiefdom, and that rifle they brought it from Canala to the *mwâwêbé* [fort] ... And there the elders, when they saw the rifle, they said: 'But that's a slingshot!' They saw it as a slingshot. They argued back and forth and then they said: 'It's a slingshot, but who holds the most powerful slingshot medicine here in the valley, well it's the X.' So then they went to look for the X family, they went to find the elder who was called Y, and the elder came, he took the rifle, and then he hid down there by the water's edge ... Then the chief of Wéma came with six warriors, they came to the other side of the river, they always came to taunt us from there ... So that means that is how the X there, old Y, he came, he hid on the other side of the river, and then in the war house, Z and T had already prepared the warriors, because they had to strike the people of Koro, they had to be driven out. And in the forest, there in Nérhëxakwéaa, Néjâ was hidden with the [French] soldiers. And when the Wéma came down ... Y there, X there, he shot, the bullet entered his leg, and then he fell, that's how the old people tell it ... That, that was in the story of that war, because us, we were supported by the big chief and the [French] soldiers, you see. (Extract from interview, January 1999)

Clearly, there is no way of establishing the truth of the details of any particular version. Nevertheless, the assertion of the presence not only of a rifle, but also of French soldiers alongside a 'Néjâ', chief of the coastal region of Houaïlou,

27 See the quotation from Nissol Euritéin (Chapter 1).

in a war that took place in the middle Houaïlou valley, suggests that this Koro war can be identified with the repressive operation conducted in that same zone in December 1867, by French troops supported by auxiliaries from the coast and the valley (see Chapter 1). This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that accounts of the operation published in the *Moniteur* in August 1868 mention the people of Mèaa on two occasions. First they report the existence of a conflict between the people of the Houaïlou valley and inhabitants of Mèaa: ‘Since February 1867, Chief Polinda of Bouéoua [in the Houaïlou valley] has been defending himself against Catamouino, chief of Méa’ (*Moniteur*, 2 August 1868). Subsequently, they describe the destruction of villages associated with Mèaa during the repressive operation: ‘The governor had the villages of Bouin-oué, Nindié, Houinbé, Méa etc. burned. The Houaïlou from the interior took refuge with the Honrôés’ (*Moniteur*, 30 August and 6 September 1868).

Close reading of the *Moniteur* for the year 1868 reveals a further striking detail: in the description of the conflicts that took place in Bourail during that year, in which a number of individuals originating from Houaïlou seem to have been directly involved, the name ‘Diopahipi’, a Gallicisation of the appellation Jööpwaipi, which we have already encountered, appears: ‘The two other murderers [of the freed prisoner Bridon], Diopahipi and Mindivi, are yet to be handed over’ (*Moniteur*, 30 August and 6 September 1868).

Here we are clearly in the realm of conjecture, and much of the information about the sociological context is lacking: in particular, we know nothing about the source of the attribution of the murder of Bridon to ‘Diopahipi’; conversely, there is no evidence to confirm the hypothesis that the individual named Jööpwaipi mentioned by Bwêéyöuu Ęrijiyi could have gone to the upper Bourail valleys (specifically to Kikwé) in 1867–68. It will be recalled, however, that the name Jööpwaipi, the meaning and origin of which I discussed above, could not be a traditional (or a very common) given name in the language of Houaïlou in 1868, since forenames are generally specific to a particular clan. It is also worth noting the compatibility of a set of hypotheses, derived from various sources, that posit that Jööpwaipi was born in the second half of the 1840s, that he was directly involved in the ‘war between the Mèaa and the Mèyikwéö’ through his quest for a war stone in 1867, and that he played a part in the conflicts in Bourail the following year. Thus, according to the sources I have drawn on – and in line with my observations on the 1856 operation – the local issues of the ‘Koro war’ became bound up

with the colonial concerns in the military operations conducted in 1867 in the valleys of Houaïlou and Koro. Just as we were able to shift the perspective on 1856 by focusing both on the gunboat and on the shark, we can understand the Koro war in terms of both the rifles of the colonial troops and the war stones of the Kanak inhabitants of Houaïlou.

The same kind of analysis would also be valid, to some extent, in relation to the involvement of people from Houaïlou in 1878: the best-known fact (see Chapter 1) is the way in which the Houaïlou auxiliaries protected the Ni tribe in Bourail by diverting the French reprisal toward the coast. We can now hypothesise that this protection was also a way for some of the Houaïlou auxiliaries to repay the inhabitants of the upper Bourail valleys, who had welcomed and protected them 10 years earlier.

War stones and conversion: The case of Bwêâyöuu Ērijiyi

'Twas in the age of darkness, before the gospel's light,
 The pagan lived a life of cruel and joyless blight ...
 With crude tool he carved in wood, in strange misshapen style
 The features of the false gods worshipped on his isle.
 Philippe Rey-Lescure,²⁸ *La sève monte* ... p. 82

A 'lesson in things'

I propose to continue the analysis of the spiritual and ideological stakes of the war by focusing on the interactions between Kanaks and Europeans around war stones. I begin by reading a text²⁹ by Étienne Bergeret, the Protestant missionary who replaced Maurice Leenhardt in Houaïlou when the latter was on leave in France throughout 1909. In an article published three years later in the *Journal des missions évangéliques* (*Journal of Evangelical Missions*), he describes how the father of Élia Mârârhëë (one of Leenhardt's first pupils) gave him a war stone:

One day I met him [Élia's father] on his way in: but this time he had come to visit not only Élia, but me also, and it was no ordinary visit: Élia's old father had come to bring me his gods, two black stones, one of them

28 Rey-Lescure was a Protestant missionary in New Caledonia, specifically in Houaïlou, from 1922 to 1933.

29 I am grateful to Christine Salomon for alerting me to this text.

about fifteen, the other about thirty centimetres long, which he drew from the bottom of his basket ... The first is a yam stone, *pè-mëu* [here called *pémao*]. The smaller pebble, which is shaped like the blade of a knife, is the *pajao*. This one is by far the more precious. You can find other *pémao*, but this *pajao*! This is the stone that rendered the Manarè [Màràrhëë] family invincible; it is owing to this stone that the warriors of Néaoua were feared as much by the coastal tribes as the tribe from the mountain! When it desired war, it turned blood-red, and the Manarè warriors, when they saw this sign, knew that they had merely to rush on their enemies, and were sure of cutting them to pieces. Élia's old father has seen it cover itself with blood, he assures me! And two young men who were present at the interview told me: 'But yes, it's true, Misher, we haven't seen it, because we're too little, but the old people have seen it!' So why does 'pajao' no longer become blood-stained as it did before? 'Oh, it's because of God's word. Since God's word arrived, it doesn't do it any more; it must be ashamed, and even it ran away, and for a long time we didn't know what had happened to it, it was hiding.' (I heard at least one other story like this, where the fetish fled and hid.) 'And then the other day, when we were rummaging in a corner, we heard something moving about inside a big shell. We looked! It was "pajao"! We put it in the fire to kill it, so as to be sure it wouldn't escape again. Otherwise, it surely wouldn't have stayed in your house, Misso!' But now that it has been burned, there is nothing to fear: since 'pajao' has been on my table, that is for over a year, it has not moved. Élia's old father has been a member of the Church for several years: he believes in the word of God ... But Élia's old father persists in believing in the mysterious power of his *pémao* [*pè-mëu*, yam stone] and his *pajao* [*panyaö*, war stone], an active power, at least in past times. And that is why we must rejoice at seeing him give it up deliberately, so that he is not tempted to sew a new patch on the old garment. (Bergeret 1912)

This passage offers a further example of the image I considered above of a propitiatory stone that covers itself in blood and summons to war. This text seems to me particularly interesting in that it very clearly indicates a link between the missionaries' interest in stones, particularly war stones – which Bergeret categorises as a 'fetish' (see the title of his two articles, published in 1909 and 1912) – and a theory of the deep-seated conversion of subjectivities underlying Protestant missionary activity ('not being tempted to sew a new patch on the old garment'). Before they became a category for description or ethnographic interpretation, war stones were first the object of both practical and theoretical analysis by the missionaries – as embodiments of a pagan religion that needed to be simultaneously understood and eradicated. I have described elsewhere the missionaries' practice of collecting and destroying war stones, mainly by burning them,

in the Houaïlou region during the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰ These acts of destruction began at the instigation of the first evangelists from the Loyalty Islands, even before the first European missionaries arrived:

This is how Protestant worship began in the Houaïlou region. We had girded up our paréos, and the women had put on their dresses. One day Sawa Pierre said to us: ‘We are going to burn all the altars, our war stones, our yam stones, all the things that were sacred to us and that we made sacrifices to, because from now on we will worship God who is our life in heaven.’ In Nénéwa we did it for two days, but the people of Néaria did not move – I was there – for they were very afraid when we brought our thunder stone out of the sea at Katevui and put it on the fire. I was about ten years old and I was not afraid. (Nérhon 1969, pp. 41)

Notwithstanding the differences in their implementation of this policy (more spectacular among the Catholics, while the Protestants relied more on individual decision), these two Christian churches shared a focus on objects, of wood and stone, as metonyms of the old religion that had to be destroyed. To quote Victor Fraysse, the Catholic missionary in Bourail who was active at Karaxëré, in the upper Houaïlou valley, in the early 20th century, it can thus be said that the missionaries’ practice was first and foremost a ‘lesson in things’ – as here in Fraysse’s description of the sacking of a place of invocation of the ancestors (*ka-mwârö*):

Then came a delegation of pagans from the neighbourhood, asking me to go and deliver them from their *lotous* [gods, fetishes, from the Wallisian *lotu* – religion, worship, prayer]. I willingly acceded to this request, accompanied by people from Karagreou [Karaxëré]. When we arrived at the designated place, at first I could not see much. Following closer examination, I entered a very dense thicket, and I saw a quantity of posts carved into strange shapes, long poles with bark pouches at the end, tightly tied on with lianas. They even showed me the place where victims were burned in honour of these singular deities. It was high time that these sacrilegious acts of worship were wrested from the devil. Although short, the ceremony was as solemn as possible. I put on my surplice and stole, and blessed the place according to the prescriptions of the ritual. Then I called the pagans, who until then had remained behind, in the grip of a vestige of superstitious fear. They leaped on their old wooden gods, and destroyed them with vigorous axe blows. Within a few minutes they were all in pieces, and were then consigned to the flames. It goes without saying

30 Naepels 1998, p. 62.

that they put up not the slightest resistance. This good lesson in things spared me the trouble of exposing the false nature and powerlessness of such deities through long disquisitions. (Fraysse 1905, p. 288–89)

Leenhardt and war stones

The missionaries' interest in objects was not only practical but also theoretical. Hence, Maurice Leenhardt concluded the 'Questionnaire' he addressed to his Kanak pupils in 1918, the most significant outcome of which are the notebooks of Bwêÿöuu Ērijjiyi (in which the 'Jopaipi' text appears), with the following words: 'Thus it is important for us to understand the darkness and our work in this area, and that will give us wisdom in the way we speak the word of God' (Leenhardt 1977, p. 91). In other words, his interest in the internal organisation of the clans (question 1), the founding ancestors of the country (question 2), the qualities of yams (question 3), the history of the clans (question 4), war stones (question 5) and healing powers and communication with the ancestors (question 6) was also rooted in a theory of conversion: it was important to understand in order first to help people to change, then in order to better 'speak the word of God', and finally to ensure that the old man, the pagan, the one who invoked his ancestors and his gods in the steam from a cooking pot, through contact with a propitiatory stone, or using his medicinal herbs, had really died within the convert.

It seems to me that it is precisely this pragmatic agenda of conversion that forms the context for the answers Ērijjiyi gave Leenhardt.³¹ His answer to the fifth question, on war stones, thus ends with a long paragraph headed 'Here are the clans that have a war stone', and consisting of a list of the names of the clans and individuals concerned.³² It is difficult to consider these pages as anything other than a denunciation – by the first Kanak pastor of Houaïlou, and addressed to the missionary who trained and converted him – of those who possessed war stones, who included the family of Ēribee³³ mâ Boè, precisely the family that is named at the end of the 'Jopaipi' text: 'There is also [a war stone] in another part of the Mèyikwöö clan, the grandfather is called Boé, and his son Bee.'

31 For further evidence in support of this argument, see Naepels 2007a, pp. 79–87.

32 Aramiou and Euritéin 2003, pp. 19–20.

33 This name does not appear in the civil register today, but a number of my interlocutors confirmed that this lineage still exists, under another family name.

Before appearing as objects of scientific study in the text and illustration plates of Leenhardt's *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (*Notes on New Caledonian Ethnography*),³⁴ war stones (and other propitiatory stones) first featured in the missionary pedagogic text *La Grande Terre. Mission de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (*Grande Terre. New Caledonia Mission*), from its very first edition in 1909.³⁵ And Leenhardt's first contacts with the school of anthropology in Paris, also in 1909, consisted of the presentation of various stones at the Anthropological Society.³⁶

'Readily giving up his treasure'

Following Raymond Leenhardt, James Clifford and Jean Guiart,³⁷ I have emphasised the importance of Bwêâyöuu Ęrijjiyi in the construction of Maurice Leenhardt's knowledge,³⁸ particularly through his notebooks. Leenhardt indeed acknowledged the enormity of this debt: 'Everything I have been able to clarify in the obscurity of native questions, I owe to Boesou', he wrote in the second edition of the pamphlet popularising the mission, entitled *La Grande Terre: Mission de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Leenhardt 1922a, p. 111). Clifford rightly points out that 'such acknowledgements are all too rare in the annals of ethnography' (Clifford 1982, p. 142). I have quoted elsewhere the more ambivalent assessments of Ęrijjiyi that Leenhardt gives in his private correspondence.³⁹ And indeed, the enthusiasm of Leenhardt's published appraisals of Ęrijjiyi tends to decline over time. He still renders homage to Ęrijjiyi in the preface to *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne*: 'Old Boesou Ęrijjisi, formerly engaged in carving masks and organising pilou ritual dances ... rewarded us for teaching him to write by slowly setting down, lying on his mat, the best of the legends reproduced below, and the pilou speeches he used to teach to the Nindia chiefs (Neja clan)' (Leenhardt 1930, p. viii). This description, however, obscures the missionary context in which Ęrijjiyi learned to write and his status as convert (and further, as pastor), as he is here presented

34 Notably plates 8 (4. Fingerstall and pierced stone into which the spear is thrust before combat), 18 (1. Fossil crab propitiatory for crab fishing; 2. Fertility stone buried with the crops; 3. Taro stone; 4. Rain stone; 5. Yam stone) and 19 (1. Virility stone – phallus touched by spears before combat; 2. Virility stone; 3. Aphrodisiac stone).

35 Leenhardt 1909b.

36 Leenhardt 1909a.

37 R. Leenhardt 1976; Clifford 1982; Guiart 2003.

38 Naepels 2007a and 2007b. It is interesting to compare Leenhardt's interactions with Ęrijjiyi with those between Franz Boas and George Hunt, in terms of both the compilation of notebooks and the collection of objects. See Berman 1996; Jacknis 1991 and 1996.

39 Naepels 2007b, pp. 100–02.

as a traditional scholar.⁴⁰ In 1932, he still appears several times in the table of contents of the *Documents néo-calédoniens* (*New Caledonian Documents*), as the writer of legends and ceremonial speeches (though his rich sociological analysis, on which Leenhardt nevertheless draws extensively, does not appear in this volume), before practically disappearing from *Gens de la Grande Terre* (*The People of Grande Terre*) in 1937 and *Do kamo* in 1947. In a movement that Clifford (1983) has analysed in other contexts, the construction of Leenhardt's discursive authority as an ethnographer, aimed at winning him professional legitimacy, involves the inverse relegation of Kanak pupil pastor Ērijiji to the role of informant, then to the anonymous embodiment of a generic category ('the Kanak', 'the Melanesian', or even 'the Austro-Melanesian').⁴¹

Ērijiji's commitment to Leenhardt was not to the exclusion of other close relationships with Europeans; for example, when Leenhardt was on leave in 1909, Ērijiji presented pastor Bergeret with the significant gift of his family's most precious shell currency, a gesture that points to a similar pattern of consolidating conversion through the abandonment of objects linked to ancestry:

The day before he left [for Kùa where he was going to take up his first post as pastor], he came to find me, and gave me a package wrapped in a very dirty rag, bound with a sort of netted strap. Bosoon [Bwêêyöuu] unwraps it, and very carefully spreads out the contents before my eyes. There are two flattened spindles, each with a very slender point, and a small piece of wood carved into the form of a pirogue, and stained with something that looks very like blood. 'Look,' Bosoon says to me, 'it's the god of my family, and also that of Mindia, the paramount chief, and also that of Sétei (one of our Do Néva boys). Now that we have "the Word" we no longer need this and I thought to give it to you, because you brought us a word of God.' ... The spindles are made from coconut fibre and the hairs of the fruit bat, the enormous creature that roams the skies of Caledonia in the evening. The point is made up of tiny shells or carved fragments of mother of pearl, strung end to end. These are Kanak currency, the money with which the pagans, and even still some people who call themselves Christians, are paid for their daughters when they give them in marriage ... But what I have before my eyes are not just money: Bosoon told me that this little package contained the most precious thing his family owns.

40 The missionary context does, however, feature marginally in the legend of illustration plate 36, where Ērijiji is singled out: 'First pupils and best instructors. Do Néva, Houailou, 1902. On the left, Boesou Erijisi.'

41 Leenhardt 1979.

If they were forced to flee, this is what they would take before all the rest. As long as the family was able to keep it, it held a guarantee of prosperity and victory. (Bergeret 1909, p. 410)

More strikingly still, Ęrijiji was – without any missionary context – one of the principal guides in the Houaïlou region of Marius Archambault, the Houaïlou postmaster who became the first expert in New Caledonian petroglyphs – stones engraved with geometric motifs.⁴² Thus, in an article also published in 1909, Archambault recounts how the ‘devoted Boasaou’ took him to Gondé, where there were several petroglyphs, naming some with reference to his guide – the ‘*dicona* [deacon]’ group and the ‘Boasaou stone’ – and concludes, ‘Boasaou is almost as passionate about archaeology as we are’:

This devoted guide, Boasaou, raised on old tales and readily giving up his treasure, hastened to tell me what he knew about the ‘stone for measuring men’. He also guided me into the central mountains, to a stone with rectilinear incisions, half submerged in a great pool of water, ‘where men in olden times hacked into the stone with axes because they had plotted to seize the moon that shone in the water, and wanted to open up a passage to the star through the very stone.’ In the same region, he showed me a tall conical rock, with a cave at the base, and explained to me that: ‘the men of old wanted to cut down this stone to make a big post for a hut.’ Along the way he gave me many others, marked with the same touch of humour. (Archambault 1909, pp. 151, 152)

Comparison of these testimonies from Leenhardt, Bergeret and Archambault confirms the scale of Ęrijiji’s involvement with Europeans, with whom he systematically appears ‘readily giving up his treasure’.

An alliance (second half of the 19th century)

I should like to supplement what can be known about Bwêëyöuu Ęrijiji on the basis of interviews I conducted, with the combined intention of better understanding the ‘Jopaipi’ text and returning to the history of the Néjâ chiefdom (see Chapter 1). Both interviewees, who independently and two years apart drew up the genealogy of two members of the Kaviyöïbanu family, assert that Bwêëyöuu Ęrijiji was indeed a member of the Kaviyöïbanu family, adopted by the Ęrijiji family:

— Did your grandfather have brothers and sisters too?

⁴² Archambault 1901 and 1902; Luquet 1926.

He has another brother that I know of, he is adopted by Ęrijjiyi there ...
— Who is that?

BwêËÿöuu, the one who used to be Mr Leenhardt's pastor. (Wainô Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, September 1993)

I had already been given this information, with an explanation, by another member of the same family:

BwêËÿöuu, you know, he gave Leenhardt stories in the books ... Paramount chief Mèèjà [Néjà], his mother was a woman of the great mountain Yöuma ... so the Nèwau went to settle in the Néjà chiefdom ... Thinking about power in war, they saw our house here, it was certainly a powerful clan at the time and to get my family involved, they sent back this woman, Bwèda ... telling her: 'You can't come back to the chiefdom, you can only come back on one condition, if the Kaviyöibanu family send you, then you can settle in the paramount chiefdom.' So the woman came back, came here, to our house, here in Dâô, so she told people from here the answer they gave over there ... So there were customary exchanges between my family and the people of Néjà.⁴³ The exchange took place on the Kaviyöibanu path, but the person who made the woman leave, the one who holds the breath of the children this woman bears, is the Ęrijjiyi household ... Once the child of this marriage – so he's the paramount chief Mèèjà Néjà – became chief ... he asked that among the Kaviyöibanu, they talk and they send a Kaviyöibanu to the Ęrijjiyi clan, so that he has power to speak. And that's how Kaviyöibanu BwêËÿöuu became Kaviyöibanu BwêËÿöuu Ęrijjiyi. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, June 1991)

The process described thus refers to a threefold movement, intended to meet the demands of the various families involved in this alliance: the ceremonies enabling the marriage of the parents of paramount chief Mèèjà Néjà would take place not among the Nèwau (the bride's clan), but among the Kaviyöibanu; in this place it would then be the Ęrijjiyi, not the Kaviyöibanu, who made the key exchanges; and, subsequently, a Kaviyöibanu – BwêËÿöuu to be precise – was adopted into the Ęrijjiyi family. This is the link that enables us to understand Leenhardt's report that Ęrijjiyi 'taught the chiefs' of the 'Néjà clan' 'pilou dance speeches' (ceremonial speeches) (Leenhardt 1930, p. viii). Moreover, such exchanges are in no way exceptional, even now: marriage is first and foremost the occasion for creating, expressing or reinforcing political bonds among a number of families, and it is thus not unusual for the 'maternal uncles' of future children to be selected, at the time of the marriage ceremony,

43 To seal the marriage of Bwèda Nèwau in the Néjà chiefdom.

from within a clan that is not that of the bride, but which has a special relationship with this clan (see Chapter 6). This exchange is usually the means of repaying or creating a debt. Adoptions derive in part from the same practice.

It should be noted that in the interview I conducted in September 1995 with Paul Ęrijiji, who was then the oldest representative of this family, he did not mention this adoption. If we assume, however, that this information is correct, it throws new light on the ‘Jopaipi’ text: it allows us to understand not only how Bwêÿöuu Ęrijiji knows this story, which as we have seen concerns the ancestors of the Kaviyöibanu clan (Rhabwê and Jööpwaipi), but also how he knows precisely the healing plants (*deewi*) that are supposed to have been revealed when the stone appeared (‘Bwêÿöuu Ęrijiji knows this medicine’). This revelation made to Leenhardt, who perhaps did not grasp its significance, once again shows Ęrijiji ‘readily giving up his treasure’. His investment in a subjectivity profoundly marked by conversion, the abandonment of ancient practices and the revealing of private knowledge are confirmed by the following interview extract, which shows Ęrijiji playing an active role in the missionary destruction of propitiatory stones:

Me, I know that grandfather said that I had a great-grandfather, a grandfather’s father, old Bwêÿöuu Ęrijiji, who was adopted Ęrijiji, him with the Protestant religion, grandfather said he took the liberty of burning other people’s stones, taking other people’s medicines. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, February 1999)

The Néajjë war (second half of the 18th century)

The alliance discussed above between the Néjâ family and the clans of the Houaïlou valley (Ęrijiji and Kaviyöibanu of the Mëyikwéö tribe in Dâö and Nêrhëxakwéaa, and Néwau in Karaxëre) itself refers back to an earlier history:

Paramount chief Mèëjâ, his mother, she’s an Ęrijiji woman, as I was saying, one of our women, of the Mëyikwéö⁴⁴ ... [The Néjâ] left Nindiah there, well, the stone up there⁴⁵ because there was an incident ... and in order to reconcile them, an Ęrijiji girl was given, and the Néjâ paramount chief, Néjâ Mèëjâ, was born ... Piecing together the movements [of the Néjâ

44 The tribe that includes the Ęrijiji and the Kaviyöibanu.

45 *Néjâ*, a rocky limestone outcrop that overhangs the lower Houaïlou valley and gives its name to the Néjâ family (one branch of which is recorded today in the civil register under the name ‘Nédia’), as well as to the village of ‘Nindiah’ and the district of ‘Nindien’.

clan] ... they left and then they stayed down there in N  w  . Afterwards when the Whites came ... he found us, his uncles, the M  yikw  , the   rijiyi, he came to find the whole M  yikw   clan, to say that we should leave D   and go to N  rh  xakw  aa. (Wain   Kaviy  ibanu, extract from interview, September 1993)

These highly euphemistic references to an ‘incident’ refer to an old war, the N  ajj   or Nindiah war. In the accounts I have been given, the protagonists in this war were, among others, the two Kakus (the ancestors of the N  j   and the N  p  r  , see Figures 2 and 3) in conflict with Ay  rhari (ancestor of the N  wau) and Gw  mee (ancestor of the M  yikw  ). This war (see Chapter 1) is widely held to be at the root of the displacement of these clans, who formerly lived in the lower Houa  lou valley, on the coast and in the middle and upper Houa  lou valley respectively.

On the basis of the figures in Chapter 1 and my genealogical research, I put forward below a synoptic, albeit hypothetical, table bringing together a set of data that are not all equally reliable, but that indicate the relative positioning of actors and sequences of events (see Table 1).

Table 1. Chronological and genealogical relationships between some of the individuals referred to in this text

Generation	N��j�� clan	N��p��r�� clan	Ay��rhari and N��wau clan	M��yikw�� and Kaviy��ibanu clan	Date of birth	Event during adulthood
+5	Kaku	Kaku	Ay��rhari	Gw��mee	1760?	Late 18th century: N��ajj�� war
+4	Nemwan��	Par��		Rhabw��	1785?	
+3	W��ga	B��ra			1810?	1856: repression in coastal region
+2	Ai	Kavo	Bw��da	J���pwaipi	1835?	1867: Koro war
+1	M���j��	J��n��		Bw���y��uu	1856 (M���j��) 1866 (Bw���y��uu)	1918: writing down of ‘Jopaipi’
0	Apupia	Mw��d��w��			c. 1890–1900	

Source: Author’s research.

1899–1900: The departure from Dâô

Under governor Paul Feillet, Mèèjà Néjà, paramount chief of Houaïlou, made a decisive contribution to the policy of disentanglement of reservations, in other words the Kanaks' forced departure from lands that had previously been recognised as belonging to them, a policy that Feillet instigated for the purpose of obtaining new land for colonisation. While Mèèjà's attitude toward colonisation was complex and ambivalent (see Chapter 3), his involvement in the process of expropriation of land was a way of reinforcing his control over the valley chiefdoms, with whom his family had long been in conflict (at least since the Néajïë war in the late 18th century). Thus the request he made, or order he gave, to the Dâô families to leave the place where they lived in order to make it available for colonial settlement has been remembered and passed down in the families concerned, in relation to the powers embodied by war stones:

And once we'd accepted religion, paramount chief Mèèjà ... asked us, well, our ancestors, to give the war stone, to give him the war stone that was the source of our strength. The ancestors said no, it was not possible, because that was our strength, and then if he was paramount chief now, that was because his power was also based on that power [as nephew of the valley families, following the matrimonial alliance discussed above]. Him, this was his response: 'If you cannot give your war stone, I ask you to leave this place for 30 years because you have accepted religion, and religion asks that we burn these stones. But if you say that you cannot do that, now you do as I ask, you leave this place for 30 years, until the power of this medicine fades away, and after 30 years, you can come back to your land.' That's how our ancestors, they left Dâô and went to the Nérhëxakwéaa area. (Extract from interview, September 1993)

I think I told you how the last grandfather left Dâô, with the X there, they didn't want to leave, paramount chief Mèèjà came in person with his soldiers, he came to Dâô to ask one of grandfather's brothers if he could leave the place. Well, he came with his white horse, and then ... he came with his soldiers, he was accompanied by [French] soldiers. He dismounted from his white horse, he crossed the river, and the grandfather climbed a banyan, because he had the war stone, he climbed the banyan, he took the war stone, he put it between his legs, and then from the top of the banyan ... he wept as he spoke, you know. But the other [paramount chief Mèèjà Néjà] had money in his hand,⁴⁶ he came

46 Shell currency signifies the contractual relations of alliance formed through exchange ceremonies (see Chapter 6).

with Kanak money, to ask the old man to leave. That's when the old man, when he saw he had the money ... chief Mèèjà was his *nyaa*, like his nephew, and at that time, that was something big, it was something that was respected, there were alliances. So him, he was torn between all that and the desire to kill. He began to weep in the banyan, and then he reproached paramount chief Mèèjà, he said: 'Today you're coming to force me off my land, but if you're here, all the same it's thanks to me.' He wept as he said that. Well, in the end he gave in, that means that chief Mèèjà did after all succeed in telling him to give up the land, you know. (Extract from interview, September 1995)

Analysing the 'Jopaipi' text with a focus on the author of the account, Bwèèyöuu Ērijjiyi, has enabled me to understand the reasons he had for writing it, within the framework of his privileged relationship with Leenhardt. Ērijjiyi's position in his lineage also allows us a deeper understanding of the relations between certain families of the Houaïlou valley (within the Mèyikwëö group) and the Néjà chiefdom on the coast, and to articulate the Koro war (which is also the repressive operation of 1867) with the pre-colonial Néajië (or Nindiah) war and the land seizures of the late 19th century.

The collectors

The Europeans were interested in Kanak warfare from more than just the missionary point of view, as demonstrated by the size of museum collections of objects related to war (weapons and war stones). This curiosity was very broadly based on ethnic stereotypes (in particular the reputed Melanesian ferocity).⁴⁷ But, a more detailed history of collecting in Houaïlou helps to understand the mechanisms that brought artefacts to European collections. In his article 'Objets kanak dans les collections européennes' (Kanak objects in European collections), Roger Boulay provides the essential historical background to the collection of Kanak objects.⁴⁸ I should like to focus more specifically on the Houaïlou region in an attempt to grasp how the actors involved experienced the donation of these objects.

47 Thomas 1989a; Boulay 2000; Douglas and Ballard 2008.

48 Boulay 1990.

First collections: The military, administrators and naturalists

The collections of Kanak objects that are held in a number of European museums were built up between 1875 and 1905, following the model of collections from other regions.⁴⁹ The military, administrators and naturalists thus contributed to the export of objects from Houaïlou.

If the sandalwood traders exchanged weapons in Houaïlou (see Chapter 1), there is no trace of this in the collections of Kanak art. During the first years of colonisation, however, the French military did take an interest in objects of war. For example, as early as 1860, army surgeon Bougarel wrote an article on ‘New Caledonian weapons’, most of which was devoted to a pragmatic evaluation of their efficacy: ‘What is to be feared above all when one is at war with the New Caledonians is ambush, which is an especial danger to soldiers who have been imprudently left alone on watch’ (Bougarel 1860, p. 286). Still, this analysis was accompanied by collecting. We may doubt Maximilien-Albert Legrand’s claim in 1893, in *Au pays des Canaques (In the Land of the Kanaks)* that, because weapons had been forbidden since 1859, it was difficult to procure any. While bearing arms was heavily restricted in Nouméa, the very slow progress of military and administrative takeover of rural areas meant that the situation there was very different – particularly given that the French military came into contact with Kanak weapons during each repressive operation. This is retrospectively confirmed by the presence of pieces from Houaïlou derived from military collections, like the Venge collection donated to Grenoble Museum in that same year, 1893.⁵⁰

The early naturalists, men such as Xavier Montrouzier, a Catholic missionary in the far north of Grande Terre, and Benjamin Balansa,⁵¹ the French Natural History Museum’s envoy in New Caledonia from 1868 to 1872,⁵² compiled important plant collections at the same time as establishing the first foundations of naturalist knowledge of the territory. They seem to have been less interested in collecting artefacts. Nevertheless, some pieces brought back by Balansa were deposited in the

49 Boulay 1990; Cole 1995; Schildkrout and Kaim 1998; Thomas 1989b.

50 Lavondès 1990.

51 See Chevalier 1942; Astre 1947.

52 See Balansa 1869, 1872–73 and 1873.

Toulouse Museum.⁵³ We know that Balansa's explorations took him to the Houaïlou region,⁵⁴ but not whether the objects donated to Toulouse Museum come from there.

Finally, the first era of collecting, in the latter half of the 19th century, ends with the great universal expositions, which included sections devoted to the colonies;⁵⁵ hence objects from New Caledonia were among the displays at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1878. The objects exhibited in Group IV, 'Fabrics, clothing and accessories', Class XI, 'Weapons' included 'Collections of spears, clubs, slingshots, slingshot stones and bags for carrying stones, stone-shields, wooden and shell knives, bows, arrows, angled stone axes, stone chief's axe' (*Exposition ... 1878*, p. 318): weapons were almost the only ethnographic objects exhibited. But there is nothing to indicate that any of these pieces came from Houaïlou. However, at the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, Jules Moriceau showed a large number of Kanak objects, without specifying their places of origin. Moriceau was practically the only provider of 'ethnographic' objects from New Caledonia at this exhibition. It is known that some of these pieces came from the Houaïlou region, of which Moriceau served as administrator before becoming head of the Native Affairs Department a few years later. Thus, 'Chief Cambo's staff' was exhibited (*Exposition ... 1889*, ref. 1772; this is Kavo Népörö, whose career as a colonial chief I outlined in Chapter 1). Moriceau's collection is known to be the source of most of the Kanak objects held in the Berlin Museum, to which he sold his pieces in 1895.

Leenhardt and Rey-Lescure: Missionary collectors

I discussed above the conditions under which missionaries came to make collections of objects. It should, however, be added that alongside the pieces that were destroyed, some were converted into ethnographic specimens. For example, Maurice Leenhardt sold 32 items to the Neuchâtel ethnographic museum during his home leave in 1909–10.⁵⁶ These included a Mèyikwéö traditional money piece that was shown as part of the 1990 international touring exhibition of Kanak art *Of Jade and*

53 Laroche 1953.

54 Moncelon 1887.

55 Jacquemin 1990.

56 Leenhardt 1910.

Mother-of-Pearl.⁵⁷ A number of other pieces collected by Leenhardt later entered the collection of the Musée de l'Homme (Museum of Mankind) in Paris. Leenhardt's position, as one of the pioneers of scientific collecting and mission work, is very similar to that of the Neuchâtel missionary Henri Junod, whose cross-disciplinary practices have been the subject of admirable analysis by Patrick Harries.⁵⁸ Similarly, Philippe Rey-Lescure used his time as a missionary in Houaïlou as an opportunity to take on the role of collector for the Trocadéro Museum. It is likely that this was at the behest of Leenhardt, who was then publishing his great monographs through the French Institute of Ethnography.

It is thus that the collections in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris come to include, among the Kanak objects identified as coming from the Houaïlou region, 12 'magic stones' donated by Rey-Lescure, and four by Leenhardt.

'A veritable open-air ethnographic museum'

As far as the Houaïlou region is concerned, the most significant period of collecting was certainly that ensuing from the succession of competing scientific expeditions undertaken just before the First World War. Once again, this period highlights the enmeshing of local stakes with global flows in a social landscape where the Kanaks' scope for action had altered substantially since the French takeover. In the expeditions led by the French explorer Maurice Piroutet, the Swiss researchers Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux, and the British explorers Paul D. Montague and Robert Compton, the figure of the naturalist still predominated over that of the ethnographer, but with marked theoretical modulations. I shall attempt to trace these, focusing on what they tell us about Kanak people's relationship to their weapons and their propitiatory stones in the early 20th century.

Piroutet still belonged to the class of explorers who collected ethnographic objects as a supplement to his main collection. A geologist, he spent time in New Caledonia in 1901, 1905 and 1909–10, periods that formed the basis for the *Étude stratigraphique sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie (Stratigraphic Study of New Caledonia)*, which constituted his thesis.⁵⁹ He also brought back a collection of objects that were deposited in the museum in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and later entrusted to the Musée des Arts africains et

57 Boulay (ed.) 1990, pp. 66–67 and 83.

58 Harries 2000 and 2007.

59 Piroutet 1917; see also Piroutet 1903.

océaniens (Museum of African and Oceanian Arts) in Paris.⁶⁰ Many of the objects he brought back originate from the 'Nindiah' or Néajïë tribe, in the middle Houailou valley.

Sarasin and Montague were the first professional ethnographers the Kanaks encountered. Both followed the models of exploration and cataloguing then dominant in the nascent discipline of European anthropology: Sarasin was well acquainted with Felix Speiser and his mission in Vanuatu, and followed the model of German geography;⁶¹ Montague was a student of Alfred C. Haddon in Cambridge and, with Compton, undertook natural history research in New Caledonia along the lines of the Torres Straits expedition that Haddon coordinated during the last years of the 19th century. Both Sarasin and Montague stayed in the Houailou region, from where they brought back substantial collections of objects; Montague, moreover, wrote the first ethnographic monograph on the Houailou region, which was never published.⁶² Sarasin spent some days in Houailou in early February 1912:

Last Saturday had visit from two Swiss scientists who are travelling all over Caledonia and Loyalty, Dr Sarazin [*sic*] (conservator Basle museum) and Dr Roux (Geneva). They are part of the expedition led by Speiser who is in the Hebrides. They only spent one morning in Houailou, I cannot understand why, but I led them straight to the finest sculptures, and they took them away. (Leenhardt, Lettre à ses parents, 17 February 1912)

The morning after our arrival, Mr Leenhardt kindly offered to accompany us in our search for ethnographic objects, particularly traditional sculptures ... In one place on the left bank of the river, our arrival gave rise to a very curious scene: the natives, forewarned of our visit, had already gathered in the village square, where they had assembled a quantity of old objects they wished to sell. It was a veritable open-air ethnographic museum. Seven roof spires were planted in the ground one beside the other, we were spoiled for choice! Close by lay spears, bows, arrows, slingshots and wooden awls used to stitch together straw for the roofs; further on there were hammers used to make balassor [beaten bark cloth], belts of fibre, formerly worn by the women, combs, dishes made from plaited reeds (Fig. 118), earthenware cooking pots, sacred stones of all kinds and many other objects. There were so many objects it was difficult to examine them. (Sarasin 1913, pp. 200–01)

60 See Boulay 1986–87.

61 See Kaufmann 1990.

62 Montague n.d. [c. 1914–15].

Propitiatory stones were especially prized among the objects collected:

These objects include one particularly rare piece: this is a magic stone, in the form of a double-headed dagger, very carefully polished (Fig. 106), which was used, according to the information we were given, to ensure progeny; with this intention, the man and the woman would each touch one end of the talisman, while invoking the spirits of the ancestors. We were also brought a number of other magic stones; they were perforated, either naturally (Fig. 107a) or artificially (Fig. 107b); the point of the spear was inserted into their hole before it was used in war or for fishing, in order to endow it with power; the hardness of the stone was no doubt thought to strengthen and toughen the wooden lance. (Sarasin 1913, pp. 194–95)

Sarasin puts forward an explanation for the changed status of the Kanak sculptures and stones: it was the fact that they had become socially disconnected that made it possible for them to enter the ethnographic museum.

They were all the more keen to sell the old objects and tools because these vestiges of an era now past no longer held any value for the current generation. (Sarasin 1913, p. 194)

Before we accept this hypothesis, three important contextual observations need to be added: the public health policy implemented by the Native Affairs Department required that huts be abandoned and rectangular houses constructed, rendering the majority of wooden sculptures, which were also architectural elements (roof spires, doorframes, carved lintels and shelves for huts) useless; then, as we have seen, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries condemned the use of war stones and themselves collected them; finally, access to monetary income was a serious concern in light of the head tax.⁶³

I know that grandfather also told me about for example lintels, roof spires, things like that. They were very popular with the colonists ... People sold them, there were even thieves in the tribe, you know. People would come then if the worst came to the worst they would demand your lintel to sell or your roof spire to sell, because it's more to make a bit of ready cash. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, February 1999)

63 A flat-rate tax payable annually by all Kanaks from 1894.

Sarasin used this expedition as the basis for a popular account of his travels,⁶⁴ and particularly for a monumental *Anthropologie*, most of which is devoted to physical anthropology, but two volumes of which are genuinely ethnographic: the analysis section draws on close reading of the entire bibliography then in existence to describe Kanak social practices.⁶⁵ The production of this scientific knowledge had no basis in Sarasin's field trip.⁶⁶ His *Atlas ethnographique* (*Ethnographic Atlas*), by contrast, constitutes an extraordinary assemblage of 73 large plates illustrating ethnographic booty.⁶⁷ These include, for example, Table 51, which presents a collection of traditional money pieces from Houaïlou.

Montague and Compton conducted zoological and botanical research two years after Roux and Sarasin's visit: 'Mr P.D. Montague and I spent the whole of 1914 in making zoological and botanical collections and investigations in this most interesting French colony' (Compton 1917, p. 81). Both came from Cambridge and followed the model of the Torres Straits expedition, which represented a major innovation in ethnographic field studies, a precursor to those of Bronisław Malinowski.⁶⁸ Montague devoted one part of his time to an ethnographic survey of the Houaïlou valley: 'Mr Montague spent some time in the tribe of Gondé at the head of the Wailu valley ... His discoveries as to religion, magic, music, and ceremonial are of great interest, but I must not forestall his account of them' (Compton 1917, p. 97). We may assume that he followed the methodology set out by William H.R. Rivers, who had participated in the Torres Straits expedition and was tasked with writing a 'general account of method' for the fourth edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*.⁶⁹ We do know that Montague made sound recordings on wax cylinders, as Haddon had in 1898:⁷⁰ the British Library holds the cylinders that Montague recorded on 30 November 1914 among the Gondé tribe (song, flute, genealogical recitation). Montague's presence certainly simultaneously, or by turns, irritated and stimulated Leenhardt, who saw

64 Sarasin 1913.

65 See, for example, the sections on war ('Krieg', p. 205–11) and cannibalism ('Kannibalismus', pp. 211–18) in Sarasin and Roux 1929.

66 Unlike his physical anthropology, which was largely based on measurements he himself made.

67 Sarasin 1929.

68 Herle and Rouse 1998; O'Hanlon and Welsch 2000.

69 Rivers 1912.

70 See Stocking 1995, p. 111.

in his work everything that an ethnographic investigation could produce. The evolution of his attitude can be detected in two letters, written at the beginning and end of Montague's stay:

Mauss, one of Durkheim's followers, has just published a great article championing French ethnography, and he is right. But one of his great arguments is how little we know about Caledonia after sixty years of occupation. And this is perhaps, he says, the key to ... all that Durkheim and his school envisaged. He devotes two pages to criticism of Caledonia, and also concludes his essay by stating that it shall not be said that the French learned nothing from Caledonia, etc ... A newspaper announces that the British Association, a formidable research machine, is coming here. If they come, should I tell them what I know, and what I am now trying to record, when Laffay leaves me time? I am training Kanaks to conduct this kind of enquiry – little that is reliable will come from others. Should I give their names so that they can be called on? ...

Montague, the young English naturalist who stayed here for a few days ... is going to put his papers in order and will then enlist for the war. He has made a detailed ethnographic study of Houaïlou, and that is why I should like to follow him. (Leenhardt, *Lettre à ses parents*, 7 and 20 December 1914).

In fact Montague's manuscript *Ethnological Notes from the Houaïlou Valley, New Caledonia* was never published, owing to the death of its author at the end of the First World War.⁷¹ Montague devoted his sixth and final chapter to 'Religion and Magic of the Natives of the Houaïlou Valley', which deals principally with stones and includes a description of their origin in the period of mourning that matches the accounts cited at the beginning of this chapter:

When a body, wrapped in white awa, was taken to the forest to be placed among the Banyan-trees, three or four men went out in the evening and watched by the corpse. No man would have dared to go by himself, so they always went in company. In the dead of the night the Bao [ancestral spirit] would appear, as lizards, birds, rats and strange forms which had no counterpart in nature. The object was to seize and capture some of these elusive spirits – a matter of some difficulty as they would change form suddenly, becoming like men of great strength. If, however, they could be once overpowered, they were carried to the river-margin and plunged into the water, whereupon they changed immediately to stones. Nobody could foresee to what kind of stone the spirit would turn, but its

71 A short passage on ceremonies was published in Leenhardt, Sarasin and Montague 1998.

virtue could be decided at once by its form. It might be good for yams, catching eels, making rain or have a phallic significance. (Montague n.d. [1914–15], p. 33)

The objects Montague donated to the Cambridge Museum in 1917 include two slingshots, a bag for slingshot stones, 11 slingshot stones, 18 spears, three spear-throwing cords, three clubs, and also an invisibility stone, a phallic stone, two seduction stones, two thunder stones, four rain stones, nine taro stones, eight yam stones, one swamphen stone, one mule stone and six eel stones. In his journal, Leenhardt notes the complex processes of alienation of objects (a process bound up with conversion) that led them to enter the museum's collection via Montague:

M's child died here of indigestion after I cured him of dysentery and then enteritis, using hordenine. Two other children were cured at the same time, but M., a man of little faith, poured milk into his child as soon as he thought he was out of danger. He sent to consult the jaou [*jauu* – soothsayer, healer] in Nérin. He replied: 'These people (M.'s family) accept the word of God and follow another. They still have all their own gods and they are invoking a new one. Nothing can come of it. You have to do what you want to do.' So M. burned his abandoned kamoaro [*ka-mwârö*, place of invocation of the ancestors], where all the panyao (god stones) [*panyaö*, war stones] lay, still holding power. He brought me the principal one, without telling me what he had done, and two years later, sold some remaining fragments to Montaigu [Montague], an English scientist. (Leenhardt, Journal, 20 March 1915)

This can be recognised as the same process of social and ideological alienation that Sarasin hypothesised in relation to the objects he purchased. This thesis can, however, in no way be generalised across all of the inhabitants of Houaïlou: such subjective processes hold specifically for those who sold or gave away objects, but there is virtually no trace of those who did not do so, holding onto their propitiatory stones and keeping their distance from the collectors and missionaries, in the writings of these individuals.

Commenting on the conversion of 'M.' and the destruction of his *ka-mwârö* in an earlier entry in his journal, Leenhardt writes: 'But what a conversion, effected by a sorcerer (*jauu*)!' (Leenhardt, Journal 24 July 1912). The epigraph to this chapter, in which Leenhardt tells his parents that he, together with Paul Laffay, a young missionary recently arrived to reinforce the Protestant mission, and the 'young English scientist' Paul Montague, had 'cast a spell on the Kaiser' on 11 December 1914,

‘on a rare magic stone’, can be reconsidered in the light of this remark: what a strange invocation, made by two missionaries and a scientist! The conversion of ‘M.’ was entirely governed by the question of efficacy: what prohibitions should be respected in order to heal one’s children? Where does power come from – the word of God, or the old gods? Which mediator should he prefer, the missionary or the soothsayer (*jauu*)? How was the death of a child to be prevented? With regard to this question of efficacy, Leenhardt’s use of the ‘magic stone’ should be held up against its limited result: while the Kaiser eventually lost the war, Leenhardt’s two companions, Laffay and Montague, lost their lives to it.

In focusing in this chapter on statements from my interlocutors as they relate to representations of ancestry, I have sought to examine the forms of preparation and propitiation for war that the present-day inhabitants of Houailou recount, particularly in relation to war stones (*panyaö*) and their origins. This has given me the opportunity to analyse anew a classic text collected by Maurice Leenhardt, ‘Jopaipi’, which proves to present a traditional local version of the Koro war, and in which I have been able to identify the repressive operation conducted in 1867 in the Houailou valley (see Chapter 1). Through analysis of the proper names cited in this text and the social position of the author, in terms of both lineage and relationship to Europeans, I use the text as a basis for revisiting the local political stakes in auxiliary involvement and religious conversion. It has led me to understand the motives and forms of European interests in war stones (missionary, scientific, collecting), and particularly to refer back and forth between 1867 and 1918 (the probable date when the ‘Jopaipi’ text was written down), and set this war more broadly still in a history of conflict that runs from the middle of the 18th century (with the Néajjé war) to the early 20th (with the collection of war stones by a chief on the coast, at the time of the land seizures organised by governor Feillet).

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