

4

Post-*indigénat* Mobilisations

I continue my exploration of the various forms of collective mobilisation by way of an analysis of the institution of the council of elders, and of witchcraft, as the pursuit of war by other means. These two strands of analysis, which have already been identified in the preceding chapters (see chapters 2 and 3), become entwined in a violent incident involving a number of Houaïlou tribes in late November and December 1955. This was the visit of diviners (*jauu*), invited to expose individuals believed to hold ‘bad medicine’ – in other words, powers of attack and sorcery.

In order to grasp all the intricacies of this affair, we first need to take into account the major political changes that accompanied the end of the *indigénat* system in 1946, and the gradual integration of Kanaks into the community of citizens in New Caledonia, which was completed with the 1956 enabling legislation and the parliamentary elections of 1957. In Houaïlou, this decade was a period of intense collective mobilisation in various forms, derived in particular from the presence of the Protestant mission in Dö Nèvâ, in the lower Houaïlou valley.

Interests and investments of various orders – political (in faith organisations and later in a party, the Union Calédonienne (Caledonian Union)), economic (through the establishment of cooperatives), customary (with the institution of councils of elders), and symbolic (in the search for, and putting out of action, those presumed to hold powers of attack) – were thus brought together, often through the local mobilisation of the same individuals.

1945–54: Administrative reform and Protestant mobilisation

The end of the *indigénat* and local autonomy

Following on from limited earlier studies on the subject,¹ three recent works offer a fuller understanding of the stakes involved in the transformation of New Caledonian political life just after the Second World War.² The right to vote, granted under the order of 22 August 1945 to certain categories of Kanaks (war veterans, chiefs, pastors and religious instructors – in total, 1,144 individuals), the creation of the New Caledonian Communist Party on 15 January 1946, the abolition of the *indigénat* system and the head tax in February 1946, the ending of requisitioned forced labour in April 1946 and, finally, the abolition of designated residence in May 1946, radically altered the jurisdictional landscape as a whole and, hence, also the roles of chiefs in village life (see Chapter 3). In the Houaïlou region, Denis Rousseau won a majority in the municipal elections of May 1947; the first Kanak was also elected to the municipal council, in the person of high chief Mandaoué (see Chapter 3). Moreover, Houaïlou was one of the places in Grande Terre with the highest levels of Communist Party activism, largely through veterans of the two world wars. Wakubwa Mârârhëë was one such, among many others:

There up there, that's my grandfather, he was the communist activist in Néawa, my grandfather who was in 14–18, Wakubwa [Mârârhëë] there. (Ivô Mârârhëë, extract from interview, July 1995)

While it has often been noted that the Kanaks' demands for citizenship were voiced by war veterans, both between the wars and after 1945, in my view the importance of ideological motives for joining the Communist Party has sometimes been overestimated: in the accounts I have collected the greatest weight is given to the condemnation of forced labour:

— Can you tell me how things were with the New Caledonian Communist Party in Houaïlou?

It started in 1945, around then, it was the volunteers, those who did their service in Caledonia ... And in the army, they made the most of it to get all the soldiers on side, and when the soldiers were demobilised, they

1 Guiart 1966; Saussol 1979; Dornoy 1984.

2 Soriano 2001, see also Soriano 2000; Kurtovitch 2002, see also Kurtovitch 1997; Trépied 2010, see also Trépied 2007.

came here to the bush ... That party did some good things at that time, because it was that party that got rid of compulsory service and taxes ... whereas before we paid tax, and we had to do two weeks' service on the roads. (Guynemer Karé, extract from interview, August 1993)

They decided to come to Nouméa to get a Communist Party card ... When they arrived in Nouméa, they went to see a lady called Mrs Tunica ... and they were received by her secretary, they explained their problem, they said they had come from Houaïlou to get a Communist Party membership card, and then they complained that in Houaïlou there they were doing forced labour, all of that, they complained ... The secretary fixed them a meeting for the next morning, so the next morning, they were received by the lady, and that was it, they went off with their cards. Maybe they stayed two days, then afterwards they came back to Houaïlou, they had their Communists' cards. The instructions they had been given, they had to go straight to the gendarmerie and show the card, there was a letter, plus their Communist Party membership cards, they had to go to the gendarmerie, then show that to the gendarmes, and then say to the gendarmes that there was no question of them working any more because they were communists, they had their cards. And then in Houaïlou, that really put the cat among the pigeons, in Gwarawi for example the chief, he got angry, he said, talking about grandfather: 'But that one, I'm not going to let him walk all over me, he'll see what'll happen.' But everyone was waiting because they didn't really know how things would turn out, so then the three elders came ... they went home in the evening, they had a bit of a rest, then in the night, they walked, they arranged to meet at two o'clock in the morning, there at the edge of the village ... They went back to the gendarmerie, and then Tèn's dad [Bwéwé] gives the letter to the gendarme, and then the gendarme takes the letter, then he reads it, then when he's finished reading he looks at Tèn's dad, and he says to him: 'So you're a communist?' then the other old man says like grandfather: 'Yes me communist'. The gendarme, he looks at the letter, he says: 'OK, off you go home, you don't have to work.' So that meant they left there, then they went home, grandfather still tells me: 'There I arrived in Pwèi, there [a hamlet in the Gwarawi tribe], everyone was there with their pickaxes'; when the people saw him coming they said to him: 'So what did the gendarme say?' So he took out his card: 'Well, you see my card, me I'm a communist, I went to the gendarme, then the gendarme asked me if I'm a communist, but I told him: "Yes, me communist", he said to me: "Off you go home, you don't have to do any more forced labour".' So everybody dropped their pickaxes on the worksite, and then everyone went to get the car to go to Nouméa to get a membership card. That's how the system collapsed, you know, everyone ran away from forced labour. Well, it was a minor incident, if you like, but a fine story, because the chief

was furious, he didn't know what to do, but everyone abandoned him, all at once, nobody worked any more. That's pretty much how forced labour sort of broke down, because everybody joined the Communist Party, and you can understand it's in that spirit that UICALO and the Union Calédonienne were formed afterwards, you know. (Narcisse Kaviyöibanu, extract from interview, February 1999)

These interviews reveal firstly that the system of compulsory service, under the coordinated management of the gendarmes and the chiefs, continued to operate after it was officially abolished, and that it was only through the mediation of Communist Party membership that it was ended in practice. The last extract also offers evidence that the ending of this system represented a direct challenge to the authority of the chief, implying a re-evaluation of the status and rights of each individual in village life. It is estimated that in 1947 there were more than 150 Kanak members of the Caledonian Communist Party in Houaïlou. This striking success in freeing themselves locally from the oppressive disciplinary structures of colonial governmentality prompted a sharp reaction from both the Catholic and the Protestant missions, which had until then adapted to the colonial order. This story is well known, from the creation of the Union des indigènes calédoniens amis de la liberté dans l'ordre (the Catholic UICALO) in 1946 to the establishment of the Association des indigènes calédoniens et loyaltiens français (the Protestant AICLF)³ in January 1947. The UICALO was set up at the initiative of Father François Luneau, who had been a missionary in Houaïlou (in Néajïë) before settling in Canala. He thus succeeded in recruiting large numbers of the Catholics in Houaïlou: at the UICALO delegates' meeting in May 1948 there were 150 members from Houaïlou. In September 1948 Roch Pidjot and Luc Wadé, respectively the chairman and secretary of the organisation, visited Houaïlou on behalf of UICALO. On the Protestant side, Houaïlou, as the headquarters of the mission on Grande Terre since the time of Maurice Leenhardt, was naturally directly involved in the establishment of the AICLF; the arrival of a very active young missionary, Raymond Charlemagne, at the Dö Nèvâ mission in May 1947, helped to strengthen the Association. There is evidence of this in the numerous association meetings that took place there (for example the general meeting of 27–30 July 1951 in Mèènèkô, that of 13–15 May 1952 in Nédivâ, that of 10–13 September in Lèwèò, and that of 10–12 September 1960 in

3 UICALO: Union of Native Caledonian Friends of Freedom with Order; AICLF: Association of French Caledonian and Loyalty Natives [trans.].

Ba). One of Pastor Charlemagne's first articles in the AICLF newspaper, *Le Messager (The Messenger)*, concludes with this peroration, remarkable for its condescension, explicitly addressed to the communist lost sheep:

The Association offers you another way: its aim is to preserve the life of the great native family, to preserve its houses and its lands, in order to remain free. Pride makes a person blind: you have to be able to see your weaknesses and shortcomings too. You want to walk alone, but there are many obstacles on the road ahead; you are the child who has let go of his father's hand and is going to fall. (Charlemagne 1948b)

The great fear of native communism led the two missions to take on some of the Kanaks' demands, and thus become involved in the process of renewal of political life that followed the collapse of colonial governmentality. For example, as has been noted, they contributed directly to the birth of the Union Calédonienne. From the Kanak point of view, in the late 1940s and early 1950s the AICLF and UICALO became sites of mobilisation, debate and political development within which the Kanaks sought to strengthen the autonomy they were gradually acquiring, and to construct it in positive forms. Éric Soriano, Ismet Kurtovitch and Benoît Trépiéd, in the recent studies cited above, have identified the stages and stakes involved in the Kanaks' entry into political life, and examined the contradictions that dominated the development of the Union Calédonienne's programs and the individual careers of some elected deputies. Here I return to the subject only in an attempt to understand the implications and issues of these developments for the inhabitants of Houaïlou.

By April 1951, on the occasion of New Caledonia's first parliamentary elections, the indigenous electorate had increased substantially, rising from 1,100 to around 8,700 (but still not amounting to universal suffrage). This led to the active involvement of the two missions (and specifically of pastors Marc Lacheret and Raymond Charlemagne for the Protestants, and Father Guillaume for the Catholics, Father François Luneau having died in 1950) in supporting of the candidature of Maurice Lenormand. Pastor Lacheret wrote to Maurice Leenhardt shortly after the election:

You will have been rather surprised to learn that Maurice Lenormand is our deputy – and you will be still more surprised when you hear that the Protestant Mission was primarily responsible for this event, I myself first of all! With this new electoral law, we were faced with a native electorate that we estimated would amount to about 10,000 natives – and we

realised that it was at risk of succumbing to all kinds of propaganda.⁴ ... When Charlemagne visited me in Nouméa, we spoke much about this matter. Lenormand seemed the *kapani* [fitting]⁵ man because: – good knowledge of the native question – capable of bridging the gap, keen to help the natives develop within their own sphere without raising them too high prematurely – intelligent and open-minded enough to understand and defend Caledonian interests – free from all political ties. In the eyes of the Whites, he had against him his marriage ‘to a *popinée*’⁶ and the fact that he is still seen as being from France. But in any case, whether or not he was elected, he turned native votes away from communism ... You will see Lenormand in a few days. His general manifesto, and his native programme in particular, was wise and lucid. Now he needs help, because he is not a seasoned politician. (Lacheret 1951)

Jean Guiart, a Protestant student of Leenhardt as well as being Lenormand’s brother-in-law, was at the Institut français d’Océanie (French Oceanian Institute) in Nouméa at the time, and hence became heavily involved in the electoral campaign:

It was not easy to demonstrate how useful ethnology could be. In 1951 I had to overstep the limits of standard practice and cobble together a campaign in the bush and in the islands for the election of Maurice Lenormand as deputy, in close collaboration with both the Catholic and the Protestant missions, who held the same opinions as I did on the situation: to wit the necessity of capturing the rising tide of Kanak awakening. (Guiart 1993, p. 54)

Lacheret’s and Guiart’s attribution of Lenormand’s anti-communist success to their own efforts is brought into question in Houaïlou, given the local influence of Charlemagne:

To begin with when we started getting involved in politics, it was still thanks to Charlemagne, I can tell you that for sure because it was me who took them to Nouméa to look for a deputy who would represent the Kanaks. So after the two Catholic and Protestant organisations, the AICLF and the UICALO, formed a single political party, the Union

4 It is primarily Fernand Colardeau, the former Communist deputy for Réunion and left-wing candidate, who is in Lacheret’s sights here. Madame Tunica, the founder of the New Caledonian Communist Party, had been attacked and did not stand in these elections.

5 A term from the Houaïlou language, from *ka*, relative, ‘he who’, and *pâri*, ‘fitting, appropriate’, here spelled *kapani* by Lacheret.

6 A pejorative term in the New Caledonian lexicon, denoting a Kanak woman. Maurice Lenormand’s wife was the sister of ethnologist Jean Guiart’s wife.

Calédonienne,⁷ they looked for a deputy at that time. And it was in the Protestant church in Nouméa, they stayed there, and then there were the other pastors and all that, and then they prayed to find a name, and that was when Charlemagne spoke first and said he had thought of Maurice Lenormand, who was in the Hebrides. And they sent a cable to Maurice Lenormand ... to tell him they had decided to choose him as the representative of the Kanak people, or rather of the Union Calédonienne. And Lenormand didn't reply, but the registration closed at midnight, you know, and they waited for him, and at 10 minutes to midnight, the head of the Haussaire's⁸ office telephoned the church to tell them that that was it, Lenormand had registered his candidature.⁹ And that was how politics started. And then at that time, how did Lenormand get in? It was purely through the pastors, the *ékalésia* [the members of the Protestant church], the delegates of the AICLF and the delegates of the UICALO. (Gynermer Karé, extract from interview, August 1993)

Nevertheless the Catholic mission, which was heavily invested in this electoral campaign through the person of Father Guillaume, also had grounds for claiming credit for Lenormand's candidature, since the latter was himself Catholic. The Catholic mission's analysis of these elections was no different from that of the Protestants: 'The Mission therefore gave the Natives the only counsel it could give with any likelihood of being heard' (Correspondance et pièces diverses, 1951). Lenormand's election evidently rested on the mobilisation of a wide range of support from within Kanak society. For example, the seventh issue of the AICLF's newspaper, *Le Messager*, offered explanations on the vote and the various candidates in Drehu (the language of Lifou), in Ajië (the language of Houaïlou) and in French; it pointed out that the association's committee, at its meeting in Poyes on 1 June 1951, had urged electors to vote for Lenormand, the candidate who followed the association's own program, which it summed up thus: '1. Preserving the status of native reserves. 2. Recognition of the Council of Elders. 3. Establishment of native customary law. 4. Development of technical and vocational education. 5. Retaining anti-alcohol legislation' (*Moniteur (Le)* 1951).

In the special issue of the *Journal de la Société des océanistes (Journal of the Oceanian Studies Society)* that appeared at the end of 1953 to mark the centenary of the French taking possession of New Caledonia, under

7 Lenormand's standing for election to the assembly was effectively the point at which the Union Calédonienne came into being, though it was not yet formally constituted in 1951.

8 New Caledonian term for the French High Commissioner.

9 On this point, see Guiart 1966.

the title *Un siècle d'acculturation en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853–1953)* (*A Century of Acculturation in New Caledonia (1853–1953)*), the task of presenting 'the political evolution of the indigenous people of New Caledonia' was entrusted to the new deputy. His long article also gave him the opportunity to expound the principles underlying his campaign, and thus constituted a historical justification of his own position as well as an account of his program:

Of the candidates, the one elected was the only one to include in his manifesto, which some deemed too wide-ranging to be sincere, a chapter devoted to the problems of indigenous people. This section of the manifesto read as follows: *It is vital, without harm to any legitimate interests, to provide the conditions and means for continuing development of the governing framework of traditional life, through the following measures: Preserving the status of native reserves; Official recognition of the Council of Elders as the council of the Chiefdom; Surveying and registration of the names of families and clans and also of the lands belonging to each family; Establishment of customary native law; Development of technical and vocational education; Retaining the measures supporting the fight against alcoholism and for the protection of health and of the race; Organisation of production and institution of social welfare cooperatives; Regulations regarding accidents at work and support for dependents; Freedom for the more advanced to renounce native status and submit individual applications for ordinary-law status.* This programme was to rally the vast majority of indigenous Melanesian voters. It also received the support of two indigenous groupings, the 'Association' and the 'Union'. (Lenormand 1953, p. 281)

In placing indigenous issues at the heart of the new political order in New Caledonia, Lenormand's text echoes the chapter Leenhardt added in the second edition of *Gens de la grande Terre* (*People of Grande Terre*), which appeared in that same year. We may recall that Leenhardt was the founder and first president of the Société des Océanistes (in Paris), as well as of the Institut français d'Océanie (in Nouméa). Lenormand and Guiart had been his students at the Institut de langues orientales (Institute of Oriental Languages). Benoît de L'Estoile has shown how this chapter, entitled '1952', redefines the articulation between ethnographic knowledge and colonisation, putting forward a new, postcolonial, social contract.¹⁰

10 L'Estoile 2007.

The country thus no longer has a colonial class that asserts itself and natives who are in decline, an archaic group that is withering and a modern group that is flourishing. But there are two groups that have formed or re-formed in unequal conditions. They are growing alongside one another. They each maintain their own lives. But they can no longer ignore one another. Natives or Whites, they are all Caledonians ...

It is possible that in a few months, the Centenary of the French arrival in New Caledonia may also mark the moment when the old misunderstandings die, and a new era begins. Ethnology will have an audience there, and will inspire a sociology in which each component of the population will work in accordance with the particular talents of his ethnicity, to further the development of the rich resources of Caledonia. (Leenhardt 1953, pp. 214 and 223)

Thus a conjunction of forces that were at once political (around Lenormand), religious (around Charlemagne, Lacheret, Leenhardt, Guillaume and Guiart) and academic (around Leenhardt and Guiart) contributed to the multifaceted promotion of a program of New Caledonian unity, on a level of expectation that the missions could control. Under this program, the Kanaks would be integrated into New Caledonian political life alongside Europeans: 'Therefore neither group is without its entitlements. Modern or traditional, they are all Caledonian, and all will participate in a future that they will build together' (Leenhardt 1953, p. 215). As we have seen, Pastor Lacheret informed Leenhardt about the election of Lenormand, although this might seem an unusual subject for mission correspondence. The celebration of the centenary of the French takeover was the high point of this Caledonian 'New Deal' project, but lost some of its lustre owing to the failing health of Leenhardt, who had to abandon his planned visit to New Caledonia for the 50th anniversary of the Dö Nèvà mission and the centenary of the French takeover – he died in January 1954. Houaïlou was one of the key centres of the planned reform: it is noteworthy that the only contemporary chief mentioned in *Le livre du centenaire* (*Centenary Book*), the prestigious book of photographs by New Caledonian writer Jean Mariotti, is high chief Mandaoué, thus testifying to the significant place Houaïlou occupied in the system of indirect rule that had hitherto operated in New Caledonia.

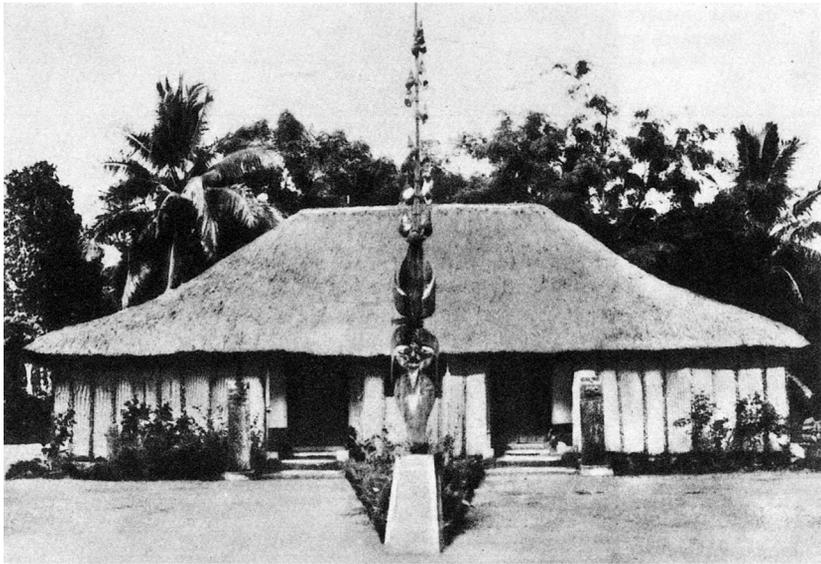


Figure 7. The Mandaoué chiefdom in the *Livre du centenaire*, 1953

Source: Mariotti 2001, p. 162; © Association pour l'édition et la promotion de l'oeuvre de Jean Mariotti (Society for Publication and Promotion of the Work of Jean Mariotti) (Nouméa).

Of the various elements of Maurice Lenormand's program for the Kanaks, the identification of family names and official registration of the patronymic were the first to be implemented, in late 1952. Jean Guiart contributed directly to this process,¹¹ which had been rendered necessary by the extension of the vote. The decree of 4 October 1956, under which the identity card was introduced, was the logical consequence: 'Article 1. An identity card shall be issued, without restriction of age, to any individual of French Nationality, or holding either ordinary or customary civil status, who requests it.'¹² Considered in relation to my analysis of the 1911 census categories (see Chapter 3), the identity card can be seen as an indication of a profound reconfiguration of colonial relationships, where the crucial division is no longer only between Europeans and assimilated and natives and assimilated (a division that nevertheless persisted in the two forms of civil status) but between national citizens on the one hand and foreigners on the other. I have discussed elsewhere some of the difficulties engendered by the declaration and official recognition of family names;¹³ I have pointed out (see Chapter 1) how both the Népörö and Nêjâ clans were at that time identified in the civil register under two distinct names (Néporo and Mandaoué, and Nédia and Mindia, respectively).

May 1952: The creation of the Nédivâ cooperative

I shall now turn to a second aspect of Maurice Lenormand's program as it was implemented in Houaïlou, as described in the *Journal de la Société des océanistes*: on 14 and 15 May 1952, the new deputy visited Houaïlou to officially open the Nédivâ cooperative. Primarily a Protestant initiative, the cooperative nevertheless received the support of the Catholic tribal chief of the neighbouring Néajïë tribe, where the Catholic mission was based.

This week was an important one for Houaïlou and all its people finally fully rallied to the mission, secure in their trust. A huge amount of work has been accomplished since you left by Potin [the native director of the girls' school] and the Catholic chief. The cooperative is working at full capacity, a magnificent building was opened on 15th last by Mr Lenormand; our

11 Guiart 1997, p. 181.

12 Under French law, indigenous inhabitants of New Caledonia have 'customary' or 'personal' civil status, allowing their transactions (e.g., marriage, inheritance) to be governed by customary law, except in relation to persons with 'ordinary civil status' (as held by French citizens), in which case ordinary law applies.

13 Naepels 1998, pp. 208–10.

two tractors (there is a new one) are working in the tribes; a 2,000-hectare domain is being created to supply meat and milk to the natives, who for the first time in their history, without consideration as to religion, political party or clan, have come to agreement under the flag of Dö Névâ. (Charlemagne 1952)

This cooperative comprised a warehouse for storing goods, two tractors to help in agricultural production, a small truck for collecting and distributing agricultural produce, and a network of small shops in each tribe. The aim was clearly to support the 'organisation of production' and the 'institution of cooperatives', to cite the terms used in Lenormand's manifesto. It was also a direct attack on the colonial relationships that pertained in a small rural municipality, where the trading post economy was based on a monopoly of trading in products centred on the shop operated by the Ballande trading company; it was thus intended to contribute to the development of new social relationships in the relational space between Kanaks, settlers and representatives of the administration.

Me I was the delegate for the AICLF, we set up the AICLF and it worked very well. But already in the AICLF, we were talking about independence, we were already talking about a lot of stuff, we created cooperatives, but the White man is still there suffocating us, you know. We bought tractors, and then we made fields, you know, everywhere in the tribes. (Guynemer Karé, former member of the cooperative, extract from interview, July 1993)

Lenormand's visit aroused the anger of one section of the settlers in Houailou; as can be surmised, this was due not only to the fact that he had chosen to visit a Kanak tribe rather than the European administrative centre, but also to the support the new deputy was thus bringing to the cooperative, in opposition to the clientelist networks that had been a major bone of contention in the conflict between high chief Mèèjâ Néjâ and Eugène Bozon-Verduraz, the trader and chairman of the municipal committee (see Chapter 3). Leenhardt, in the political testament he offers in the second edition of *Gens de la Grande Terre*, imagines an expostulation by the 'positive spirit' (in other words Europeans closed to Kanaks), defending colonial imperialism and dismissing the cooperative initiative: 'What do we care about their cooperatives, we earn more by making them drink' (Leenhardt 1953, p. 222).

We have no information as to how the concept of cooperative organisation was introduced into New Caledonia, nor why the Protestants of Houaïlou took it up in 1952. It may be noted, however, that Jean Guiart concerned himself with the development of the cooperative movement throughout the 1950s, in the New Hebrides, and in the Pacific more broadly.¹⁴ In this final text from that decade, he mentions the Houaïlou cooperative:

The cooperative based in Nedivin, in the lower valley of the Houaïlou river, owes its origins in part to the concern of the Protestant mission to restore equilibrium in a district split between fluid and indeterminate local political factions, where a heavy atmosphere was becoming established as a permanent feature of life in the region. Following years of fruitless efforts on the spiritual level, a well thought-out strategy for economic development was to see many return to the mission's fold ... Ultimately, it has held together perhaps less from economic than from political reasons, but this has been enough for the project to continue, and gradually become better organised: a central cooperative store receives merchandise from Nouméa and distributes it to the local shops which are initially looked after by individuals, but which tend to become collectively run. With a lorry and a truck, the central store also takes on collecting the coffee, which it trades with the capital. The cooperative currently handles about one fifth of the coffee grown in the valley. Its main handicap is primarily financial, since it does not have enough ready cash to pay the producer for the coffee, and the latter must wait for the final sale in Nouméa in order to enjoy the added value they gain from choosing the cooperative to sell their product. However, most Melanesians have no other means of existence than selling their produce, and in their pressing need for money, all too often opt for a less advantageous but immediate sale, selling the coffee to travelling peddlers. (Guiart 1959a, p. 22)

As part of the program of cooperative development in Houaïlou, a trainee was later sent on placement to a kibbutz in Israel, to find out about collective forms of rural development:

All of Houaïlou lived through the cooperative, and they went so far those old guys, me I remember old Tèn [Bwéwé] coming back from Israel, he was the first person we saw driving a Renault lorry, a Renault Saviem. They organised a harvest in all the tribes, coffee was still the main product economically, and the Nédivâ cooperative handled the transactions, and collected the coffee in all the tribes in the region. And processing was done in the tribes, before it was brought in sacks, and then the transaction was done with Ballande, the big stores in Nouméa, you know. It worked

14 Guiart 1951, 1956a and 1959a.

so well that they built the big cooperative that is still there, you can still see the structure, they bought vehicles, they were able to fund some of the schools, construction. (Jean-Jacques Ayawa, extract from interview, July 2006)

While the Catholic tribal chief of Néajîë, Louis Unu, initially participated in the Nédivâ cooperative, this initiative was countered when a Catholic cooperative was set up by Father Plasman, a missionary in Néajîë, who was associated with the American veteran Lee. But this lasted only a short time, owing to a conflict between its founders that arose as early as 1956.

The high level of Protestant involvement in the reorganisation of colonial relationships in Houaïlou, under the aegis of the mission, through the defence of their lands, the cooperative's criticism of colonial relations, the openness to village reorganisation and training (evident in Lenormand's program), was matched in the political realm. Thus, in the municipal elections of October 1954, the winning list comprised five settlers (Leroi, Rousseau, Malignon, Magnier and Maradhour) and five Kanaks, all Protestants, who were heavily involved in the AICLF and the running of the cooperative. These were Auguste Parawi-Reybas, cooperative delegate and AICLF delegate for Warai; Kétiwan Ayawa, cooperative delegate and AICLF delegate for Ba; Georges Jöpöyöi, chairman of the cooperative and cooperative delegate for Nédivâ; Denis Yupé Wéma, cooperative delegate for Boréaré; and finally Uruva Néjâ, son of high chief Mèèjâ Néjâ (who died in 1921), former student at Dö Nèvâ and brother of high chief Apupia. We shall return to the role played by the two brothers Uruva and Apupia Néjâ in the life of Houaïlou during the 1950s.

The list that won the majority of votes was that formed, with the support of Europeans which they themselves solicited, by the directors of the local Cooperative. This cooperative had been set up with the open sponsorship, and financial assistance, of the Protestant Mission; but its day-to-day operation was subject only to increasingly lighter monitoring, which has now all but disappeared. (Guiart 1955, p. 26)

Plans for councils of elders

It was in the context of the reorganisation of Kanak village life, necessitated both by the ending of the repressive colonial rules and by the fear of communism, that the two faith associations chose to take up the concept of the council of elders. Thus, the pamphlet marking the founding of the Catholic UICALO, dated 25 May 1946 and entitled 'Demands

of the Union of Caledonian Natives Friends of Freedom With Order', includes the following: 'We call for the Chief to have a council elected by his subjects' (Correspondance et pièces diverses, 1946). This notion was developed in the UICALO manifesto of March 1947, which called for councils of elected elders with powers of coercion:

To maintain inviolate the tribe under the direct authority of the Chief, assisted by a Council freely elected by secret ballot, by all adult subjects of both sexes. The purpose of the council is not to diminish the authority of the Chief, but on the contrary to assist and support him by providing the help of its wisdom and the support of its own authority. The delegates call on the French administration to derogate to the chief and his council those necessary judicial and coercive powers that are conferred on them by the ancient customs of the ancestors, for the purpose of settling conflicts arising between subjects within the tribe. ('Vœux émis par l'assemblée des délégués de l'UICALO à Paita', 1947)

The centrality of this institution in postwar Kanak campaigning was emphasised by the priest of Lifou in March 1947: 'They insist on only one point: the creation or rather the reinstatement of a chief's council, for the Council still exists but is no longer either summoned or consulted' (cited in Kurtovitch 1997, p. 64). The same emphasis on the need to recognise or establish councils of elders appears in the early AICLF texts, in 1946: 'The council of elders (or of *atési*¹⁵ in the islands) must be reinstated, so that they, with the chief, can examine all questions concerning the tribe's wellbeing ('Pensées de base ...', 1946). Shortly after his arrival in New Caledonia, in a 'chat' broadcast on the radio in April 1948, Charlemagne put forward the same idea:

Of the planned roles devised between 1912–1918 by a committee chaired by Mr Cané, one custom remains: the council of Elders. Its creation emerged from the observation that the Caledonian chief, although all-powerful, never goes against the law of his men ... This chief does not decide alone ... Recognition of this state of affairs led to the creation of the council of Elders, the practice of which corresponded so well with the mentality of the people that it is now becoming established in every village, and 'the Elders', regardless of age, are recruited from among the local people of note. This custom ought to be enshrined in law. (Charlemagne 1948a, p. 6).

15 Spiritual advisers to the chief on the Loyalty Islands [trans.].

In fact the councils of elders had not been legally instituted after the First World War; those that were set up in the years after the Second World War were local Kanak initiatives, without any legal framework, sometimes based (in varying regional contexts) on locally recognised social functions (as in the Loyalty Islands, particularly Lifou), and sometimes not (specifically in Houaïlou). The councils of elders set up in the late 1940s had varying, generally fairly close, relationships with the two organisations that promoted the principle, and equally variable, generally somewhat conflictual, relationships with the chiefdoms:

In some districts the reinstated councils were composed of elected members of the 'Union' or the 'Association', while in others, which remained attached to the traditional membership, the restored councils were formed by the heads of specific families. The tribal chiefs, dispensing with the support of the now eliminated administrative discipline, returned to their traditional role, and their authority, tempered by the presence of councils, returned to its original principles. (Lenormand 1953, p. 292)

As noted above, official recognition of the council of elders formed part of Lenormand's manifesto when he was elected deputy in 1951. During this campaign, and still more through the year 1953, it was promoted throughout New Caledonia, in a debate around reform of the status of municipalities. In a territory that was not yet living under the democratic rule of universal suffrage, and where the question of the dual electorate was a subject of debate, the issue was reproduced at the level of local communities. Was it better to create indigenous municipalities, alongside municipalities that preserved the European settlers' autonomy, 'in order to provide each of these communities with a framework appropriate to its conditions of development and its specific ideas', or 'mixed municipalities' (Lenormand 1953, p. 290)? At that time Lenormand supported dual municipalities, in order to avoid what he believed to be the risk of premature assimilation:

The powers and responsibilities accorded to European rural municipalities and indigenous communities need to be defined respectively by a distinct status. In this way the particular character of these communities and the desire of their inhabitants to live according to their habits and their usage and customs will be respected. (Lenormand 1953, p. 291)

The idea, then, was to establish dual political representation at municipal level, one structure for Kanaks living in reserves, and the other for other residents. Within this framework, councils of elders would have served as

the first step in the construction of indigenous municipalities. Thus the Kanaks' campaign for greater democracy within the tribal space via the election of a council of elders, and the small rural settlers' defence of colonial segregation, became strange bedfellows in the new deputy's plans. In fact in the municipal elections of 1954, the allocation of municipal elected officials for each ethnicity and each municipality was fixed in law, without any relation to the respective weight of the communities in question. For a decade, the terms of the debate on the status of municipalities was to be determined by the relationship between universal suffrage and colonial heritage: at the level of local politics, how was the difference between customary and ordinary civil status, resulting from the colonial distinction between subjects and citizens, to be resolved? What weight should be given to the division of non-state-owned space into reserve lands and private land? Would assimilation of the electoral colleges not lead to the disappearance of unique features of Kanak social and cultural life? Conversely, would plans to grant the councils of elders' autonomy in managing village affairs not simply reproduce colonial segregation, at the very moment when Kanaks were gaining greater mobility and increased opportunities for living on privately owned land? And finally, was universal suffrage to be applied within the space of customary life, or not? A difficulty of interpretation in relation to the recognition of 'customary authorities' began to develop, and to this day this recognition can be seen in two contradictory ways in the New Caledonian context, either as a means of achieving full Kanak autonomy or as a brake on it, blocking the path to genuine democratic representation.

To return to the councils of elders and their powers, the administration's response was that, now that the *indigénat* system had ended, the chief no longer held any powers of administrative sanction; nor was there any question of according such power to any councils that might be formed: 'The natives are currently governed by ordinary law, and it could not be otherwise' ('Étude des vœux de l'UICALO', 1947). Therefore, as Kurtovitch notes, 'neither native justice, nor the powers of chiefs, nor the change in status of tribal and district councils, nor tribal police, actually came into being' (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 140). Thus councils of elders, conceived as a counterweight to the figure of an all-powerful chief – a role that had been built up by the colonial administration during the first half of the 20th century – were never officially recognised. The relics of indirect administration, in the management of public order, did

indeed remain in the hands of high chiefs and tribal chiefs, as indicated in decree no. 895 of 6 July 1954, which specifies the powers accorded to the Indigenous Affairs Department:

Article 10. Indigenous high chiefs are responsible for maintaining order in their district. They shall take all measures necessary to ensure that public safety and peace are not disturbed by indigenous people.

Article 11. Under the authority and supervision of high chiefs, tribal chiefs shall maintain order and calm within their tribe.

Article 12. The indigenous high chiefs and tribal chiefs are required to inform the sergeant of the gendarmerie squad in their district about everything that happens in the territory under their authority.

1955–56: A witch-hunt

December 1955: The visit of the seers

It was in this context of high levels of political activism among many Kanak Protestants in Houaïlou, in the Nédivâ cooperative, in municipal administration, in a number of councils of elders and in the work of the AICLF, that a violent witch-hunt was organised in a number of tribes. A group of a dozen or so men from the neighbouring municipality of Ponérihouen, made up of *jauu* (seers) from the Goa tribe supported by AICLF representatives from the same area (Goa and Mou), had organised public meetings in a number of tribes in Ponérihouen, in order to seek out individuals suspected of possessing malign powers, and neutralise their activity. They were invited to Houaïlou to carry out the same task, at the instigation of AICLF delegates.

It was all the people who represented the AICLF association there, I think it was them that invited the *jauu*, but to get them into the tribe, they had to go and see the chiefs or the councils of elders. (Ivô Mârârhëë, extract from interview, June 2006)

The dozen or so individuals involved, who formed themselves into an inquisitorial tribunal, stayed more than a week in Lèwèö, a tribe adjacent to the administrative centre of the municipality and the headquarters of the Néjâ chiefdom. They were lodged with the local AICLF delegate and cooperative representative, before leaving to spend a few days in Néawa, where they stayed with the chief, one of Leenhardt's Protestant students

who was a former communist and also an AICLF delegate. Guiart published two accounts of this episode, in which he himself was indirectly implicated, through his faith (as a Protestant close to the AICLF and the Nédivâ cooperative), his academic interests (as a researcher at the Institut français d'Océanie, doing fieldwork in Ponérihouen and Houaïlou during this period) and his political associations (as Lenormand's brother-in-law).¹⁶ These two texts confirm the Protestant involvement in this campaign: 'Themselves Protestants, the seers cracked down mainly in Protestant villages' (Guiart 1967, p. 135). They also give an idea of the methods used:

The sorcerers' 'spontaneous' confessions were obtained by third-degree procedures that these days are standard procedure:¹⁷ beating, placing red-hot embers delicately on the skin. It should be added that the *jau* were supported both by a number of dignitaries, who gave a veneer of respectability, and by a few strapping fellows ... Yet this modern-day inquisition was not to everyone's liking, least of all the accused. The Protestant mission saw its best students involved in the affair, as accusers, alleged perpetrators, or simply believers in the virtue of the *jau*. (Guiart 1959b, pp. 42–43)

All of the testimonies I have gathered emphasise the extensive publicity given to these events, and the crowds that gathered around them. The accusation was public. In front of the gathering of seers, their supporters from Ponérihouen, representatives of the AICLF and the councils of elders from the Houaïlou tribes concerned, the accused were adjured to renounce the alleged powers of protection or attack they were supposed to possess (plants, leaves, bark, stones) on pain of violent punishment, including being made to stand all day in full sun, kneeling while holding heavy stones in their outstretched hands or being repeatedly slapped.

I know that before there were two old grandfathers who came from there [Ponérihouen], they were *mèrhi* [seers] ... So, and before, well in the years 54–55, all the people of Houaïlou, they went to look for them there to come and dig out the bad stuff here in Houaïlou, you see? Then they did it in Lèwèö, they went back and did it in Néawa, you see? Then there was a big outcry, because there were people who didn't want to give up their medicines or their stones, so the council of elders sort of kept an eye on them and then shoved them around a bit, you see? So it ended in court ... There weren't too many fights or anything like that, it was just

16 Guiart 1959b and 1967.

17 Guiart is implicitly referring to the war in Algeria.

the councillors who sort of ... the police, the tribal police who roughed people up a bit, sort of ... And then they took away leaves, pebbles, bits of wood, bark. (Ivô Mârârhëë, extract from interview, February 1999)

The reference to ‘councillors’ in this interview indicates that the initiative ran alongside the reorganisation of village administration around councils of elders and faith organisations. The material adds to the ancestors’ efficacy – ‘medicines’ or ‘stones’¹⁸ – obtained through a markedly unequal power relationship, and were taken as confirmation of the malign intent of the accused who was thus unmasked, and held responsible for deaths or misfortunes that had occurred in the recent history of the tribes concerned.

It was decided by the whole tribe, I mean the *kâmöyaari* [subjects] together with the chief, in discussion, and they said that since there was quite a lot of stuff, deaths that couldn’t be explained: ‘It seems there are *jauu*, you know, we’ll try to get them to come, then we’ll see.’ ... They held the court down there, you know. So the *jauu* brought everybody down, it was as if they were seers, you know, they were seers. They called, and their chief said: ‘Look, I see Such-and-Such, make Such-and-Such come.’ He is called; ‘Come here!’ Them, they question him, still got their medicine. The other he says: ‘No, I haven’t got anything’, they argue, it’s like a prisoner, you know, he tries to defend himself, until the moment when, well, he ends up saying: ‘Yes it’s true.’ At that time it was a good thing. There are a lot of old people who everybody knew that him, he’s got a bad medicine, him he’s got a devil; well after the *jauu* came, they’re nothing, they become powerless those guys, they haven’t got anything any more, they’re just ordinary guys like us, they can’t do their little magic any more. (Marcel Mèèjà, extract from group interview with the council of elders of Lèwèö, June 2006)

The aim was thus to ‘clean up’ the villages, to expose those responsible for disorder and to settle accounts – in short to start again from clean and transparent foundations for community life in shared spaces, countering all the alleged powers to attack ‘in darkness’, in the domestic space behind closed doors. It should be added that the accused came primarily from the tribes of Lèwèö district, but that some originating from other districts were brought in front of the tribunal, sometimes using the cooperative’s truck.

18 See Chapter 2.

A fairly precise idea of the breadth of the accusations can be gleaned from a quite extraordinary document published by Jean Guiart, the ‘List of witchcraft in the district of Neouyo’, which was entrusted to him by some of the organisers of the campaign:

[The team] had the local dignitaries issue victory announcements, to support an official request to intervene. Curiously, here the team targeted members of the chief’s family most of all, particularly those who supported the political minority in the country, which included high chief Apupia, though they did not dare to accuse him. It was not that the *jau* were asked to participate in a political operation; their tendency was more simply to shape the forms of their campaign in line with majority opinion ... [This list] contains a request for intervention, formulated, according to the investigator, in ungrammatical French. (Guiart 1967, pp. 135–37)

The document is signed by the president of the Croix-Bleue (Blue Cross, the Protestant anti-alcohol temperance society), the chairman of the council of elders in Lèwèö, and the cooperative and AICLF delegate for Lèwèö. Fourteen individuals from the ‘district of Neouyo’ are identified by name, together with the various kinds of powers of attack they are accused of possessing: ‘doki (bad spirit)’ (*doki*), ‘Jee (a kind of spear)’ (*je*), ‘Rhë gassu (medicine that makes women infertile)’ (*rhëë gayu*), ‘Gasu (medicine that poisons the blood and leads to leprosy, madness. etc ...)’ (*gayu*), ‘Gasu Koé (a sort of liana that prevents a person from growing)’ (*gayu kwèè*), ‘Arù (medicine that makes a person weak)’ (*aru*), ‘Kosèri (power of curse)’ (*ko yèri*), ‘Rhaï (a lizard)’ (*rhai*), ‘club’, ‘Bée (a sort of barrier that hides everything)’ (*bé*), ‘Jarua (a medicine for robbery that makes the thief’s victim blind)’ (*jarua*). The list is followed by a ‘List of the Sick’ that mentions (without naming) 132 individuals – a very substantial number in relation to the population concerned – who were in need of treatment: 42 from Lèwèö, 40 from Néawa, but also 13 from Warai, 12 from Kwawa, 10 from Kùà, eight from Nédivà, six from Ba and one from Nérhëxakwéaa. By comparing the 14 names on the ‘List of Sorcerers’ with the genealogies I have constructed for the families concerned, we can sketch the genealogical diagram below (which completes Chapter 2, Figure 2):

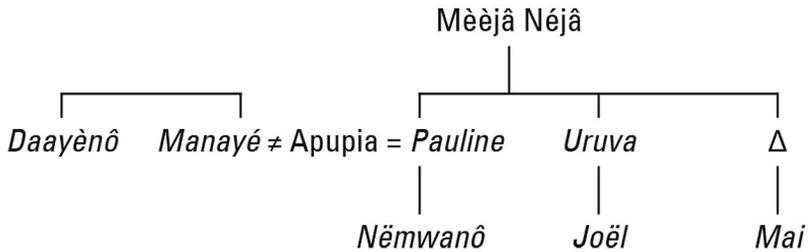


Figure 8. Genealogical identification of some of the accused related to high chief Apupia in 1955

Names in italics are those accused.

Source: Author's research.

It was in the context of this activity that the list of the accused was given to Jean Guiart, who was then in Houaïlou doing ethnographic fieldwork and was close to the campaigning Protestants: the document's signatories hoped thus to obtain authorisation for their intervention, 'I pray you to do what is required for authorisation of medicines to drink'. In the two articles he wrote on the subject, Guiart claimed that it was he who had persuaded the seers to return to Ponérihouen, after two weeks spent in Houaïlou, on grounds of potential interference in the forthcoming election campaign, new parliamentary elections having been scheduled for 8 January 1956: 'The ethnologist ... however obtained better results than the administration in this matter, using the imminence of the elections to persuade the seers to go home in order to prevent their political adversaries from exploiting this upheaval' (Guiart 1967, p. 137). Thus he intervened here on behalf of his brother-in-law Lenormand's political interests; the need was all the more pressing given that the committee for revision of the electoral register in Houaïlou, on which some of the 'accused' were due to sit, had not been able to begin its work because of the activity around the Ponérihouen *jauu*:

The administration watched this commotion anxiously and believed that at times they detected the result of political manoeuvring by the Deputy. The latter's party wondered whether the affair would excite resentment and fears that would be harmful in the forthcoming elections ... The author of these lines had to resort to subterfuge and ask the seers, given the imminence of the parliamentary elections, to return home, making clear to them how inopportune this disturbance was. A few months later they reappeared in the criminal court, with some of their acolytes; but only the assaults were punished. (Guiart 1959b, p. 43)

There is little doubt that this campaign, conducted by the most ardent Protestants in Houaïlou with the aim of reconfiguring the local social order, was initiated without consulting pastor Raymond Charlemagne, who had returned from a visit to France in November 1955, just before the *jaunu* arrived at the end of the month. When, two years later, Leenhardt's son Raymond, himself also a pastor, returned to Houaïlou (where he had been born when his father was a missionary there) in the company of his wife Geneviève, Charlemagne offered them his interpretation of a witch-hunt that he had not initiated, though his condemnation of it was on the mild side:

According to Charlemagne, there are even more 'seers' here than in Paris! And the witchcraft crises that break out from time to time are aimed at purging the country of foreign devilry introduced by the Chinese, the Javanese, etc. In short it is salutary and well-intentioned witchcraft! ... In 56 there was once again a lot of sorcerer activity,¹⁹ and Charlemagne returning from vacation sent his instructors on a big Bible study tour of the tribes affected, on Moses and Pharaoh's sorcerers: 'These stories of magic, the Bible knows them and shows us that this is not good.' (Leenhardt and Leenhardt 1958, p. 78)

The question of witchcraft

In the discussion that follows, in order to avoid exoticising witchcraft, I propose to follow Marc Augé's definition:

When using the term witchcraft, we simply indicate a set of beliefs structured and shared by a given population that relates to the origin of misfortune, sickness or death, and the set of practices of detection, healing and sanctions that correspond to those beliefs. (Augé 1974, p. 53)

Augé goes on: 'Beliefs in witchcraft are only manifested and acted upon during procedures of divination, interrogation or accusation' (1974, p. 62).

In New Caledonia, when the person responsible for misfortune (sickness, accident, death) is not identified, the wrong suffered may be analysed in terms of witchcraft.²⁰ This distinction from other modes of evaluating behaviour and responsibilities can be discerned in the expression used by some Kanaks who describe witchcraft as 'Kanak justice'. The relations

19 In reality, at the end of 1955.

20 For this exposition, see Salomon 2000a.

between natural phenomena and moral phenomena, between social affiliations and the individual body, that emerge here are very different from those constructed by the values of either the Christian missions or the French legal system. In order to understand the social logic at work in witchcraft affairs in New Caledonia, I follow Christine Salomon in distinguishing two principal categories: illness, accident, failure and death can be perceived either as punishment for deviance inflicted by the ancestors, or as the consequence of a malicious attack by a third party.

In the first case, 'witchcraft' denotes:

illnesses sent by ancestral powers, who ensure respect of social rules. These illnesses represent a response to transgression of norms, a punishment or simply a warning intended to induce the individual to reflect and encourage him to make amends for his error ... By means of sickness, the omnipresent and omnipotent ancestors punish deviance both within the lineage they founded and outside of it. (Salomon 2000a, pp. 72–73)

The transgressions thus sanctioned may be of the order of negligence toward the ancestors (poor upkeep of cemeteries) or toward the contractual obligations linking different clans (for example, matrimonial alliance and the ceremonial exchanges it calls for at various stages of the life cycle), or of failure to fulfil one's obligations to maternal uncles (refusal to obey, speaking ill). 'Kanak justice' thus has a strong ethical dimension and a powerful element of social control. Sickness and its variants prompt a work of enquiry, interrogations in the family about any social conflicts in the recent or more distant past. This investigation sometimes includes consultation with a seer who can identify the origin of the harm.²¹ Given the social aetiology of the misfortune, the victim is not necessarily the person directly to blame for the transgression thus identified, but may be one of his relatives. The sickness in effect punishes the behaviour of an individual insofar as he belongs to a family group (lineage or clan, patrilineal kinship group), which is also a political unit in local social life. Thus the individual implicates his group through his actions. This social belonging is complex because, in a segmentary system, an individual can claim to be a member of more or less encompassing groups depending on the circumstances. Thus we cannot talk of a principle of 'collective responsibility' as such in 'Kanak justice', but rather of a political and military system of inter-individual relationships, mediated by family

21 There are several different types of healer in the Houaïlou region, notably seers (*mèrhi*, literally those who search by vision) and diviners (*jauu*); see Salomon 1993, p. 255; Leenhardt 1935, p. 181.

affiliations. In this first case, the process of assigning responsibility may lead to reparation, according to a specific logic: it is the person guilty of the transgression who makes amends, because he is the target of a potentially lethal sanction sent by the ancestors, to which he wishes to put an end.

In other situations, other illnesses, other diagnoses, a second type of witchcraft is identified, in which the evil spell may be more individualised. An individual may come to believe himself the victim of an aggressive attack through witchcraft. Every individual is believed to have the power to bring about the illness and death of another, including one of his relatives, either directly by means of the powers he holds, or by commissioning it from another. In such cases there is a variety of possible responses: one of them consists of accusing, in private but also sometimes in public, the individual one believes to be responsible for the wrong one has suffered. This leads to the circulation of large numbers of witchcraft accusations, which sometimes give rise to customary trials and violent settling of scores. The witch-hunt conducted in Houailou in late 1955 is an example of this second category, a sort of continuation of war by other means.²² The vision of the diviners, who are able to identify illness and its cause by various means, such as dreams, defines a way of seeing distinct from eyewitness testimony and carrying the same evidential value as catching someone in the act: 'I saw an innocent man, accused by the diviner, dragged before the court and accepting being sentenced to several months in prison. How was he to know what his spirit might have done? But the *jau* [diviner] could know, and all he could do was passively lament the revelation that this divination had brought forth' (Leenhardt 1930, p. 248). Confession at the customary trial or, more precisely, the gesture that amounted to confession, which consisted in surrendering plants, pieces of wood, bark or pebbles that might constitute the material aids for practices of witchcraft, is then often followed by private retractions. As Salomon writes: 'In most cases, the sorcerer identified confesses, pleading guilty, for fear of incurring the censure of the group (and physical mistreatment), in the expectation of subsequently retracting in better times, when the current balance of forces has altered and his accusers have been discredited in their turn' (Salomon 1993, p. 142). Thus, 50 years later, one of my interviewees returned to the accusation made by the *jauu*

22 See Salomon 2000a, pp. 110 and 114–15.

against his grandmother in 1955, explaining that, under physical duress, she had been forced to reveal the protective powers of her clan ('to preserve the house'), but these were in no way powers of attack ('Satanic objects'):

The medicines at that time, there weren't really what I would call Satanic objects. They kept all of that, to preserve the house [to protect their own clan] ... I remember grandmother's story, X's grandmother, she held the medicine from the great mountain of X up there, but it didn't come like that the medicine, it was her fathers, her grandfathers who put it [who had given it to her] ... And then how many times they [the *jauu*] sent uncle: 'Hey, go and get your mother', the old man kept going and coming back. 'No but that, that's mine, it belongs to X, what do you want with it?' Grandmother, she was beaten. (Extract from interview, July 2006)

The accused person's gesture appears to have stood principally as a guarantee of good behaviour or, sometimes, the promise to give something up, rather than an act indicating admission of a 'transgression'. The public meetings organised by the *jauu* thus fall into the context of public handling of a social problem. It is worth remembering also that it was the missionaries who inaugurated the collection of stones and 'medicines' during their campaigns of evangelisation and eradication of 'paganism' (see Chapter 2): for those who gave up these objects at this time, the point was to turn a page, rather than to feel guilty. I have already cited the example of the father of Élia Mârârhëë (one of Maurice Leenhardt's students who was involved in the witch-hunt operation in 1955) handing over a war stone to pastor Étienne Bergeret. Bowing the head, keeping silent, bringing the plants specified by a seer are thus ways of acknowledging the power of the accuser or the powerful person in an interaction, if need be under physical duress. But after the crisis, perhaps following a minimal confession and a sanction in the public spaces of judgment, retraction is always possible in private or after the local balance of power has shifted and the context of the past confession has been recast. The confession then appears as a temporary capitulation, in a context that may vary and where the stronger individual may lose his power. Nevertheless, in Houaïlou in late 1955, the dominant collective dynamic, reinforced by the *jauu*, was certainly on the side of the Protestant mobilisation around the AICLF and the cooperative.

Political and judicial consequences

Following the witch-hunt conducted by the *jauu* in Ponérihouen, a man lodged a complaint about the violence that had been inflicted on him when he refused to hand over the powers he was accused of holding: ‘He didn’t want to confess to his thing, so they did things to him to make him confess, you know’ (extract from interview, June 2006). Coming on top of similar complaints filed in relation to previous *jauu* activities in the Ponérihouen region, this case became the subject of an investigation by the gendarmerie, a judicial inquiry and then a court judgment in Ponérihouen in January 1957. Several members of the Ponérihouen group, in particular the two *jauu*, were given prison sentences, while two individuals from Houaïlou were fined.

At that time old Daayènô, he was like the brother-in-law of high chief Mèèjà Apupia [see Figure 8]. Well, it was really Apupia who was pointed [targeted, hit] through his brother-in-law, so he pushed the man to lodge a complaint against the council of elders, the *jauu* [diviners]. (Ivò Mârârhëë, extract from interview, July 2008)

This interpretation is both interesting and convincing, because it clearly situates both the witch-hunt and the formal complaint, with the concomitant displacement of the conflict into the judicial arena, within the context of a more general struggle between the authority of the high chief of Lèwèö district on one hand and the councils of elders, associated with the AICLF Protestant activism, on the other – even though Apupia was not the direct object of the *jauus*’ accusations, as Guiart notes.

The political commitment to the reorganisation of communal tribal space, and the feeling that it was necessary to eliminate alleged causes of misfortune, in order to achieve greater local unity around the councils of elders and full mobilisation of the Protestant villages, were powerful forces. Even after the conviction of the diviners in early 1957, those who had initiated the visit of the Ponérihouen *jauu* to Lèwèö district, that is, the AICLF and cooperative delegates, planned for them to return to ‘clean up’ the other districts of Houaïlou, starting with the tribes in the main valley; this aroused the concern of the administrator for native affairs. This, along with other cases in other parts of Grande Terre, was one of the main reasons for the circulation of a memorandum from the New Caledonia Ministry of the Interior, addressed to the gendarmes who served as native affairs administrators, on the subject of witchcraft cases. This document offers a prime example of administrative ethnology:

It has come to my notice that there has been a sharp increase in witchcraft cases recently. Some of you seem somewhat uncertain as to the attitude to take and the precise role of the Administrator in this kind of incident, I believe that a clarification will not go amiss in informing you as to the feelings of the government concerned on this question. First of all it should not be forgotten that these cases are closely bound up with the affective bedrock of native mentality, and will only die out through a gradual evolution of minds. Repressive action in this arena would risk running counter to our goal, causing ceremonies to be hidden; they would thus escape your oversight and might take aggravated form. In my opinion, it would be equally inappropriate for you to officially acquiesce, as this would give the 'sorcerers' activity a sort of administrative endorsement that must be avoided at all costs. Your role in this domain therefore appears to me essentially one purely of informing people and warning those involved about certain limits they cannot go beyond without incurring penal sanction (serious mistreatment, ordeals by poison, etc.). It goes without saying that in cases of manifest breaches of the law you must draw up a report and submit the matter to the judicial authorities, the only authority competent to initiate an inquiry and punish the guilty. I hope that this clarification will facilitate your work by indicating the path to follow. I count on you to conform to it, and to keep me fully apprised as before about any incident of this nature that comes to your attention. I would add that when you draw up such reports I would see no harm – quite the contrary – in your giving your opinions on the underlying reasons for this resurgence in witchcraft cases. It is almost certainly due to quite serious social discontent. Your knowledge of the local situation and of the native mentality will be invaluable to me in this matter of drawing out the exact and real causes of it, and if necessary putting forward structural reforms that might bring lasting improvement in the current situation. (Memorandum No. 287, from the General Affairs Department of the Ministry of the Interior, on cases of witchcraft, 28 January 1960)

This text reasserts the gendarmerie's detachment (which was also the position taken by the surveyors responsible for the 1917 repression) in its activity of indirect rule (while, of course, maintaining its role of ensuring that penal law was respected). In short, the stated desire of the government council was that the Kanaks reorganise their village life as they saw fit. We have, indeed, a quite remarkable cinematographic record of a witch-hunt in the neighbouring region of Canala²³ – one of its most striking features being that it was filmed by a gendarme during the 1960s. In my analysis, the issue in these witchcraft trials was at least as much the

23 Some extracts are included in Dagneau 2008.

local definition of a new village governmentality following the end of the indigénat as it was the ‘affective bedrock of native mentality’ – since forms of subjectivation are clearly linked to forms of government. Of relevance here is the intuition of Peter Geschiere, who examines the question of the ‘modernity’ of witchcraft in a Cameroonian case (Geschiere 1995, p. 9), showing how it operates as a ‘political language’ (p. 7), contributing to ‘the emergence of new forms of domination or resistance’ (p. 16).²⁴

In addition to its judicial consequences, the visit of the *jauu* contributed significantly to the political rallying of the Protestant tribes (a movement that could of course include widely varying forms of adherence): thus in the parliamentary elections of 8 January 1956, the sitting deputy, Lenormand, who was supported by the Protestant mission of Pastor Charlemagne, won 645 votes in Houaïlou, while his main opponent from the social republicans, Georges Chatenay, who was supported by the Catholic mission of Father Plasman, obtained only 190.²⁵ The two other candidates, Bastien and Raighasse, obtained nine votes and one vote respectively. In a text dated August 1956, Guiart notes that the two high chiefs of the coastal area, Apupia Mindia (the son of Mèèjà Néjà) and Félix Mandaoué (the son of Mwâdêwé Népörö) supported not Lenormand, but Chatenay.²⁶ This confirms once again how the issue of local governmentality was bound up with the political mobilisation of the AICLF, the economic investment of the cooperative and the institution of the council of elders.

Following this renewed victory, the Union Calédonienne was officially inaugurated in Nouméa on 13 May 1956. Both the AICLF delegates from Houaïlou and Pastor Charlemagne participated in the founding congress. The Defferre enabling legislation of 19 June 1956²⁷ was implemented in New Caledonia under a decree of 22 July 1957, finally introducing full universal suffrage around a single electoral college. An AICLF congress, chaired by Dui Matayo Wetta, was held on 10–13 September 1957 in the Lèwëö tribe, which was deemed cleansed of its ‘bad medicine’, in order

24 See also Taussig 1987.

25 My point is not to deduce ideological adherence from the vote, but simply to note the efficient mobilisation of voters, whatever the individual motives behind their behaviour.

26 Guiart 1956b.

27 Law passed by the French parliament enabling the French government to introduce reforms in overseas territories, particularly electoral reforms [trans.].

to complete preparations for the campaign for the territorial elections of 6 October 1957, in which the Union Calédonienne won a large majority on the government council.

1957–60: Dynamics of division

A return to the council of elders and political suspension

Owing to the preponderance of the UICALO and the AICLF, and their importance in Lenormand's program, legal recognition of the council of elders and the definition of its areas of authority were debated throughout the second half of the 1950s. In 1956 Guiart wrote 'Notes à propos de l'organisation intérieure des tribus autochtones en Nouvelle-Calédonie et aux îles Loyalty' ('Notes on the Internal Organisation of Native Tribes in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands'), in which he proposed assigning to the council of elders the procedures for choosing the chief, discussion of problems of land ownership, questions of succession, the establishment of a native police force and the allocation of shared labour, thus making the council both a 'customary court' and a 'low-level municipal council' (Guiart 1956b, pp. 12–13). This document seems to have formed one of the bases for reflection in the New Caledonian territorial assembly when it debated a plan for recognition of the councils in March 1958:

Article 2. Customary Councils called 'Councils of Elders' shall be recognised or established in the tribes, the members representing the various clans constituting the tribe being appointed according to customary rules; these appointments shall be submitted to the Ministry of the Interior for validation.

Article 3. The powers of the Council of Elders include ruling on problems of land ownership within the reserve or the part of the reserve assigned to the tribe.

Article 4. The Council of Elders shall appoint its Chairman and Vice-Chairman, with renewable mandates of two years' duration. A secretary responsible for keeping the record of decisions shall be appointed by the Council of Elders from among its number or outside.

Article 5. The Council of Elders shall be convened by its Chairman or in his absence by the Vice-Chairman. It may also be convened at the request of half of the constituent members, or at the request of the Ministry of

the Interior. Any council may at any moment, and by invitation of its Chairman, coopt any person whose presence it judges necessary; this person shall not have voting rights.

Article 6. Decisions of the Council of Elders may only be made by a majority of two thirds of the constituent members. Within two months of notification of the decision taken, parties may appeal to the Ministry of the Interior, or if necessary to the Courts. The final decision of the Ministry must be notified within three months of receipt of the appeal. (Régime ... 1958)

The members of the council, representing the different clans of the tribe, are here 'appointed according to customary rules', rather than elected as had been envisaged in the UICALO's initial demands. Nevertheless, in terms of the power relations within the Houailou tribes, this text still represents a partial divestment of the authority of chiefs. This is clear from a letter written by high chief Apupia Mindia (Apupia Nèjâ) to the high commissioner, effectively a cautionary reminder of the state's neutrality of the state in customary affairs, established through the system of indirect rule in return for the loyalty of the chiefs.

I have just learned that the government council has decided that the composition of the council of elders should be submitted to the ministry of the interior, for validation, and that this council shall elect a chairman who is not the chief. I protest in the name of customary rights, recognised by the 1946 constitution, against these violations of the prerogatives of tribes and traditional chiefs. It is to them and them alone that the choice of the council belongs, and the territorial administration can only approve the choice made according to customary rules, chairmanship of the council of elders rests with the chief. On the occasion of the forthcoming replacement of a tribal chief who died, I have just sent to the gendarme administrator of native affairs a list of the members of the council of elders for my district. I protest in advance against any manoeuvre that would challenge this list, the only one valid in the eyes of custom, and against any political and partisan intervention in the operation of the rules handed down to us by our ancestors. I count on your authority to ensure that the rights and freedoms recognised by the Constitution are upheld, in the name of France. (Apupia Mindia, Letter to the High Commissioner of the Republic, May 1958, private archive)

Such a protest recalls the bitter animadversions of Apupia's father Mèèjâ Nèjâ on the state's failure to reward loyal chiefs (see Chapter 3). This draft legislation was aborted owing to the events of 1958 in Nouméa, when a large demonstration in opposition to Lenormand developed into

an attempted coup and resulted in the suspension of the government council.²⁸ In the subsequent elections, on 7 December 1958, the Union Calédonienne remained in the large majority in Houailou, with 840 votes; the social republicans won only 272. The local balance of political forces remained stable.

Split in the Protestant church

However, the structure underlying the mobilisation of a large number of the Houailou Protestants on a variety of levels (economic, customary, political, organisational), which culminated in the gatherings around the diviners (*jauu*) in late 1955, broke apart not long afterwards. From at least 1954, a serious conflict arose between Marc Lacheret and Raymond Charlemagne, two of the Protestant missionaries sent to New Caledonia by the Mission Society in Paris.²⁹ It resulted both in visits from various leading figures in the Mission Society to New Caledonia and to the missionaries concerned being summoned to Paris. Over the years, a great mass of disagreements had accumulated between Pastor Raymond Charlemagne, the missionary established in Dö Nèvâ, on one side, and pastors Marc Lacheret of Nouméa (and later Lifou) and René Dolfuss of Lifou (later Nouméa), on the other. Marked differences of character were exacerbated by financial disagreements (Charlemagne criticising Lacheret's financial management and his ability to protect educational investment projects linked to the development of Dô Nèvâ), by political differences (Charlemagne being accused of being close to Lenormand, while Lacheret was more closely linked to the wealthier classes in Nouméa;³⁰ added to this were their conflicting evaluations of the political situation in Maré) and by accusations that Charlemagne was excessively strict with the Kanak pastors (owing particularly to his conflict with pastor Élia Tidjine). Despite four years of mediation, the Paris Mission Society failed to arrive at a solution. Rather the reverse: throughout the year 1957 the conflict became more entrenched. During his visit to France in July 1957, Charlemagne's position appeared indefensible to the Mission Society:

28 Following the events of 13 May 1958 in metropolitan France and the involvement of the Gaullist party in the management of Algerian affairs.

29 For the remainder of this chapter, I shall refer to the interpretation proposed by Trépied in relation to the case of Koné, in Chapter 8.1 of his 2007 book ('The 'Charlemagne-ist' Protestants: from the UC to the RPCR (1957–1977)'); see also Trépied 2010, Chapter 6. I am grateful to Benoît Trépied for the various archival documents he has alerted me to.

30 His daughter Évelyne married Jean Lèques, the future conservative mayor of Nouméa, in 1954.

‘Whether wittingly or not, he had become a symbol of political order, which the Executive Committee could not accept, in New Caledonia any more than in any other field’ (‘Bref rapport sur les origines ...’ 1959, p. 7). Lenormand then intervened to protest against the possibility of Pastor Charlemagne being recalled to France, given the imminence of the elections in October 1957, and received assurance that he would not be recalled before the elections. In August Charles Westphal, a delegate granted high-level powers, was sent to New Caledonia. Charlemagne, against the wishes of the Mission Society, returned to New Caledonia in early September and refused to go back to France as Westphal requested. Westphal finally published an article in the *Bulletin du commerce* in Nouméa announcing that Charlemagne had been relieved of his duties:

Pastor R. Charlemagne, recalled to France by the Committee, is relieved of his office with effect from 30 November 1957 and no longer belongs to the Territory’s Mission Staff. The Protestant Mission henceforth denies any responsibility for his actions. (Westphal 1957)

This interpretation, according to which the conflict that resulted in the founding of the Free Church of New Caledonia (Église libre, Nédivâ) arose from arguments between missionaries, is today supported by those in Houaïlou who remained loyal to the Paris Mission Society (the Autonomous Church, Église autonome, Dö Nèvâ):

It’s very harsh, they even came to force my mother to sign a paper, at that time they worked a lot with paper and signatures. Ultimately it’s a problem between missionaries, normally we shouldn’t be involved, but we couldn’t help it, the other one [Charlemagne] tried to hole up in Caledonia so he didn’t have to go back to France, and then look what happened, people split, right up to now even. (Abisai Bwawé, instructor at Dö Nèvâ following the split, extract from interview, July 1993)

Seen from Houaïlou, home of the Dö Nèvâ mission where Pastor Charlemagne was established, it is difficult to abstract this conflict from the context of politico-religious mobilisation I have described in this chapter, and understand the local interpretation of these disagreements. Charlemagne’s supporters emphasise first and foremost the issue of education.

Charlemagne, he didn’t think so much about prayer, but about education, for the education of the Kanaks in New Caledonia. Well the problem started because Mr Charlemagne set up a high school in Dö Nèvâ. But he set up the high school with money from state subsidies from the New

Caledonia Mission Society. But since all of that is in the name of the Paris mission, you know, the pastors got up a petition to get Charlemagne out of Dö Nèvâ ... He built it, and then the Mission Society asked him to go back to Paris. With Pierrot Ayawa, and then Olèn Jöpöyöi, and then Porâ Pidra, they started to gather all the deacons, all the representatives in the tribes, the tribal chiefs. We stayed nearly a week over there in Dö Nèvâ, trying to ask all the pastors to keep Charlemagne, we're going to tell the Mission Society not to leave, we will keep Charlemagne, it's for teaching. It's no good, the Mission Society says he's got to leave. That's why Charlemagne chose to come to Nédivâ. Me I'm here because I lived through the whole thing. There are three delegations that went off, there's one that went from the east coast, over there up to Hienghène, there's one that went from the north, north-west coast, it went from Pöya to Koumac Poupou, and there are others that went from here to go to Nouméa to get all the people to sign so that Charlemagne stays in New Caledonia ... Because when Charlemagne left Dö Nèvâ, he came to Nédivâ, and then the school began to develop. (Honoré Jöpöyöi, extract from interview, July 1993)

You want to know exactly how the Church got cut in half. It was in the time of pastor Charlemagne, and I was right there at the start of the split in the Church, because at that time, I'm in Dö Nèvâ learning to drive, because the old people, they were preparing to set up a big cooperative. The other pastors when they taught at Dö Nèvâ, there was a barrier in education, they shouldn't cross that barrier, it's a contract between the Paris Mission Society and then the government, they mustn't raise the native, the Kanak, a bit higher. Well, when pastor Charlemagne arrived, he threw all that out, he smashed that barrier, and then he started to send students to France, like Naisseline and then all his first students, he sent them to France, Pierrot Ayawa and all them, it's not by chance that he sent them to France. And that was the start of the story. There are some who've tried to talk about it, and to ascribe other motives, but all that is false, absolutely untrue. The start of this business was purely education. Why? Because the French government wasn't pleased with the Paris Mission Society ... That's the split in the Church, it's about education, it's not about anything else. (Guynemer Karé, extract from interview, August 1993)

When Pastor Charlemagne arrived in 1947 I think, him, he wanted to start to really teach the young Melanesians there in Dö Nèvâ. Him, he saw what a handicap French was. So he really opted for dropping the *Ajië* language at school, and teaching French so that the school would start to be effective, you know. Because before up there in Dö Nèvâ, the school was more oriented towards training pastors, deacons, it was a bit for teaching young people to do manual work. But the people did not really get very far in education. It was more geared to manual stuff, practical

work and all that. Then there, when there were splits, it was there that most of the old people in Houaïlou, they really saw the work. Since they were closer, then they were for father Charlemagne when there was the split with the pastors all of that, father Lacheret all of that.

— So that means that in Néawa people moved over to the Free Church too?

We stayed with father Charlemagne, you know, pastor Charlemagne. Yes almost all of Houaïlou. (Ivô Mârârhëë, extract from interview, July 1995)

The first consequence of Charlemagne's dismissal was his departure from Dö Nèvà, the missionary post belonging to the Paris Mission Society, when an interim order from the civil court in Nouméa of 27 January 1958, upheld on appeal on 17 February 1958, required that he leave the premises. A few days before the start of the new school term pastor Charlemagne, accompanied by the majority of the staff at Dö Nèvà, set up a few kilometres up river, in the Nédivâ tribe, where the Kanaks who supported him – in particular the local leaders of the cooperative – gave him land for the construction of a new education centre. The Fédération de l'enseignement libre protestant (Protestant Free Education Federation, FELP), chaired by Dui Marayo Wetta, was founded there on 23 February 1958.

The primary reason for setting up this Federation is the perennial failure of the Evangelical Protestant Mission in Paris until now to improve the level of its schools and its instructors. Thirty years ago the Steering Committee of the Paris Mission adopted the point of view of pastor Bergeret, that is that it was enough to have religious classes led by pastors to teach students to read the Bible in their indigenous language and some basic arithmetic. On the basis of this decision one teacher, Miss Peter, did not train any instructors during a 25-year period, and one missionary, Schoolmaster Rey-Lescure who stood up for the opposite view, was sent to Tahiti. We trained the first instructors to teach the Certificate in Primary Education in Do Néva in 1949, and in 1956 I obtained funds from Fides³¹ for construction of the Elementary School in Do Néva, despite the Paris Mission Directorate intervening with the Fides Steering Committee. Today, through their autonomous Federation, the indigenous people are completely free to provide for improving their level of education and to attempt to remedy their general educational disadvantage. (Charlemagne 1961)³²

31 Fonds d'investissement pour le développement économique et social de la France d'outre-mer (Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development of non-Metropolitan France) [trans.].

32 I am grateful to Benoît Trépiéd for sending me a copy of this document.

In retaliation for the expulsion of Raymond Charlemagne from Dö Nèvâ, the pastors and evangelists who had remained loyal to the Paris Mission Society were forcibly expelled from the Protestant tribes where the majority had rallied to Charlemagne (particularly in Kula, Gôdè and Nèrhëxakwéaa). For their part, the opponents of the FELP took back the infrastructure belonging to the Paris Mission. The conflict thus spread to all the Protestant tribes in Houaïlou; the most serious incidents occurred in Warai in spring 1958, with the result that the FELP's primary school had to move premises. Taï Wahéo, a pupil at the Warai school who originated from Ouvéa, recently told this story in his memoirs:

One Saturday morning, a non-working day, angry men entered the Protestant church in Warai. They were shouting and yelling, taking out the tables and benches used by the students. It was barely a week after school had started. They even went to Eika [a site the tribe had granted to the Protestant mission] to chase away the students who were there.

— *Névâi, ge ve tu bèri xè-réé. Koa wi gèvè yömi ve* (Hey you! Get out of here now! Or else we'll kill you) ...

One young man kept his cool. Having witnessed the whole scene, he recognised the culprits in the disturbance ... Michel, that was his name, ran to warn his father, Waxuié, and a few others ...

When they arrived at Eika, Auguste [Parawi-Reybas] asked:

— Who brought all the benches and tables out of the church?

— We did. Why, don't you like it?

Immediately, it was a general punch-up. Blows rained down, mingled with shouts and curses ...

— That's enough, said Pierrot [Ayawa], the courts will rule on this disagreement.

So people stopped fighting. Everyone went home. The gendarme, in his role as administrator of indigenous affairs, was informed by chief Nèrhon Acomâ ... When the class from the Warai church was transferred to the tribe of Thü, the children assumed that it was as a result of a court judgment, to allow them to study in peace ... Those two years 1958 and 1959 were very hard for the pastor's family. With the split in the Protestant church, the pastor had lost all his fields. The parishioners who remained loyal to the Paris Mission left the parish and took over the fields that had been granted to the pastor. (Wahéo 2008, pp. 86–87)

This account introduces a number of important players in the Protestant mobilisation of the 1950s and 1960s, whom we shall meet again later in this chapter, in particular Pierrot Ayawa and Auguste Parawi-Reybas. Noteworthy also is the physical violence aroused by this educational and religious conflict, emerging in these moments of political mobilisation well beyond the bounds of the witch-hunt described above. Geneviève and Raymond Leenhardt, who were travelling in New Caledonia at the time, offered a political reading of these religious and educational events, associating the (armed) opponents of Pastor Charlemagne (and hence of the Free Church and the FELP) with the conservative activists supporting the social republicans – and thus implicitly aligning Charlemagne with Lenormand's party. As we shall see below, this association was also to break down.

On our return tonight, we find Charlemagne on the road; he tells us that when he returned last night he found his school in Warai empty. He is told that they are in Tu because there are problems. He learns from the women that one of them has heard via her son that 41 social republicans gathered at Afchain's house with 14 rifles, and that they wanted to empty the Warai school. Charlemagne runs to Tu and sees that for their part his people have decided to enter Do Néva ... He tells them that this would be a serious mistake and dispatches messengers to all parts. He manages to get them to turn back. (Leenhardt and Leenhardt 1958, pp. 26–27)

Ultimately, detailed examination of the protagonists in the Warai conflict presents a more complex picture of the local stakes in the brawls of spring 1958. The two opposing sides were led by two brothers who were thus rivals into a violent segmentary conflict:

There are stories, me I lived through that time, Michel, where we were at Warai – the first FELP school was Warai on the east coast, Tiéta on the west coast – and at the time in Warai, we lived through the time when the old people were still there around the fire with spears, and it was war, you know. What I don't accept is that there was war between siblings, between members of the same family, some supporting the causes of the Evangelical Church, and the others the Free Church. In fact it was the Church that appeared on the surface, but when you took a good look beneath, there was politics, but the base of it all was culture, it was the customary relations we had, you know. (Jean-Jacques Ayawa, extract from interview, July 2006)

Aside from the isolated case of Warai, the two classes of reasons given retrospectively for the split (conflict between missionaries or investment in education) are not sufficient to account for the division of the faithful between the two churches and the two schools. Reluctance to fall in with the new leaders who had emerged during the recent Protestant mobilisations, based on an assessment of personal character or social status, could on the other hand be a much more decisive factor:

[In our tribe] Everyone went to the Free Church, everyone. The only one who stayed attached to the Autonomous Church was grandfather X, but even there you understand the cultural split, the split at the level of custom. (Extract from interview, July 2006)

In the Lèwèö tribe for example, we may thus note that Uruva Néjâ, one of Leenhardt's former students at Dö Nèvâ, brother of high chief Apupia and victim of the *jauu* in late 1955, remained loyal to the Autonomous Church (associated with the Paris Mission Society). During the same period, he was forging links with the social republicans (even though he had been elected municipal councillor in 1954 on the list supported by the Nédivâ cooperative) – thus refusing to follow those who defended Charlemagne, who had prompted his accusation by the *jauu* and were campaigning for the reduction of his brother's powers, in favour of the council of elders.

Jean Guiart published two texts in 1959, 'Naissance et avortement d'un messianisme. Colonisation et décolonisation en Nouvelle-Calédonie (Birth and Death of a Messiah Cult: Colonisation and Decolonisation in New Caledonia)' and *Destin d'une Église et d'un peuple (1900–1959). Étude monographique d'une oeuvre missionnaire protestante (The Fate of a Church and a People (1900–1959): A Study of a Protestant Mission)*. These, like the travel journal of Geneviève and Raymond Leenhardt, take a clear stance toward the split in the Protestant church in New Caledonia, justifying the position of Charlemagne, who they thus present as the faithful follower continuing Leenhardt's missionary and educational work. What is interesting is that, in taking this position, they also found themselves taking sides in local discussions on the reform of village life:

The high chiefdoms are losing their power to the tribal chiefs. I think this is no bad thing. An elder explained to me that in order to choose a new chief, following the death of the previous incumbent, there are now three points that must be considered by the council of elders who will elect him: his knowledge of traditional customs, his religion, which

must correspond with that of the tribe, his relations with the Whites. The high chiefs have in effect allowed themselves to be too easily bought and their subjects have not followed them in elections. All of this reveals a consideration that the mission needs to take into account. (Leenhardt and Leenhardt 1958, p. 24)

Split in the Union Calédonienne

Finally, the interlinked mobilisations instigated in Houaïlou in the early 1950s also broke down as a result of political developments in France and in New Caledonia as a whole. Following the events of 18 June 1958,³³ the substantial autonomy that the Defferre enabling legislation had allowed the New Caledonia government council, on which the Union Calédonienne held the majority, was gradually reduced, in a Gaullist process of recentralisation that lasted almost 10 years. This was initiated by governor Laurent Péchoux, who thus stood in direct opposition to Maurice Lenormand. Once again, I am interested in these political events only in terms of their effects on the social and political life of the Kanaks of Houaïlou, how they mobilised and around what issues. In fact, the result was a rapid breakdown of the alliance between Lenormand, Charlemagne, Guiart (supported at a distance by Geneviève and Raymond Leenhardt), and a certain number of rural European settlers in the Union Calédonienne on one side, and the AICLF activists, the founders of the Nédivâ cooperative, the defenders of the councils of elders, and those who had promoted the visit of the *jauu* to Houaïlou, on the other. While their interests and programs had converged during the early 1950s, the alliance had already been damaged by the split in the Protestant church.

Thus in March 1959 the Kanak municipal councillors who belonged to the AICLF resigned from the Houaïlou municipal council in support of Lenormand; the European municipal councillors from the Union Calédonienne (headed by the mayor, Denis Rousseau) refused to do so. Lenormand's local support then gradually disintegrated: firstly he came into conflict with Dui Matayo Wetta, the AICLF chairman from Ponérihouen who had been a member of the New Caledonia government council since 1957, and with Michel Kauma, the vice-chairman of the government council; secondly, a personal and political disagreement³⁴

33 When de Gaulle became president of France and was granted emergency powers by the French parliament in order to resolve the constitutional crisis [trans.].

34 See the analysis put forward by Guiart (1966).

pitted him against Jean Guiart following the death of their father-in-law, Jules Calimbre, leading Guiart to disseminate notes that were highly critical of Lenormand, to which responses appeared in the Union Calédonienne's newspaper *L'avenir calédonien* (*Caledonian Future*);³⁵ finally, Pastor Charlemagne drew increasingly closer to Péchoux, principally in order to obtain the money needed to finance the new FELP facilities.

It was Charlemagne who founded the UC [Union Calédonienne], because the UC, it's UICALO and then the Association that formed the UC. Me, I know because I lived through it, because before, when old Roch [Pidjot] and Lenormand are still there, the big meetings they hold in Houailou, they hold at the [Nédivâ] cooperative down there. Me I'm down there with the cooperative's big truck, I do all the tribes in Houailou to bring people when Roch Pidjot is coming, and then Mr Lenormand. It's a long story, because Charlemagne is for the side where there's money, it's so he can build his school quickly ... He's maybe really on the side of important people who've got a lot of cash as well, yes because it's to get loans to build his school, the Federation's school, because the Federation is Charlemagne's school ... Charlemagne and the others left the Union, Charlemagne he goes over to the bigwigs, it's money ... I know because me, I'm there, I saw what happened, it's me that goes everywhere cutting timber, trees to build the school ... It's me who does the other side up to Hienghène, with my baby-car [minibus], the cooperative's baby-car, to get the people to sign, tribe by tribe. And then there is [Auguste Parawi] Reybas who goes over to that side with Pierrot [Ayawa], they go to Canala, yes. (Honoré Jöpöyöi, extract from interview, July 1993)

At that time, he [Pierrot Ayawa] got closer to the political circles, it was more from the need to make the FELP work. He had an ideology that he didn't articulate openly, that he didn't expound openly, for him it was a form of independence that he wanted already. He split off from the Paris Mission, because politically, his mission, as he saw it, was to train people, so that there were people capable of leading the country. I believe all the elders shared this philosophy. Then after there were splits with Charlemagne, there were splits, and then in politics it was Lenormand, it was Pentecost, at the time they were the people who held the power, who had the money, who could help. (Jean-Jacques Ayawa, extract from interview, July 2006)

Before at the beginning, I remember when I was still a kid, everyone was in the Union Calédonienne, AICLF and UICALO. People started to vote, I can't remember if it was 51 or 52 for the first time in Caledonia

35 Nos 251, 252 and 254, April 1960.

there, the Melanesians. And then that worked for maybe about six years, you know. And the big split happened at the same time as the Protestant church split, it was in 58. That was when the Protestant church began to break apart, and the UC, the Union Calédonienne starts to split. The AICLF they went over to the other side, and then UICALO was still with the UC, you know. (Ivô Mârârhëë, extract from interview, July 1995)

These converging developments, moving towards the break-up of the Union Calédonienne, were particularly strong in Houaïlou (as in Ponérihouen) where, as we have seen, mobilisation around the AICLF had been high among the Protestant Kanaks. It is therefore no surprise that it was in Houaïlou, in the Ba tribe, that a crucial general meeting of the AICLF was held, at which the association expressed its support for Dui Matayo Wetta and Michel Kauma in their opposition to Lenormand, and strident criticism of the latter's proposals for reform of the status of municipalities ('The second day was devoted to studying the various plans for reorganisation of Municipal Committees. The Union Calédonienne's two versions were examined in detail and rejected by all the Delegates present, who are categorically opposed to the introduction of an electoral majority system at tribal level' ('Assemblée générale de l'AICLF' 1960)). The text drawn up at the general meeting merits detailed examination. First, because in opposition to Lenormand's position, the AICLF insists on maintaining the division between municipal matters and customary aspects of village or tribal organisation:

The AICLF opposes any introduction of municipal sections, because it is in practice impossible to operate in local circumstances, because they are discriminatory in principle and because, owing to the automatic confusion of municipal matters and customary issues, they risk causing serious difficulties within the tribes, both in Grande Terre and in the Loyalty Islands.

Our customary affairs should not be mixed up with those of the municipalities. The proposal before us is for the establishment of sections with councils elected within the Municipalities, these local councils being responsible for managing the municipal interests of districts. The municipal Budgets are not large enough to be cut into small portions. We are opposed to our life being transformed by mixing politics and elections in places where our understanding and our solidarity depend on the balance established through custom. ('Assemblée générale de l'AICLF' 1960)

Second, because in this way the plans for recognition of the council of elders regained an element of local, 'customary' self-organisation independent of the general political issues in New Caledonia. The AICLF's reflections reached a level of detailed elaboration sensitive to the diversity of local configurations of social relations:

The problem of official recognition is therefore that of the Council of Elders which has been reinvigorated in the last few years, renewing an ancient custom, but too often in a disorganised fashion. In order to prevent any challenges, and any intervention by Politics where it does not belong, a number of conditions need to be met, in particular no election should intervene on the customary level:

1. The Council of Elders of the Tribe should be composed of one representative of each clan resident in the tribe. This representative is normally the oldest man in the senior branch of the clan, unless all the members of the clan agree on another person, for example if the normal incumbent has moved elsewhere. No clan must be excluded from the Council, once it has been settled there for at least one generation.
2. The decisions of the Council of Elders must be unanimous, in which case they can be considered final. If there is prolonged disagreement, the decision can be taken by a two-thirds majority; this opens the possibility of a challenge in law, which is in any case already possible in the Courts. In no case may a decision be made by simple majority, for fear of leading quickly to violent opposition in the reserves resulting in the collapse of indigenous society, especially through the politicisation of the problem.
3. The role of the Council of Elders is to serve as an organ of conciliation for settling problems of land ownership within reserves, conflicts around the attribution of family names, any difficulties resulting from marriages, and everything that, according to local custom, concerns the internal life of the tribe.
4. The Council of Elders must not be attributed any responsibility on the municipal level. This does not preclude it from formulating opinions on points of interest to the tribe and tasking the Chief with taking any steps in the general interest.
5. It is for the Council of Elders to appoint, according to local custom, the successor to a Chief who has died or stepped down. The Council of Elders is chaired by the Chief as part of his duties; he has the responsibility of holding, or having another hold, the notebook in which at each meeting the date, names of those present, subjects discussed, decisions taken or wishes expressed, are recorded. Where any firm decision is made, the members present must initial the notebook under the record of the decision.

6. As regards the appointment of High Chiefs in Grande Terre, the diversity of individual practices is such that it is better to pass the task of recording the appointment of post-holders to the Administration, following upon general agreement in the district. Subsequently, a consultation among the various officially recognised Councils of Elders will determine whether it is necessary to make legal provision for them to meet in Assemblies or Districts, under the chairmanship of the High Chief, whom these Assemblies shall have, among other things, the duty of appointing. (*Assemblée générale de l'AICLF* 1960)

In light of the articulation of these positions, the congress of the Union Calédonienne that was held in November 1960 resolved to expel Kauma and Wetta, thus triggering the departure of the AICLF from the Union Calédonienne, which then drew closer to the conservative parties. Thus, in the municipal elections of May 1961 in Houaïlou, Paul Malignon, who had succeeded Rousseau as mayor on the latter's death in 1959, was re-elected, with the support of the Kanak municipal councillors who were the mainstays of the AICLF, Auguste Parawi-Reybas, Pierre Ayawa and Kaléba Boai. And, in the parliamentary elections of November 1962, Lenormand lost the election in Houaïlou for the first time since 1951, with only 350 votes against 733 for Édouard Pentecost. Thus Houaïlou became a regular provider of Kanak elected officials opposed to the Union Calédonienne's proposals for autonomy and, later, of anti-independence representatives, some of whom, like Auguste Parawi-Reybas, Victorin Boéwa and Delin Wéma, were well known throughout New Caledonia.

The splits in the Union Calédonienne, Lenormand's political trajectory, the state's resumption of control in New Caledonia (Jacquinot law 1963, Billotte law 1969)³⁶ and the AICLF's demands effectively helped to separate the municipal issue from that of the councils of elders. And, when the reform of municipal administration was finally passed in 1969, there was no mention of councils of elders. It was merely established that, in accordance with a 'consideration relative to the clan council and the council of clan chiefs', on 10 December 1981:

Article 1. The clan council settles all matters involving the clan's property. It is composed of representatives of each family group included in the clan.

Article 2. At the level of the tribe, a council of clan chiefs may be set up, comprising each of the customary representatives of the clans making up the tribe.

36 French government legislation reducing the autonomy of New Caledonia [trans.].

Article 3. Once it is fully constituted, the council of clan chiefs replaces the council of elders as regards the powers exercised by this latter. The council of clan chiefs manages the general customary Administration of the tribe. (*Journal officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* 1981)

Houaïlou was a crucial location in New Caledonian political life in the 1950s, particularly because of the presence of the Protestant mission and its role in the political reorganisation that followed the dismantling of the *indigénat* system. This decade was marked by the transition from chiefs with a monopoly on representation of the Kanaks in the public arena (like high chief Mandaoué, the first elected Kanak municipal official in 1947) to a new generation of local actors (such as Pierre Ayawa, Georges Jöpöyöi, Jona Pwâdi and others). The successive conflicts that were played out in the late 1950s led the majority of them to espouse conservative policies, some developing political careers at territory level. One of their aims was to challenge colonial chiefdoms by promoting the postcolonial councils of elders. This challenge ran alongside the attempt to build economic autonomy through the cooperative, the quest for political harmony through witch-hunts, and the pursuit of educational success in their support for pastor Charlemagne's breakaway venture. This mobilisation was in fact based on a coalition of new actors in the intellectual, religious and political spheres: Charlemagne, Leenhardt, Guiart and, to a lesser extent, Lenormand thus saw their fates closely entwined with that of Houaïlou. In addition, the 1950s were by far the most productive for Guiart; as far as the Houaïlou region is concerned, he relied massively (but not exclusively) on Protestant interlocutors from the AICLF. Thus, in the pages 'honouring those who have been of greatest assistance in the writing of this study' that open the first edition of *Structure de la chefferie* (*The Structure of the Chiefdom*), 10 men from Houaïlou are mentioned in the acknowledgements;³⁷ eight of these were mainstays or supporters of the AICLF, and some also of the cooperative (Kétiwan Ayawa, Pierre Ayawa, Yéné Bwérhécéu, Philippo Cibëi, Georges Jöpöyöi,³⁸ Élia Mârârhëë, Acöömwâ Nêrhô, Auguste Parawi), the ninth being the Catholic chief of Kamwi (Adrien Lecê Bwêé), and the 10th, pastor Charlemagne himself (who disappears from the acknowledgements in the second edition).

37 Guiart 1963, pp. 9–11.

38 Under the name 'Bwéowé'.

While the level of military activity in Houaïlou was low in the 1950s, physical violence nevertheless remained a significant component of the register of possible actions drawn upon by those involved in the reorganisation that political, economic and customary mobilisations aimed towards. Thus, the blows and mistreatment that accompanied the visit of the diviners (*jauu*) from Ponérihouen in late 1955 and the split in the Protestant church are not an incidental element in the formation of apparently relatively consensual social spaces: intimidation and harassment here represent the margin of the spaces of autonomy that the Kanak inhabitants of Houaïlou were in the process of constructing.

In this chapter I have chosen the organisation of a witch-hunt conducted by seers (*jauu*) in Houaïlou in late 1955 as a point from which to observe the huge transformations that took place in colonial governmentality after the end of the Second World War. By following the mobilisation of one group of actors, I have sought to reveal the broader connections between political stakes (access to universal suffrage), economic questions (the cooperative organisation of production and consumption), religious divisions (within the Protestant church in particular), educational issues and village concerns (through the councils of elders and preoccupation with questions of witchcraft), over an extended period that runs from the granting of voting rights to a few Kanaks in 1945 to the AICLF congress in Ba in 1960, where the conjunction of interests that had made Houaïlou one of the centres of political life in the 1950s finally broke down.

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