

# **CONFLICT, COLONISATION AND RECONCILIATION IN NEW CALEDONIA**

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This thesis presents my own original research. All sources have been duly acknowledged. Except where acknowledged in the customary manner, the material presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and has not been submitted in whole or part for a degree in any university.

Carolyn Nuttall

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## ABSTRACT

As New Caledonia moves towards a decision on self-determination, this thesis traces important moments of conflict in New Caledonia's recent history and identifies gestures of recognition that might have led to reconciliation. It considers, in particular, cycles of pre- and post-colonial conflict in order to understand the role of customary knowledge and practices amongst the indigenous peoples. Throughout the history of New Caledonia intertribal rivalry has been a major source of conflict. Yet customary self-regulation practices were challenged when each new arrival—missionaries, colonisers and convicts—brought new sources of conflict. Disruption, rapid change and the threat to Kanak survival kept the cycle of conflict extant and reconciliation illusory. Throughout the post-annexation history of the country, statutes, decrees and laws written by French administrators, governors, and politicians have failed to mediate across cultural difference to resolve conflict and achieve reconciliation.

Chapters One and Two examine, largely through the eyes of French Catholic Marists and the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, the various sources of intertribal conflict which existed prior to colonisation and the divisions which became more pronounced with the arrival of missionaries, merchants and marines. Following French annexation, the Melanesian population was marginalised as land was expropriated, military reprisals were exacted, missionary work compromised and priests and pastors deported. Ongoing clashes—intertribal, interdenominational and international—set in motion a cycle of conflict which has persisted until the present day.

Chapter Three analyses the impact of World War II on New Caledonia and the end of the *Indigénat*, a period of hope when Kanak citizenship was recognised and there was an enhanced possibility of reconciliation. With the guidance of the churches, the Kanak became more politically aware, yet during this same period schisms within the Protestant Church caused further conflict within the Kanak community in the form of intertribal religious and political divisions. Chapters Four and Five survey the Kanak awakening of 1968 and the tendency over the following decades towards the more militant conflict which culminated in the violent conflict of the 1980s. The events of this period were followed by French-initiated mediation, in which the Churches again

played a prominent role, and led to the signing of the Matignon Agreements. The reconciliation which accompanied these developments was shallow. A recognition and acceptance of past events has facilitated more recent inter-island and inter-family reconciliation so that with the support of indigenous Church leaders, genuine pardon has been achieved in what may be seen as the maturing of a society.

The study reveals that the conflictual events of the past remain painful in the indigenous collective memory and will need to be addressed further if the cycle of conflict is to be broken so that lasting reconciliation may be achieved and translated into the *destin commun* for the country's inhabitants that is prefigured in the Noumea Accord.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADCK	Agence de développement de la culture kanak
ADRAF	Agence de développement rural et d'aménagement foncier
AENCNH	Association des étudiants de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et des Nouvelles-Hébrides
AICLF	Association des indigènes calédoniens et loyaltiens français
CAFAT	Caisse d'allocations familiales et des accidents du travail
CPDI	Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes
CRS	Compagnies républicaines de sécurité
DGSE	Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure
DOM-TOM	Départements et d'outre-mer et territoires d'outre-mer
ÉÉNCIL	Église évangélique en Nouvelle-Calédonie et aux îles Loyauté
EFO	Établissements français d'Océanie
EHESS	École des hautes études en sciences sociales
EPA	Entente pour l'autonomie
EPIGN	Escadron parachutiste d'intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale
EPKNC	Église protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie
FI	Front indépendantiste
FLNKS	Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste
FNSC	Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne
FULK	Front uni de libération kanak
GIGN	Groupe d'intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale

IFO	Institut français de l'Océanie
INALCO	Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales
INCO	International Nickel Company
INSEE	Institut de la statistique et des études économiques
JORF	Journal officiel de la République française
LKS	Libération kanak socialiste
LMS	London Missionary Society
ORSTOM	Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer
PALIKA	Parti de libération kanak
RPCR	Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
SLN	Société le Nickel
SMEP	Société des missions évangéliques de Paris
UC	Union Calédonienne
UICALO	Union des indigènes calédoniens amis de la liberté dans l'ordre
USTKE	Union syndicale des travailleurs kanaks et des exploités

# INTRODUCTION

*Soyons unis, devenons frères,  
Plus de violence ni de guerre.  
Marchons confiants et solidaires  
Pour notre pays*

National anthem of New Caledonia

The undeniable sentiments of fraternity, peace, and optimism for the future are clearly expressed in the new ‘national anthem’ of New Caledonia. However, these sentiments have not always been present during New Caledonia’s troubled history. ‘Guerres fréquentes’ (Brainne 1854), ‘la loi des armes [...] le déclenchement du nouveau processus de violence qui a embrasé ces jours-ci la Nouvelle-Calédonie’ (*Le Monde*, 6 May 1988a), ‘la tension en Nouvelle-Calédonie’ (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988b) and ‘l’insurrection canaque’ (*Le Monde* 15 January 1985b) are frequent themes in the colonial historiography of New Caledonia. In this thesis, I propose to consider a number of contexts in New Caledonia’s history which saw religious, cultural, racial and ideological differences result in conflict, and to discuss the various attempts to mediate and resolve tension and to achieve reconciliation.

The history of New Caledonia has been peppered with regular cycles of conflict. Before colonisation, merchants, missionaries and marines described the natives of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands as being ‘almost constantly at war’ (Douglas 1990, p. 22). Dr Victor De Rochas, a surgeon of the Imperial Marines, suggested that a passion for warfare was innate among the natives:

Il n’est besoin de forcer personne à prendre les armes, car tout sujet en état de manier la lance et le casse-tête n’a garde de faillir au premier point d’honneur de l’homme, et de manquer l’occasion de satisfaire une passion innée chez tous les Calédoniens.

(De Rochas 1862, p. 203).

The belief that aggressive behaviour is innate and is the precursor of conflict is rejected by French academic and philosopher, René Girard. In Girard’s view, violent conflict is

the end product of rivalry resulting from an innate imitative desire and it is by religious and cultural intervention that warring groups become reconciled in sustainable communities (Girard 1972). The propensity for conflict in the Kanak population may be subject to differing interpretations. As Montaigne wrote in *Les Essais* (111, No. 324), ‘Il y a plus affaire à interpréter les interprétations, qu’à interpréter les choses.’ Whilst cognisant of the differing interpretations of events I will examine in some detail in the various kinds of conflict that have beset the history of the peoples living in the archipelago we know as New Caledonia.

In pre-colonial times conflict within the tribe was most commonly manifested in ‘extravagant verbal aggression and bravado’ (Douglas 1998, p. 130); intertribal wars, on the other hand, were fought to the death in accordance with a predetermined framework of customary order. Post-war suzerain rights were also encoded. At times, the battle lines were drawn with epic precision: ‘C’est alors qu’on voit les guerriers des deux camps se défiant réciproquement du geste et de la parole, à la façon des héros d’Homère.’ (De Rochas 1862, p. 205).

Yet despite warfare and the linguistic divisiveness of some twenty-eight spoken languages, the tribes of New Caledonia had coexisted for centuries within the dictate of native custom which governed alliances, enmities, trade and marriage patterns. Custom by prohibition, ritual and myth was a stabilising element in Kanak society and in warfare. Death had an ameliorative effect: it signalled the end of the war and a return to peace. The eating of the slain completed the ritual and within the confines of customary law, reconciliation or at least temporary abatement was achieved in the alternating cycles of war and peace.

During the early nineteenth century, as interest in the ‘black islands’<sup>1</sup> of the western Pacific increased, the wave of new arrivals—missionaries, French colonists, convicts, and free settlers—introduced new sources of rivalry. This, in accordance with Girardian mimetic theory, escalated into conflict and the collapse of customary order. The sandalwood traders introduced a market economy to which the Melanesians rapidly adapted; however, inequitable practices between traders and tribes encouraged an ‘acquisitive desire’ among those tribes who perceived themselves as disadvantaged, and

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<sup>1</sup> The French explorer Dumont D’Urville divided the Islands of the Pacific into three groups: *Polynésie*—many islands, *Micronésie*—tiny islands and *Mélanésie*—black islands (Stanley 2013, p. 104).

this inevitably degenerated into hostility and violent conflict. Western commercial law had no equivalent in native custom where acquisition by stealth and warfare was the *modus operandi*. As tribes set out on the path to wealth, trading ships were sacked and entire crews were massacred. It was judged that these vessels were responsible for upsetting tribal order, and for balance to be restored a ‘scapegoat’, the crew, had to be sacrificed. Retaliating traders, on the other hand, faced the Western judicial system and the law courts of Sydney. During these early encounters, cultural differences remained unexplored and, in the absence of dialogue, conflict resolution was ineffective; indeed, it often led to further conflict.

In the pre-colonial clash of civilisations, the arrival of Polynesian catechists of the London Missionary Society (LMS) presented a possible source of dialogue and mediation between the warring tribes; instead, however, intertribal rivalry and conflict intensified. The catechist, as a stranger to the island, could only be received as a privileged guest, *enehmu*<sup>2</sup>, by one tribe. This tribe, in consequence, gained prestige and security, and neighbouring tribes became envious (*désir mimétique*).<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to secure similar power and wealth, the tribes which believed themselves to be disadvantaged called upon Marist priests for support. Catholic–Protestant antagonism resulted in further confrontation and the tribes were swept into an ever-increasing conflictual vortex.

French annexation in 1853 added dramatically to the vertiginous cycle of conflict. Initially the country was administered by the French military of the *Établissements français de l’Océanie* (EFO) which sought to civilise the native population by exterminating violent conflict. In the Western view of mediation, conflict was considered to equate to barbarity, and dialogue to civilisation. It was a colonial paradox to find that the Administration, when grossly outnumbered, resorted to violent repression and superior armoury to quell fighting. With no real negotiating power, the Kanak became marginalised socially, economically and geographically, and their voices remained unheard. A major and continuing cause of violence was the colonial ‘land grab’ which transferred all tribal land to the property portfolio of the French Empire.

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<sup>2</sup> Custom on Lifou dictated that strangers were welcomed by the chief as special friend or privileged guest—*enehmu*—, who was protected and supplied with food and lodging in what was considered to be ‘a kind of freemasonry among the natives’ (Macfarlane 1873, p. 27).

<sup>3</sup> According to Girard (1972) all culture originates from *désir mimétique*, which can become rivalry and escalate into violence.

The impact of invasion, forced displacement, and the destruction of property denigrated and demoralised the Kanak to such an extent that retaliatory action was taken and conflict escalated into warfare. In 1878 and again in 1917 major revolts brought into play native alliances and enmities which transcended tribal linguistic division. This could be seen as an instance of compact as outlined in Rousseau's Social Contract:

The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.

(Rousseau 1973, pp. 190-191).

This illustrates the very essence of all beings and the instinct of survival which overrides all other instincts. In conflict with the French military, the Kanak were at a technological disadvantage, and the French, acting within the accepted order of European colonial law, brutally suppressed any uprising. The devastating native death toll went uncontested; there was no reconciliation and the Kanak were pushed further into the inhospitable land of the *Chaîne centrale*.<sup>4</sup> In the early years of colonisation there was little room for dialogue or mediation.

On the Loyalty Islands, historical tribal enmity escalated into wars of religion when rival tribes embraced opposing Christian denominations of Catholicism and Protestantism. In the currency of the day, Catholicism equated to French and Protestantism to English, and these Imperial arch-rivals had become bitter adversaries in the carving up of the Pacific. Interdenominational tension exacerbated intertribal fighting and led to a 'paper war' which drew into the fray the Governments of Britain and France. A souring of the relationship between Church and State in France was reflected in the anticlerical attitude of several of the Governors appointed to New Caledonia. This added to the difficulties of the Church and hindered mission work. As antagonism between Church and Government increased, native zealots were exiled, priests and pastors were dismissed, commandants were decommissioned, and governors were returned to France. Conflict led to drastic measures being taken in which reconciliation was not an option.

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<sup>4</sup> *La Chaîne centrale* (or *Grande Chaîne*) is the central mountain chain which divides the mainland of New Caledonia longitudinally.



The first colonial Governor, Charles Guillain, arriving as a ‘liberator’ to civilise, produce and rehabilitate (Matsuda 2005, p. 118), had visions of a socialist utopia, particularly for the convicts sent to the new penal colony. He saw reconciliation as a process of assimilation, and to prevent further Melanesian disadvantage he delineated reservations which were unalienable and non-commutable. An Office of Native Affairs was established, and in the pursuit of his Saint Simonian ideals, a phalanstery was constructed on 300 hectares at Yaté in the expectation that all would live together in communal and self-sufficient harmony. The success of the project was short-lived: ‘Une année ou deux après, ils durent se séparer pleins de défiance, d’aigreur, de haine les uns contre les autres’. (Garnier 1871, pp. 78-79).

As the colony expanded, the acquisition of land for the new arrivals—felons, recidivists, political prisoners, free settlers and imported workers from Vietnam, Japan, the New Hebrides, Indonesia and Reunion Island—was hotly contested. Huge tracts of Kanak ancestral land were expropriated, Kanak discontent increased, and violent conflict erupted. Worse was to befall the Kanak in 1887 when Governor Nouet introduced the repressive Native regime, the *Indigénat*. In an age marked by violence, injustice and humiliation, this regime of isolation and oppression was contrary to the generally accepted international code of behaviour, and to the fundamental document of the French Revolution, the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen de 1789*. The Kanak were incarcerated, forced to work and obliged to pay a ‘head tax’. Support provided by priests and pastors was limited as the Churches contended with a succession of anti-clerical Governors. Alienated in their own land, the Kanak had no legal or political redress; they were non-citizens locked in colonial alterity and this remained the case until World War II.

After the French had capitulated in 1940, pro-Vichyist and Free French battled it out in New Caledonia under the watchful eye of the Australian and New Zealand Governments. Subsequently, with war raging in the Pacific, the geographic advantage and mineral wealth of New Caledonia were seized upon by the Government of the United States of America and hundreds of thousands of allied troops set up camp in the country. For the Kanak, it was a decisive moment. The possibility of escaping the treadmill of political repression was foreshadowed in 1944 when General de Gaulle put forward a number of initiatives which hinted at decolonisation and economic reform for French colonial subjects in the colonies. At the same time, complete independence was

categorically rejected. In the aftermath of World War II, the *Indigénat* was abolished and Kanak tribes, liberated after almost a century of incarceration, presented a fertile breeding ground for the newly emerging Communist Party.

This led to other forms of struggle. The Churches, faced with the threat of Communism, were quick to respond by establishing associations aimed at providing the Kanak with a Christian based means of presiding over native affairs. Within a short period of time these associations regrouped to form a Party with real political teeth, the *Union Calédonienne* (UC) which, under the motto, ‘deux couleurs, un seul peuple’, saw Europeans and Kanak join in the struggle against the crushing excesses of the ruling oligarchy. Just as warring tribes had united to fight against colonial oppression in the previous century, in the mid-twentieth century Melanesian and European differences were forgotten, when a united front was presented to battle for social reform and change. These changes were hotly contested by the ruling plutocracy, which sought to retain the status quo, and violence again erupted.

As the Kanak political voice became more powerful, intertribal and interdenominational differences were overshadowed in the fight for social, administrative and land reform. In 1956 the French Government responded to political pressure by providing the Territory with greater autonomy by way of the *loi-cadre* of the French socialist politician, Gaston Defferre. Certain powers were transferred from Paris, but this step towards reconciliation between the French State and New Caledonia was temporary. In 1958 de Gaulle was swept back into power and in a referendum on the new constitution New Caledonians voted overwhelmingly in favour of their continuing association with France. In coexistence, coloniser and colonised proceeded along increasingly divergent tracks and little attempt was made to bridge the ever-broadening gap.

By the late 1960s several Kanak students who had become embroiled in the student-worker riots in France returned to New Caledonia imbued with political fervour. This Kanak awakening was not universally welcomed. With newfound freedom, the educated Kanak elite established new political parties: the *Fouards Rouges* and the *Groupe 1878* and began to press for greater autonomy. Protests were held in Noumea which appeared to mirror those of the French *soixante-huitards* but beyond the wall of slogans was a fundamental difference between the demands of the Kanak and the students in France. The New Caledonian students’ fight was for the recognition of native custom and of the ideals of the previous generation; in France, the rebellion was

against parental mores. Europeans who had ruled supreme in New Caledonia for one hundred years suddenly found their position of privilege under threat and they were not prepared to negotiate. Conflict became violent as *Caldoches*<sup>5</sup> took to the streets to disrupt passive Kanak demonstrations.

New Caledonia had become a cauldron of intractable conflicts as the traumas of the past dictated the attitudes of the present. Mass immigration during the years of the nickel boom in the late 1960's saw the Kanak outnumbered; their power was reduced and they were trapped in a vicious cycle from which there seemed no exit. The push for greater autonomy changed to a call for independence. Conflict escalated between the pro and anti-independence sectors, the latter pushing for total autonomy with French patronage. In response to increasing tension Parliamentary Ministers in France introduced a series of statutes—*la valse des statuts*—which provided and then withdrew the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Territory according to the political persuasion of the Government. In 1983, Georges Lemoine, the Minister for the DOM-TOM,<sup>6</sup> in a bid to break down the barriers and proceed towards reconciliation, brought together at Nainville-les-Roches those from the opposed camps in New Caledonia and French officials. Although consensus was not reached, the great achievement was in bringing the warring parties together for face-to-face discussions. In the words of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, 'Ce discours est une étape de progrès, et je dois saluer le courage de M. Lemoine pour affronter cette étape. Mais le chemin est encore long.' (*Le Monde* 5 December 1983). Generally, the statutes were embedded in a Western conceptual framework which gave no consideration to cultural difference and in consequence failed. Despite the good intentions of the French Government, reconciliation remained a chimera.

Violence between the pro- and anti-independence camps reached a climax in the 1980s when a period tantamount to civil war, *les événements*, culminated in 1988 in Ouvéa when four gendarmes, nineteen Kanak and two soldiers lost their lives. In the wake of this massacre, the Socialist Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, sought to establish dialogue and reconciliation between the warring parties by bringing together an œcumenical

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<sup>5</sup> The word *Caldoche* was originally a pejorative term which described New Caledonians of European origin. In current parlance, it designates descendants of *colons*, long term French residents, and mixed race New Caledonians who have become assimilated and identified with the European culture of the island.

<sup>6</sup> Départements d'Outre-Mer et Territoires d'Outre-Mer—French overseas departments and territories.

group of six eminent French clergymen and public servants, *les Médiateurs du Pacifique*.<sup>7</sup> A peace treaty, the *Accords de Matignon-Oudinot* (Matignon Agreements), brought about an uneasy peace and delayed the decision on independence for ten years. Touted as a process of reconciliation, the Agreements fell short of this expectation. Time had not been allowed for mourning or for the discussion required to reach a general consensus. The people of Ouvéa believed that they had been abandoned by the *Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste* (FLNKS) chiefs during the assault and by the French after the assault: ‘Bien des parents des morts d’Ouvéa pensent qu’ils ont été sacrifiés [...] par les deux camps.’ (*Le Monde*, 7 May 1989). The people of Ouvéa were given no opportunity to participate in the decision-making, and further conflict could only result.

The cycle of violence was not extinguished. One year later, at the end of the customary period of mourning, the independence leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné were assassinated by a radical independent, Djubelli Wéa. After a decade of mourning, the Churches, which had provided the advance guard for colonisation and continue to play an important role in New Caledonia, united to mediate with the estranged Tjibaou, Wéa and Yeiwéné families. The importance of the Church in Melanesian society is described by Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, ex Vice-President of the FLNKS: ‘Quand il y a entre nous, du FLNKS, des divergences de vues, ou des problèmes personnels nous nous tournons volontiers vers l’Église’. (*Le Monde* 3 September 1989). The documentary film, *Le Pardon*, which was made by Gilles Dagneau in 2004, traces the long and difficult process which, under the guidance of Catholic and Protestant religious leaders, led to the reconciliation and pardon of the Tjibaou, Yeiwéné and Wéa families.

In this multiethnic society, the roots of the present remain deeply embedded in the past and memories of colonial injustice continue to divide. It has been difficult for those who have suffered directly and those who have inflicted the suffering to accept that which remains an imperfect reality. The anguish of Ouvéa resurfaced again in 2011 with the filming and screening of Mathieu Kassovitz’s film *L’Ordre et La Morale*. This film recounts the recollections of Philippe Legorjus, head of the *Groupe d’intervention de la*

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<sup>7</sup> *Les Médiateurs du Pacifique* is the name of a documentary film produced in 1997 by Charles Belmont.

*Gendarmerie Nationale* (GIGN), concerning the massacre on Ouvéa during the final stages of the French Presidential election in 1988.

After the Ouvéa bloodbath, tension remained high; innocent Kanak were incarcerated in France, the army was found to have committed summary executions and to have failed in its duty of care for the wounded. Twenty-three years after these events, the suffering on Ouvéa was still so intense that Kassovitz found it impossible to obtain total consensus to film there. In this divided society, it is only with reference to the problems of the past, and dialogue between the different ethnic groups, that the present can be understood and the future shaped. As Chomsky (2011, p. 268) claims, to approach reconciliation with ‘historical amnesia’ is to compromise moral and intellectual integrity and set the scene for further violence.

In what follows, I propose to analyse certain of these key events of the past which have led to a continuing cycle of conflict, and what appear to be irreconcilable differences, but also to consider the potential for reconciliation that has emerged at various critical moments in New Caledonian history.

Chapter One examines the pre-colonial period from 1840 until 1853, the sources of intertribal conflict which existed prior to colonisation, and divisions which became more contentious with the arrival of missionaries, merchants and marines. Throughout the history of New Caledonia intertribal rivalry has been a major source of conflict.

Chapter Two draws attention to the problems of the ever-increasing marginalisation of the Melanesian population following French annexation. Unwitting Administrators and Governors, absorbed in the task of colony-building, considered the original inhabitants, estimated to be around 60,000, to be little more than nuisance value. They were treated as a sub-species, dehumanised and stripped bare of ancient tribal land and custom. An insurmountable barrier was built between colonised and coloniser and in the sanguinary clash of cultures in 1878, 1400 lives were lost—1200 of whom were Kanak. During the period of colonial rule examined in this chapter, 1853-1902, Governors were omnipotent, Melanesian land was expropriated, violent military reprisals established compliance, missionary work was compromised and missionaries were deported. Conflict inevitably resulted.

Chapter Three analyses the impact of World War II on New Caledonia, its aftermath and the end of the *Indigénat*. It was a period of hope when Kanak citizenship was

recognised and there was a real possibility for reconciliation. With the guidance of the churches, the Kanak became more politically aware and as the aspirations of the Kanak and the white plutocracy proceeded on a collision course, an independence movement was born. During this period the Protestant Church, which for 100 years had supported the Kanak, bowed to the pressure of internal disagreement and split into two separate entities. This caused a scission within the Kanak community. Particular attention will be paid to the divergent routes, religious and political, taken by the Napoemien tribe of Poindimié and the Embouchure tribe of Ponérihouen.

Chapter Four investigates the Kanak awakening of 1968, the increased militancy of the loyalists and the piecemeal attempt of various statutes to bridge the gap and overcome mounting conflict. The Hienghène massacre and the controversial *non lieu* judgement on the self-confessed assassins is also examined. As a result of this ruling, the strategy of the FLNKS changed from peaceful protest to more militant conflict and the fight for independence continued with greater determination and violence. This period of growing polarisation offered scant opportunity for reconciliation.

Chapter Five evaluates the violent conflict of the 1980s, *les événements*—the disastrous Ouvéa Massacre—and the post-trauma period when the new Socialist Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, brought together a carefully selected group of mediators to initiate dialogue between the antagonists on the way to reconciliation. The Churches played a prominent role in this process which led to the historic signing of the Matignon Agreements. The success, or otherwise, of this process of reconciliation is examined as well as the ‘drama of ambiguity’ which resulted in the deaths of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné. This study includes an examination of the subsequent Church-instigated intra-island and Ouvéa–gendarme reconciliations and the heartfelt difficulty of achieving a *pardon* between the Tjibaou, Yeiwéné and Wéa families.

The apocalyptic proportion of the disaster of 150 years of conflict and the piecemeal approach to reconciliation in New Caledonia remains an unfinished history. Throughout the post-annexation history of the country, statutes, decrees and laws written by French administrators, governors, and politicians have failed to mediate across cultural difference to resolve conflict and achieve reconciliation. Socio-political attempts to bridge the gap have been skewed toward Western values, they have ignored historical and political factors, and have been unable to ease the painful legacy of long and bitter conflict. As Maclellan (2005, p. 2) indicated: ‘There is a limit to legislative justice. You

cannot legislate away racial discrimination.’ Short-term solutions cannot alleviate the painful memory of deep-seated conflict. Authorities cannot impose trust and empathy by decree but they can encourage steps towards reconciliation by mutual encounter and exchange. (Bloomfield, Barnes & Huyse 2003, p. 26).

In 1998, pro- and anti-independence forces, together with the French Government under the direction of Lionel Jospin, negotiated the Noumea Accord, which acknowledged past injustice and set forth a process of decolonisation to culminate in a referendum by 2018. This Accord also called for ongoing social dialogue, a process by which the mosaic of ethnic groups living in New Caledonia could move from a divided past to a shared future, a *destin commun*.

I will not consider in any detail the intricacies of the Noumea Accord and the subsequent political developments in New Caledonia. Suffice it to say that the future of New Caledonia lies in the balance and that reconciliation of the diverse communities to achieve the projected *destin commun* is a long-term project which will require past truths to be confronted, different cultural ways of conflict resolution to be considered, and time allowed for *la parole* to ameliorate the bitter memories of colonialism and the legacy of violent conflict and injustice.

I hope that my thesis will offer an opportunity to consider important moments of conflict and possible reconciliation, including the failure of various kinds of recognition. This history needs to be taken into account if the vision articulated in the Preamble of the Noumea Accord is to have a chance of being realised:

*Le passé a été le temps de la colonisation,*

*Le présent est le temps du partage, par le rééquilibrage,*

*L’avenir doit être le temps de l’identité, dans un destin commun.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Article 4 of the Preamble to the Noumea Accord.





# CHAPTER 1

## **Missionaries, Sandalwooders and Intertribal Warfare on the Loyalty Islands and *Grande Terre*: 1840-1853**

### **Pre-contact hierarchies and intertribal conflict**

Warfare among the indigenous population was a common theme in the writings of mariners and missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century (Crocombe 1968, pp. 86-93; De Rochas 1862, pp. 201-214; Douglas 1998, pp. 123-159) and the rules were well established. According to Tardy Montravel, there were two types of enemy tribes, those classified as enemies by birth (Wofof) and those who became enemies by accident (Oote) (Person 1953, p. 30; Reuillard 1992, p. 482).<sup>9</sup> The missionary-anthropologist Maurice Leenhardt provided a listing of the Wofof tribes which included Touho, Hienghène, Balade, Arama and Belep, as well as the Oote tribes of Tendo, Tiendanite, Poyes, Wanas, Koné and Voh (Person 1953, p. 39). Wars between these tribes were fought to the death, with the number slain in battle limited by the number of bodies that could be removed from the battlefield by the victors. It was only after the bodies were removed that victory could be claimed.<sup>10</sup>

Wars reflected deep-rooted rivalry and vengeance which were likely to resurface at the least provocation (Montrouzier 1870, p. 30). Powerful chiefs, the political players of the day, were able to acquire additional land and prestige, by the skilful manoeuvring of their warriors.<sup>11</sup> According to oral history battles were both intra and inter island. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, warriors from Lifou defeated the Kunie people on the Isle of Pines where they 'gained control of the disunited local tribes and soon organised a single authority structure on the island (Crocombe 1968, p. 27; Pisier 1969,

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<sup>9</sup> Although there is general agreement on the existence of this classification, the orthography differs: Montrouzier (1870, p. 30) refers to the Ot and Wawap tribes and Guiart (1994, p. 112) to the Ohot and Hwaap.

<sup>10</sup> Guiart (1997, p. 86) claims that 'the rules governing traditional war are that some men may be killed, but there may be no attempt to exterminate the enemy, with whom one will eventually negotiate, because of inter-marriage between the adversaries'.

<sup>11</sup> A chiefdom's prosperity was proportional to its demographic success and to the number of bodies that were welcomed into the chiefdom [...] or were destroyed by enemies (Bensa 1997, p. 84).

p. 74; Shineberg 1967, p. 32). After several generations of prosperity, the Kunie chief was killed in battle by the people of Tuauru on the south-eastern part of the mainland. His son, Ti-Tourou Vendegou,<sup>12</sup> who had acceded to the rank of High Chief, set about exacting vengeance. Victory in battle provided Vendegou, the only chief on the Isle of Pines, with aristocratic status and chiefly authority (Pisier 1996, p. 76); his chiefdom extended to Noumea, Yate, Garji, Tuauru and Kanala. Vendegou's chiefly power and stature, however, were not fully appreciated by white traders and missionaries and this led to angst and conflict.

On Ouvéa, chiefdoms had been established by sea-faring chiefs from the Mainland, Lifou and Wallis Island. Bazit, from Lifou, was the High Chief of Weneki, and his major rival Weneguei, High Chief of Fayaoué (cited in Dauphiné 1996, p. 7) was from the east coast of the mainland. Intertribal marriage and alliances with the Polynesian seafaring tribes of Nekelo, Beka and Doumai from Wallis Island (Uvea) had added to chiefly power.<sup>13</sup> In a polygamous society,<sup>14</sup> chiefs were frequently related by marriage; Weneguei was the brother-in-law of both Bazit and Nekelo (Dauphiné 1996, p. 8). Powerful links were also forged by marriage between mainland and Loyalty Island tribes. *Grande Terre* chiefs favoured wives from Ouvéa:

The chiefs of New Caledonia are said to have a strong desire for wives from this island, and it is customary when a party from Uvea goes over to build a large canoe [they have no timber of their own for the purpose], that the right to fell such as they may require is purchased by the surrender of a daughter of the principal personage.

(Erskine 1853, p. 347).

Such alliances, however, did not prevent conflict and in 1856, Nekelo was killed by the people of Fayaoué.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> According to Cook, 'Tea seems a title prefixed to the names of all, or most, of their chiefs or great men'. His indigenous friend honoured Cook by calling him 'Tea Cook' (Williams 1997, p. 262).

<sup>13</sup> Descendants of Wallisian emigrants are most numerous in Ouvéa (De Rochas 1862, p. 124) where Polynesian-Melanesian cultural difference has invoked conflict. According to Daniel Nekelo, *grand chef de Takedji* [Ouvéa]: 'À la chefferie, on parle faga'uvea. Avant on avait du mal à se comprendre avec les Iaaï. Maintenant, les jeunes peuvent apprendre les deux langues à l'école et cela favorise les échanges entre nous' (*Mwà Vée* 2009b, p. 36).

<sup>14</sup> Ti-Tourou, High Chief of the Isle of Pines, claimed to have fifty wives but according to Captain Cheyne, he had only 30! (Pisier 1969, p. 77).

<sup>15</sup> Inter-marriage between the Ohot and the Hwaap did provide a 'chain of solidarity' during the Pouebo uprising in 1867 (Guiart 1994, p. 112).

Despite language differences, Iaaï and Faga-Uvea on Ouvéa, Drehu on Lifou, Nengone on Maré and some twenty-five spoken languages on *Grande Terre*, there was considerable inter-island movement. Dauphiné (1986, p. 9) writes of a ‘veritable diaspora’ from southern Ouvéa to the east coast of the mainland.<sup>16</sup> De Rochas, a naval surgeon, describes invasions by the bravest and most enterprising warriors who, in victory, became village chiefs of the defeated tribe. He notes that submission by the vanquished was not always complete; often the defeated tribe retained its own chief and its own distinct nationality, language and customs (De Rochas 1862, p. 241). Intricate intertribal networks were formed but it would appear that the desire for power kept the tribes of New Caledonia, and the Loyalty Islands deeply divided.

Before colonisation, a hierarchy of warfare was well established within the indigenous communities of *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands. Most commonly, conflict was intra or inter-village in retaliation for insult or injury.<sup>17</sup> Intertribal raids were by stealth and ambush, which was less costly in terms of human life than open confrontation. Although war was constant, casualties were few. According to the Reverend Samuel Macfarlane, ‘they are not sufficiently advanced in civilisation to understand the art of killing by thousands’ (Macfarlane 1873, p. 7). High Chiefs were protected and were never in the front line of battle; they remained prudently behind and an appointed war chief would lead the warriors. To lose a chief in combat would result in the loss of honour for the tribe (De Rochas 1862, p. 207).

It is the chief that they are really after. But if their own chief is killed, their enjoyment comes to an end for it signifies the defeat of that party [...]. The defeated become as serfs. They cannot create another chief for themselves, but they will not be attacked again for they have become mere slaves. They will be called by a shameful name; they will be spoken of as slaves, or as pigs sewn through the nose with sennit.

(Crocombe 1968, p. 86).

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<sup>16</sup> According to De Rochas (1862, p. 115), ‘Les communications entre les îles Loyauté et la côte orientale de Calédonie, surtout avec la tribu de Hienghène sont fréquentes ; les indigènes d’Ouvéa ont même formé des villages en plusieurs localités de ce même littoral.’

<sup>17</sup> De Rochas’s essentialist perspective on the question of violence is clear: ‘Une des passions les plus vives et les plus tenaces dans l’âme du Calédonien, c’est celle de la vengeance. Le temps est impuissant à effacer la mémoire du dommage ou de l’injure qu’il a reçue, il en gardera au fond du cœur l’inexorable souci, et toute sa vie il guettera l’occasion de se payer du sang de l’agresseur. Ce même esprit de vengeance passe des individus à la société, et c’est lui qui entretient la perpétuité des guerres.’ (De Rochas 1862, p. 158).

In a final display of victory, the dwellings of the defeated would be burnt and their crops destroyed, to promote post war famine or *suite de la guerre* (De Rochas 1862, p. 242). Among the cannibal tribes, war also provided a supply of human flesh. According to Ta'unga, the slain were gathered by the women, chopped up and cooked in earth ovens, and 'great was their delight because they were eating well that day' (Crocombe 1968, p. 92).<sup>18</sup> Garnier (1991, p. 148) also describes in detail the feast of human flesh which followed a battle between the people of Ponérihouen and the neighbouring tribe of Houindo.

Chiefs in New Caledonia were all-powerful; they were protected in warfare and respected. Captain James Cook, when he discovered the country which he named New Caledonia, found chiefly order well established. When the chief spoke there was silence, broken only by murmurs of approbation of the elderly (Williams 1997, p. 251; Person 1953, p. 10). The supposedly despotic chief, Bourate of Hienghène, was described by De Rochas as 'vile'—'l'ogre des Annales de la Propagation de la Foi' who frequently killed his subjects—yet despite this, he was revered by his people, who would chant to him, 'Grand chef, Bourate ! Beau seigneur, Bourate !' (De Rochas 1862, p. 246). Women, on the other hand, were believed to play a subservient role; they stood behind the crowd and were ignored. The Reverend Nihill, during his sojourn on Maré, described female behaviour in terms of custom rather than subservience:

[...] young ladies who slink about in the most approved fashion, for it would be considered very improper for a woman to pass a chief without stooping and cowering with her shoulders. It seems to be a matter of form rather than anything else, for they do not seem obliged to work very hard, nor do they appear to be on unequal terms with the men in other respects.

(Nihill 1852, p. 39).

Rivalries were nurtured for generations and war erupted at the least provocation. When Western seafarers and missionaries arrived, these deep-seated differences led to the forging of opposing religious and political alliances which changed the tribal equilibrium and reignited intertribal conflict.

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<sup>18</sup> Ta'unga was a Polynesian catechist from Rarotonga who worked at the Tuauru mission 1842-1845.

## **The arrival of the LMS on the Isle of Pines (Kunie): Disease, death and revenge**

Until the arrival of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in New Caledonia, these ‘black islands’ of the Western Pacific remained largely ignored. In 1840 the LMS, having successfully evangelised the eastern Pacific, sent the mission ship *Camden* to New Caledonia with a party of Samoan *natas*.<sup>19</sup> The expedition had been made at the request of the Rev. John Williams who had lost his life the previous year on Eromanga. When the ship arrived at the current site of Noumea, the *natas* took fright and refused to disembark, for fear of being eaten by the cannibals (Crocombe 1968, pp. 86-95; Montrouzier 1870, p. 30).<sup>20</sup>

Subsequently the *Camden* was welcomed at the Isle of Pines by Touru, the chief, and two Samoan evangelists, Noa and Taniela, were left on the island. As the only chief in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands with access to the ‘white God’ Touru’s chiefly power was greatly augmented, but his satisfaction was short-lived. Not content with the *natas* Touru demanded a white missionary, but none was available when the *Camden* returned to the island the following year. To add fuel to the fire, the missionaries intended to leave two *natas* with the people of Touaourou on the southeast coast of the Mainland (*Grande Terre*) Touru had defeated these people in battle, they were his slaves and to provide them with access to the White God would undermine his chiefly authority and lead to conflict.

## **Sandalwood merchants and conflict**

On the second voyage of the *Camden* to the Isle of Pines, a sailor, Edward Foxall, noticed sandalwood growing on the island. The enterprising sailor sold the information to ‘tea-iron-sandalwood’<sup>21</sup> merchants in Sydney, and in secrecy, Messrs Dacre, Jones

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<sup>19</sup> The aim of the LMS was to evangelise ‘Oceanians by Oceanians.’ They established training centres in Samoa and Rarotonga to train the most adept and ardent indigenous students to take ‘the Word’ to the heathen of Melanesia. In these ‘savage islands’ of the Western Pacific, the *natas* who were indigenous catechists were expected to look after themselves, adapt to a foreign country, learn the local language, teach the rudiments of Christianity and prepare the way for white missionaries.

<sup>20</sup> Also *The Hobart Town Mercury* 4 February 1857, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> This circuit provided the Australians with the tea they so desired, the Melanesians with iron, which was a source of amazement for people who only knew the strength of sharpened stone, and the Chinese, who use the fragrant wood as incense for worship and other ceremonies.

and Elgar dispatched two vessels to the island. The first of the sandalwood merchants to arrive was Captain Cheyne, and with gifts of hoop-iron he established friendly relations with Touru, who promised to make his natives cut and load wood onto the trader's boats. For this he was richly rewarded, according to Cheyne:

There is seldom a day passes but what he gets some presents from us, as we find it in our interest to do so for he has great power over the natives, and makes them keep bringing the sandalwood. I generally give him an axe and some Iron Hoop for every boat load of wood that goes off to the ship, as tribute: which makes him anxious to get as many sent off in a day as he can.

(Cited in Shineberg 1967, p. 36).

The sandalwood merchants soon realised that they were very much in the hands of the chief and that there was no possibility of demonstrating white superiority. Touru was in full control and he rapidly accumulated wealth. The news of sandalwood on the Isle of Pines quickly became a *secret de Polichenelle* and other traders soon followed. From the time of Cheyne's first visit on 6 August 1841 and Captain Ebrill's visit of the ill-fated brig *Star* in November 1842, twenty sandalwood merchants had visited the island (Shineberg 1967, pp. 220-222). Competition for the wood and for native labour was intense. The indigenous population became shrewd bargainers and turned rivalry among the traders to their own advantage in the game of supply and demand (Shineberg 1967, p. 150).

An ignorance of local custom and language put the traders at a great disadvantage, and suspicion and conflict soon arose. When an unknown illness began to decimate the native population, 'white sorcery' was suspected, as neither whites nor catechists were affected. In ignorance, the traders ignored native taboos which aimed to stop trade in sandalwood, and an already sensitive situation became more volatile. The innocent *natas* were suspected of collaborating with the traders, and when the chief's house was burnt to the ground fuel was literally added to the fire. Although it was found that that the fire had not been deliberately lit, the truce remained uneasy. By this time the island was awash with iron hoop, axes and beads, and so the law of supply and demand no longer applied: it was more the law of 'might is right.' As the situation worsened, the sandalwood traders left the island, leaving only the unfortunate catechists to face the wrath of Touru.

When Melanesian and European came face-to-face, different customary expectations led to suspicion, mistrust and conflict which at times became violent. Touru hoped that by banning the traders, the death of his people would cease. The plan was unsuccessful and the Kunies continued to die by the score. In the meantime, the catechists had lost credibility and influence. Traders were warned to avoid the Isle of Pines as the situation was grave, but for the crew of the *Star* the message was not received. Twenty-one were massacred, including the Samoan catechists who were making their escape. Vengeance had been exacted on the white man's god. After the attack, valuables were removed, the ship was burnt and the slain were eaten. The *Catherine*, a vessel in the same vicinity, was also attacked and the crew massacred. Ignorance, misunderstanding and a fear of the unknown had dire consequences. It was now a case of fight or flight, and both traders and missionaries chose flight.

Chiefly power in New Caledonia demanded recognition and when challenged the outcome was tragic. The Reverend Murray of the LMS was aware of possibility of problems arising from an ignorance of native custom. In *Missions in Western Polynesia* he wrote: 'Great care is necessary in dealing with a savage people; mistakes and misunderstandings are so apt to arise, and it is often a difficult matter to get them rectified' (Murray 1863, p. 293). Paradoxically, it was the evangelising mission of the LMS that opened the way for the sandalwood traders they abhorred, for the Roman Catholics whom they liked even less and the arch-enemy of the British, the French. Lack of communication, absence of linguistic and customary understanding and the introduction of hitherto unknown contagious diseases led to violent conflict, the demise of European-Melanesian relations, and the avoidance of the island by both evangelists and sandalwood traders.

### **Maré (Nengone): *Natas*, traders and a court case**

When Reverend Murray and several indigenous evangelists approached the island of Maré on 9 April 1841, they were surprised to hear a voice from a nearby canoe calling out: 'I know the true God' (Murray 1863, p. 300). It was the voice of a Tongan, Taufa, who had been lost at sea with seven fellow compatriots and had drifted to Maré. They had been living on the island for about seven years and spoke Nengone, the language of Maré. The Reverend Nihill of the Anglican Melanesian Mission, who lived on the

island and worked on the translation of the Bible into Nengone, mentioned the Tongan population of Maré in an 1855 diary entry:

There are no less than 33 Tonga people at this place counting children, the descendants of a party which went adrift in a canoe. Only one of the original party is alive now, a fine old white-haired woman called Sarai. The others that I have seen are only distinguishable from the Nengone by being a little lighter in colour [...] Bula's (retained) wife is a Tonga girl.<sup>22</sup>

(Nihill 1852, p. 17).

Meeting the Tongans was fortunate for the catechists, Tataio and Taniela, who as a result gained the protection of Yeiw, high Chief of si-Gwahma. Soon, however, the sandalwood merchants followed. The people of Maré adapted rapidly to the market economy, they were astute and applied themselves assiduously to the laws of supply and demand and quickly amassed personal wealth: glass, iron and cotton fabric called *manou*. Sandalwood had no real value for the natives, it was merely for burning, but for the merchants it added to the value of their trade with China. Ships loaded with tea in China for the tea-thirsty Australian colony could now be filled with sandalwood, a saleable commodity, for the return voyage. According to Shineberg, the Chinese market value for sandalwood was up to 100 pounds sterling per ton and some cargos were in excess of 320 tons thus merchants such as Burns, Towns and Paddon were able to amass great wealth (Shineberg 1969, p. 220). Due to the ease of anchorage (Marchand 1911, p. 126)<sup>23</sup> and the protection of the *natas*, trade was conducted exclusively with the si-Gwahma tribe. This increased the power of Yeiw (Dauphiné 1996, p. 9)<sup>24</sup> and ignited the jealousy of rival tribes who sought vengeance, and the capture of a trading ship was seen to be 'a royal road to wealth' (Turner 1861, p. 399). The *Martha* was attacked in April 1842 (Turner 1861, p. 404) at Sereuamiet and the crew was killed. In November 1843, an attack on Paddon's schooner the *Brigand* led to the demise of

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<sup>22</sup> The presence of Tongans on Lifou, Maré and Isle of Pines has also been documented by Tautu'u (2012).

<sup>23</sup> On arrival at Maré the LMS mission ship spent an entire day searching for a suitable anchorage due to the coral cliffs which formed a rampart.

<sup>24</sup> This suggests that the chief was Naisseline. The contacts were more bloody in Maré because this island was less open and, in addition, the sandalwood merchants traded uniquely with the northern chiefdom of Naisseline. Dubois (1969, p. 312) suggests that, at that time, Naisseline was only two or three and not yet a chief. Murray (1845, p. 3) mentions Nesili, son of Jeui the chief at Kuama.



seventeen crew and about fifty natives. The catechists believed that the attacks were due to intense intertribal jealousy and that the traders were the innocent victims of the war-mongering natives. The Reverend Gill describes constant intertribal war on Maré: ‘War was their constant employment and in it they had the greatest delight’ (Gill 1855, p. 9).

Six ships were lost on the Maré coast, the situation was tense. It was in these circumstances that the trigger-happy crew of the *Will o’ the Wisp*, whose superiority was limited to a knowledge of firearms, murdered three natives. The ship’s captain, Captain Lewis, was brought to trial in Sydney’s Supreme Court where, according to the Judge:

Even if the Jury should be of the opinion that there had been no actual necessity for the killing of these men as a measure of self-defence; still if there was fair and reasonable grounds for the creation of such a belief in the mind of the prisoner, he would still be justified [...] it should appear plain not only to Englishmen, but to the islanders themselves, that the act was justified, for if this was not the case, most sanguinary measures in retaliation might be anticipated.<sup>25</sup>

(Sydney Morning Herald, 8 July 1851).

The Jury found the Captain not guilty. Twenty months later the *Lucy-Ann* was attacked at the site of the *Will o’ the Wisp* murders. In the view of Captain J. E. Erskine<sup>26</sup> and the missionaries, this massacre was a justifiable reprisal. For Robert Towns, the owner of the ship, it vindicated Captain Lewis’ belief that the Nonte-Kuruba tribe intended to take a European ship for instant gratification, and when the attempt on the *Will o’ the Wisp* failed a subsequent successful attempt was made on the *Lucy-Ann* (Shineberg 1967, p. 205).

Conflict was multi-layered. It extended beyond trader–native and intertribal combat to Christian tribe–heathen tribe hostility. When two natives escaped from their heathen tribe to join the enemy Christian tribe of Naisseline, they were chased and massacred. They became the first New Caledonian Christian martyrs (Marchand 1911, p. 129).

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<sup>25</sup> A similar logic was applied by Maitre Semur in Noumea in 1986, following the Hienghène massacre.

<sup>26</sup> John Elphinstone Erskine (1802-1887) was a naval officer whose account of his voyage around the Western Pacific, *Journal of a Cruise among the Islands of the Western Pacific*, was published in 1853.

Naisseline, who tried to protect the two during the attack, escaped injury. His life was spared in recognition of a service which that he had previously rendered to the enemy tribe. Thus, customary justice was honoured.

In 1852 while the Reverend Dr George Selwyn, the Anglican Bishop of the Melanesian Mission, travelled around the islands of the Western Pacific, his colleague, the Reverend William Nihill and a Maori helper, Henry Taratoa, stayed on the island of Maré. At Netché, in the tribe of si-Gwahma, they found that Polynesian evangelists from Samoa and Rarotonga had established three mission stations on the island. In an agreement struck between the LMS and the Melanesian mission in 1848, it had been decided that the Melanesian mission would be responsible for the evangelisation of the Loyalty Group (Nihill 1852, p. 17). Both Protestant missions trained natives as teachers in order that Oceanians would be evangelised by Oceanians. Bishop Selwyn recruited young people from the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia, trained them at his college in Auckland and returned them to teach their own people. The aim of the mission was not to make Melanesians Englishmen but Christians: ‘to think out the meaning and attitude of the Melanesian mind and character—not to suppress, but educate it.’<sup>27</sup>

It seems incongruous that, with this ambition, natives were educated in a foreign country where it was necessary for them to read, write and speak in the language of the missionary, to dress like the missionary and to live and behave like the missionary. The LMS, on the other hand, trained Rarotongans and Samoans at theological seminaries in their homelands. Once trained, these native teachers or *natas* were taken by the LMS mission ship to the islands of the Western Pacific. Despite their differences, the Anglicans, LMS teachers and natives worked together and were well received by the natives:

Every night we translate for about an hour and a half [...]. The natives supply us with food in abundance, yams etc., at all times, fowls very frequently, pork occasionally. They treat us as they do their own chiefs attending to our wishes, saluting us etc., and their teachableness is shown by the congregation on Sunday amounting to a thousand.  
(Nihill 1852, p. 21).

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<sup>27</sup> Letter written to his father by John Patteson 1866 (cited in Garrett 1982, p. 185).

This arrangement proved to be so successful that the Reverend Nihill and his family remained on Maré for two years until Bishop Selwyn decided to cede the Loyalty Islands to the LMS because of their ‘priority of occupation’. The striking of this *entente religieuse* avoided unnecessary and costly duplication of limited mission resources, as well as sparing native converts the unedifying spectacle of competing Christian creeds. It was agreed that the Reverend Nihill would leave the island when LMS missionaries were found. When, in October 1854, LMS missionaries Creagh and Jones arrived, Nihill continued to work with them while waiting for a passage from the island, but he died of tuberculosis before the ship arrived.

### **Lifou (Drehu): A pernicky Scot, conflict and expulsion**

Lifou, the largest of the Loyalty Islands, was divided into three tribal districts, each with a High Chief: Bula at Lossi in the south, Zeoula at Gaitcha in the centre and Ukeneso at Wet in the north. At the time of arrival of the LMS catechists, these tribes were almost constantly at war (Delbos 1993, p. 111). In 1842, two catechists, Pao and Zekaraia, arrived from Maré. When Zekaraia apostatised, Pao, who became known as the ‘apostle of Lifou’,<sup>28</sup> was the sole catechist on the island until 1845 when he was joined by two other teachers. Fortunately, Pao, a man of indomitable perseverance and dauntless courage, became *enehmu* to the respected blind High Chief Bula.<sup>29</sup> Tribal rivalry was intense, and Ukeneso resented Bula’s appropriation of the catechists who, he believed, were responsible for Bula’s victory in battle. The death of Bula in 1847 and the emergence of various contenders for the chieftainship embroiled the whole of Lossi in internecine warfare. Fighting, as well as an epidemic in 1846 that decimated the tribe, made the evangelists’ position untenable. In the interest of self-preservation, they were forced to abandon the mission and flee to Maré. It was not until 1851 that the teachers returned to Lifou to continue to prepare the way for the long-awaited ‘white missionary’. The catechists succeeded in extending their influence in Gaitcha and to

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<sup>28</sup> Pao, or Fao, remained on Lifou until his death in 1863. He is buried at Wé (Delbos 1993, p. 111).

<sup>29</sup> Also part of Bula’s household was a seaman, James Reece, who had been left on Lifou in 1844 by Captain Lewis. Reece married a woman of Lifou and remained on the island until Bula’s death when internecine warfare drove him to Maré (Shineberg 1967, p. 65).

some extent in the north by converting the chief of Chépénéhé, Wainya,<sup>30</sup> to Christianity.

For Ukeneso, the teachers were the cause of his defeat in battle and as Protestantism gained ground he looked to find a counterbalancing force. Marist priests were already established on Ouvéa and it was to them that Ukeneso turned. He hoped that they would arrive with French military reinforcements to punish those disobedient subjects who had accepted the catechists' gospel. Messages between Bazit on Ouvéa, who had become Catholic, and Ukeneso led to the arrival on Lifou of three Catholic priests, Fathers Palazy, Fabre<sup>31</sup> and Bernard. They arrived in 1858 by French warship under the command of Jules Testard.<sup>32</sup> During the reign of Louis-Philippe, warships had been placed at the disposal of Marist missionaries for the development of 'civilising missions'. In the face of French military power, it was as an act of political expediency that many of Fao's converts became Roman Catholics.

Before the Marists' arrival on Lifou, Bishop Selwyn had conducted several of his winter schools on the island but, when the LMS missionaries arrived, it was decided that a united Christian front should be presented. The British missionaries were anxious to avoid conflict between the different denominations of the Christian Church and subsequent division and antagonism within the native community. As Bishop Selwyn put it: 'We must not give a divided testimony to those whom we desire to represent the unity of the Godhead' (cited in Davidson 2000, pp. 19-20). To promote this solidarity, the Protestants decided to carve up the southwestern Pacific. Each denomination had an area of responsibility: the Methodists, Fiji and Tonga; the LMS Samoa, the Cook Islands and New Caledonia; and the Presbyterians, the New Hebrides: 'There is no rivalry between us. Each does its own work as far as possible without interfering with that of the others' (cited in Davidson 2000, p. 20). Catholics were excluded from these considerations, and when Marist priests decided to settle in areas that had been commandeered by the Protestants, the foundations of public tranquillity rattled.

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<sup>30</sup> Wainya's wife, Mary Hennessy, was the daughter of an Irishman and had been brought up in the islands (Macfarlane 1873, p. 149).

<sup>31</sup> Fr Jean-Baptiste Fabre remained on Lifou for twenty-five years (Delbos 1993, p. 111).

<sup>32</sup> In the opinion of Testard there was no place for the Kanak in the colony: 'Le Calédonien est intelligent, mais c'est un monstre de perversité ; il faut commencer par détruire cette population si l'on veut vivre en sécurité dans le pays. Le seul moyen qui paraisse un peu praticable pour en venir à bout, serait de faire des battues comme pour les loups en France.' (Cited in Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 12).

In 1859, shortly after the Marists, Reverends Baker and Macfarlane of the LMS arrived. However, as Samuel Macfarlane explains, arriving after the Marists did not bother the LMS: 'It is true that the priests were a year before us in person, but as they are centuries behind us in principle, we had not much to fear'. (Macfarlane 1873, p. 62). By this time the Polynesian catechists had evangelised much of the island; built comfortable plastered cottages, and chapels were ready for worship. The indigenous population's intention that a white missionary would consolidate chiefly power was perhaps not understood by Samuel Macfarlane, who retained a notion of white superiority: 'even if a missionary did act as a kind of king over the natives, is it, I ask, a very great calamity for these poor ignorant natives to be governed by an intelligent, Christian gentleman?' (Macfarlane 1873, p. 22). It is true that this 'superiority' was not shared by all. According to Bishop Selwyn, 'to go among the heathens as an equal and a brother is far more profitable than to risk that subtle kind of self-righteousness, which creeps into the mission work' (cited in Davidson 2000, p. 20). Selwyn's idea of the ideal missionary was, however, someone who had been through the British public-school system, 'preferably Eton', and was university educated. In accordance with these ideals, John Coleridge Patteson was recruited in 1854 to establish a training school on Norfolk Island.

Macfarlane, with his notion of grandeur, was nevertheless a source of inspiration. He dug wells to obtain potable water on an island where there was no fresh surface water; he procured a horse from Samoa to enable him to travel more easily across the island; he improvised horseshoes by bending iron; he constructed buildings to withstand hurricanes and wallpapered the walls of his home and grew flowers in his front garden. In the belief that language is power, he set about mastering the local language, Drehu, reading sermons in that language within four months and preaching in it by the time he had spent seven months on the island. He had hymn books and primers printed in the local language and a seminary for the training of native teachers established at Chépénéhé. Macfarlane had welcomed Catholics to festivities such as the consecration of a chapel but when the Marists built a church in close proximity to the established Protestant Church in Chépénéhé the bond of friendship was broken and conflict erupted.

Differences between the French administration, the Marists, and the LMS mission surfaced when a British ship arrived at the island containing crates of books which had been printed by the Reverend Creagh on the LMS printing press on Maré. The books

were written in Drehu, the local language of Lifou. Macfarlane received an official letter from the Governor instructing him to stop teaching in the local language and to stop the distribution of books written in Drehu. A decree published in the local press, *Le Moniteur*, in October 1863 banned, from that date, the use of native languages in schools. For the LMS mission this was a blow as some of the schools had been in taught in the local language for twenty years. The decree favoured the Marists who taught in French. As Macfarlane boldly put it, ‘the cold freezing hand of despotism and Popery had laid its iron grasp upon what the natives esteemed highly and held dearly’ (Macfarlane 1873, p. 132).

A barrage of letters from the Governor informed the missionaries that, as subjects of a friendly nation, they could stay on the island but if this option was chosen, all land was now owned by the French Administration and would need to be repurchased. In addition, missionaries who wished to continue to evangelise could only do so with the approval of his Majesty, the Emperor of France. Lifou was in a state of siege, and the missionaries were incarcerated, as it was suspected that Protestantism was the Trojan Horse of Britain. This was denied by Macfarlane who insisted that the missionaries’ interest was in spreading the gospel and not nationality. This meant little to the soldiers who went about destroying, burning and plundering Protestant houses and property in what became a war on religion.

Undeterred, Macfarlane embarked on a ‘paper war’ waged through Noumea, Sydney, London and Paris. Letters were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>33</sup> and in the English press. After some six months of correspondence a memorial<sup>34</sup> addressed to the Emperor, Napoleon III, bore fruit. The Emperor’s reply granted the missionaries personal freedom, the return of mission property and freedom to worship. The anti-clerical Governor resisted what he saw as British *imperium in imperio* and, in an attempt to stop Macfarlane, decided that the ‘freedom to worship’ approved by Napoleon did not include the distribution of literature in the native dialect or the

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<sup>33</sup> In Sydney, he relied upon the support of Pitt St. Congregational laymen, the proprietor of the Sydney Morning Herald, John Fairfax, and the editor of the paper, Rev. John West, a Congregational minister. Letters published in the paper written by Rev. Murray drew attention to events in the Loyalty Islands.

<sup>34</sup> This memorial was signed by Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury; Henry Pelham, 3rd Earl of Chichester; A.C. Lonson, Bishop of London; Arthur. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster; Warren. S. Hale; Lord Mayor of London; several Aldermen of the City of London, as well as church dignitaries (Macfarlane 1873, p. 196).

reopening of schools or of the seminary. Another six months of correspondence between Governor Guillain and Macfarlane resulted in approval being granted to distribute printed material and to reopen the seminary but not the schools. If the idea was to keep the English out and make the islands French, there was no resistance. Macfarlane's cynical political analysis is quite clear on the subject:

The idea of keeping the English out of the barren rocks that compose the Loyalty group is quite a farce. Our valuable colonies show that 'John Bull' is a little more ambitious in his selection of territory, and can well afford to allow his chivalrous neighbour the undisturbed possession of such islands.

(Macfarlane 1873, p. 214).

Persecution continued on all of the Loyalty Islands. On Maré the LMS missionaries Creagh and Jones continued to work, despite the Governor insisting that they had no right to live in a French Colony without a residence permit. The Reverend Jones argued that there had been no official annexation of the Loyalty Islands and he queried the ability of one country to take possession of another by simply publishing the act in a newspaper. According to the missionaries, the French flag had never been raised in the Loyalty Group and hoisting the flag ten years earlier in New Caledonia did not constitute possession of the group. Subsequently, in 1864, the flag was raised, with the consequence that LMS schools were shut and missionaries and catechists were incarcerated.

### **Ouvéa (Iaai): Catholic vs Protestant, Church vs State**

Violence was perpetrated on multiple fronts. Shortly before his death in 1856, Weneguei, with the help of Henry Burns, a merchant who had settled on the island, brought two teachers from Maré to Ouvéa. In the game of chiefly politics, the aim was to gain an advantage over the rival tribe. The two powerful chiefdoms were in constant conflict to gain total control of the island, and in 1857 when two Catholic priests, Jean Bernard and François Palazy, arrived in the northern chiefdom of Nekelo, it was suspected that the tribal battlelines would be drawn. Father Bernard was chosen for the mission, as he had previously spent several years on Wallis Island and spoke the

language of Nekelo's tribe.<sup>35</sup> Nekelo, however, refused to receive these 'men in black'. Experience suggested that a French warship could signal a possible French invasion with loss of life and land. Bazit was not so reticent, and in his struggle for power the priests were a worthy investment. After establishing friendly relations with Bazit, the priests journeyed south where they received a hostile reception. Eventually, with the aid of a French warship and Commandant Testard, who was anxious to limit British influence on the island, the Marists won over Nekelo in the north and Doumai in the south. For Doumai, this enabled him to divorce himself from Weneguei and forge links with his confreres, the northern Polynesian chiefs Nekelo and Beka. Fayaoué and Wadrilla, with the encouragement of Maré catechists and Henry Burns, remained Protestant. In the north, Ohua, the chief of Ognat, influenced by his Lifou in-laws, accepted Protestantism and built a church in close proximity to that of the Catholics. This aroused the fury of Bazit who, with his warriors, set out on a course of murder, pillage and plunder, setting fire to the houses and church of the Ognat tribe and forcing the Protestants to seek refuge in the *grotte d'Ouvéa*.<sup>36</sup> These incidents will remain relevant to New Caledonian history and, in particular, underpin some elements of the tragic massacre of 1988 (see Chapter 5).

Finally, the Protestants fled to Wadrilla, thus beginning a long and sad exile.<sup>37</sup> For thirty-four years, the tribe lived in exile as refugees with the Wadrilla-Fayaoué tribe. Twice they returned to their tribal homeland only to be driven back to their southern confreres. The extreme volatility and violence of these early encounters left an indelible impression on the Gossanah tribe which, almost one hundred years later, found itself an unwilling participant in the bitter events of 1988-1989 and once again isolated from the rest of the island, and the outside world. Others, led by Wadgylia of Weneki, called the 'Cromwell of Ouvéa'<sup>38</sup> by the Catholic missionaries, were opposed to both new

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<sup>35</sup> Immigrants from Wallis retained their Polynesian language, Faga-Uvea, whereas the tribe originating from the mainland (Fayaoué tribe) kept their Melanesian language, Iaaï (Person 1953, p. 34).

<sup>36</sup> In the region of the tragic massacre of 1988.

<sup>37</sup> It was not until 1884 with the death of Imwone that his widow and young son returned to Weneki to reclaim their personal effects. Bazit would not, however, relinquish their land. This Protestant tribe, christened 'Hosanah' or 'Gossanah' was presided over by Imwone's son who converted to Catholicism. In 1989, after the Ouvéa massacre and the assassinations that followed, the Imwone chiefdom was officially recognised. According to Guiart this was not the first time the tribe of Imwone had been in exile: 'À l'époque des premiers contacts européens, Imwone et les siens ont été exilés en Grande Terre, à Houaïlou. Revenus, ils se sont faits protestants et ont été exilés, de nouveau, en conclusion de la guerre civile entre catholiques et protestants.' (Cited in Plenel & Rollat 1988, pp. 42-43).

<sup>38</sup> So called because he plotted to depose his chief, Imwone.



religions. Tension on the island increased and the priests, fearing further conflict, requested military reinforcement from the mainland. When LMS missionary Samuel Ella arrived at Fayaoué in 1864, antagonism throughout the Loyalty Group was extreme: Protestants and Catholics; French and British, and rival tribes were at war. Disembarkation was impossible. It was only after being stranded at sea and retreating for three months to the New Hebrides that the Reverend Ella was finally granted residency on Ouvéa. Conditions applied, and he was banned from pursuing any evangelistic functions.

Ella was drawn into the paper war when his station at Fayaoué was attacked by the military. He complained to France of the draconian behaviour of the Governor, Charles Guillain, and of the part played by the Priests Bernard and Barriol<sup>39</sup> in attacks on Protestants. Both Marists were withdrawn. Three months later Guillain<sup>40</sup> agreed to allow Ella to work as a missionary on the condition that religious conflict was avoided.

In June 1865, Guillain raised the French flag on Ouvéa in the expectation that with the application of French law the island would return to order. He divided the island into three districts and appointed Catholic chiefs for each district. The Catholic chiefs limited religious freedom for the Protestants, and enemy tribes, which represented opposing religions, remained on a collision course. In response to a battery of correspondence sent by the Reverend Ella to the Governor of New Caledonia, the British Government and His Majesty, the Emperor of France, a Commission of Inquiry was set up to hear the missionaries' grievances in relation to the unjust, oppressive administration of the Loyalty Islands. It was only after a second Imperial Commission of Inquiry was held into religious persecution that the despotic commandant of the Loyalty Islands and Governor Guillain were returned to France. Land taken from the Protestants by the commandant was returned, and with the defeat and imprisonment of Napoleon III in Germany, the military base was removed from the Loyalties. Justice was seen to be done.

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<sup>39</sup> Fr Barriol replaced Fr Palazy in July 1858 (Dauphiné 1996, p. 18).

<sup>40</sup> Guillain was by now more circumspect. He had been reprimanded for his brutal intervention in Lifou. Preventing the spread of British influence while not being seen to favour the Marists, who were in a state of open warfare with the natives on mainland New Caledonia, required great diplomacy.

## **Multi-layered conflict on *Grande Terre*: Nata–Kanak, Marist–Kanak, Marist–British merchant**

Fear of cannibalism thwarted the first attempt to place *natas* on *Grande Terre*, and it was not until a year later in 1841 that two Polynesian teachers, the Samoan Taniela, and the Rarotongan Mataio, began work. On its annual voyage around the islands the mission-ship *Camden* replaced these first catechists with Ta'unga, a Rarotongan, and two Samoan teachers, Noa and Taniela. They were welcomed by the son of the local chief, Uadota,<sup>41</sup> but among the catechists there was dissension. Ta'unga disputed the popularity of Samoans, writing: 'A few people began being friendly towards me but not to those two Samoans because they were bad tempered and the people were not attracted to them.'<sup>42</sup>

During these early years of the mission epidemics raged, causing widespread death among the indigenous population. Transmissible diseases such as measles, smallpox, dysentery, influenza, syphilis, tuberculosis and leprosy have generally been cited as being responsible. The indigenous population, ignorant of the transmission of microbial disease, believed death was the work of the teachers and their god Jehovah. In reality, sandalwood merchants were a more likely source of disease but they did not dispute the natives' claim. They were happy to point the finger at the catechists to divert attention from themselves. Touru, chief of the Isle of Pines, took action. He had effectively removed catechists from his island and sought to rid the land of the Tuauru of them also. To unleash an attack on mainland catechists provided Touru with two possible advantages: it would stop the deaths of his people and demonstrate his suzerainty over the Tuauru<sup>43</sup>. Nathotha, chief of the Tuauru, refused to stain an axe with the blood of the catechists (Person 1961, p. 75) who had, by their presence, liberated him from the despotic chief of Kunie. Such insubordination enraged Touru who set out with twenty canoes of armed warriors to seek vengeance. When they arrived on the mainland,

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<sup>41</sup> Sometimes spelt Wadoka (Garrett 1982, p. 190).

<sup>42</sup> According to Gunson, the Rarotongan teachers considered themselves as the senior evangelists, having helped to evangelise Samoa. On the other hand, the Samoans opined themselves to be more cultured. They were described by the British missionaries as 'the French of the South Seas' (Shineberg 1968, p. 40).

<sup>43</sup> Guiart (2012, p. 94) believes that the missionaries of the LMS panicked unnecessarily in removing the evangelists from the mainland and that the arrivals from the Isle of Pines would not fight the tribe which had welcomed the catechists, due to familial alliances.

Ta'unga greeted them with priestly calm. This act of courage was admired by Touru and the missionaries' lives were saved. The LMS missionaries Murray and Turner, however, feared for the safety of the Polynesian teachers and in 1845 decided to withdraw them from *Grande Terre* and relocate them on Maré.

Indigenous deaths from unknown causes during the period of early European contact caused conflict. Clearly, introduced disease for which there was no pre-existing immunity (or treatment)<sup>44</sup> contributed to the ever-increasing death toll. Undoubtedly, death was multifactorial. Massacres of ships' crews, made possible by the introduction of firearms, provided an unprecedented increase in the supply of human flesh, which in a cannibal population, could have led to prion disease epidemics.<sup>45</sup> Shipborne rats introduced the bubonic plague. On arrival in New Caledonia, George Griffith<sup>46</sup> was bombarded with plague warnings (Griffith 1901, p. 97) and mosquitoes:

When I went to bed, I shut the long windows opening onto the balcony to keep the smell out. I also shut in the heat and some odd millions of mosquitoes, any of which, according to popular belief, might have had thousands of microbes concealed about its person.

(Griffith 1901, p. 101).

In their correspondence, the Marist priests frequently mentioned mosquitoes. Br Germanique in a letter to Brs François and Louis-Marie describes a night spent with mosquitoes in a village between Pouebo and Hienghène: 'The natives gave us a hut to lodge in, but it was impossible to close one's eyes for the mosquitoes.' (Clisby 142).<sup>47</sup> Fr Rougeyron in his report on New Caledonia to Fr Colin complained of the deathly bite of mosquitoes. Everywhere there was a hint of cannibalism:

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<sup>44</sup> Rev. Nihill (1852, p. 31) describes illness on Maré and the medicine chest of the day which included arrowroot, ginger, an emetic and Dover's Powder (Ipecac and Opium) which would provide little opposition to viral or secondary bacterial infections.

<sup>45</sup> Gajdusek won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1976 for his work on transmissible spongiform encephalitis among the cannibalistic Fore people of Eastern New Guinea.

<sup>46</sup> George Griffith, 1857-1906, British journalist, author and explorer.

<sup>47</sup> Also De La Hautière (1869, p. 34): 'Les indigènes pour échapper, la nuit, durant le sommeil, aux piqures des moustiques, entretiennent du feu dans l'intérieur de leurs habitations, et parviennent, au moyen fumée, à chasser ces hôtes importunes.' See also Garnier (1991, p. 45).

The traveller has no sooner breathed the beautiful air of New Caledonia than thousands of mosquitoes, also known as marengouins, attack him and suck him like leeches but the bite is very much different; it is fatal. (Girard 0533).

The living conditions of natives were conducive to the spread of newly introduced disease. Melanesians slept huddled together in smoke-filled huts, and this would have facilitated the transfer of microbes by droplet infection. Despite popular belief, epidemics did not spare the Europeans. Fr Rougeyron in a letter to Fr Vidal, 1 September 1853, describes the death of Bishop Douarre as follows:

There appeared in our island one of those frightful epidemics which carried off a very great proportion of the population. The Bishop fell victim and it took three days for the scourge to take him to the tomb. (Girard 1276).

The abnormally high mortality rate of missionaries' children is well documented (Lal & Fortune 2000, p. 186). However, in a comparative demographic study, the death rates may not have been as disproportionate as has been suggested. The European population of New Caledonia in 1860 was only 432 (O'Reilly 1953, p. 30); at the same time the Melanesian population was estimated at around 60,000 (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, p. 32). Shineberg, in an examination of the demographic history of New Caledonia, concludes that census figures for Melanesians in the nineteenth century are 'worthless.' She disputes the 'catastrophic decline' and imminent extinction of the native population following European contact. The theory of the 'fatal impact' provided the administration and settlers with two advantages. Firstly, a decline in Kanak numbers would reduce their need for land which would free up additional land for settlers. Secondly, the catastrophic decline of the Kanak justified the introduction of overseas labourers who were found to be more reliable and more agreeable.

On *Grande Terre*, the figures were rubbery. Captain Cook on his voyage of discovery in 1774 describes the population:

To judge merely by the numbers of the natives we saw every day, one might think the island very populous but I believe that, at this time, the inhabitants were collected from all parts on our account. Mr Pickergill observed that down the coast to the west there are but few people; and

we knew they came daily from the other side of the land, over the mountains, to visit us.  
(Williams 1997, p. 261).

The consensus is that for the first hundred years after discovery, demographic figures which were, and continue to be bandied around, are merely estimates and lack any authority (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, pp. 32-35). It was admitted in 1866 that ‘il n’était pas possible de donner le chiffre, même approximatif, de la population indigène’.<sup>48</sup> The figures from the Loyalty Islands were kept by the missionaries and provide a more accurate idea of the demographic trend. These figures are interesting as they indicate that the population of the Loyalty Islands remained relatively stable despite disease and considerable mobility (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, p. 35). The death toll was nevertheless of concern to the natives and a cause of further conflict (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, p. 35).

### **Conflict: British vs French**

Concern of the possibility of a French takeover of New Caledonia was aired in Australia as early as 1842. The prospect of having a foreign power on a large island on its doorstep was of major concern to Australia. Although Britain showed little interest in the annexation, the Australians and New Zealanders realised the benefit of such an acquisition. A year before the French marines and Marist missionaries arrived in New Caledonia, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a prospectus drawn up by a Police Magistrate, Major Sullivan, entitled ‘A prospectus for forming a British Colony on the Island of New Caledonia’:

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Extraits des archives du Secrétariat colonial de la Nouvelle-Calédonie’, *Le Moniteur*, 30 September 1866 (cited in Shineberg 1983, p. 34).

There can be no doubt that it would be highly advantageous both to this colony and to the mother country were a British colony established in New Caledonia, and the recent intelligence that the French have taken possession of the Marquesas, renders such a step almost necessary [...] the establishment of an important sea-port in the direct line of communication to China and India, whenever the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans may be joined at the Isthmus of Darien.

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 August 1842, p. 2).

## **Marists at Balade**

In 1843, the Marist priests Monsignor Douarre, Fathers Rougeyron and Viard and Brothers Taragnat and Marmoiton arrived at Balade in the north-east of New Caledonia on the French battleship *Bucéphale*. They were welcomed by Paiama, high chief of Balade and the French flag was raised by Commander Julien Laferrière, to a twenty-one gun salute. The country, by virtue of flag and gun, was given to God and to France (De Salinis 1892, p. 17). Paradoxically, the missionaries, despite their reliance upon the marines, were reluctant to keep the flag which they believed might compromise the spiritual nature of the mission. In the absence of French inhabitants on the island, the priests agreed to keep the flag, providing that the government would take the necessary measures for annexation within six months. This was not to be.

King Louis-Philippe, not wanting to add to the friction between Britain and France caused by the Pritchard affair in Tahiti,<sup>49</sup> ordered Commander Le Comte to retrieve the national flag and return it to France. At the time, the British–French relationship was cordial; the Minister of External Affairs, François Guizot, had struck an *entente cordiale* with his British counterpart, Lord Aberdeen. In addition, Louis-Philippe was related by marriage to both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.<sup>50</sup> As fate would have it, the naval ship *La Seine*, which was sent to retrieve the flag, struck a reef and was lost,

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<sup>49</sup> While the British missionary and Consul to Tahiti, George Pritchard, was in England making arrangements for Tahiti to become a British protectorate, Admiral Dupetit-Thouars, against the wishes of Queen Pomare, took possession. French-British relations soured as a result and for three years Tahiti was at war with France.

<sup>50</sup> Louis-Philippe's daughter Louise was married to Leopold 1 King of the Belgians, the uncle of both Victoria and Albert, who were first cousins.

leaving some three hundred shipwrecked sailors in the care of the struggling Marist mission at Balade. Fr Rougeyron wrote of this event to Fr Cholleton:

You know of course that France had really taken possession of our island and that the flag has been raised. Today it flutters no more. The ship, the Seine, which was shipwrecked, was given orders to come to New Caledonia to take it away.

(Girard 0528).

During the early nineteenth century, the fortunes of the Catholic Church in France had waxed and waned. The privileges previously held by the Church had been withdrawn. Catholicism was no longer the religion of the State and so the struggling mission received little support. Louis-Philippe promised naval support for the mission but for twenty months, the small band of Marists remained isolated with dwindling food supplies. The Marists felt that they had been abandoned by France and were fearful of the advance of Protestant 'heresy.' Missions of the LMS were spreading throughout the Pacific, and the possibility of a British claim on the strategically-placed island seemed likely. Several sandalwood traders had already established warehouses and refuelling depots in the area and Bishop Selwyn of the Melanesian Mission had been welcomed by Bourate at Hienghène. In an attempt to reverse the decision to abandon French annexation of the island, Bishop Douarre travelled to France to plead with the King and his Ministers (De Salinis 1892, p. 44), but his pleas were ignored. It was not until the Revolution of 1848 when Louis-Philippe abdicated and Napoleon III came to power that a decision was made in favour of annexation.

The small band of priests at Balade with no knowledge of local custom was at enormous risk. Intertribal rivalry was intense and soon jealousy turned to hostility. When Pouebo was chosen as the site for a second mission station rather than Hienghène the situation became untenable. Bourate, the High Chief of Hienghène, was anti-Catholic and anti-French and he felt that he had been deceived by the Marists (Dauphiné 1996, p. 51). His dealings with British sandalwood traders, Richards, Towns and Paddon, who were established in the area, had guaranteed him power. In 1843, the year the Marists settled at Balade, Bourate visited Sydney with Richards and in 1848, he returned as the guest of Robert Towns. In Sydney, he was feted by the press and referred to as the 'King of New Caledonia' (Dauphiné 1996, p. 46). Gifts were showered upon him: horses, a saddle, bridle, spurs, pigs and an accordion. Bourate was

able to converse in English and had adopted English manners, which put him at an advantage when dealing with the sandalwood traders who had settled in Hienghène. Nevertheless, Bourate was anxious to improve his position of power and reap any benefit the Marists may bestow.<sup>51</sup> On 27 August 1846, Bourate sold a parcel of land to Bishop Douarre with the intention that this land would be used for a mission station. When it came to found the promised mission, Father Grange, the Priest chosen to open the mission refused to venture so far from Balade alone. Father Grange was, according to Father Gougou, ill-suited for the mission:

Le père Grange, qui avait à l'égard des indigènes une réaction raciste de haine et de mépris, se montrait [dur et déloyal envers eux]. Un jour il chassa à coup de pied un chef qui souriait pendant le catéchisme. De tels gestes ne s'oublent pas.<sup>52</sup>

(Cited in Person 1961, p. 112).

Subsequently Father Grange abandoned the mission and returned to France.

Famine, epidemics, and attacks on the mission by Bourate made life increasingly difficult for the priests. When the mission buildings were set on fire and Brother Blaise Marmoitan was speared and then clubbed to death, the priests fled to Pouebo. In July 1847, the mission house at Pouebo was also attacked and burnt to the ground. For the priests, there was now little choice other than to move to Hienghène. The priests suspected that Bourate might have instigated the attacks on the Balade and Pouebo missions either as 'payback' or as strategic power play. By driving the priests to Hienghène he may have hoped in one fell swoop to increase his power in the north relative to that of his rivals, the chiefs of Balade and Pouebo (Girard 0663). However, the priests, wary of this despotic tyrant, the 'Tiger of Hienghène',<sup>53</sup> remained besieged for a month at Pouebo. Miraculously, the French ship the *Brillante*, with eighty sailors, appeared and managed to evacuate the mission. Before leaving *Grande Terre*, the

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<sup>51</sup> Reports vary. De la Hautière (1869, p. 88) writes: 'Ce chef comprit sans peine que tout son prestige, reposant sur les usages, et surtout les superstitions des siens tomberait rapidement s'il tolérait la présence au milieu de la tribu, des Révérends Pères Maristes.'

<sup>52</sup> When the Balade mission was eventually abandoned and the priests were evacuated to Sydney, Father Grange left the mission and returned to France, not before humiliating and slandering his colleagues (Person 1961, p. 118).

<sup>53</sup> 'Son amour de la chair humaine était proverbial, et la case de ses ancêtres était ornée sur toutes les faces, des crânes de ses victimes' (De La Hautière 1869, p. 88).



priests destroyed their buildings which were being used to trap passing ships. The natives dressed in priestly attire:

[...] a violet soutane to look like a Bishop and [...] black soutanes; they all carried books in their hands, pretending to recite their breviary whilst strolling to and fro on the terrace [...] so as to deceive.

(Girard 0663).

Rougeyron, in a report on the mission, described this design of the natives on unsuspecting ships (Girard 0651).

Plagued by violent conflict, the priests left Pouebo and Balade and travelled to Saint Vincent to open a mission. Due to a lack of fresh water and insufficient arable land, this mission was aborted, as was an attempt to establish a mission on Ouvéa because of the 'unfavourable disposition of the inhabitants' (Delbos 1993, p. 76). Finally, the group of Marists settled on the Isle of Pines.

Monsignor Douarre was surprised to find his Anglican counterpart from New Zealand, Bishop Selwyn, on the Isle of Pines. The British Bishop, old Etonian and Cambridge don, was on a quixotic mission to recruit suitable islanders<sup>54</sup> for his training college in Auckland. From his arrival in the South Seas the Bishop had determined that he would never interfere with other missions. Christianity should, be believed, present a united front. Neither would he force English manners upon the natives, his intention being that native pastors retain their culture and custom and be trained to organise their own churches.<sup>55</sup>

Selwyn believed that white missionaries should be 'white corks supporting a black net'. Monsignor Douarre made it clear that he would prefer not to have protestant competition and the Anglican bishop, 'extremely courteous and conciliatory, according to the custom of his church, did not insist and left the field clear for the Catholics' (Delbos 1993, p. 81). He thus presented a united Christian front and cooperative missionary venture.

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<sup>54</sup> 'Bishop Selwyn, like all great men, was a good physiognomist.' (Coleridge 1987, p. 8).

<sup>55</sup> The first students at St Johns were Loyalty Islanders: George Siapo, Isaka Valu, Waderulu, George Apale and John Thol. Females were also recruited: Wasatrutru and Wabisane, the wife of George Siapo and daughter of high chief Bula (cited in Davidson 2000, p. 23-27).

Monsignor Douarre went back to Hienghène in 1848 but this attempt also failed and the priests returned to the Isle of Pines. According to Montrouzier, the reason for the failure of the Marist mission in Hienghène was due to the British who frequented that anchorage and threatened not to return with gifts of hatchets, guns and red cloth if French Catholic priests established a mission there. The Marists returned to Pouebo in May 1853 on the advice of Brother Taragnat who, while assigned to act as an interpreter for Viscount Harcourt on the *Alcmène*, had been told by the natives of their wish for the Priests to return. At Balade, the site of the original Marist mission, Febvrier-Despointes on 24 September 1853 took possession of the country for France.

Tardy de Montravel on arrival in the northeast found that the Pouebo tribe had accepted the French, but that Bourate was still antagonistic. To counter this resistance, de Montravel returned to Hienghène on 5 May 1854 with two warships the *Prony* and the *Constantine*, and two hundred armed men disembarked with four mountain howitzers to impress and intimidate the defiant natives (cited in Dauphiné 1996, p. 60). Despite this display of power by the French, intertribal relations continued to deteriorate until Bourate, who was considered to be responsible for all francophobic behaviour, was taken prisoner and exiled to Tahiti. Various pleas to commandant Testard, including one from Bishop Selwyn for the release of the chief, failed.

Continued tribal unrest in the north during September 1859 resulted in further military intervention and the despatch of three warships the *Styx*, *Thisbé* and *Calédonienne*. One hundred and seventy armed soldiers disembarked at Hienghène and during a week of warfare,<sup>56</sup> several dozen lives were lost, dwellings were burnt and crops were destroyed. Sailors and sandalwood merchants were banned from Hienghène. It was only after the arrival of the anti-clerical Governor Guillain in 1862 that communication with the township resumed and Bourate was able to return to his homeland. The French punitive strategy of sanguinary violence and exile had paid off, the wild beast of 1857 had been tamed, and he became a loyal ally of Governor Guillain.

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<sup>56</sup> Of this event there are differing reports from Governor Saisset. On 8 September 1859, he reports that the enemy was demoralised and dispersed without resistance (cited in Dauphiné 1996, p. 65). Then on 31 December 1859 in a letter to the Ministry in France he writes of facing a warrior population of 40,000. All the tribes united against his 170 soldiers (Dauphiné 1996, p. 66). The expedition met with resistance. A marine, Tricot, was killed and all of the enemy villages and plantations were destroyed. Three whites who fought against the French were taken prisoner and shot (De La Hautière 1869, p. 89).

## **Conclusion: Chapter 1**

Conflict was well established and intertribal warfare was constant, organised and sanguinary between the tribes of New Caledonia before annexation in 1853. Enemy tribes were predetermined, and wars were fought according to a customary agenda that also regulated post-war outcomes. The civilising mission of Christianity, and the economic Eldorado of sandalwood trade, provided new and more powerful sources of prosperity for certain tribes, which boosted intertribal antagonism and caused the centuries-old balance to waver. On the Loyalty Islands, which were not formally annexed until 1864, dissent between priests and pastors bolstered intertribal rivalry, and this was often fuelled by the intervention of the French military and local governors. When European guns and warships were introduced to the islands, the death toll, which in pre-European times had been in units, leapt into the realm of hundreds. The Kanak, technologically disadvantaged, had no voice, and were dominated and marginalised. The missionaries' attempt to bridge the European–Kanak gap was hindered by interdenominational battles which were played out on the international stage with pen and gun. The early governors were military men, trained in warfare, and conflict was resolved violently. Kanak deaths were not contested; there was no apology, and no room for compromise. Violence, which is synonymous with conflict, could only generate a vicious cycle of hatred, revenge and further conflict, with no real prospect of reconciliation. Early incidents on Ouvéa sowed the seeds for resentment and revenge that would come to haunt the island a century later.



## CHAPTER 2

### **The Military, Missionaries, Melanesians and Governors in Conflict: the Colonial Period**

By the mid-nineteenth century, interest in the Pacific of the major Imperial powers of the day, Britain and France, had waned. Britain had considerable economic interests east of Aden and key trading posts in Singapore, Hong Kong, Natal, India, and New Zealand,<sup>57</sup> while Australia provided penitentiary lodgings for British criminals. Annexation of additional regions would have been costly for Britain to administer and would have provided no real economic or strategic benefit.

France during the same period was in a state of political flux. The demise of the Napoleonic Empire led to turmoil as Bonapartists, Monarchists and Republicans jostled for power.<sup>58</sup> The July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe was loathe to jeopardise France's relationship with Britain,<sup>59</sup> and rejected the idea of further colonial expansion in the Pacific.<sup>60</sup> Burgeoning unemployment led to street rioting and the brutal military repression of the *les journées de juin*. Thousands were wounded and massacred and thousands more were captured and deported.<sup>61</sup> In these tumultuous circumstances, the aspirations of the Marists to annex New Caledonia remained dormant. In 1851 Louis-Napoléon, with his constitutional term at an end, dissolved the National Assembly, and by plebiscite changed the constitution, thus providing himself with a second unlimited term of office. Louis-Napoléon became Napoleon III, Emperor of the

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<sup>57</sup> During the first half of the nineteenth century Britain secured sovereignty over: Singapore (1819), Aden (1839), Hong Kong (1842), New Zealand (1840), Natal (1842) and India was annexed in 1847.

<sup>58</sup> In the first thirty years of the nineteenth century there were seven changes of Government in France: the Consulate (1799-1804), the 1st Empire (Napoleon 1, 1804-1814) the 1st Restoration (Louis XVIII, 1814-1815), the Hundred Days (Napoleon, 1815), the 2nd Restoration (Louis XVIII, 1815-1824), Charles X (1824-1830), July Monarchy (Louis-Philippe 1st, 1830-1848).

<sup>59</sup> This decision was fortuitous. When the King abdicated in February 1848, he fled in ignominious style to Britain. In 1871 Napoleon III also sought refuge as a political refugee in Britain. Instability in France became the butt of British journalistic humour. *The Times* (8 March 1871, p. 9) reported: 'France is the political volcano of the Continent, and Paris is its crater. The expulsion of dynasty after dynasty has been more regular than the eruptions of Vesuvius.'

<sup>60</sup> The annexation of Algeria had taken place in 1830 during the reign of Charles X.

<sup>61</sup> This insurrection was the subject of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*.

Second Empire<sup>62</sup> and, free from the shackles of the old constitution, he was now able to reassert French influence in Europe and around the world.

## France takes possession

In 1853, Napoleon III gave the order to Théodore Ducos, Minister of Marines and Colonies, to annex New Caledonia. This annexation would, as well as pleasing the friends of the Marist mission,<sup>63</sup> provide a refuelling station for ships en route to the emerging China market. France had a naval base at Valparaiso to provide military protection for her interests in the Pacific, but for the navy to be reliant upon a foreign country was unsatisfactory, and supply was uncertain and irregular (Person 1961, p. 151). The establishment of a base in the Pacific on French land became a priority. The missionaries were eager for French annexation in order to stem the advance of British ‘heresy’ which was causing them as much concern and more conflict than paganism. Fears of British possession escalated when British warships began hydrographical exercises in the area. This was noted by Fr Montrouzier: ‘Il y a ici trois HMS, deux vont aller prendre possession de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, que la Grande Bretagne va occuper, ce qui bouleversera Mgr Douarre.’ (Fr Montrouzier, personal communication, 30 August 1851, cited in Person 1953, p. 177). Fr Montrouzier’s conviction that a British move to annex the country was imminent was so strong that he engaged an English-speaking Marist in Sydney to teach him English ‘pour pouvoir me débrouiller à mon retour en Nouvelle-Calédonie, que la Grande-Bretagne va occuper’. (Fr Montrouzier, personal communication, 27 September 1851, cited in Person 1953, p. 177).

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<sup>62</sup> After the *coup d’état* on 2 December 1851 Victor Hugo sought refuge in Guernsey where he remained in exile until the fall of Louis-Napoléon. A bitter opponent of Louis-Napoléon, Hugo showed no pity for this ‘pitiless man’ whose power mongering he described as ‘treachery in conception, perjury in the execution, murder and assassination in the struggle, spoliation, swindling and robbery in the triumph.’ (Hugo 1909, p. 12).

<sup>63</sup> In 1848 Louis-Napoléon by obtaining the support of the Church gained victory over the Republicans. As the Concordat 1 of 1801 was still in place, Catholicism was recognised as the religion of the majority of French citizens but not the ‘official religion’ of the State as had been the case during the reign of Charles X [1824-1830] when Catholicism had regained its pre-revolutionary position. Under Concordat 1, Cardinals sat in the Senate and clerical salaries were paid by the State. Despite the Emperor’s support of the Catholic Church and Pope Pius IX, by providing French troops to protect the Papal State, there remained points of dissension between Church and State especially in matters concerned with education and politics (Maurain 1930, p. 911).

The advantages of British annexation were recognised in Australia and New Zealand, but Downing Street remained indifferent, and no action was taken. Britain and France were, during this period, allied in the battle to stop Russian aggression against Turkey in the Crimea (1853-56), and Britain was not prepared to challenge the limits of *meum et tuum*, and risk a fallout with the Emperor. Anxious to counter British dominance in the Western Pacific, the Emperor was well aware of the geopolitical benefits of annexation.<sup>64</sup> He also realised the possible advantage of clearing the mouldering naval prisons in France by sending prisoners to the other end of the world and using them as manpower to construct the new colony.

In Australia, the newspaper baron, John Fairfax, and his *Sydney Morning Herald* editor, the Reverend John West, were strongly opposed to the transportation of felons to the colonies. Transportation had ceased in New South Wales in 1840, in Moreton Bay in 1839 and in Tasmania 1853 and for Australia, and New Zealand, the prospect of having French brigands on the doorstep was intolerable.<sup>65</sup>

Despite opposition, Napoleon III sent instructions to a number of people to act: to Rear Admiral Laguerre, commander of the Naval Division of Réunion and the Indian Ocean, to Tardy de Montravel, and to Febvrier-Despointes, Commander of the Pacific Division. Febvrier-Despointes was first to arrive at Balade and, in the presence of Marist priests Rougeyron, Forestier and Vigouroux and local chiefs, he took possession of New Caledonia and its dependencies in the name of his Imperial Majesty, Napoleon III, Emperor of the French (Person 1961, p. 182).<sup>66</sup>

With the possession of the country in hand, the American barque, *John H. Millay*, was chartered to deliver a copy of the *procès verbal* to M. Sentis, the French consul in Sydney.

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<sup>64</sup> With the advent of steam ships and the opening of the Panama Canal, interest in New Caledonia as a possible site for a refuelling depot was aroused. Warships began to roil the seas: the British warship the *Havannah* commanded by Captain John Elphinstone Erskine in 1849, the *Fly* (1849), *l'Alcmène* (Captain Harcourt) and *HMS Bremble* (Person 1953, p. 166).

<sup>65</sup> 'No sooner, therefore, have we got rid of British convictism, than we are threatened with French convictism. An unlimited collection of Parisian brigands within a short and easy voyage of our northern coasts.' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1853, p. 4). See also Donohoo (2013).

<sup>66</sup> Bishop Douarre, who had laboured for annexation, passed way just months before it was achieved.

## **Trans-Tasman protest and French ownership under dispute**

When the news became public, there was an outcry on both sides of the Tasman. A flurry of letters to the local press and to the Secretary of State for the Colonies decried the ‘cruelty, treachery and faithlessness’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 3 November 1853, p. 4) of the French. The British Government was also criticised for shilly-shallying and wasting time on enquiries and correspondence:

But while England and the English, although possessing most extensive colonies in the vicinity of these islands, have remained unaccountably blind to their importance, France and the French appear to have been awake, and to have understood fully not only the importance of the islands themselves, but the facility with which the rights of the weak races which possessed them could be set aside.

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 3 November 1853, p. 4).

Sir George Grey, Governor of New Zealand, wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the request that the French should be informed that the Isle of Pines and New Caledonia were considered to be British Territories by the British Government and the French should not take any further action until the question of ownership was settled (AtoJsOnline 1877).<sup>67</sup> Despite warnings of the vulnerability of British Pacific possessions and the need to avoid conflict in the region, Britain refused to act. Allied in Europe, in the Pacific Britain and France were rivals, and during the ‘cat and mouse’ antics the Kanak were mere pawns in the game.

## **50,000 natives dispossessed**

The Kanak, the indigenous population of New Caledonia, lived in established villages on shared tribal land that, as acknowledged by the Noumea Accord, was taken illegitimately by France without establishing proper relations with the indigenous

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<sup>67</sup> In 1848, Rev. John Dunmore Lang, Presbyterian Minister, noted that Britain had the right of possession of New Caledonia as it had been discovered by Captain Cook. Lang also wrote to the German Government in Frankfurt suggesting German annexation. In 1847 43,000 Germans had emigrated to New York and in the opinion of Lang it would be preferable for them to have their own colony where they would be able to speak their own language and have their own laws and institutions. New Caledonia was proposed as a suitable site: ‘The territory referred to consists of a series of larger islands of the Western Pacific Ocean, and particularly the large island of New Caledonia, situated within a few hundred miles of the East Coast of Australia.’ (Roots 2004, p. 45).



population, whatever the norms of 'international law' recognised by the leading powers of the day.<sup>68</sup> The Kanak cultivated crops by means of elaborate irrigation systems, and had an accepted framework of customary justice. Yet despite this, according to the international law of the day and the French Civil Code, by the signing of a treaty, prior ownership rights became invalid. The treaty was drawn up by the French, to the advantage of the French, and only understood by the French. It was a unilateral manifestation of the Emperor's command. Native law and custom were swept aside by flag, gun and treaty. The Kanak, numbering around fifty thousand in 1853,<sup>69</sup> were stripped of the land of their ancestors that was essential for their very being.

With annexation, the country came under the authority of the Military Administrators of the EFO, some 5000 kilometres away in Tahiti, and the Administrators,<sup>70</sup> with a military force of only 187, relied upon their superior armoury to quell native uprisings; at times, reinforcements had to be brought in from Tahiti. This occurred when violence erupted in June 1854, as large tracts of land were expropriated from the Koindo, Kandio, Jack and Goumbar tribes to make way for the township of Port-de-France<sup>71</sup> and violence erupted. Generally, conflict was between ancient tribal rivals, but when missions or settlers were attacked, the military was quick to react by burning villages and destroying crops. Despite the superior weaponry and technological advantage of the French, the age-old method of retribution as used by the Kanak, *à la suite de la guerre*, was resorted to by way of French reprisal. The taking of prisoners was considered too costly. In confrontation with the military, the natives offered no resistance and took to

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<sup>68</sup> Notwithstanding the 'good old rule of history' as proposed by Sir Walter Scott (1813, p. 382), 'that they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can', it is debatable whether the notion of *terra nullius*, which came into common parlance to justify Imperial colonisation (in the belief that indigenous peoples were not sufficiently civilised to comprehend or warrant land ownership), can be applied to New Caledonia. In 1998, in the Noumea Accord, France accepted that it had acted illegitimately in taking possession of New Caledonia, but that this action had been in line with certain international practice at the time. The document states that 'ce territoire n'était pas vide'.

<sup>69</sup> Filippi & Angleviel (2000a, p. 33) provide a figure of 40,000 to 60,000.

<sup>70</sup> Contre-amiral A. Febrier-Despointes from 24 September 1853 until 1 January 1854; Capitaine de Vaisseau Tardy de Montravel from 1 January 1854 until 31 October 1854; Capitaine de Vaisseau Joseph du Bouzet from January 18 1855 until 28 October 1856; Chef de Bataillon Jules Testard 18 January 1856 until 21 December 1856; Capitaine de Corvette Le Bris 25 May 1856 until 5 May 1857; Capitaine de Genie Roussel from 21 December 1858 until 20 March 1859; Chef de Bataillon Durand 20 March 1859 until 1 July 1860; Capitaine de Vaisseau Saissel from 22 May 1859 until 2 April 1860. (Congrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie n.d.).

<sup>71</sup> This name was later changed to Nouméa due to confusion caused between Port-de-France (New Caledonia) and Fort-de-France (Martinique) for the postal system.

the hills. They were not pursued; the effort of rebuilding was considered punishment enough.

In the north-east of the country, where British traders had established a stronghold and anti-French feeling ran high, hostility frequently led to warfare. In September 1859 the troops under M. Saisset,<sup>72</sup> the acting Commandant, were transported in the warships the *Styx* and the *Calédonienne*, to Hienghène. In the battle that followed, a French soldier, Captain Tricot, was killed and another, Bauville, died later of injuries received. As a result, villages were destroyed and three Englishmen who fought with the natives were taken prisoner and shot. Another five British nationals who were captured faced deportation or the death penalty (Colquihlat 1987b). The Kanak were forcibly suppressed.

### **Administrators and the ambiguity of land spoliation**

A major cause of conflict was the expropriation of tribal land. Since annexation, land rights were in the hands of the Administrators, military men who had little understanding of the legislation as it related to property. Admiral Du Bouzet<sup>73</sup> on 20 January 1855 provided an initial declaration relating to land title. This was on the premise that by taking possession of a land ‘non encore occupé par une nation civilisée et possédé seulement par des tribus sauvages’ (Merle 1999, p. 5), all previous ownership title was cancelled, and natives had no right to dispose of land which they occupied either jointly or severally by sale or exchange. The government had the exclusive right to purchase land occupied by natives. Therein the ambiguity: if natives are able to sell land to the Government, do they own the land, which they have cultivated, or do they merely have tenancy rights? The rights to land that had been purchased prior to annexation were repealed and had to be renegotiated with the Administrator. In theory, these measures were put in place to protect the unwary native from unscrupulous settlers. In practice, it provided the Administration with absolute control of land which was required for French settlement (Conseil Général 1887, p. 8). The Du Bouzet declaration, while conforming with the international law<sup>74</sup> of the day

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<sup>72</sup> Jean-Marie Saisset, acting Commandant for Jean Durand, 22 May 1859 to 2 April 1869.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Fidèleugène du Bouzet, Commandant 18 January 1855 to 28 October 1856.

<sup>74</sup> International laws were at the time written by the major Imperial powers and therefore favoured colonisation.

and Article 713 of the French Civil Code concerning ‘vacant’ land (Merle 1999, p. 5), ruptured native ties to the land and disrupted Kanak agricultural practices. For decades, the issue of land rights continued to be a major source of conflict.<sup>75</sup>

The Imperial arrogance of the day gave credence to the belief that the uncivilised inhabitants of a country exert only limited rights over land. This legitimised the appropriation of the territory by force, treaty or occupation by a ‘civilised’<sup>76</sup> colonising power (Merle 1999, p. 4). Under the military administration, vast areas of land were expropriated.<sup>77</sup> Settlement was favoured in areas around military posts and large areas of land controlled by Kouindo, Kandio and Angara around Port-de-France were allocated, which led to discontent and violence. Louis-Théodore Bérard, who settled on land acquired at the foot of Mont-Dore with a dozen other settlers and about forty New Hebridean labourers, was the victim of an uprising in 1857. Bérard and twenty-seven others, including fifteen New Hebrideans (Douglas 1980, pp. 32-33), were killed in the attack. The innocent settler paid the price for administrative magnanimity, ignorance and arrogance.

The land that was sold by the Administrators was not vacant and ownerless, but tribal land with centuries old ties to the indigenous community. It was the blood of the ancestors, the very root of Kanak existence. With annexation, the entire territory claimed by France left the Kanak usufructuaries of their own land. As Kanak, land was lost so, too, was native identity, power and social position. Anti-French sentiment escalated and erupted into violent conflict with the continuing cycle of land spoliation, revolt and repression.

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<sup>75</sup> Land rights continue to be a source of angst for the Kanak. In 2014 Bergé Kawa, a descendant of Chief Ataï, describes a lifetime of fighting for the return of tribal land: ‘Toute sa vie [...] il se sera battu pour la restitution des terres dont son clan s’estime spolié.’ (*Le Monde* 29 August 2014).

<sup>76</sup> The definition of ‘civilised’ in the Oxford dictionary is ‘brought to an advanced state of social development’. But this begs the question of whether technological advancement and materialism equate to greater social advancement than life in a shared community which lives in harmony with the natural environment.

<sup>77</sup> In 1857 for example; on 2 January 136 hectares were granted to Vial d’Aran, Bérard et Cie, at Boulari; on 25 October 200 hectares went to the relatives of M. Bérard and on 15 December 3200 hectares were provided for the Marist mission at Conception and St Louis. In 1858, on 17 February 40,000 hectares were attributed to MM Byrne and Brown, on 23 August 500 hectares at Boulari to M. Darnaud Ernest, on 12 December 4000 hectares to M. J. Paddon at Païta and on 19 December 4000 hectares to M. Joubert.

Free settlers were slow to arrive. The lure of land in a country which was set to become a penal colony, and which was inhabited by cannibals,<sup>78</sup> failed to attract immigrants. When New Caledonia, by Imperial Decree, gained independence from the EFO on 14 January 1860, the European civilian population was a mere 420 (Gille & Leca 2012, p. 107) and colonisation was stagnant.

### ***Civiliser, produire, réhabiliter: Charles Guillain, the First Governor (1862-1870)***<sup>79</sup>

Étrange personnage à visage multiple, brillant par son intelligence, fascinant par ses initiatives, déroutant par son ambigüité, et menaçant par son autoritarisme qui n'exclut nullement la ruse et la duplicité. Partisan du principe qu'il faut diviser pour régner, il s'efforcera, mais en vain de jouer du clergé colonial de Nouméa contre le pro vicaire, des Sœurs de Saint-Joseph contre les Maristes, des protestants contre les catholiques, des chefs et des tribus païens contre les chefs et les tribus chrétiennes. (Delbos 1993, p. 136).

The first Governor of New Caledonia, Charles Guillain, was heralded as '[...] the legitimate hope for a better future for New Caledonia' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 August 1862, p. 2). He arrived on 2 June 1862 with instructions to open a penal settlement, to encourage free migration and to civilise the indigenous cannibal population. Inspired by the revolutionary French philosopher François Fourier, Guillain had ambitions for a socialist utopia, *France Australe* in the Pacific. He aimed to put into practice his Saint-Simonien ideals of utopian socialism by combining the disparate groups in his charge: convicts, free settlers and Kanak in closed communities, phalanxes, with a central communal building, the phalanstery. It was expected that the phalanx community would work together in harmonious collaboration and become self-supporting. Bound in this melting-pot environment, people would become more tolerant, convicts would be rehabilitated, and natives would be assimilated as civilised

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<sup>78</sup> Montrouzier (1870, p. 32) describes the chef of 'Jengen' (Hienghène) slaughtering humans for consumption, while Garnier refers to 'nos malheureux cannibales' and also describes cannibal feasts.

<sup>79</sup> 'Civiliser, produire, réhabiliter' was the motto Guillain proposed for the New Caledonian coat of arms. It was to appear below the figures of a convict and a Melanesian (Clifford 1982, p. 47).

Kanak Frenchmen in a French Pacific paradise: ‘C’est le contact permanent, le travail et la patience qui unifieront les peuples d’Orient et d’Occident’ (Reuillard 1992, p. 477).

Little consideration was given to the Kanak. Decisions that would affect them profoundly were made unilaterally and without consultation. When the phalanstery was built, land of a Catholic tribe near Yaté was chosen. This led to conflict, the destruction of property, police intervention and its ultimate abandonment. Undeterred, the Governor decided to attempt a more gradual assimilation by corralling the natives in reserves where they could be more readily controlled:

[...] traitant ainsi les indigènes comme des troupeaux de bétail que l’on met sous la garde de tel ou tel stockman et groupant ceux-ci sous l’autorité d’un stockman principal. Il ne s’occupe pas de savoir s’il n’y a d’inconvénients à ce groupement arbitraire et si on ne va pas par là exciter les susceptibilités, la jalousie des tribus, des familles.

(Legéard 2004, p. 66).

In 1868, *Le Moniteur* published the details of this project undertaken by M. Mathieu, the Colonial Secretary. The aim was to create ‘inalienable and non-transferable reservations’ that would protect the natives from the inescapable progress of colonisation and the ‘retrograde influence’ of the Marist priests (Reuillard 1992, p. 514). It seems incongruous that, concomitant with the establishment of native reserves, was the intention that Kanak contact with the Western world should be increased in order to facilitate assimilation and decrease chiefly dominance. Guillain had been informed by his predecessor, Jean Durand,<sup>80</sup> of the power of the Melanesian chiefs, of their hostility to foreign interference in tribal matters and of the importance of gaining chiefly support. The plan to reduce chiefly dominance could therefore only further strain relations (Reuillard 1992, p. 501).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jean Durand was Administrator from 20 March 1859 to 10 January 1860.

<sup>81</sup> M. Mathieu on 22 January 1868 reported: ‘La propriété individuelle ne sera longtemps, pour le plus grand nombre, qu’un mot, les plaçant entre un droit et un fait contradictoires, c’est-à-dire entre une propriété qu’on leur reconnaît et des coutumes enracinées leur défendant d’en disposer [...] l’indivision est dans leurs mœurs, nous le pouvons avoir la prétention de changer des mœurs par notre seule volonté. La propriété collective est un fait consacré par le temps et la tradition, acceptons-la, mais seulement comme moyen de transition [...] car telle qu’elle est l’expérience nous révèle que partout où la surveillance de l’Administration ne peut s’exercer, les indigènes sont livrés à l’arbitraire du chef dont la domination matérielle et morale est une cause de retard dans leur progrès.’ (*Le Moniteur* 26 January 1868, cited in Reuillard 1992, p. 501).

Guillain's idea of using the native reserve as a buffer between the native and Western world was not shared by his superiors in France who believed that the establishment of reserves would limit rather than promote assimilation. For this Guillain received a Ministerial rebuke. In fact, when Guillain arrived in New Caledonia in 1862 large tracts of tribal land had already been appropriated, and the relationship between the administration and native was tense. Guillain's initial intention was to restrict military intervention, as he wrote to the Minister in April 1863:

Ce n'est pas la politique d'expédition et d'occupation militaire que je plaide ici, c'est simplement la politique d'organisation et de civilisation, cette politique pacifique qui consiste à lier de bonnes relations avec des indigènes, à nous faire connaître et aimer d'eux en les conseillant et dirigeant suivant leur propre intérêt.

(Reuillard 1992, p. 484).

To bring Kanak and European together in peaceful coexistence, Guillain created a model farm at Yahoué and agricultural centres at Fonwahy and Néméara. However, the situation became untenable and this experiment was aborted (Gille & Leca 2012, p. 108). In the quest for assimilation, Guillain was single-minded, there was no dialogue, and neither Church nor Kanak was consulted. Guillain was committed to the development of the colony. He began work on the essential infrastructure of roads, port, military hospital, a legal system and schools, but his intransigence and strong anticlerical views soon brought Church and Government into the field of combat.

Guillain was a visionary leader; his reforms were rapid and progressive. He introduced a smallpox immunisation program for European children and natives,<sup>82</sup> an eight-hour working day, and free schooling, which was compulsory and secular.<sup>83</sup> Along the way, he made many enemies. Decisions made in haste were at times ill-conceived. Land was demarcated for tribal use, but when more was required for penal settlement and free settlers, the area set aside for native reserves had to be revised downwards. With each wave of immigrants, the Kanak were pushed onto less fertile land so that food

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<sup>82</sup> 'The Government of New Caledonia having received lymph from Paris has called upon parents to present their children at the Colonial Secretary's Office for vaccination.' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 March 1869, p. 14). This may be a reference to smallpox.

<sup>83</sup> Free compulsory and secular schooling was introduced in New Caledonia thirteen years before the Jules Ferry laws in France.

production for the clan was jeopardised. According to Delbos, the removal of natives to the fringes of white settlement left them with a diet of coconuts and fish, with neither of these in reliable supply:

Sans parler de l'injustice à expulser de leur terre ces pauvres naturels, il y aurait la perspective de les voir disparaître en peu de temps, soit par la famine car le cocotier ne peut suffire et la pêche n'est pas toujours heureuse ni possible, soit par la maladie soit par leur contact avec les européens.

(Delbos 1993, p. 138).

Between 1868 and 1872, the area of appropriated land increased from 30,000 hectares to 150,000 hectares which, in 1872, was distributed between 402 titleholders, fourteen of whom owned 56% of the land. For the establishment of a penitentiary, 110,000 hectares was claimed, which included the entire Île Nou. While the Kanak struggled to eke a living from limited acreage, for others the distribution was generous and at times incongruous. For example, by decree, Empress Eugénie's chamberlain, M. le Marquis de Trazégnies d'Ittre, received 500 hectares which he never intended to inhabit (Gille & Leca 2012). The resettlement of tribes on the land of hereditary rival tribes and the reorientation of native hierarchies was disastrous and led to violent conflict.

The paternalistic and philanthropic ideals of Guillain were often lost in their translation, and violent confrontation was found to be a more effective way of establishing law and order. He wrote to the Minister in April 1863:

Politique pacifique et conciliatrice tant que le développement normal de nos établissements n'exigera pas que nous reculions les limites de notre domination, si alors les moyens diplomatiques ne nous ont pas permis d'y arriver sans coup férir, il sera temps d'employer la force et ceci avec un succès d'autant plus prompt que nos moyens d'action se seront accrus.

(ANSOM, fonds Nouvelle-Calédonie, carton 42 Memoire de Guillain. Essai de colonisation pénale à la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Paris 9 juillet 1861, cited in Reuillard 1992, p. 484).

Towards the end of 1862, conflict erupted in the region of Koumac. European settlers were attacked and their properties were burnt and ransacked. A general exodus of settlers followed and, by governmental decree, coastal traders were forbidden to engage

with the natives of that area. Guillain dispatched a detachment of sixty soldiers to the area to establish peace. His instructions to Mathieu, the Colonial Secretary, in November 1863 state: ‘nos soldats devront s’abstenir de le faire et se garder de tout mauvais traitement envers les indigènes; ordre, modération, prise d’une bonne position pour être maître de terrain’. (Reuillard 1992, p. 486). Hope for a peaceful submission was in vain. The soldiers, greatly outnumbered, were forced to act and this resulted in the death of many natives and the destruction of native homes and villages. Tombonna, the militant chief, despite losing his land to the military, refused to acquiesce and for a year an administrative ban remained on the north of the island (Reuillard 1992, p. 487).

From the time of his arrival, Guillain was faced with outbreaks of tribal resistance to European settlement around Wagap and Touho. The Marist missions were attacked and burnt in 1862, settlers were menaced, their plantations destroyed and cattle killed. In 1864 the war chief of Gaté, Gondou, with a thousand Ponérihouen warriors attacked and ate the crew of *La Reine des Iles*, and a month later the crew of *Le Secret*.<sup>84</sup> When Taillard, a settler near Wagap, was assassinated by Poindi-Patchili,<sup>85</sup> an ally of Gondou,<sup>86</sup> Guillain dispatched military reinforcements to protect the settlers and missionaries. As aggression in the area intensified, the tribes of Bourate and Kahoua from Hienghène joined forces with the military to establish law and order in the region. Guillain’s Saint-Simonien ideal of bringing together *in situ* European values and the primitive practices of the indigenous world was severely challenged. As attacks increased and several villages between Touho and Koné were destroyed, Guillain feared widespread aggression and had little alternative other than to establish more military outposts and rally sympathetic tribes. Those tribes that had been dispossessed by Gondou were happy to join the French. The military and pro-French natives set out on a mission of destruction, traversing the country, burning villages and destroying crops. The toll of these military expeditions was considerable: several French were wounded and several hundred natives were killed (*Sydney Morning Herald* 21 October 1865, p. 5). It was not until 1869 that an expedition from Wagap captured and killed Gondou.

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<sup>84</sup> These assassinations occurred on a bay which has since been named ‘Plateau des massacres’.

<sup>85</sup> Poindi-Patchili was a minor chief from the village of Tiouano (Wagap).

<sup>86</sup> Gondou, ‘quittant parfois les montagnes qui lui servent de repaire, il fond sur ses voisins, saccage les villages, enlève les femmes, dépossède les chefs [...] La case de ses ancêtres dissipait sous les crânes des victimes qu’il dévorées ; le farouche Gondou n’est pas un homme, c’est un chien altéré de sang ; il ne parle pas, il aboie. Il mord ceux qui l’approchent. Il est tellement affamé qu’il vous dévorera tous et finira par se manger lui-même lorsqu’il sera seul sur la terre.’ (De La Hautière 1869, p. 171).



This rebellion led by Gondou predated that of Ataï who, in 1878, organised widespread resistance to colonisation in the La Foa area.

## **The Marists and government in opposition**

Conflict in the area around Pouebo flared again in 1867. Tension arose in 1865 when the land of a Catholic tribe was expropriated to accommodate newly arrived settlers. The local priests, Fathers Villard and Guitta,<sup>87</sup> drew up a petition of protest for the Catholic chief Hippolyte to present to the Governor, whereupon the Governor, who was no friend of the Catholics, exiled Hippolyte to the Isle of Pines where he died six months later.<sup>88</sup> The rumour was that he had been assassinated. The anti-governor, anti-settler priests became a target for the pro-Administration press.<sup>89</sup> Such was the coverage of the media that Guitta took action against the radical press and won a defamation case. The affair ended when settlers, their children and a gendarme were massacred.<sup>90</sup> Guillain mobilised soldiers in the area, and ten of the assailants were arrested and transferred to Noumea where they were tried and after seventeen lengthy hearings sentenced to death by guillotine (*L'œuvre de la Mission Mariste en Nouvelle-Calédonie* 1901, p. 31). Adolphe le Boucher<sup>91</sup> was charged with the defence of some of the accused before the criminal tribunal in Noumea. In his pleading, by reference to customary law, he found the chief Napoléon Ouarébate not guilty. The priests, Villard and Guitta, were condemned for inciting native hostility toward the settlers and removed from the mission (Colquihlat 1989; Guiart 1994, p. 117). These events led to the redistribution of customary land and the restructuring of customary

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<sup>87</sup> Father Guitta reappeared on Maré during the conflict which resulted in the expulsion of Rev. Jones.

<sup>88</sup> In 1865 the *sénatus-consulte impérial* gave authority to colonial administrators to bypass judicial authorities in matters relating to crime and punishment of subjects. It also deprived the Catholic Church of supremacy on colonial soil.

<sup>89</sup> 'À peine débarqué, le 2 juin, Guillain se met tout de suite au travail. Son premier soin dès le 7, est d'assurer le contrôle de la presse et par suite de l'opinion en prenant ce jour-là un arrêté qui fait de son chef d'état-major, M. Mathieu, le directeur du journal, *Le Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Geste très significatif de celui qui veut accaparer l'influence en l'arrachant aux maristes. L'organe officiel de la colonie devient, en effet, à partir de ce jour-là, le porte-parole officieux du gouverneur. Très tôt baptisé « Le menteur », par l'opposition.' (Delbos 1993, pp. 141-142).

<sup>90</sup> See *Sydney Morning Herald* (4 November 1867, p. 5) and Delbos (1993, p. 155). The victims included M. Bailly, Quartermaster of the guards and Commander of conscription at Pouebo; Venturini, a private; Démené, colour-sergeant; his two sons, one aged six years and the other four months; a native of Eromanga; four natives of the Sandwich Islands and one from Lifou. Fourteen others were wounded.

<sup>91</sup> Governor of New Caledonia from 22 July 1884 to 13 May 1886.

authority whereby hereditary chiefs were replaced by administrative chiefs who were prepared to cooperate with the government. To encourage natives to adopt a Western work ethic, a contingent of thirty men was to be sent each day to work at the Military base in Pouebo (Saussol 1969, pp. 116-117). A final military expedition in 1869 with almost three hundred soldiers and native allies destroyed the villages and crops of the last of the rebellious tribes.<sup>92</sup>

The early years of Guillain's governorship were difficult; his republican ideals could not be reconciled with the Imperial reality, battles broke out around the country, land had to be found for settlers and convicts, and worst of all was the 'enemy of progress,' the Church on the mainland, where the Marists reigned supreme.<sup>93</sup> To contain their influence, new and draconian restrictions were placed on Catholic schools, and members of Catholic tribes were sent to work for the Government in Port-de-France (Noumea). This led to conflict (Delbos 1993, p. 143).

## **Wars of religion on the Loyalty Islands**

The situation became dire on the Loyalty Islands when Marists, aided by the French Administration, entered the fray and a French Catholic, British Protestant intertribal battlefield was drawn. On Lifou there was a strong Protestant following and the possibility of a French-Catholic takeover was heeded by the LMS who countered the move by installing two British missionaries. Guillain entered, tilting on all fronts; the Saint-Simonien ideal of a Universal Family had become an impossible dream and the gap between civilisations, religions, and tribes had widened.

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<sup>92</sup> According to Mathieu: 'J'ai pensé que [...] vous (les indigènes) et nous pouvions vivre les uns à côté des autres [...] Comprenant que l'Union fait la force, il faudra que les divers éléments de la population coloniale se rapprochent dans le but, de la part des indigènes d'aider la colonisation européenne par le travail de la part des colons, de concourir aux progrès de la colonisation chez les aborigènes en se montrant bienveillants et justes dans leur relations avec ces derniers ; de la part de tous, en donnant satisfaction au gouvernement voulant faire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie une colonie chrétienne, industrielle, digne du drapeau qui la couvre.' (*Le Moniteur* 28 June 1869, cited in Reuillard 1992, p. 498).

<sup>93</sup> After French annexation, both John Jones and Samuel Macfarlane sought permission to establish mission stations on *Grande Terre* but this was refused. On *Grande Terre*, the Catholics reigned supreme. It was not until 1854 (Ouvéa), 1857 (Lifou) and 1866 (Maré) that the Catholics arrived on the Loyalty Group which the Protestants had evangelised since 1841. The situation became explosive.

Guillain's intolerance of religion, both Catholic<sup>94</sup> and Protestant, exacerbated pre-existing problems and the islands became a stage for tripartite discontent and conflict. The Marist priests were suspicious of the Protestants and the encroachment of heresy, and the Protestants were wary of the intentions of the Marists:

[...] dangerous individuals whose influence saps the foundations of public tranquillity [...] whose efforts tend rather to the injury than advantage of society [...] Popery is as much the wolf as ever [...] it prowls along on the frontier of the heathen world.

(Macfarlane 1873, p. 99, p. 117)

From this cauldron of roiling hatred, 'primitive' man was introduced to 'civilisation.'<sup>95</sup> The government, with control of the military, held the upper hand and by means of bullets, bayonets, galleys and prisons, the ability to rule. Cloak and dagger activity ran high. The Government believed that the Protestant missionaries were covert British agents who were working to extend the political and commercial interests of England (Macfarlane 1873, p. 158). This was clearly illustrated in a decree of 3 July 1864 which was signed by the Governor M. Guillain, 'considering that, under cover of the Protestant religion, strangers have sought to denationalise the population of the Loyalty Islands' (*Le Moniteur* 3 July 1864, cited in *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 September 1864, p. 5).

To discourage Protestant expansion, the Governor reclaimed land that had been purchased by the Protestant Church and outlawed teaching in languages other than French,<sup>96</sup> which effectively closed Protestant schools, which had taught in the local languages for around twenty years. The Marists were not exempt from the rancour of the anti-clerical Governor who decided to open a secular school at Chépénéhé. One hundred natives from the newly converted Catholic tribes were recruited for the construction. A protest mounted by the High Chiefs of Wetr and Gaica, Ukeneso and Sainou, about this forced labour earned them ten months incarceration at Port-de-France. Until this time, the Marists had continued their work which had often

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<sup>94</sup> 'Le christianisme est le grand obstacle au progrès; et le catholicisme en est la forme la plus dangereuse. La présence du prêtre parmi les indigènes retardera leur civilisation de cinquante ans.' (Forestier, cited in Delbos 1993, p. 137).

<sup>95</sup> The natives were quick to capitalise on religious and national differences that existed between the missions.

<sup>96</sup> By decree published in *Le Moniteur* October 1863 (cited in Macfarlane 1873, p. 132).

been openly facilitated by the Commandant, but this support was due to their nationality and not their religion (Macfarlane 1873, p. 221).

### **Lifou is declared a military zone**

Until 1864, the definition of ‘French dependencies of New Caledonia’ was unclear. France had not taken formal possession of the Loyalty Islands, French sovereignty of the islands was in doubt, and so the Protestants continued to pursue their mission of preaching, teaching and establishing their own code of law and order. These laws were embraced by the natives who applied them with gusto. So enthusiastic were the native ‘policemen’ that law enforcement often led to friction, violence and a decline of the public order they were attempting to uphold. Trouble arose when a Catholic colonist, Williamson, complained to Governor Guillain of the treatment he received at the hands of the native ‘police’ as they as they went about applying the laws of the British missionaries (Macfarlane 1873).<sup>97</sup> A fact-finding mission sent to the island exonerated Macfarlane, but the attention of the Administration had now been drawn to troubles in the Loyalty Islands.

The French disapproved of the application of laws other than those of the French Government. To clarify the situation, an instruction arrived from the Minister of Navy and Colonies, the Marquis de Chasseloup-Larbat, to Governor Guillain advising him to ensure that the authority of the French over the Loyalty Group was understood and undisputed. This was duly achieved by flag and warship.

On 2 May 1864, a detachment of twenty-five soldiers under the command of Eugène Bourgey was sent to Chépénéhé. The Commandant requisitioned the Protestant church for a garrison, ordered the Protestants of Wainya’s tribe to build accommodation for the soldiers and threatened to burn down their houses should there be any delay. Lifou was declared a military zone. With a military camp on his doorstep, Macfarlane began a campaign of formal written protests to Guillain in Noumea. A month later Guillain, with battles now raging in all directions, retaliated by sending Commander Testard and three hundred soldiers, ‘a large proportion of whom are armed convicts’ (*Sydney*

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<sup>97</sup> Williamson, according to Macfarlane (1873, pp. 212-213), was a slave-driver who arrived at Lifou from South America. He found that the people of Lifou were not prepared to submit to his discipline and when they tied him to a coconut tree for half an hour he was ‘enraged and indignant’ and resolved to see what he could do through the Government at New Caledonia.

*Morning Herald* 25 February 1865, p. 4), to Chépénéhé. The force of the attack put any resistance out of the question.

During a prayer meeting the Protestant Church was attacked and the surrounding buildings were burnt, which was a blow for the Reverend Macfarlane, who had encouraged and instructed the natives in the building of lath and plaster houses. Chépénéhé had become a model village for others to follow. The conflict continued, land was seized and property destroyed. Natives were fair game, some were shot and others were imprisoned. Native teachers were escorted from the island in irons, missionaries were silenced, schools were closed and the distribution of books printed in the native language using the LMS press on Maré was prohibited.

These actions were justified according to Guillain by virtue of the following laws: 9 August 1849 (the state of siege), 9 June 1857 (Code of Military Justice for the Army), 4 June 1858 (Code of Military Justice for the Navy), 21 June 1858 (regulation of public administration of the Code of Military Justice in Naval affairs), 5 March 1864 (reorganisation of military jurisdictions of Oceania), 26 June 1860 (by ministerial instruction), and finally, by decree, the island of Lifou was declared to be in a state of siege. The military authority was provided with all the powers required for ‘the maintenance of order and of police’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 8 September 1864, p. 7).

These actions met with condemnation in the Australian press. Guillain was criticised for his Draconian behaviour whereby French authority was enforced by the encouragement of conflict: ‘burning, slaughtering and ruthless intimidation’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 1864, p. 7). The same report questioned the ban on teaching in languages other than French, as the LMS missionaries taught in Drehu, the native tongue, and not English:

Could anything be more monstrous than to call this denationalising the natives. The French have shown their flag for a few days, and they say, to teach the poor people in their own tongue is to denationalise them.<sup>98</sup>

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 8 September 1864, p. 7).

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<sup>98</sup> The article does provide a disclaimer: ‘It is not unknown to us that in questions arising between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries, the intense opposition of their views will scarcely admit that exact and dispassionate representation which as honourable men both parties would tend to make.’

## The Guillain Herald: *Le menteur*

Shortly after his arrival, Guillain determined that the only local newspaper should become an instrument for his political propaganda. By decree, on 27 June 1862, the Governor appointed Adolphe Mathieu, his 'Chief of State' and 'Colonial Secretary,' as editor. This newspaper, *Le Moniteur*, was recognised as the official mouthpiece for the Governor's political and social views. It became known as the 'Guillain Herald' (Colquihlat 1989, p. 4) and to Guillain's adversaries as *Le menteur* (Delbos 1993, p. 142).

The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted the anomaly of the Chief of State being the editor in a report it reprinted from the *Le Moniteur*. This account was totally at odds with previous articles written about the Lifou reprisals. *Le Moniteur* praised the military efforts of Commandant Testard and his *sang-froid* as he 'received the enemy with a well-directed fire then routed them by a charge with the bayonet'. The same report disclaimed the article that appeared in *Revue du Monde Colonial* on January 1865, which claimed that Commander Testard was 'deprived of his command' following the military charge on Lifou. This report met with a sharp rebuke from *Le Moniteur*, which warned the press in Paris to be more discerning when accepting anything that may affect the reputation of devoted officers and functionaries (*Sydney Morning Herald* 21 June 1865, p. 3).

Injustices instigated by Guillain provoked the ire of the Reverend Macfarlane who during the 'paper war' requested the same religious liberty for Protestants on Lifou as was enjoyed by Protestants in France, and for good measure he sought the appointment of a British Consul to New Caledonia. As already noted, international dialogue resulted in the Protestants being assured of the freedom 'to diffuse among the natives of the archipelago the benefit of Christianity and civilisation' (Macfarlane 1873, p. 198). This victory was short-lived; the Governor's interpretation of the Emperor's letter enabled him to implement his own agenda and vision for a secular indigenous system of education. For this, the Governor received a rebuke from the Minister of Navy and Colonies:

...notre civilisation repousse les moyens terribles de répression auxquels vous avez dû recourir ; et l'émotion qu'ils produiraient dans l'esprit public, s'ils étaient connus, serait de nature à créer des embarras sérieux au Gouvernement de l'Empereur.

(Reuillard 1992, p. 500).

Guillain justified his actions by referring to the ministerial instructions of 28 January 1859 that provided the Governor of New Caledonia with the authority to disallow Protestant propaganda in the colony. A response from the Minister criticised Guillain's reading of the instruction on two counts: first, that the authority given in 1859 referred only to *Grande Terre* and not to the Loyalty Islands; and secondly, that it was difficult to reconcile Guillain's interpretation of 'religious liberty' with the suppression of all means of religious instruction (Zorn 2012, p. 160). Undeterred, Guillain continued his program of 'slash and burn' management.

Schools could only be opened with government approval and then only with qualified teachers. Religious instruction in schools was also banned and this angered the Marists as Article I of the Concordat of 1801<sup>99</sup> clearly states:

La religion catholique, apostolique et romaine, sera librement exercée en France. Son culte sera public, en se conformant aux règlements de police que le Gouvernement jugera nécessaires pour la tranquillité publique.

(Napoleonica La Revue 2008).

The priests believed that this Article provided them with the freedom necessary to teach and evangelise. Guillain, on the other hand, believed that mission schools were an obstruction to public peace, and from 1 January 1864 any non-compliant school was declared illegal and closed.

Mission schools, which had been operating on *Grande Terre* for twenty years, closed their doors. In the embryonic colony, there was a paucity of qualified teachers and so the Governor was ultimately obliged to utilise the only personnel available, the military. So stringent were the restrictions that even after Sisters Marie de la Présentation and

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<sup>99</sup> The French Revolution in 1789 saw a head-on clash between the Catholic Church and the State. Church assets were confiscated and priests were made to swear allegiance to the Republic. The Vatican resisted, the French marched on Rome in 1798 and a peace deal was struck in 1801 with the signing of the Concordat.

Marie de la Croix qualified as teachers in order to open schools on the Isle of Pines and at Saint Louis, more obstacles were presented. The Governor decided that teachers should provide the government with their work programs: a day plan as well as a progress report every three months. Education for those in remote communities became impossible (Delbos 1993, p. 147), and on the Loyalty Islands ‘no native could exercise the functions of a teacher without the sanction of the commandant [...] no teacher would be allowed to exercise the functions of his office, except on the island to which he belonged’ (Macfarlane 1873, p. 237). It followed that teachers from Lifou who were working on Ouvéa were forced to return to their place of origin.

### **Macfarlane’s gadfly attack on the Governor**

Throughout the governorship of Guillain, Macfarlane continued his gadfly attack and continued with constant outpourings from his ‘prolix pen.’ Letters sent to the Governments on either side of *La Manche* bore fruit. The French ordered a commission of inquiry to investigate the claims.

A letter from Guillain to Macfarlane on 16 January 1865 informed him that His Majesty’s Government would allow Protestants freedom to ‘worship and to pursue the intellectual advancement of the population’. However, there was a distinction between politics and religion so that administrative and judicial affairs were the domain of the Governor (*Sydney Morning Herald* 21 March 1865, p. 7). The following day, Commandant Trève produced a signed copy of an oath which was to be sworn by each of the Protestant ministers, in his presence. The Ministers were to pledge obedience to the Colonial Government, to act in accordance with the established order of the colony and, ‘if in my church or elsewhere I learn that anything is being concocted prejudicial to the colony, I will make it known to the Government’ (Macfarlane 1873, p. 201). The Commandant’s lack of confidence in the integrity of the missionaries brought a speedy rejoinder from Macfarlane. In a letter dated 31 January 1865 Macfarlane made it clear that the mission had no desire to be connected with any government, nor to receive State pay, nor to become a government agent (Macfarlane 1873, pp. 201-202).

Battles continued to be waged over Church property on Ouvéa, and the Reverend Ella began a ‘long and fruitless’ correspondence with the Commandant. His complaints were referred to the Governor who, as already noted, either ignorant of, or in arrogant disregard of tribal politics, divided the island into three, and appointed in each division



a Catholic chief. These divisions and appointments could only cause dissent. It was not until 1871 and the appointment of a new Governor, Eugène Gaultier de la Richerie,<sup>100</sup> that the resident Commandant was dismissed and a new Commandant, Xavier Caillet, was appointed. Caillet denounced:

Des faits regrettables provoqués presque toujours par l'intolérance de missionnaires catholiques auxquels on peut reprocher de confondre trop volontiers les intérêts de la France avec ceux de leur congrégation et de ne mettre ni assez de discrétion dans leurs actes, ni assez de prudence dans leurs moyens de propagande.

(Zorn 2012, p. 161).

No action was taken by the Governor on this report. In 1874, Gaultier de la Richerie was recalled to France, and his replacement, Louis Alleyron,<sup>101</sup> requested an investigation into the massacre and mutilation of Protestants. Caillet remained steadfast in his criticism of Catholic fanaticism, and for this, he was dismissed. The militant priests, Jean Bernard and Eugène Barriol, were found by a Commission of Inquiry to have urged Bazit and the Catholics to attack the Protestants and they were both dismissed.

Arnaud Emprin<sup>102</sup> who had been a missionary in New Caledonia since 1858, was installed on Ouvéa and with his arrival, the island returned to peace and religious tolerance. Samuel Ella stayed on Ouvéa until 1879. His replacement, James Hadfield, after working on Ouvéa for seven years, continued the work in a supervisory capacity from Lifou until 1920 when the reins were eventually relinquished in favour of the Paris Missionary Society (Garrett 1982, pp. 202-203).<sup>103</sup>

The problems of the Governor were not restricted to Protestants, Catholics and natives; they were also exacerbated by those within his own administrative ranks. Commander Bourgey, who led an expedition to Lifou in order to annex the Loyalty Islands, arrived

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<sup>100</sup> Eugène Gaultier de Richerie, Governor, 26 August 1870 to 25 September 1874.

<sup>101</sup> Louis Alleyron, Commandant, 25 September 1874 to 27 February 1875.

<sup>102</sup> Armand Empirin (1821-1898) arrived in New Caledonia in December 1858 and died on the Isle of Pines on 14 May 1898 (Escoffier 1993, p. 74).

<sup>103</sup> James Hadfield spent 42 years on Ouvéa and Lifou before handing over to the Paris Mission in 1920, at which time there were 36 schools about 1800 students and 6000 adherents in the Loyalty group (Garrett 1992, p. 366).

with reckless determination. His treatment of Protestant tribes and property caused a furore in Australia, Britain and France, and a ministerial reprimand for Guillain. Bourgey was relieved of his position as Commandant of the Loyalty Islands within a month. A second military expedition to Lifou, led by Commander Testard, resulted in the violent repression of natives who were fleeing from the military stronghold in Chépénéhé. This caused further dissatisfaction in France and an Imperial reprimand for Guillain. Articles in the French press blamed Testard for this vicious attack and less than a month later, he was relieved of his command by the Governor.

As noted above, the report in *Le Moniteur* on 20 April 1865 which was published nine months after the event, described a very different scene. In the article Testard is thanked for his ‘wise conduct’, his ‘conciliatory spirit’ and the ‘rectitude of his acts towards all—whether Catholics or Protestants.’ Reports vary throughout the literature: Samuel Macfarlane reported that those Protestant chiefs, who were replaced by Catholic ‘administrative chiefs’, were taken as prisoners to Port-de-France. This is in sharp contrast to the coverage of the event that appeared in *Le Moniteur*: ‘Protestants [...] became reassured and sent their chiefs to the Port-de-France to assist at the birthday fete of his Majesty’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 May 1865, p. 5) where they were provided with quarters near the house of ‘their friend Testard’. This article also reports the withdrawal of troops from Lifou and the recall and promotion of that ‘admirable officer’ Testard. The article ends with a warning that ‘special intelligence’ cannot always be ‘depended upon.’ Captain E. Trève replaced Testard as Commander of the Loyalty Islands after the military operations on Lifou (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 May 1865, p. 5).<sup>104</sup> He was a zealous Catholic, an enemy of the Governor and a friend of the Catholic chief, Ukeneso.

Ambiguities and the tactical use of violence made life difficult for the Protestant mission.

### **Marists and the irascible Reverend Jones in conflict**

In 1866, two Marist priests, Jérôme Guitta and François Beaulieu, began a mission on the island of Maré. By this time Protestantism was well established. Polynesian

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<sup>104</sup> This report includes that of *Le Moniteur* 30 April 1865.

evangelists had been on the island for twenty-five years, the LMS missionaries for twelve years and some of the people of Maré had been educated at St Johns College in Auckland. The most powerful tribe on the island, the si-Gwahma tribe of High Chief Naisseline, was Protestant,<sup>105</sup> and when his rivals adopted Catholicism, religious differences caused old tribal feuds to intensify. Further trouble arose when the Governor delimited tribal boundaries in favour of Catholic tribes. The Protestants revolted, war broke out and the Protestants were victorious. Worse was to come when the priests, due to cultural misunderstanding, prevented Catholic tribes from performing the post-war customary exercise of making a submission to the conquering tribe. There was further bloodshed and another twenty-one lives were lost.

A French man-of-war was sent to the island and an inquiry accused the Reverend Jones of urging the Protestants to fight. This was strongly denied. Jones was a long-term resident of Maré, and in his opinion, a customary submission from the rebels was the only way to secure ‘immediate and durable peace.’ He insisted that that he, a European, ‘could not have instituted a custom which reaches far back into the unhistoric past’ (House of Commons 1988, p. 5). According to Jones, the problems of the present were rooted in the past, and dated back to the arrival of the Marists.<sup>106</sup> The Catholics were ultimately judged to be responsible (House of Commons, p. 6) and the Governor, Amédée Courbet,<sup>107</sup> whose singular concern was for French subjects, not Catholics or Protestants (House of Commons 1988, p. 9) responded by banishing the Protestant chiefs to Noumea and Indochina. The Catholics in the meantime had fled with their priests to join their companions on the Isle of Pines.<sup>108</sup>

British–French rivalry reignited Kanak intertribal rivalry, jealousy and conflict. To rid the island of British influence, Protestant hereditary chiefs were replaced with Catholic

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<sup>105</sup> Of the six districts of Maré, only one is Catholic, the Western half (chief Naisseline). The eastern half is divided into five districts, governed by Wanakami, Hmaene, Washoema, Lali and Tinewami. Only Tinewami is Catholic. According to Jones, Naisseline defeated the ‘Papists’ in battle and, by the submission of the defeated tribe, Naisseline became by native right the Chief of the whole island (Garrett 1982, p. 204).

<sup>106</sup> ‘The sore is too deep-seated to be simply skinned over; it will always break out. It is the priests who are the fomenters of all native troubles, and until the French authorities remove them from the islands, and allow the natives to settle their tribal differences in their own native fashion, they will never have any peace.’ (House of Commons 1888, p. 6)

<sup>107</sup> Amédée Anatole Prosper Courbet, Governor, 8 August 1880 to 29 September 1882.

<sup>108</sup> Five years after fleeing to the Isle of Pines, the Catholics returned to Mare and under Governor Adolphe le Boucher, 22 July 1884 to 13 May 1886, further conflict erupted.

administrative chiefs, which upset the established tribal order and reignited the tension it was intended to resolve. Further pressure was applied to the LMS mission and this resulted in a spate of letters from Jones: to Earl Granville in the British Foreign Office; to Viscount Lyons, the British Ambassador in Paris; to de Freycinet, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs; to J. Jantealous, Director of the Interior; and to Admiral Jauréguibery. Meanwhile, the Director of the Interior visited the island and closed mission schools, insisting that all teaching should be conducted in French, and that a French National should regulate questions of religion (House of Commons 1888, pp. 18-19). Letters to the Editor in the *Sydney Morning Herald* were forwarded to Earl Rosebery, who had recently become Secretary of State in the Foreign Office. These, via the British Ambassador in Paris, were relayed to the French Government, which refuted the reports of French atrocities (*Sydney Morning Herald* 17 January 1885, p. 8). The Reverend Jones was considered a troublemaker intent on causing problems for the Government and the Governor wanted him removed. In a letter to the Minister of Navy and Colonies, Georges-Charles Cloué, Courbet warned that he would be forced to employ whatever powers were legally at his disposal in the treatment of foreigners unless the missionary changed his attitude. In reply, the Minister wrote:

Le procédé d'expulsion pourrait susciter des embarras internationaux [...] un pasteur français pourrait succéder au missionnaire anglais [...] ce qui amènerait les indigènes à comprendre que la question de nationalité est indépendante de la question des religions.

(Zorn 2011, p. 123)

Meanwhile the French Government seized the moment and took matters into its own hands. Louis Cru, a Pastor from the Reformed Church of France<sup>109</sup> was appointed to counterbalance the Jones effect. This effectively bypassed the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (SMEP) and met with the disapproval of the LMS and Pasteur Lengereau, the chaplain of the penitentiary. The arrival of Pastor Cru resulted in additional protest and the scission of the Protestant Church of Maré.

Most Protestants remained loyal to Jones, but the ambitious high chief Yeiwéné of the Naisseline line supported Cru and formed a church to challenge the power of Jones

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<sup>109</sup> The Reformed Church of France was a Protestant Church recognised by the State and, as such, the *pasteur* became a political pawn. The SMEP ally of the LMS was a Protestant society and was not recognised by the French government.

(Garrett 1982, p. 205). When Cru, the French Protestant head of the island, attempted to commandeer Jones' church at Ro, the rival tribes, which were representative of the British–French division within the Protestant Church, resorted to violent conflict. The subsequent native rebellion was such that le Boucher<sup>110</sup> dispatched the Director of the Interior, Lacascade, with a hundred soldiers and instructions to strengthen the position of Cru, and to close the church at Ro which according to Jones had become a *véritable tribune politique*. The conciliatory Lacascade refused to close the church and formally refused to obey, whereupon the Governor, who had already published a notice of the closure of the Church in Noumea, dismissed Lacascade and ordered him to return to France and to explain his conduct to the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. In the wake of the fracas, le Boucher was also relieved of his duties in New Caledonia and sent as Governor to Guadeloupe while Lacascade became Governor of Tahiti (*Le Matin* 5 May 1886, pp. 1-3).

In December 1887 a decree from the new Governor, Louis Nouet,<sup>111</sup> in accordance with a Ministerial telegram, charged the Reverend Jones with compromising public order and tranquillity in the Loyalty Islands. At the suggestion of the Director of the Interior, Delphino Moracchini, and the Head of the Judicial Service it was decreed:

Article 1. Mr Jones, Pastor, residing at Maré, is expelled from the territory of the Loyalty Islands; he is enjoined immediately to quit the said territory, which is forbidden him.

Article 2. In case of refusal or resistance on his part, he shall be constrained to it by force.

(House of Commons 1888, p. 32).

The Pastor was given thirty minutes to leave the island.

This old English Tartuffe has at last met with his deserts, and has been expelled from the country where he has sown trouble for years and years, incensing by all the means in his power the hate of the aboriginals [...] against the Roman Catholics and against France.

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 28 December 1887, p. 8).

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<sup>110</sup> Adolphe le Boucher, Governor, 22 July 1884 to 13 May 1886.

<sup>111</sup> Louis Hippolyte Marie Nouet, 5 June 1886 to 30 July 1888.

Except for reports in the Australian press (*Sydney Morning Herald* 19 December 1887, p. 4), Jones' expulsion was generally kept under wraps. An exception was a letter from the Free Protestant Church of Paris, which condemned the measure taken by the Governor: 'La mesure prise contre le Rev. Jones n'est pas une solution, elle n'est que le commencement des difficultés sérieuses' (Zorn 2012, p. 179). This schism within the Protestant Church foreshadowed that which occurred on the *Grande Terre* at Houailou seventy years later in 1957.

After the departure of Jones in 1887, the gap between the two sectors of the Church broadened. Pastor Cru, who was unable to gain the support that Jones had achieved, failed to live up to expectations and fell out of favour with the French government. The Governor, Noël Pardon,<sup>112</sup> in exasperation wrote to Franck Puaux of the French Evangelical Church informing him that Cru was not up to the task and asked for a replacement, someone capable of wiping out the memory of Jones. Cru was withdrawn in 1891, whereupon François Langereau, the chaplain of the penitentiary, wrote to Alfred Boegner, Director of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, proposing his son, an ordained minister, as a possible candidate. This proposal was accepted and finally, after almost fifty years of British domination, the *Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris* (SMEP) was installed in the colony (Zorn 2012, p. 179).

These turbulent years in the Loyalty mission saw a deluge of dismissals: priests, pastors, governors, commandants, *natas* and chiefs. Protestant–Catholic, French–English and intertribal rivalry was compounded by governors who, absorbed in their own agenda of colonisation, were oblivious of deteriorating relationships which were spiralling out of control. Politico-religious disaccord contributed to the hostility, but central was the centuries old intertribal enmity which was thrown into sharp relief with the arrival of the missionaries and the French.

Religious rivalry was restricted to the Loyalty Islands. It was only after the SMEP took control of the New Caledonian mission that Protestants were able to establish on *Grande Terre*. In the early days of the Ouvéa mission, boundaries were established in order to avoid disputes. When the priests, Fathers Palazy and Fabre visited Fayaoué, the Protestants who were surprised to discover the similarities of the two religions

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<sup>112</sup> Noël Pardon, Governor of New Caledonia, 12 January 1889 to 14 April 1891.

welcomed them. Macfarlane on Lifou, despite his criticism of Catholics, welcomed them on fete days when no-one was excluded and everyone was welcome. In the opinion of the Reverend Jones, whose thirty-three years on the islands had not always been easy, the battles between Catholics and Protestants were not wars of religion:

C'est simplement un ancien antagonisme ; mais étant divisés sur des questions de terres ou de chefs, les partis en cause ont choisi d'être également opposés religieusement.

(Howe 1978, p. 38).

This was also the opinion of Father Gaide:

Les catholiques et les protestants vivent séparés, ont peu de rapport entre eux ; c'est moins la religion que les questions de chefferies et de territoires qui les divisent.

(Howe 1978, p. 38).

These opinions underscore the fundamental use of violence to expand tribal power and the grasping of whatever may prove to be of advantage in this quest.

The scission of the Protestant Church on Maré provides an interesting example of disastrous conflict management where disregard of 'the other', ignorance of Kanak custom, unilateral decision-making and the absence of dialogue between all interested parties had devastating and far-reaching consequences. Attempts were made on many levels to stem conflict, but with each attempt, a new and ever-increasing cycle of hostility was set in place. Central to the conflict was intertribal rivalry, fuelled by religious difference and the neglect of the native custom. Custom had been obstructed by the priests, either in ignorance or with the desire to stamp out 'heathen' practices. By means of sanguinary retribution, justice was seen to be done when the Governor resorted to firearms and the military for the resolution of the conflict. This heavy-handed approach to conflict resolution angered the LMS missionary who, with pen and paper, enlisted the support of the Australian press, the British Government and the French Government. The French Government weighed into the argument on the side of their representative in New Caledonia, and the LMS missionary became the victim of forces beyond his control. The decision was made to replace British Protestant missionaries with their French counterparts.

This decision, which was intended to resolve conflict, set in motion a new cycle of discord as the divided Protestant movement of France was brought into play. In France,

the self-funded and LMS-supported SMEP was not recognised by the French Government. It was a Minister from the Government-funded Reformed Church who had been chosen to go to Maré. This antagonised the LMS which had been working on Maré for over fifty years, and aroused hostility when the LMS missionary, who had been working on the island for over thirty years, became the subordinate of the new French appointee.

British–French rivalry aroused intertribal rivalry and the rebellion which followed divided the Protestant Church on Maré. Again, the local Governor became involved and the LMS missionary was unceremoniously removed from the island. After 1891, dialogue between France and the LMS resulted in the appointment of an SMEP Pastor, in consequence of which the French and British missions worked in collaboration on the Loyalty Islands until the Reverend Hadfield retired in 1920.

In the early days of colonisation, tribal warfare became enmeshed in a web of external feuds, all of which affected Kanak lifestyle. The goal was to replace native political, judicial and belief systems with those of the West. Military reprisal and incarceration were chosen to resolve conflict rather than dialogue and reconciliation and, as has been described, this frequently led to an increasing cycle of conflict and instability. The attempt of the Church to take a conciliatory role was frequently limited by interdenominational warfare and the opposition of the anticlerical governors of an increasingly secular State. Although the Church provided a buffer between the Kanak and the European, the message of peace and love was frequently lost in tribal warfare, hatred and division.

## **Convicts, land and conflict**

As well as establishing peace and order in the colony, Guillaïn had instructions to make the necessary arrangements for the installation of a penal settlement. The suitability of New Caledonia for this purpose had been a decisive factor in the decision to annex the country:

Le gouvernement était désireux depuis longtemps de posséder dans les parages d’Outre-mer quelques localités qui pussent, au besoin, recevoir des établissements pénitentiaires. La Nouvelle-Calédonie offrait toutes les conditions désirables.

*(Le Moniteur 14 February 1854).*



Prison reform was a major concern in France where the mouldering *bagnes* had become nests of crime. In cities, crime was rife and the establishment of an overseas penal colony was seen as a beneficial and humane means of ridding the *métropole* of a dangerous element as well as providing a workforce for the construction of the new colony. A year after annexation, 30 May 1854, the Transportation Law was passed and this allowed common law criminals to be sent to penal colonies where they would be engaged in hard labour and the worst tasks of colonisation. Women sentenced to hard labour could also be transported to the colonies, where they would be employed in tasks tailored to their age and sex. According to the law, those sentenced to less than eight years were to remain in the colony for an additional period of time equivalent to the term of the sentence—*doublage*—while those sentenced to eight years or more were to remain permanently in the colony. For good conduct the prisoner could, at the discretion of the Administration, be employed by local inhabitants or the local Administration and at the end of his or her sentence receive a parcel of land and the means of cultivating it for his own benefit.

By decree on 2 September 1863, Napoleon III authorised the creation of a penal colony in New Caledonia, and on 9 May 1864, the first convoy of 250 prisoners arrived on *L'Iphigénie*. The welcome speech given by the Governor to these *ouvriers de la transportation* was extraordinarily warm:

Vous êtes envoyés en Nouvelle-Calédonie pour participer aux travaux importants à exécuter dans la colonie, je vous y attendais impatientement comme les auxiliaires dévoués dans cette œuvre [...] Votre conduite ici peut faire oublier les funestes égarements...

(Bonnichon & Gény 2012, p. 747).

In the social, economic and political turmoil of nineteenth-century France, the intention of Napoleon III was not only to close the *bagnes*<sup>113</sup> and build new colonies, but also to transform prisoners into honest citizens by exposing them to the redemptive quality of the land. The popular philosophy of the era was that of J-J Rousseau: ‘man is born free yet everywhere he is in chains’; it is nature which makes man happy but society makes him depraved and miserable.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Bagnes* closed in Rochefort in 1852, in Brest in 1858 and in Toulon in 1873.

<sup>114</sup> This is also the perspective of Saint-Simon (Reuillard 1992).

## The liberation of the felon and confinement of the native

The welcome speech of the Governor heralded a prosperous future for his *ouvriers* as they settled into the rural idyll. As the penitentiary expanded to become a major force on the island, vast tracts of land were acquired and this put the original inhabitants at a great disadvantage. For the Kanak, land is life and as large areas of land were removed from the symbiotic Kanak–land balance, the fight for Kanak survival took root. The liberation of the felon came at a cost, namely the confinement of the native. The penitentiary effectively divided the colony into three: free settlers for whom life was a battle; criminals, the unwanted of France who emerged as kings in *France Australe*; and the Kanak who were the most numerous and the most ignored.

The humanitarian vision of rehabilitation by way of hard labour in the construction of the new colony and the subsequent reinsertion of the liberated prisoner into honest society fell short of expectations. What seemed a possible form of reconciliation between the State and those it condemned was in reality quite different. An oversized penitentiary administration caused problems and after almost twenty years of transportation, there were only 57 kilometres of passable roads on the entire island (Dousset-Leenhardt 1969, p. 307). According to Moncelon, in addition to the shortage of roads there were no bridges, no public gardens, no docks, no facility for large boats, no sewers, and the streets of Noumea were a cesspool. To provide this infrastructure France had paid a huge cost for transportation (Moncelon 1885, p. 16). Many believed that transportation to the penal colony was an expensive reward rather than punishment, an Eldorado where prisoners lived ‘like foxes in a henhouse’ (Toth 1998, pp. 245-246):

L’Administration de la transportation a fait des bagnes une sinécure pour les malfaiteurs. Le territoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie est offert en prime aux plus grands scélérats. Sous prétexte de régénération, l’État comble de faveurs les condamnés aux travaux forcés et leur fait une situation que l’honnête homme malheureux peut envier sans jamais y parvenir.

(Moncelon 1886, p. 1).

The *libéré*<sup>115</sup> was provided with two to six hectares of arable land (Dousset-Leenhardt 1969, p. 306), clothing, food rations and free hospital care for thirty months, the right to

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<sup>115</sup> *Libéré*: prisoner who had completed his sentence.

choose a wife from the convent at Bourail, and an indemnity of 150 to 300 francs, depending on the size of his family. Food rations were also generous: the prisoners received 250 ml of wine and 60 ml of tafia on alternate days, a daily 750 grams of bread, 120 grams of dried vegetables, 20 grams of coffee and 25 grams of sugar five days weekly, 250 grams of fresh meat and two days a week salted lard (Moncelon 1886, p. 42; Delacour 1872, p. 29). Conditions were further improved when reforms were introduced by Governor Pallu de la Barrière<sup>116</sup> who, impatient with the rate of free colonisation, prevailed upon the Minister to allow the attribution of concessions to prisoners before their sentences had transpired. This was granted not to ensure an easy life but to expand the colony, as justified by Governor Noel Pardon:

Cruel laws can only guarantee cruel morals [...] The tilling of the soil is the most powerful rehabilitative force because it is the most direct and reveals most clearly the moral effect of the land upon the man serving a sanction.

(Cited in Toth 1999, p. 63)

Some prisoners, instead of engaging in the heavy labour required to found the colony, were able to find employment as domestics and gardeners; others became assistants for engineers and land surveyors. They wandered around the countryside with wine and cigarettes, or joined the prison orchestra, the *Musique de la Transportation*, and provided entertainment in the rotunda at the Place de Cocotiers. This deployment of prisoner labour met with criticism as being in contravention of the 1854 law which was intended to enforce hard labour. The daily report from the Isle Nou, New Caledonia, April 1883 stated:

The employment of convicts as scribes constitutes an abuse of power by the administration and should be stopped at all costs. To choose among the most intelligent of prisoners and transform them into workers for the bureau of affairs [...] is to leave them with no practical surveillance [...] and in consequence, one often finds them involved in illegal traffic.

(Cited in Toth 1999, p. 63).

In this 'Kingdom of the Prison', the penal administrator was king. Despite outside criticism, the budget, manpower and property holdings of this state within a state grew

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<sup>116</sup> Pallu de la Barrière was Governor from 29 September 1882 to 22 July 1884.

out of all proportion. Costs escalated; in 1864, the wages for the year were 143,000 francs and by 1877, they had risen to 4,500,000 francs. Staff employed by the penitentiary service outnumbered those of the civil service by 843 to 587 and in 1885 110,000 hectares was attributed to the penitentiary (Toth 2003, p. 47). The *libéré* enjoyed a lifestyle that would have remained a dream in the *métropole*.

George Griffith, in his inspection of the prison system, although generally critical of the leniency of corrective punishment in the colony, described the success of the program in Bourail, a thriving township of *libérés*. One *libéré*, transported for forgery and embezzlement, was the local photographer, editor and journalist of the *Bourail Indépendant*, and an ‘emeritus assassin’, a lawyer, transported because he ‘chose to make himself a widower’, was running the Bourail lending library. Despite pockets of success Griffith also found the transportation, regeneration and rehabilitation regime divisive, and noted the schism which separated free and bonded colonists. The two did not mix, they refused to live beside each other and this in his opinion left the Government with the choice of abandoning either the system of concessions or that of free colonisation (Griffith 1901, pp. 179-180).

The excessive privileges received by prisoners were drawn to the attention of the Ministry in France where it was believed that colonisation was being achieved at the expense of prisoner discipline and punishment. A ministerial commission of enquiry, the Dislère Commission, was set up in 1889-1900 to investigate and discard the ‘excessively humanitarian ideas that were dominant when the decree of 1880 was issued’ (Dislère cited in Toth 1998, p. 261). The outcome was to stop provisional land concessions to *transportés* immediately and to ensure that the law of 1854 and the ‘hard work of colonisation’ were applied in spirit and to the letter. The humanitarian experiment ended. In the philanthropic social, economic and political considerations of the era the Kanak remained a phantom figure, deprived of land and any of the ‘humanitarian’ ideals that the prisoners enjoyed. Rather than lead to reconciliation, this would produce resentment and conflict in the years ahead.

## **Political prisoners: The Communards**

Prussian victory over France in 1871 and the signing of the Frankfurt Peace Agreement left many in France demoralised and angry. The proletariat of Paris, after proclaiming the fall of the second Empire, established a revolutionary council, the Communards,

which vowed to continue the fight. In the midst of social unrest and political turmoil, the French army attacked the city commune and during a week of human butchery, *la semaine sanglante*, an estimated 20,000 Communard lives were lost.<sup>117</sup>

The Government of Adolph Thiers took repressive action and about 38,000 of the commune were arrested; of these, 3417 were sentenced to ‘simple deportation’, 251 to hard labour and 1169 to prison cells (Pisier 1971, p. 103). Simple deportation according to the law of 1810 meant a life sentence to a place outside Europe, which was to be determined by law. As New Caledonia had penitentiary and prison personnel, it was decided that the simple deportees would be sent to Isle of Pines, hard labour prisoners to the penitentiary at Nou Island and those to be incarcerated to the Ducos promontory. The Ducos promontory was uninhabited but the Isle of Pines was self-governing according to a treaty signed by Chief Vendegou and the French at the time of annexation in 1853 (Pisier 1971, p. 105).

The island was already overpopulated, as the High Chief and Father Goujon had welcomed nine hundred Catholics from Maré during the war of religion on that island. However, the decision had been made and Governor de la Richérie had been instructed to inform High Chief Samuel and his wife Queen Hortense, the daughter of Chief Vendegou. Apart from the concern of overpopulation, Father Rougeyron doubted the wisdom of placing Communards amidst the Catholic community on the island. He was aware that these urban savages, the Communards, had decreed the separation of Church and State, that they had converted churches into ‘clubs’, massacred the Archbishop of Paris and twelve Dominicans d’Arcueil, and imprisoned another sixteen priests at La Roquette (Pisier 1971, p. 106).

The Governor had two alternatives: either to ignore Hortense and her concern of overpopulation or to disobey the Minister and find another destination for the ‘simple deportees.’ Despite the treaty, which provided the Kanaks with self-government, and against the wishes of the Chief, the decision was made to split the island. There was no place for an independent Kanak community; the choice was made in favour of the local Governor and the Ministry in France. Land was confiscated from a fervent Catholic population for the benefit of violently anticlerical Parisian brigands. The Kanak were

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<sup>117</sup> The operation was led by Marshall MacMahon who later became President of France, 24 May 1873 to January 1879.

doomed as France determined to cleanse its shores of its 'savage' urban population (Bullard 2000, p. 11).

It was decided that the infertile west coast would be evacuated by the tribes, the Catholics from Maré would be transported to *Grande Terre* and the deportees would use the evacuated areas of the west coast. Half of the Catholics from Maré were offered refuge with Ukeneso and Father Fabre on Lifou. De la Barrière provided the dispossessed, by decree of 12 December 1872, with transport, 250 kilos of rice and 200 kilos of biscuit (*Bulletin Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* 1872, cited in Pisier 1971, p 107). In the bisection of the island, the prison received 4000 hectares and the Church 9500 hectares (Pisier 1971, p. 107).

In a history of errors, the French had placed anticlerical fanatics, who found that the sight of a *soutane* added to their punishment (Pisier 1971, p. 111), on the land of devout and fervent Catholics. The hatred of the Communards for Catholics was facetiously noted by Father Janin, the prison Chaplain, by the absence of their 'clientele' from his office (Pisier 1971, p. 111). European rivalries were being played out between the Church and 'urban savage' in New Caledonia.

Within a month, 1132 deportees had arrived on Isle of Pines and with later arrivals, this number swelled to 3021. Many of the political prisoners were well educated and soon managed to earn a reprieve and find employment in Noumea. These included Jourde, an accountant who found employment at a sawmill, Ballière, an architect who designed theatres for Higginson, and Dr Rastoul, who was employed as a medical practitioner. Two hundred of the deportees found employment on the mainland and contributed experience and expertise that was sadly lacking in the capital. The successful escape of Henri Rochefort, writer and politician, with five others put paid to these employment arrangements, which had worked so well for all concerned. Security was tightened and all deportees were returned to prison. The death toll among those deported was high; almost one in every ten died on the Isle of Pines due to illness, execution or simply disappearance. Dr Rastoul and nineteen others, with little seafaring knowledge in a bid to escape, added to this number (Brou 1978, p. 506).

## **The Kabyles swell the numbers, Kanak land further alienated**

The burgeoning numbers on the Isle of Pines were further expanded by some 200 Kabyles, prisoners of the 1871 war in Algeria. In 1871, the French were fighting on all fronts: the Franco-Prussian war in which Louis-Napoléon was defeated, the French civil war with the demise of the Paris Commune and the French-Kabyle war which led to the suppression of the Kabyle. All had an impact on New Caledonia. The Kabyle, discontented with the oppressive politics of French colonialism, rebelled when the Crémieux Decree gave French citizenship to Algerian Jews, but not to Muslims, Arabs and Berbers who remained ‘indigenous’ under the *Régime de l’Indigénat*.

While the French troops were fighting the Communards, the Kabyle uprising was successful, but with the suppression of the Commune the Prime Minister deployed troops to Algeria and the war was bitter and sanguinary. During the fighting which followed, some ten thousand were killed. Villages were burnt, crops were destroyed, the chief, Mohamed El Mokrani<sup>118</sup> was killed, and thousands more were thrown into prison. In indemnities, the Kabyles were forced to pay in excess of 30,000,000 francs and forfeit 446,406 hectares of their best land. To keep the rest, they were required to pay the French an additional 27,000,000 francs (Robin 1901, pp. 521-528), the population was reduced to extreme poverty and a great nationality disappeared. *Finis Kabyliae* (Robin 1901, p. 543).

The captured Kabyles and Communards, ‘brothers in arms’ against a shared enemy, were imprisoned together in Thouars and arrived together in New Caledonia. Paradoxically, most of those who had fought against French imperial values with such determination in 1871 joined ranks with their old enemy, the French, to suppress the Kanak uprising in 1878. Chikh-Aziz-ou-Haddad fought with a fearlessness that earned him a reprieve for good conduct (Robin 1901, p. 529). When the Communards were amnestied in 1879, the Kabyles were not included. On their return to France, the Communards campaigned for an extension of the amnesty for their ‘companions in misfortune’, but the situation in Algeria remained tense and the Government feared that the return of the insurgents of 1871 could create further disturbance to public order.

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<sup>118</sup> El Mokrani’s brother, Bou Mezrag, and the son of Sheik El Haddad were deported to the Isle of Pines (Pisier 1971, p. 134).

Amnesty was eventually granted to the Kabyles in 1895, but it was not until 1904 that they were finally able to return to Algeria.

### **The French Recidivist Bill: Australia and New Zealand join the protest**

In May 1885, the French Government broadened the scope of the Relegation Law to include recidivists. Until then only political and common law criminals were able by law to be transported to penal settlements. This law provided the ability to sentence repeat offenders to life imprisonment, in French overseas possessions, for as little as four misdemeanours such as theft, fraud and vagrancy. This Bill caused such a furore in New Zealand and Australia that the Bill was passed with ‘the names of the colonies struck out’ (AtoJsOnline 1886). The French anti-slavery politician, Victor Schoelcher, wrote a scathing letter of condemnation to the French Government. He criticised the ‘sordid egoism’ of a country of thirty-three million, which had the capacity to absorb 50,000 to 60,000 incorrigible recidivists but preferred to cleanse her shores by shipping them off to a country with a population of 16,000. France presented a deaf ear to this criticism and to the suggestion that the Bill mocked the sacred principles of the Republic (Schoelcher 1885, pp. 1-14).

In New Caledonia, the Relegation Bill was poorly received: agriculturalists and miners who were happy to employ *forçats* refused to employ recidivists. The Governor Pallu de la Barrière declared emphatically that:

New Caledonia could not receive any recidivists They would not be able to find work any more than the *libérés*. There were no industries in the colony and the *libérés* furnished more workers than were wanted.

(*The Brisbane Courier* 7 May 1885, p. 3).

Mining magnate and entrepreneur Higginson considered the Bill to be ‘disastrous.’ Land was earmarked for their arrival on the Baie de Prony, Île Brun and Ouaménie (Bernard 1805, pp. 399-400) and the Communard housing on the Isle of Pines was to be used.<sup>119</sup> Although the recidivists were unable to claim land, land was still required for housing. Again, the Kanak were further dispossessed as another tier of felons was added to the ‘civilising mission’, a mission which in its heartlessness was more destructive

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<sup>119</sup> Decreed as places for recidivists: 26 August 1886 Isle of Pines, 12 February 1889 Ouaménie, 12 February 1889 Baie de Prony, 22 April 1909 Ducos, 29 January 1913 Île Nou (Barbançon 2008).



than the savagery it purported to influence (Bullard 2000, p. 93). Again, violence was exacted on the indigenous population, which in turn engendered further violence.

### **The Reunion sugar workers: Another wave of immigrants and further reduction of Kanak land**

Free settlers from France were slow to take up offers of land, and Governor Guillain sought other means of improving the economy and boosting population numbers. As the sugar industry of Reunion had suffered a downturn, he believed that the larger producers might be interested in expanding their holdings in New Caledonia where sugar was already being successfully produced. In 1862, Ferdinand Joubert, on a concession of 4000 hectares at Dumbéa, produced sugar which gained recognition at the International Exhibition in London. Other planters followed and with them their indentured workers. To encourage production, Guillain offered 500 hectares free of charge to the first two to import sugar mills capable of producing 700-800 tons of sugar per year (Speedy 2008, p. 6). For many years, sugar mills and rum distilleries produced well until cyclones, grasshoppers and drought took their toll.

These huge concessions especially around Dumbéa, Païta and Mont-Dore added to the growing exasperation of the indigenous population. An additional 620 indentured labourers and large family groups added considerably to land requirements: Jolimont Kabar had eighteen children and the Douyère family of three siblings had twenty-nine children (Speedy 2008, p. 8). Land, for the *Réunionnais* was to be the key to success, but for the Kanak, another element of dispossession.

### **Arrivals from Alsace-Lorraine**

For the Kanak in New Caledonia the Franco-Prussian war was not without effect. With the defeat of France and the signing of Treaty of Frankfurt, Alsace and most of Lorraine were reclaimed by Germany.<sup>120</sup> Sixty thousand who wished to remain French migrated mainly to France but also to Algeria, which the Kabyle rebels had evacuated. Others, the *optants*, were offered a financial inducement to relocate to French overseas

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<sup>120</sup> These provinces had been German in the 17th and 18th centuries. Benefits of re-annexation included the strategic value of the Vosges mountains in the event of a future war with France and the large coal and iron deposits.

territories and several opted to go to New Caledonia where they received 10 hectare allotments, free of charge, at Moindou.

In the late nineteenth century, New Caledonia became a repository for the unwanted of France and with each new wave of settlement, transportees, deportees, Communards, Kabyles, Creoles, Alsatians and Lorrains, the Kanak became further dispossessed and more resistant to the dehumanising and subordinating pressure of colonial expansion, until in 1878 the situation culminated in violence.

## **The 1878 insurrection**

The revolt of 1878 burst ‘like a bolt from the blue.’ For twenty-five years, the Kanak had been forced to abandon the land of their ancestors and move further into the less hospitable areas of the central mountain range. From 1853, the question of land rights had been ambiguous for the French and a major source of conflict for the Kanak for whom the du Bouzet declaration had only provided a usufructuary right. In an amendment on 10 April 1855 Du Bouzet added: ‘Un dixième des terrains ruraux destinés à être vendus sera mis en réserve pour les indigènes’.<sup>121</sup> The decisions made on land usage by military Administrators were criticised by the *Conseil Général* as lacking clarity and failing to provide the sense and scope intended by the Minister.<sup>122</sup>

Subsequent changes to this decree were no less confusing and attracted similar criticism: ‘Cette confusion, si facile à expliquer quand on songe que le législateur de 1862 était lui aussi un marin peu familiarisé avec la délicate question domaniale’ (Conseil Général 1887, p. 6).

The indiscriminate distribution of land in response to the demands of each new wave of immigrants increased the frustration of the Kanak (Conseil Général 1887, p. 12). Within a year from 1 January 1876 until 1 January 1877, the number of settlers increased from

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<sup>121</sup> Article 3 of the decision of the Governor of the EFO (Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901).

<sup>122</sup> Criticism centred on the lack of legal expertise of those naval officers who had been responsible for drawing up the document: ‘C’est un marin qui prend possession d’une terre lointaine au nom de l’Empereur ; va-t-il entrer dans des questions de droit qui lui sont étrangères et qui sont d’ailleurs très-ardues ? Va-t-il déclarer que cette terre sera la propriété de l’État et que les concessions ne pourront être accordées que dans les conditions prescrites par la loi du 22 novembre, 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 1790 ? Il s’en gardera bien.’ (Conseil Général 1887, p. 6).

777 to 2752, boosting the immigrant population to 15,620. This included 3032 military and civil servants, 3836 *déportés* and 6000 *transportés* (Guiart 1968, p. 111).

Discontent arose from not only land confiscation but also the unauthorised theft of women from the tribes. Twenty-five kilometres from Boulouparis a *libéré*, his native Dogny partner and two children were massacred by Dogny tribesmen.<sup>123</sup> This led to the arrest and imprisonment of the chief of the Dognys as well as other local chiefs. A counterattack by the Dognys on the La Foa gendarmerie to free the chiefs left four gendarmes and a convict dead. On the same day, 20 Europeans and Pacific Island labourers were also killed in La Foa. Lives lost in further fighting included gendarmes and eighty foreigners: Europeans, New Hebrideans, Loyalty Islanders and Indians.<sup>124</sup> The military, under the command of Colonel Gally-Passebosc, was sent in, and the war was on.

On 3 July 1878, Gally-Passebosc was killed. Reinforcements from France and Indochina as well as Kabyles and Communards were recruited.<sup>125</sup> Traditional tribal enemies were mobilised to assist the French track the rebel tribes. After two months of fighting, Ataï, the Vercingétorix of the revolt, was killed by a tribal rival from Canala.<sup>126</sup> Still, the fighting continued until the following January when typhoid broke out among the troops and the fighting stopped.

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<sup>123</sup> Guiart (1968, p. 111) believes that the female was the young wife of the polygamous chief of the Dogny.

<sup>124</sup> These would have been Réunion sugar workers from the sugar mill at Ouameni which was attacked by the Ouameni tribe on 26 June 1878 (Latham 1975, p. 53).

<sup>125</sup> It might seem surprising that the *déportés* would fight with the French who only a few years earlier had been their enemy; the Kabyle fighting against colonialism and loss of land in Algeria and the Communards against, among other things, the ceding of French territory to the Germans. The Communards were, however, also patriotic. Their fight was for a certain future for France after the humiliating defeat of their country at the hands of the Germans. A noted exception was Louise Michel whose sympathy was pro-Kanak. She is reputed to have given part of her red Communard scarf to Ataï. When amnesty was granted, almost all the Communards returned to France.

<sup>126</sup> Jérémie Karé (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p 29) believes that the people of Canala were with the soldiers to warn the Kanak that the soldiers were approaching and to hide: 'Si les gens de Canala et de Houailou vont avec les soldats français ce n'est pas pour collaborer avec eux et pour les renforcer mais pour jouer un rôle à l'intérieur pour les noyauter'. Saussol (2013, pp. 169-180) suggests that the Canala tribe may not only have been informed of the rebellion but may have instigated it; they may have been double agents. References indicate the hatred of the Canala for the French (Rivière 1881, p. 174 Trentinian cited in Dousset-Leenhardt 1969, p. 176). In the march across the *Chaîne centrale*, the Canala were undecided about their support of the French: 'The tension was palpable'. Then Servan, the commandant leading the expedition, gave Nondo his gun. This was a very powerful customary *geste*, an offer of alliance. By accepting the offer Nondo validated it. There is also the suggestion that Ataï and Nondo were brothers or

During the period of massacres, ‘Melanesian acts of violence’ accounted for the death of 200 Europeans, and in reprisal ‘European acts of violence,’ 1000-1200 Kanak were killed. The press applauded the European victory, and attacked the natives for their violence:

Murdering wretches who have desolated this land [...] have lately disgraced the name of man. Like beasts of prey they have killed for the love of killing, and whether a stranger, whom they never had seen, a strong hale man who had extended the hand of friendship [...] the natives were insane enough to imagine that by killing all in their way, man, woman or child, friend or foe, they could drive the white man from the island, and once again enjoy their cannibal feasts.

(*Sydney Morning Herald* 28 November 1878, p. 7).

## **The cause of the conflict in 1878**

Although the trigger that started the revolt was the death of a ‘mixed blood’ family, it is unlikely that the insurrection of 1878 was in response to the removal of a Dogny woman from her tribe. Cohabitation was common practice in New Caledonia: ‘Il existe actuellement, à la Nouvelle-Calédonie un grand nombre de métis, provenant de race blanche et de race indigène’ (Moncelon 1886, p. 10). Kanak women were married to French men and living in France. Among the military, cohabitation was common; Captain Bourgey returned to France with a Kanak wife and mixed blood children and James Paddon’s wife was New Hebridean. Some Kanak men may have sought revenge but it is unlikely that this would have led to war.

Several causes were suggested for the rebellion, including land expropriation, the violation of native burial sites, the devastation of Kanak gardens and the antagonism between the conquered and the conqueror. As Rivière states:

Mais la grande cause de l’insurrection, la seule pourrait-on dire, c’est l’antagonisme qu’on a vu de tout temps, du peuple conquérant et du peuple conquis. Il faut que ce dernier soit absorbé par l’autre ou qu’il

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cousins (Delathière 2004, p. 177). In spite of a reconciliation ceremony between the tribes in 2014, the intertribal relationship remains sensitive.

disparaisse. Or ces races noires ou cuivrées, qu'elles soient de l'Amérique ou de l'Océanie, n'absorbent pas.  
(Rivière 1881, p. 281).

As much as the Kanak detested the whites, they detested their cattle even more. Ataï complained to Governor Orly<sup>127</sup> about the unreasonable acquisition of land and the devastation caused by cattle. Separate bags of soil and stones were used to illustrate that which the Kanak had, and that which they retained after colonisation. Ataï also complained to the Governor about marauding cattle, which were destroying native yam and taro plantations. When it was suggested that the Kanak should fence their plantations, Ataï responded: 'we will build fences the day our yams and taros leave the plantation and eat your cattle' (*Le Monde* 13 May 2014).<sup>128</sup> When the early settlers arrived, their numbers were few and they were welcomed, but when they started buying land without consulting the elders and desecrating native cemeteries, negotiations became violent as fertile coastal land was confiscated and the Kanak were pushed further into the less fertile central mountain range. As whites took over the land, hatred grew and led to rebellion.

The pressure on available land was compounded by the establishment of the delimitation committees of Governor de Pritzbuër in 1876,<sup>129</sup> which provided pro-French tribes with a distinct advantage. Ataï's tribe was anti-French. After delimitation, his tribe was left with 922 hectares, while his smaller pro-French neighbour received over 2000 hectares; Ataï's allies, the Dogny, had 632 hectares, while the pro-French rival Mandiai and Pocquereu tribes received 1107 hectares and 1286 hectares respectively (Latham 1975, p. 61). Pro-French allegiance was rewarded, sowing further seeds of conflict and violence.

At the time of the insurrection, the Kanak had been treated with contempt for twenty-five years; their only support had come from the Church and anti-clerical Governors had hampered that. During this time, the Kanak had lost land, crops, tribal

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<sup>127</sup> Jean-Baptiste Orly, Governor, 11 April 1878 to 8 August 1880.

<sup>128</sup> An oral history as told by Berger Kawa, a descendant of Ataï's clan. In 1859, 1000 head of cattle were imported from Australia; by 1878 there were 80,000 (Dousset-Leenhardt 1969, p. 302).

<sup>129</sup> Léopold Pritzbuër, Governor, 27 February 1875 to 11 April 1878.

burial grounds and identity.<sup>130</sup> Father Apollinaire, a Melanesian priest from Moindou, spoke with pride and admiration of Ataï,<sup>131</sup> who fought to the death in an unwinnable battle and who, due to his ‘exceptional personality’, was able to rally the villages of the *Grande Terre* in a quest for liberty, family, and custom. According to Apollinaire, the reason for Kanak discontent could be traced back to Du Bouzet’s declaration that the native ‘never had and would never have the right to own land’. Land expropriation policies ignored Kanak custom and tradition. The cause of the revolt was listed simply in *La Nouvelle Calédonienne* as: ‘They are black. We are white. They were the first occupants of the island. We arrived later. Formally, the vast land was free. Now the stations move closer together and the colonists increase to crowd the natives out. They revolt.’ (Cited in Clifford 1982, p. 48).

## The Trentinian Report

Following the insurrection, the Government requested a report on the cause of the revolt. The report was prepared by General Arthur de Trentinian but when presented it was discarded and ignored. This did not escape the notice of a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist: ‘The French authorities have held an inquiry into the causes which have led to the New Caledonia revolt, but up to the present, the result of this inquiry has been kept secret.’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 22 February 1879, pp. 4-5).

The report was considered subversive due to its criticism of the French, and remained hidden and unpublished until 1965. Trentinian concludes in his report: ‘Avoir signalé nos torts, c’est prendre la promesse de les éviter désormais et d’empêcher ainsi le retour des massacres qui ont eu lieu.’ (Dousset-Leenhardt 1969, p. 159). In the report, the Kanak are described as people who work for their chief, family and tribe producing from the land that which is necessary for survival. In a thirty-page report Trentinian lambasted the colonial regime and the lack of respect of the Europeans for the Kanak.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> From an official publication for the colonial exhibition of 1889 published by order of the Under-Secretary of State for colonies and protectorates of the Pacific Ocean: ‘Une insurrection indigène, amenée en grande partie par des déprédations continuelles du bétail des éleveurs dans les plantations, par la distribution souvent inconsidérée de grandes étendues de terres prises aux naturels sans compensation d’aucune sorte, par des violations de sépulture, par des vexations dont les indigènes ne peuvent obtenir justice, éclata le 25 juin 1878.’ (Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901, p. 21).

<sup>131</sup> Latham (1975, p. 50) lists the Moindou tribe of Moméa as an enemy tribe of Fr Apollinaire.

<sup>132</sup> His report included as the major reasons for the insurrection: insufficient investment in native education; insufficient effort to maintain lawful and just relations between Europeans and Kanak; and

The potentially reconciliatory nature of this analysis was unheeded at the time. French interests had been defended by violence and as a peacekeeping measure, after the battle, 1200 native prisoners were sent in exile to the Isle of Pines and Belep. The barriers that segregated European and Kanak were raised, the seeds of further violence were sown.

### **Governor Nouet: *L'Indigénat***

When Louis Nouet became Governor<sup>133</sup>, the inhabitants of New Caledonia were still traumatised by the events of 1878. Throughout the island, Europeans were demanding greater security and more control over Kanak activity. The findings of the Trentinian report had not been released and the Kanak had no voice. The decree of 11 July 1887 gave the Governor the ability to set tribal boundaries and on 18 July 1887, the repressive *Régime de l'Indigénat*<sup>134</sup> was introduced. The *Indigénat* divided the country further and the schism between natives and Europeans increased. French native subjects and French European citizens were subjected to two different systems of government, two different legislations and two different justice systems. French citizens were governed by Republican law and French subjects the Imperial law of the colonial jungle. The *Indigénat*, which applied only to the native non-citizens, protected the authority of the Administration. It provided Commandants with the power to accuse, condemn, intimidate and imprison without appeal. White supremacy was absolute, authoritarian and dictatorial. The hapless natives were ruled by a regime of decrees and statutes, which were variously described as being brutal, cruel and sadistic, intimidating, heavily policed and heavily taxed. The *Indigénat* defined tribal boundaries, allowed the appointment of administrative chiefs, determined infractions and terms of punishment and subsequently introduced a head tax<sup>135</sup> to fill the coffers of a moribund economy and provide workers for an under-supplied labour market.<sup>136</sup>

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above all, imprudent concessions of land and dispossession of Kanak in violation of previous administrative guarantees (Dousset-Leenhardt 1978, pp. 129-133).

<sup>133</sup> Louis Nouet, Governor, 5 June 1886 to 30 July 1888.

<sup>134</sup> *L'Indigénat*, although often called *Code de l'Indigénat*, was never a Civil Code or a Penal Code. It was a collection of rules which should perhaps be called a *régime* (Merle 2004, p. 142). These rules were imposed on all French colonies except the old colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, Réunion, Saint-Pierre et Miquelon and the *Établissements français dans l'Inde* (Delathière 2004, p. 16).

<sup>135</sup> An edict on 23 December 1887 lists criminal offences for non-French citizens (Merle 2002, p. 87): ♦ not obeying orders; ♦ leaving reserve without permission; ♦ possession of Kanak weapons in areas inhabited by Europeans; ♦ practice of sorcery or accusations of such against others; ♦ presence in bars

Natives, administration, and the French State viewed the *Indigénat* differently. The Republican State justified the regime with empty rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice*, of assimilation en route to eventual inclusion. The colonial government was empowered by Kanak incarceration and oppression, and for the Kanak the *Indigénat* meant degradation and despair.

In 1996, fifty years after the *Indigénat* had been abolished, older Kanak who had experienced the *régime* were interviewed for a special publication of the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak* (ADCK) journal *Mwà Vée*, entitled *L'Indigénat* (*Mwà Vée* 1997). Until then, literature relating to the *Indigénat* had been almost totally legalese and European. The period for the Kanak was a sad memory, a period of *non-dit* and *la nuit coloniale*. The intention of this issue of the review was to expose memories of the past in order to inform the present generation and to build a strong base for the future. The *Indigénat* years had been a period of population decline, and alcohol had become a coping mechanism for the unsatisfactory psychosocial environment of the reserve. Prostitution and gonorrhoea had led to infertility and the Kanak population fell from an estimated 38,000 in 1887 to 27,000 in 1921 (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, p. 33). Wakolo Pouyé, a teacher from the Embouchure tribe at Ponérihouen, recalled the intimidation, the loss of authenticity and identity.<sup>137</sup> It was apartheid, and he remembered the segregation: ‘on ne mange pas à la même table à cette époque’ (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 25). Yet there were signs of reconciliation, notably in the role played by the Protestant Pastor Maurice Leenhardt. In Pouyé’s view, it was Maurice Leenhardt who, by introducing the ‘temperance society’, saved the Kanak from extinction in the reserves. Memories of the *Indigénat* had remained dormant for fifty years for the old Kanak: ‘C’était comme si je découvrais à mon tour la réalité de l’Indigénat !’ (*Mwà Vée*

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and cabarets; ♦ nudity in European centres and along the road; ♦ presence in European houses without authorisation; ♦ clearing of bush by fire; ♦ disrupting public order or work in houses, shops, factories, etc.; ♦ circulating in the streets of towns and cities after 8 p.m.

In 1892 the following was added: ♦ disrupting public order in Noumea and in rural centres.

<sup>136</sup> ‘Avant d’augmenter les charges déjà si lourdes qui pèsent sur la situation européenne, il me semble qu’il existe à notre portée une autre source importante de revenus qu’il convient de ne pas négliger plus longtemps ; je veux parler de l’impôt sur les indigènes. Nous avons là, près de nous, une population de plus de 40,000 âmes qui est devenue française par l’occupation et qui, j’en suis convaincu, ne tardera pas à le devenir par les sentiments [...] Certains peuples adoptent une politique coloniale très habile peut-être qui consiste soit à supprimer les indigènes soit à en faire de véritables esclaves. La France est un pays généreux ; c’est elle qui la première, a proclamé l’émancipation des Noirs ; ce n’est pas elle qui consentira jamais à détruire ni à asservir des hommes soumis à sa domination.’ (Extract of speech 16 August 1886 by Governor Nouet, cited in Delathière 2004, p. 17).

<sup>137</sup> Wakolo Pouté was born in 1928 into the *Embouchure de Ponérihouen* tribe (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 23).



1997, p. 26). In the interview, Wakolo turned questions of the past into answers of hope for the future: the ‘two colours, one people’ of the *Union Calédonienne*, of a multiracial tomorrow, the new present and not the old past: ‘Il va falloir aboutir à une société mélangée, unifiée, réunie.’ (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 27).

Jérémie Karé, who was born in 1925, attended Maurice Leenhardt’s school Do Neva, at Houaïlou. When he was asked what happened to the traditional chiefs when they were replaced by those chosen by the colonial administration, he seemed to be surprised: ‘Mais ils sont là, ils sont respectés. Ils sont toujours chefs coutumiers.’ (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 29). The administrative chief was merely a mouthpiece with no real customary power. The Kanak approached the regime with flexibility rather than rigidity and this, as in La Fontaine’s fable, helped them to survive.<sup>138</sup> The clan was also a support:

Chez nous, il y a la guerre mais il existe une façon de retrouver la paix, c’est le pardon. Il concerne un clan tout entier et pas seulement la personne offensée. La faute d’une personne engage l’ensemble de son clan. Elle n’est pas individuelle, elle est communautaire.

(*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 3).

The maintenance of customary practice provided the Kanak with a way of responding to European violence, and a traditional pathway towards reconciliation.

The decree was to be revised and renewed every ten years, according to the needs of the colony. It was not until after the Second World War, in 1946, that the *Indigénat* was finally abolished.

### **Paul Feillet, Governor of New Caledonia 1894-1902: Contradictions in vision, reconciliation denied**

When Governor Feillet arrived in the colony in June 1894, the country was teetering on bankruptcy. Mining revenue had slumped and mines were closing due to competition from Canada. Livestock production was down and floods and grasshopper plagues had destroyed crops. Feillet realised that the future of the country was dependent upon minerals, livestock and coffee and in the economic climate it was coffee, the ‘nickel of agriculture,’ upon which his hopes were pinned. To sustain the development of the

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<sup>138</sup> This fable of the Oak and the Reed: the oak, rigid and proud, could not survive the wind, but the reed with flexibility and humility survived.

coffee industry free settlers were needed and these had been slow to arrive due to the stigma of the 'prison land' image: 'Ce pays, si beau, si riche, souffre de ne pas être connu. On l'a toujours vu sous l'aspect sinistre et décourageant d'une géôle lointaine.' (Feillet 1894, p. 12).

### **The 'dirty tap' of transportation is turned off**

The decision was made to stop transportation and 'to turn off the dirty water tap' (Delbos 1993, p. 275). The Governor began an advertising campaign with guidebooks and brochures published under the direction of the Ministry of Colonies.<sup>139</sup> In France, the *Union Coloniale Française* published a fortnightly journal, *La Quinzaine Coloniale*, which promoted New Caledonia not as an Eldorado, but as a country where success was assured for those with resources who were prepared to work. The immigrants targeted were those with a reserve capital of 5000 francs, but in four years, only 1200 new settlers had taken up the offer. The Feillet target was 10,000 to 20,000.

By stopping transportation, the flow of convict manual labour came to a halt and with it, the cheap workforce required to build the colony. It was now necessary to replace this workforce by recruitment in Indochina, the New Hebrides and Batavia.

### **Marists and Governor in conflict**

In New Caledonia, the two dominant powers were the Marist mission and the prison. The new Governor favoured neither of these. Having decided to stop transportation, he was now faced with the opposition of the Church. In France, the move was towards anticlericalism, radical secularity, the abandonment of the Concordat with the Vatican and the termination of financial patronage of the Catholic Church (Garrett 1992, p. 107). On *Grande Terre*, the Catholics had reigned supreme, and when State funding was withdrawn, Church property was reclaimed. When Protestants, whose activity had been restricted to the Loyalty Islands, were provided with religious liberty, the

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<sup>139</sup> These brochures included *Notice sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Gallet, *La plantation du café en Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Camouilly, *L'Émigrant en Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Dr Davillé (the initial print run of this publication in 1894 was 10,000 copies; this was followed by a second edition in 1901), *Les Débuts d'un Émigrant en Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Villaz, *La vie du colon en Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Devillers, Reverchon and Vigoureux, and the monthly Bulletin of the *Union Agricole Calédonienne* (Colquihart 1990, p. 2).

Catholics rebelled. They began a lobby against the Governor using André Ballande, an influential businessman and benefactor of the Catholic Church in New Caledonia, as an intermediary. For the eight years of his governorship Feillet was dogged by Catholic opposition and conflict. In addition, between Protestants and Catholics, the Church and Government and the Church and State, the cycle of conflict resurfaced.

The Marist mission enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the ‘House of Ballande,’ a powerhouse in the development of New Caledonia, and the Bishops Fraysse and Chanrion used this relationship to advantage in their attack on the Governor. André Ballande was an astute businessman and devout Catholic. He ran his business from France and for him to have a trusted source of local information from an uncompetitive ally provided him with a commercial advantage. When the influence of the General Council increased, Ballande saw the benefit in having a representative on the council. Bishop Fraysse obliged with a candidate who had the ability to defend both the House of Ballande and the Catholic mission, and informed Ballande of his choice by coded telegram (Shineberg & Kohler 1990, p. 7). For thirty years Gabriel Laroque filled this role to the satisfaction of merchant and mission, and for this, the Church was handsomely remunerated. As the convict labour market disappeared, the Bishop also arranged, through his confreres in Haipong, a shipment of 750 prisoners from the Poulo Condore Island jail for ‘the House of Ballande’.<sup>140</sup> This was a lucrative transaction, and for the Church’s role in this unholy alliance it was paid ten francs per head. The Church also received large gifts of money and a levy on the profits of certain business ventures. At the peak of Church–Government hostility, which translated into intra-French conflict, Ballande, in collaboration with Bishop Fraysse, stood for the Chamber of Deputies in Paris to promote the mission and to counter antagonism.<sup>141</sup>

### ***Feillettistes and anti-Feillettistes: The war of the press***

The press was not immune from Church-Government rancour.<sup>142</sup> When the Bishop refused to endorse the newly established Agricultural Union of Caledonia differences

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<sup>140</sup> Evenor De Greslan was one of the *Grands Blancs* sugar planters from Réunion Island who was instrumental in the development of the sugar industry in New Caledonia (Speedy 2008, p. 7).

<sup>141</sup> This antagonism concluded in 1905 with the complete separation of Church and State.

<sup>142</sup> ‘La mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie est horriblement attaquée, on peut dire persécutée [...]. La Liberté défunte a été remplacée par Le Radical néo-calédonien. Deux fois par semaine, il vomit des

between Church and Government became irreconcilable. The Governor called for the removal of Fraysse from the colony, calling him the ‘enemy of free colonisation’ (Delbos 1993, p. 282), and in an attempt to turn the tables, Fraysse prevailed upon his friend André Ballande to acquire a controlling interest in the local pro-Government newspaper, *Le Radical*.<sup>143</sup>

The Government weighed into the conflict, accusing the Church of opposing its policies of forced labour and head tax (Shineberg & Kohler 1990, pp. 3-21).

### **Tribal land further reduced**

One of the problems facing the free colonisation policy was the acquisition of land for the anticipated new arrivals. The first land reserved was that of the penitentiary which in 1885 amounted to some 110,000 hectares but more was needed for the Governor’s ambitious project. Feillet justified the confiscation of additional land by referring to the act of annexation when all land became that of the State and to the tenet that the Kanak had a purely precarious title to the land that they occupied. Moreover the ‘revision’ of land was never imposed, it was always negotiated and the price received by the chief was not payment but merely ‘le signe palpable du consentement’ (O’Reilly 1953, p. 224). The restriction of native land facilitated administration and controlled the primitive population, which the Governor, imbued with the evolutionary ideology of the day, considered a lower species in need of taming and civilising. Dispossession was also justified by the claim that new settlers would add value to the land and provide salaried employment for dislodged and dislocated natives. In the vast reorganisation of territorial land, the Kanak holding was reduced to three hectares per head of population (Merle 1999, p. 16). O’Reilly, in his investigation, found that in a period of thirteen months, from November 1898 to December 1899, no fewer than 74 ordinances related

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blasphèmes affreux contre Dieu, Jésus Christ, la Sainte Vierge et la religion et insulte grossièrement la Mission et les missionnaires. Il est soutenu et probablement dirigé par les gouvernants qui en veulent à la Mission’. (Delbos 1993, p. 279).

<sup>143</sup> The Bishop in an outburst of vituperative railing described the newspaper as ‘[...] cette horrible feuille a dépassé en violence ce que vous voyez de pire dans les plus mauvaises publications de Paris. C’est de la rage, de l’épilepsie, du satanisme. Ce qui n’est pas étonnant, car l’inspiration est prise à la loge dont les adeptes sont malheureusement bien nombreux dans ce pauvre pays.’ (Delbos 1993, p. 284).

to the limitation of native reserves and the acquisition of land for settler use.<sup>144</sup> Included in these transactions was the removal of 4717 hectares from the Houaïlou tribe which in exchange received 995 francs and a list of restrictions:

Les indigènes ne pourront rien réclamer en sus, soit pour privation de récoltes ou de plantations, soit pour tout autre motif [...] Ils devront également déguerpir de ces terrains désignés ci-dessus. Ils devront également déguerpir de ces terrains dès que l'ordre en sera donné. Si, à leur départ, des récoltes en taros ou en ignames, restaient à faire, ils auraient le droit de venir enlever les dites récoltes de leur maturité.

(Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901, p. 16).

Other parcels of land transferred between 1899 and 1900 included 6217 hectares in the Kouaoua valley for the sum of 1110 francs, 483 hectares from the Gomen and 485 hectares from the Tieti tribe for which they received 200 francs and a 'Lefauchaux' rifle (O'Reilly 1953, p. 224). The law as it related to tribal land was vague. An inspector in a report 'Rapport de l'inspecteur des colonies Fillon du 15 mai 1907' described this lack of durability of the law: 'Je ne crois pas que le caprice d'un gouvernement local ait, dans aucune autre colonie, soumis à plus de variations les droits des premiers occupants autochtones.' (Cited in Merle 1999, p. 17). These new land claims were in flagrant contradiction to previous land settlements and caused an increase in intertribal tension that would inevitably lead to open conflict.

### **The Feillet head tax on natives: Conflict and the Committee for the Defence and Protection of Natives<sup>145</sup>**

The head tax which was introduced by Feillet and the General Council on 22 November 1895 can also be viewed as an act of violence and a source of discontent. This tax applied only to adult male Melanesians, who were forced to pay 10 francs per annum,

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<sup>144</sup> Details of the orders for the spoliation of Kanak land from January 1899 to January 1900 inclusive are detailed in *Spoliation des indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Mémoire du comité de protection et de défense des indigènes* (Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901, pp. 14-20).

<sup>145</sup> The *Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes* (CPDI)—Committee for the Defence and Protection of Natives—was a committee set up in Paris by Paul Viollet in 1892 for the defence and protection of indigenous people against colonial excesses.

which equated to the native working for a settler for ten days.<sup>146</sup> In February 1901, Hippolyte,<sup>147</sup> Chief the Catholic tribe of Touho, accused Amane, Chief of the pagan tribe of Poyes, of not paying the tax. The Poyes people denied this and took to the bush. They were pursued by the military, houses were burnt, crops were destroyed and lives were lost in *les troubles de Touho* (Legiard 2004, p. 51). In a report in *Le Temps*, 12 May 1901, Feillet declared that this violent attack was an isolated case that had only occurred after all means of conciliation had been attempted. The *Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes* (CPDI) responded to this with incredulity:

Brûler un village abandonné par des désespérés qui ne peuvent payer l'impôt, et déclarer ensuite qu'on se propose avant d'engager une poursuite sans merci, de tenter tous les moyens de conciliation, est un de ces traits admirables, où se révèle naïvement l'étonnante inconscience de certaines administrations coloniales.

(Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901, pp. 1-2).

The CPDI in a letter to the Minister of Colonies appealed for the removal of this tax on natives whose land on *Grande Terre* had been seized: 'la plus cruelle qui puisse être signalée dans nos possessions coloniales' (Comité de protection et de défense des indigènes 1901, p. 4). As well, the CPDI demanded, in the name of humanity and justice, the repeal of several decrees: the decree of 12 March 1897, which gave the Governor power to intern natives without representation or trial for an undetermined period of time; the decree of 18 July 1887, which gave the Governor the right over indigenous property; and the law of 23 November 1897, which regulated the dispossession of natives. Recognising the gross injustices to which natives, who were legally French, had been subjected, the CPDI also demanded the restitution of tribal land that had been confiscated since November 1897. These claims were supported by certain settlers who complained of a return to indigenous slavery.

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<sup>146</sup> With an estimated population of 40,000 Kanak in 1880 (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, p. 33), this was seen as an additional source of revenue. Note that this population decline [from the 40,000-60,000 in the early to mid-1800s estimated by Filippi and Angleviel (2000a, p. 33)] is disputed by Shineberg (1983).

<sup>147</sup> Hippolyte, who spoke French, was supported by the whites with whom he had good relations. The Poyes was an enemy tribe which after the 'troubles' became Protestant (Legiard 2001, pp. 51-89).

In the Hienghène area tribal hatred had existed for generations<sup>148</sup> and when ‘inalienable’ land in the area was attributed (Duroy 1988, p. 68),<sup>149</sup> war broke out. The war was quelled in a military operation lead by René Moriceau, the head of the newly formed Native Affairs Bureau. This expedition was criticised in a letter written by Dr Normet, the colonial doctor in Hienghène, who believed that a simple incident between the tribes—Chiefs Amane and Bouillant (Poyes tribe) and Chief Hippolyte (Touho tribe)—had resulted in the *répression d’une rébellion imaginaire*. In the name of civilisation this murderous reprisal gained legitimacy; fourteen were killed and thirty were injured. In the aftermath of this war, major changes were recommended. The Governor banned the sale of firearms to natives and Moriceau recommended the reinstatement of customary chiefs due to the respect and influence they had over tribal members (O’Reilly 1953, p. 227).

Feillet was authoritarian and ambitious and consequently made many enemies including the members of the *Conseil Général*. With widespread unrest, it seemed as though the Feillet idea of civilisation was more destructive than the savagery it intended to conquer (Mwà Vée 1997, p. 29).<sup>150</sup> The *Conseil* demanded an explanation for the dispossession of native reserve land and the country was soon divided between the *Feillettistes* and the *anti-Feillettistes*. The local press and Bishop Fraysse entered the fray. The Bishop disagreed with the Governor’s treatment of natives and the resumption of tribal land, and in particular the handling of the confiscation of land of the Ina tribe near Pouebo. Feillet had been eager to acquire the land of this small Catholic tribe for his free settlers, and even though the chief of the tribe had agreed with the proposition, the tribe did not. The tribe sought the help of the Marist missionaries.<sup>151</sup> Bypassing and ignoring the

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<sup>148</sup> ‘Les tribus de la vallée de la Hienghène n’a pas disparu (sic) et ne disparaîtra pas (sic) de longtemps. Les indigènes se méfient les uns des autres et font des détours très longs pour ne pas traverser les terres de leurs ennemis.’ (O’Reilly 1953, p. 226).

<sup>149</sup> Already settled in the area were the forebears of those involved in the Hienghène massacre in 1984: Jean-Louis Sangarné who had fought in the Sedan, Claude Petitjean, a *communard*, and the Lapetite family with their eleven children were *Feillet colons*. Between the years 1895 and 1905 the amount of land provided for colonisation in the Tiendanite Valley alone, in the Hienghène area, increased from 469 hectares to 1234 hectares (Duroy 1988, p. 62).

<sup>150</sup> According to Jérémie Karé, the Governor found it difficult to communicate with the Kanak and attempted to do things his own way: ‘il se met à nommer des chefs sans se rendre compte de la structure coutumière existante. Il le base, entre autres, sur des Kanak qui connaissent un peu de français et peuvent lui permettre de communiquer avec cette société Kanak qu’il ne connaît pas.’

<sup>151</sup> ‘Les Canaques n’ont jamais accepté la spoliation foncière dont ils étaient constamment les victimes. Ils n’ont pas cessé de s’en plaindre à tout témoin, en particulier à ceux qui avaient vocation à les écouter,

Church, the Governor visited the tribe and took the land. This blatant demonstration of the power of the State had the potential to gravely affect the faith that the natives had in the authority of the Church.

According to Delbos, as the Governor was unable to have the Bishop expelled, he decided to destroy the monopoly previously enjoyed by the Marists by approving the installation of Protestant missions on *Grande Terre* (O'Reilly 1953, p. 238).<sup>152</sup> Some *natas* with family on *Grande Terre* had already been engaged in clandestine mission work but when discovered they were rapidly removed (Guiart 2003, pp. 40-42). Mataia from Ouvéa had made several visits to Houaïlou and Kapéa, a nephew of chief Mindia, had spent five years training with the Protestants on Ouvéa. Following Feillet's approval, two *natas* were authorised to work at Houaïlou, providing that one was able to speak the language of Houaïlou, Ajië, and the other French. To rub salt into the Marist wounds, the *natas* from the Loyalty Islands were offered free transport to *Grande Terre* by the Governor. Within a short time, the number of *natas* in the Houaïlou area had increased to fifteen or sixteen. In 1898 M. Lengereau, the pastor of the European parish in Noumea, in a letter to his superiors in France, commented on the success of *natas*:

J'attire l'attention des Églises de France sur les vingt-cinq ou trente tribus de la Côté Est de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, et les vingt tribus à l'ouest, qui, évangélisées par une quinzaine de pasteurs Maréens ont fait adhésion au protestantisme...

(Guiart 1959, p. 14).

Pastor Delord arrived from Paris in 1898, and in response to his request for another Pastor, Maurice Leenhardt and his family arrived. Leenhardt was well received and he believed that he was fortunate during his early years at Houaïlou to be dealing with friendly governors (Clifford 1982, p. 51).<sup>153</sup> It was the Marists who bore the brunt of Feillet's antagonism.

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comme les missionnaires, qui ont généralement transmis et même publié leurs plaintes.' (Guiart 2003, p. 54).

<sup>152</sup> O'Reilly goes on to quote from a 'note' written by the Governor: 'la paix religieuse et politique ne peut être ramenée dans le pays que après le départ de Monseigneur Fraysse'.

<sup>153</sup> Leenhardt was a distant relative of Feillet, and this may have helped the Leenhardts. Any aid would have been short-lived, however, as Feillet returned to France in the same year as the Leenhardts arrived in New Caledonia.



In 1902, Feillet, after almost eight years of visionary but difficult administration, was recalled to France. He was a man with a grand vision for the colony and for the *grandeur* of France. Jérémie Karé described the Governor: ‘Feillet essaie vraiment de mener une politique coloniale qui soit celle de la France, tout en s’interposant entre les colons et les Kanak de façon à préserver ces derniers d’une colonisation trop radicale.’ (*Mwà Vée* 1997, p. 29). He was a man in a hurry, impulsive, violent, angry and authoritarian. His closing words of the *Conseil Général*, ‘Vive la Colonne, Vive la France, Vive la République’, indicated his patriotism but his republican ideals and colonial reality were ill-matched. The contradiction between reconciliation and colonial violence became more pronounced as France moved towards a more secular State, and as the Church lost its bargaining power it was less able to defend native rights. For the hapless Kanak it was a mortal blow. As the despair of the natives increased, their population decreased, and there was little means of recourse.

### **Maurice Leenhardt: The first Protestant missionary on *Grande Terre* and the prospect of reconciliation**

In 1902, Maurice Leenhardt was the first Protestant European missionary to establish a mission station on *Grande Terre*. He established the mission station Do Neva, ‘the true country’, at Houaïlou on the East Coast of the island where the High Chief of the region Mindia Néja had converted to Protestantism.<sup>154</sup> The success of the *natas* in this region had inspired a Marist counterattack, and two Marist fathers had been sent as a counterbalancing force. When Leenhardt arrived on the doorstep of the Catholic mission, political manoeuvring became more conflictual.

Leenhardt soon realised the injustices of the colonial process and of the impossible situation of the native population. His attempt to provide the natives with access to education and justice brought him into conflict with the administration and with settlers who had an insatiable demand for land and forced native labour. Soon after his arrival, he became aware of a petition that had been sent by colonists to the Governor requesting the expulsion of *natas*, and Protestantism, from *Grande Terre*: ‘These foreigners [...] were stirring up resistance to white rule and impeding the recruitment of

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<sup>154</sup> This region had been evangelised by the Ouvéa *nata*, Mathaia (Clifford 1982, p. 59).

Canaque labour.’ (Clifford 1982, p. 32).<sup>155</sup> Feelings ran so high that a posse of natives would accompany the pastor on mission voyages into the *Chaîne centrale* for fear of an ambush in some deserted place.

Leenhardt’s missiology was fundamentally different from that of his Loyalty Island colleagues, Philadelphie Delord on Maré, and James Hadfield on Lifou. Delord was a veteran evangelist whose charisma was able to sway audiences and provide much needed support for the mission; however, in true evangelistic style he believed the goal was the conversion of primitive people to Christianity.<sup>156</sup> In this, he and Leenhardt had differing views. Leenhardt believed that the Kanak needed support and the means to survive ‘the deadly breath of civilisation’. In Leenhardt’s opinion Protestantism had ‘gone soft’ in the Loyalty Islands and was ‘not actively experiencing the spiritual revivication of continual translation’ (Clifford 1982, p. 116). In a colony where Protestantism lacked prestige and where Catholicism reigned supreme,<sup>157</sup> the Catholic priests, backed by the military, gendarmes and administrative chiefs, were formidable opponents for the lone Protestant missionary. In Leenhardt’s early years he was warned by friendly Governors Picanon and Rognon,<sup>158</sup> to avoid political involvement, but this went against his strong sense of justice:

But I would think myself profoundly egocentric if I didn’t try to get justice for these poor people. Anyway how can I, in simple everyday morality, oppose the natives stealing of coconuts if I accept their expulsion from the coconut groves to which they are attached like mistletoe to its tree.

(Clifford 1982, p. 52).

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<sup>155</sup> The *natas* taught arithmetic and encouraged the checking of weights and prices in dealings with the whites: ‘This was unheard of insolence.’ (Clifford 1982, p. 59).

<sup>156</sup> Delord, the ‘friend of the lepers’, had gained support and much-needed funding for the establishment of leprosariums on Lifou, Chila, Maré and Bethesda. His treatment of leprosy was described as innovative (Clifford 1982, p. 76) and appealed to French benefactors. In reality, his treatment with Chaulmoogra oil had been in practice for some sixty years, and despite his reputed success with the drug, it was not until the advent of ‘sulpha drugs’, sulphones and sulphonamides, in the 1930s, that a more effective treatment of *mycobacterium leprae* was achieved.

<sup>157</sup> Despite this, the Protestant mission was amazingly successful. At the time of Leenhardt’s departure in 1926 one third of the island professed to be Protestant.

<sup>158</sup> Edouard Picanon was Governor from 14 November 1902 until 17 May 1905 and Charles Amédée Rognon was Governor from 17 May 1905 until 17 September 1905.

Leenhardt found it impossible to avoid political conflict. He was in constant confrontation with gendarmes and settlers over land, labour and the human rights of the native population. He fought against a Government which aimed to repress the natives and a gendarmerie which, encouraged by Government, harassed *natas*.

In Houaïlou, political manoeuvring between Leenhardt and the Catholics led to hostility; intra-French rivalry resurfaced, with Protestant opposed to Catholic and all missionaries at odds with the Administration. This conflict was not without ramifications for Kanak society. The method of evangelism of each Church differed. The Catholics relied entirely upon European priests and it was not until after the Second World War, in 1946, that the first two indigenous Catholic priests were ordained. In contrast, the mainstay of Protestant evangelism was the native catechists and teachers, with the missionary playing a supportive role of the ‘white corks supporting the black net’ in Bishop Selwyn’s words. When Leenhardt first arrived in the colony, the Marists were well established. They had extensive property holdings and political power, and the newly arrived Protestants on *Grande Terre* were considered to be foreigners. This situation was to change in 1905 with the final separation of State and Church in France. This scission, while not affecting the Protestant Evangelical Mission, would reduce the power of the Catholic Church.

Leenhardt’s initial criticism of the educational standard of *natas* and monitors became more moderate with time. He directed that no native custom should be abolished until its full implications were understood and even then, only when an alternative ritual of social cohesion had been found. He fought the administrative bodies which condemned the use of native languages in schools on the premise that at least a few native languages should be preserved and that language was as much a part of the native culture as the attachment to land, but he also recognised that cultural change was occurring: ‘The life of culture is change—at its own pace and on its own terms.’ (Clifford 1982, p. 54).

Within the Protestant mission, cracks were beginning to appear due to inter-missionary conflict between *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands. Leenhardt realised that there were fundamental differences between his mission and that of the Loyalty Islands; they were two separate entities which had been built upon very different cultural and historical foundations. Leenhardt’s colleague, Etienne Bergeret, on Lifou favoured the tradition of a single person being responsible for both religious and general education:

the 'pastor-teacher'. This halved the cost of training and kept the mission under the paternalistic control of the white missionary, within the hierarchical system favoured by the SMEP Leenhardt, on the other hand, separated education and pastoral care. On the mainland, the tyranny of distance prohibited the system in existence on the Loyalty Islands, where distances separating schools were such that the white missionary was able to engage in a supervisory role. Teachers trained on the *Grande Terre* had more authority and this was not part of the French colonial vision. As Jean Guiart noted:

Le système colonial détestait tout progrès canaque et en particulier tout effort d'enseignement visant à donner aux Mélanésiens la connaissance des moyens techniques dont les blancs prétendaient se réserver globalement la maîtrise.

(Guiart 2003, p. 26).

Leenhardt's mission provided *natas* with a more functional training to equip them better for work in the 'bush schools'. As the missions on *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands each pursued their own agenda, the schism broadened, and 'the spirit of Do Neva became suspect among the Loyalty missionaries'.<sup>159</sup>

The separation became so pronounced that Leenhardt obtained formal recognition in the constitution of the SMEP of the differences between Protestants of the Loyalty Islands and those of the *Grande Terre*.<sup>160</sup> The acceptance of Leenhardt's request was in the hope that, with time and dialogue, inter-island differences would vanish. Meanwhile, the situation between the two missions deteriorated as missionary egos took centre stage and the Melanesians were reduced to 'bit players' in the theatrics. Philippe Rey-Lescure, a young missionary at Do Neva, had been influenced by his uncle, Maurice Leenhardt, and sought to weave native custom into the fabric of the Christian faith. When he suggested reconstructing the *Grande Case* as a 'symbol of regional pride' and 'cultural authenticity' (Clifford 1982, p. 120), his suggestion was met with the derision of his colleagues. The schism widened and attack followed counterattack in what became known as *l'affaire Rey-Lescure* and the problems of the natives were pushed into obscurity. At the point of no return the SMEP took the line of least

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<sup>159</sup> M Anker (SMEP missionary) to Allegret (Director of SMEP) 19 January 1932 (cited in Clifford 1982, p. 119).

<sup>160</sup> In Leenhardt's opinion, evangelism in the Loyalty Islands had become pastoral and was too concerned with the everyday running of the church. His idea of the missionary was as an educator and interpreter of cultural and religious difference (Clifford 1982, p. 116).

resistance and Rey-Lescure and his family were transferred to Tahiti (Garrett 1992, p. 368). With the departure of the mission, Do Neva languished, trainees were sent to Lifou to be trained as pastor-teachers and the Houaïlou language was relegated to second position behind Drehu, which became the accepted language of mission education and publicity (Clifford 1982, p. 120). As Guiart points out, the practices of Leenhardt and Rey-Lescure have since been vindicated.<sup>161</sup>

## **Conclusion: Chapter 2**

Following an initial antipodean outburst of protest, the French settled into the task of establishing a colony. All land became the property of the State and vast areas of tribal land were distributed by the early Administrators, military men with little regard for, or knowledge of native culture. The Kanak were not consulted. This led to conflict and discontent which culminated in the 1878 insurrection. In conflict, disparate tribes which spoke different languages became reconciled to join with Ataï in the battle against the Administration, settlers and traditional tribal enemies. In what could have been a step towards reconciliation a report was presented by Trentinian which provided recommendations to avoid further conflict. This report was ignored. To re-establish peace, hundreds of Kanak were deported in a move which could only lead to discontent and bitterness.

The distribution of tribal land, the *Indigénat*, the head tax and the appointment of administrative chiefs from enemy tribes kept Kanak and government in constant opposition. With each wave of new arrivals, *transportés*, *déportés* of the Paris Commune, Kabyles, Alsations and Lorrains, recidivists and manual workers, more land was expropriated, the Kanak were pushed further into the less fertile land of the central mountain chain, and the spiral of conflict intensified. Intertribal battles were frequently terminated by violent military intervention, the burning of villages and the destruction of crops. The understanding was that white is might, and white is right. As Kanak pleas for justice fell on deaf ears conflict was the only way to restore self-respect and autonomy.

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<sup>161</sup> 'Aujourd'hui la validité de la thèse de Leenhardt, séparant la fonction sacerdotale et celle de l'enseignement, est empiriquement reconnue de tous.' (Guiart 2003, p. 26).

On the Loyalty Islands conflict spiralled out of control when Catholic–Protestant rivalry aggravated pre-existing intertribal enmity and anti-clerical governors sent in the troops. The Church, by defending native rights, was frequently at odds with anti-clerical governors and the secular State, and this left the Kanak with conflict as the only means of recourse. Conflict around the countryside was multi-layered and seemingly intractable.

Between communities there was little communication: different languages were spoken, different world views were held, and pioneering families were generally fully occupied in the battle of establishing themselves in a harsh new country. There was a glimmer of hope for the Kanak when Protestant missionaries were granted the right to work on *Grande Terre* and Maurice Leenhardt established a vocational school, Do Neva, at Houaïlou. In collaboration with the Marists, Leenhardt instituted a temperance movement and obtained legislation to ban the sale of alcohol to the indigenous population. Like Selwyn in the previous century (see Chapter 1), Leenhardt recognised the value of Kanak custom and culture and insisted that it should be retained and fully investigated.<sup>162</sup> Gradually the native population regained confidence and the population decline was halted. Leenhardt was an exceptional voice of potential reconciliation but even for him the battle lines were drawn. By encouraging the Kanak, he found himself in opposition with the authorities, such were the antagonisms of the day.

In the clash of cultures and absence of a common language, multiple forms of violence and conflict erupted and left little hope for reconciliation. Incarcerated in reserves and yoked to the dispensation of *L'Indigénat*, it was not until World War II threatened world peace that the Kanak re-emerged as a viable opposition to French hegemony, leading to the prospect of reconciliation but also in fact to further violence. We shall now turn our attention to this post-war period to pursue in detail the political and religious context in which opposing forces were to evolve in New Caledonia.

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<sup>162</sup> Maurice Leenhardt worked on *Grande Terre* from 1902 until 1926. He returned to Paris to teach at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, taking over the Marcel Mauss chair of anthropology until 1951 when it was passed to Claude Levi-Strauss. He was first President of the *Société des Océanistes* and the *Institut Français d'Océanie*. He also worked at the *Musée de l'Homme* (Clifford 1982, p. 2).

## CHAPTER 3

### World War II and its Aftermath

#### **Pétain, de Gaulle and the Americans: Conflict averted**

It was not until the dramatic events of World War II, bringing a new international form of conflict, that the possibility of internal reconciliation could exist. For this reason, this chapter will proceed to the significant context of New Caledonia after the fall of France in 1940.

In June 1940 Marshal Pétain, the hero of Verdun, signed an armistice with Germany. France was divided; the north was under the control of Nazi Germany and the south, in economic and political collaboration with the Germans, was governed by Marshal Pétain in Vichy. Before this surrender General de Gaulle had fled to London where, unprepared to capitulate, he launched an appeal for the French to join the Allied Forces in the war against Germany. De Gaulle realised the value of the untapped source of manpower within the Imperial Empire in his call to arms broadcast on the BBC.<sup>163</sup> His appeal was endorsed by the British Government, which offered support to those French colonies prepared to join the resistance movement.

For Georges Pélicier, the Governor of New Caledonia, the advantages of aligning with the Allied Forces in the British dominated Pacific were evident. Amidst the uncertainty of a divided France, an opportunistic lawyer, Michel Vergès, saw this was the chance to push for local autonomy in defiance of the Vichy Government. His proposal was well supported, but opposition was soon brought to bear by the Catholic Church, which supported the German puppet regime in Vichy.

For the Church, it was a case of ‘one good turn deserves another.’ Bishops and Archbishops of the Catholic Church rallied to marshal support for Pétain as the legitimate Head of State, and as quid pro quo, the buildings which had been taken from

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<sup>163</sup> De Gaulle in his broadcast from London on 18 June 1940 called the Empire to arms: ‘France is not alone. She is not alone! She has a great empire behind her. Together with the British Empire, she can form a bloc that controls the seas and continue the struggle. She may, like England draw upon the limitless industrial resources of the United States.’ (Cited in Munholland 2005, p. 10).

the Church by the State in 1905 were returned. Also provided was State aid to Church schools and the permission to resume religious education in public schools.<sup>164</sup>

In New Caledonia Governor Pélicier was directed to cut ties with Britain. This placed him in an unenviable position, as New Caledonia relied heavily on Australia for supplies of food and for coal for the nickel smelter at Doniambo. Pélicier found himself in an unenviable position: he was facing a cacophony of calls for independence, demands from the Vichy Government, isolation in an Anglophonic ocean, and the prospect of the Japanese siding with the Germans to take over New Caledonia with its lucrative nickel industry.<sup>165</sup> The Governor found himself in an untenable position. It was decided to bring the potential calamity to an end by undercover political intervention. The Australians decided to act.

To facilitate this move, the Australian Minister of External Affairs, John McEwan, asked a French-speaking lawyer in the New Hebrides, Bertram Ballard, to be Australia's representative in New Caledonia. Ballard accepted the offer. High-level confidential cablegrams flew between Noumea, Canberra and London. As tension increased, Governor Pélicier became jittery and was recalled to France. His replacement, Maurice Denis, resigned when Henri Sautot, who had been the French Resident Commissioner in the New Hebrides, was appointed by General De Gaulle of the Free French movement to govern the island (*The Argus* 20 September 1940, p. 1):

I desire that the situation in New Caledonia should be urgently settled in accordance with the population. I confirm your appointment as temporary governor of New Caledonia [...], and I request you will proceed urgently to Noumea [...] as a French operation [...] and under the French flag with merely contingent support from H.M.A.S. Adelaide.

(De Gaulle, cited in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2016a).

Included in the same letter is a message from the Admiralty Reporting Officer, which acknowledged the plan of HMAS Adelaide to land Sautot. In this clandestine operation, even the President of the Free French Committee was unaware of the plans afoot. The

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<sup>164</sup> Many Marist missionaries had parish and family connections within parts of France where conservative Catholic opinion supported the regime established by Marshal Georges Pétain at Vichy after the fall of France in 1940 (Garrett 1997, p. 62).

<sup>165</sup> On 25 August 1940 Vichy's Minister of Colonies instructed Pélicier to reserve all of New Caledonia's mineral production for the Japanese (cited in Munholland 2005, p. 42)



arrival in Noumea of M. Brunot, a Free French diplomat, caused tension with Sautot who less than one year later was replaced as High Commissioner by Commandant D'Argenlieu. De Gaulle was aware of the 'cesspool of intrigue' existing in the Pacific and of the possible conflict which might result from his latest appointment. According to Stanley Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, 'De Gaulle has been at special pains to spare Sautot's feelings. He maintains him as a member of the Council of Defence and has decorated him with the Cross of Liberation.' (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2016b).

### **Broader Pacific conflict in New Caledonia and a chance for reconciliation**

A surprise attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 brought the Americans into the war in the Pacific. As the Japanese pushed south, New Caledonia seemed a likely target as it would offer little resistance, an abundance of mineral resources and was strategically well located. With this turn of events, all hope was pinned on the United States, at the same time as 'the honour of the French flag and that of Christianity'<sup>166</sup> were in the hands of Admiral d'Argenlieu.<sup>167</sup> On 12 March 1942 an initial convoy of fifteen thousand American troops arrived. This was soon to expand to forty thousand, thus causing the population of New Caledonia to almost double. In 1942, the population of New Caledonia was estimated to be 57,000, composed of 29,000 Kanak, 17,000 Europeans and 11,000 Asians. 'One might have said that the Martians had landed' (Munholland 2005, p. 91) was how Gabriel Païta, a Kanak student at the Catholic mission school at Canala remembered the arrival. For the residents of New Caledonia, the magnitude of American equipment and supplies was 'stupefying,' and their generosity astounding. Gabriel Païta believed that 'it was the Americans who led to the advancement of the Kanak people'. He remembered the gifts of shoes and clothing and even a jeep for Father William (Munholland 2005, p. 91). Displays of

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<sup>166</sup> De Gaulle to d'Argenlieu 24 December 1941 (cited in Munholland 2005, p. 88).

<sup>167</sup> D'Argenlieu, after serving the French Navy with distinction during the First World War, turned to the Church, and became a superior in the Carmelite Order, Father Louis de la Trinité (Munholland 2005, p. 74).

American affluence caused the French to suspect an American ulterior motive and a plan to claim the mineral-rich, strategically-placed island.<sup>168</sup>

## **Kanak liberation**

The Kanak, living under the *Indigénat* regime and incarcerated in tribal reserves, were now in demand to help the war effort. More than one million allied servicemen were estimated to have passed through New Caledonia during the 46 months of US military occupation. This sudden population explosion had far-reaching effects. In Noumea eighty-six bars and fifty-three shops opened, wages quadrupled, and the Kanak were able to find employment with the US armed forces for previously unheard-of wages. The American occupation was a time of awakening for the Kanak, it provided a glimpse of the liberty, equality and fraternity that France had promised but failed to deliver. Kanak employed by the American Army were well paid, well housed, fed and clothed. Indentured Asian workers in New Caledonia were not so fortunate; they were bound by the terms of their contracts and when prices rose they were unable to afford the essentials. Their discontent provided a fertile environment for the newly established Communist Party of Madame Tunica y Casas, a French woman who had been educated in New Caledonia.

At Brazzaville in January 1944, with war still raging, General de Gaulle paid tribute to the *vaste empire* that had rallied behind the Free French movement. In the crude light of warfare, the value of the Imperial Empire had become apparent:

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<sup>168</sup> The accusation was made by the Free French that the United States was ‘trying to set up an octopus; of trying to fragmentise the old French Empire in the hope of seizing it for themselves’ (Munholland 2005, p. 178). Such a claim was indeed suggested due to the huge wartime investment America had made in New Caledonia and the realisation of the need to keep open the transpacific route to the Philippines and China (*Le Monde* 15 May 1946). New Caledonia, a country unable to defend itself, was seen by the American committee of Naval Affaires to be a vital link in the American chain of security (*Le Monde* 4 January 1947). The suggestion that Australia should take control of New Caledonia was rejected by Doctor Evatt, Minister for Foreign Affairs: ‘Derrière cette île se trouve la France, qui reste grande malgré ses épreuves.’ (*Le Monde* 30 March 1946).

S'il est une puissance impériale que les événements conduisent à l'inspirer de leurs leçons et à choisir noblement, libéralement, la route de temps nouveaux où elle entend diriger les soixante millions d'hommes qui se trouvent associés au sort de ses quarante-deux millions d'enfants, cette puissance, c'est la France.

(De Gaulle 1944).

In the aftermath of the war, as France struggled to regain pre-war grandeur, and retain the power provided by its far-flung Empire, for the first time France's overseas territories were recognised in the Constitution. The preamble to the Constitution of the Fourth Republic refers to a union of France and the *peuple d'outre-mer*, founded on equality, irrespective of race and religion. This Constitution generally adhered to the promises made at Brazzaville: it recast institutional design, provided each province with an elected assembly (Article 77)<sup>169</sup> and, in order to reduce the gap between legislative advance in France and its application in the colony,<sup>170</sup> allowance was made for Territorial representation in the French National Assembly (Article 76).<sup>171</sup> France had no intention of relinquishing administrative sovereignty of her territories, which continued to be remote-controlled from France so that the promises of the Constitution and the reality *in situ* were not always in accord:

Fidèle à sa mission traditionnelle, la France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a pris la charge à la liberté de s'administrer eux-mêmes et de gérer démocratiquement leurs propres affaires ; écartant tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire, elle garantit à tous l'égal accès aux fonctions publiques et l'exercice individuel ou collectif des droits et libertés.

(Conseil Constitutionnel 1946).

The possibility of self-government or independence was soundly rejected: 'Il n'est certes pas encore question d'indépendance, mais la voie de l'émancipation est ouverte.'

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<sup>169</sup> Article 77: 'Dans chaque territoire est instituée une assemblée élue. Le régime électoral, la composition et la compétence de cette assemblée sont déterminés par la loi.'

<sup>170</sup> In 1946 Roger Gervolino was the first Member of Parliament to represent New Caledonia in the National Assembly. He was followed by Henri Lafleur in 1947.

<sup>171</sup> Article 76: 'Le représentant du Gouvernement dans chaque territoire ou groupe de territoires est le dépositaire des pouvoirs de la République. Il est le chef de l'administration du territoire. Il est responsable de ses actes devant le Gouvernement.'

(De Gaulle 1944). De Gaulle's 'certain idea' of France as a great power was unwavering, and as the country's glory was greatly enhanced by her overseas possessions they were to be retained come what may. For those previously restrained by the *Indigénat* it was a time of awakening, a time to escape from the colonial shackles and to contemplate an indigenous destiny in terms of political, social and economic freedom.

Liberated after almost 100 years of denigration, incarceration and dispossession, for the indigenous, education and employment became a priority: 'ils ne pouvaient s'élever, peu à peu, jusqu'au niveau où ils seront capables de participer chez eux à la gestion de leurs propres affaires' (Le Guevel 1945). However, decrees, statutes and laws originating 18,000 kilometres away in France were not always in tandem with their implementation in New Caledonia and conflict was again a possible outcome. Statutes which favoured Kanak liberation were met with the resistance of the predominantly loyalist *Conseil Général*, and frequently their application was delayed. The Houphouët-Boigny law of 11 April 1946,<sup>172</sup> which prohibited forced and obligatory labour, was to take immediate effect; in New Caledonia, its implementation was delayed until the following August. The right of indigenous suffrage in French overseas territories which became law on 22 August 1945, was deferred in New Caledonia by referring to an earlier law of 13 April 1945 which states: 'tous les non-citoyens de quelque instruction sachant lire le français, travaillant ou ayant travaillé plus de deux ans comme salariés peuvent voter'. This meant that most Kanak were unable to vote. The law 46-940 of 7 May 1946—the Lamine Guèye Law—states:

À partir du 1er juin 1946, tous les ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer (Algérie comprise) ont la qualité de citoyen, au même titre que les nationaux français de la métropole et des territoires d'outre-mer. Des lois particulières établiront les conditions dans lesquelles ils exerceront leurs droits de citoyens.

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<sup>172</sup> Loi No. 46-645 du 11 avril 1946, Article No. 1: 'Le travail forcé ou obligatoire est interdit de façon absolue dans les territoires d'outre-mer.' Article No. 3 : La présente loi abolit tout décret et règlement antérieur sur la réquisition de la main-d'œuvre, à quelque titre que ce soit.' This law was adopted by the National Assembly and executed as a Law of the State by Félix Guin, President of the Provisional Government of the Republic, and Marius Moutet, Attorney General and Minister for Justice.

This law was incorporated into Article 80 of the French Constitution in 1946,<sup>173</sup> but still the Melanesian right to vote was limited to Melanesian pastors, customary chiefs, school teachers and returned servicemen (Henningham 1992, p. 49). Universal suffrage was finally introduced in New Caledonia in 1957.<sup>174</sup> Inconsistency led to confusion, discontent and, ultimately, conflict.

### **Communism and the Churches: Antagonism and reconciliation**

The wartime alliance of the USSR and the Free French provided a springboard for the 'Association of Friends of the USSR' to enter the political scene in New Caledonia, a push which was led by Florindo Paladini, Jeanne Tunica y Casas and the Melanesian High Chiefs Henri Naisseline and Vincent Bouquet. After years of colonial oppression, the communist promise of social equality and political emancipation offered hope, and the party gained ready acceptance. In New Caledonia, the three branches of the Communist Party—Melanesian, Indo-Chinese and European—were answerable to a central coordinating committee which united the three ethnic groups. The communist promises of employment, improved working conditions, voting rights and racial equality met with Melanesian and Vietnamese approval. Although the agreements were long on rhetoric and short on sustainable outcomes, the Communist Party opened the way to Melanesian political awareness. In August 1946, after a bomb attack on her home, Jeanne Tunica y Casas left New Caledonia for Australia and the party limped on for a couple of years, but the force had dissipated (Kurtovitch 2000, p. 178).<sup>175</sup>

The broad acceptance of the party among the tribes as confirmed by Pasteur Raymond Charlemagne in Houaïlou, Father Patrick O'Reilly in Poindimié and Charles Marchandon, a gendarme on Lifou, caused a degree of malaise among the Catholics and Protestants in the Territory. Disapproval of the Communists by the established Churches was unanimous. Emphasis on the segregation of religion and politics aimed to

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<sup>174</sup> 'Enfin, la loi du 26 juillet 1957 pour l'élection de l'Assemblée territoriale issue de la loi-cadre « Defferre » du 23 juin 1956 octroya le droit de vote à tous les Calédoniens sans distinction.' (Lenormand 1991, p. 141).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. 'Le fantôme communiste bientôt évanoui' (Guiart 1959, p. 54). In Australia, the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, gave Mme Tunica y Casas, the proprietor of the Coq d'Or restaurant, eleven weeks to leave Sydney, with the threat of deportation if she failed to comply (*Sydney Morning Herald* 12 March 1949).

draw converts from the church, and this was recognised by priests, pastors and catechists. Christianity had played a major role in the care and education of the Kanak people for over 100 years and was firmly implanted in Kanak culture. Nevertheless, the Churches were wary and quick to respond to the communist challenge. In March 1947 the Catholic association UICALO, *l'Union des indigènes calédoniens amis de la liberté dans l'ordre*, took shape and was soon followed by the Protestant *Association des Indigènes Calédoniens et Loyaltiens Français* (AICLF) (Kurtovitch 2000, pp. 163-179).

In the face of communist opposition, Monsignor Bresson, like Bishop Selwyn before him, saw strength in Christian unity and, in a gesture of reconciliation, approached his Protestant counterpart, Pierre Bénignus, with the suggestion that Churches should work together to form a Christian political alliance (O'Reilly 1952, p. 186).<sup>176</sup> An appeal for unity was published by the UICALO in its booklet *Revendications de l'Union des Indigènes calédoniens amis de liberté dans l'ordre*. There was a call to raise the standard of liberty, equality and fraternity 'qui ne doivent avoir ni deux faces, ni deux poids, ni deux mesures [...] unissons-nous tous étroitement pour être plus forts, et plus puissants, et plus écoutés' (O'Reilly 1952, p. 182).

Although the Protestants initially agreed to this proposal, the union was short-lived, due to ideological differences. A message of apology was sent to Monsignor Bresson from Pastor Bénignus.<sup>177</sup> In the view of the Protestants, the Pastors were not in favour of joining with the Catholics for fear of a Catholic takeover and in Bénignus' opinion, Luneau<sup>178</sup> and Bresson were too militant. The anomaly of a union between hitherto

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<sup>176</sup> 'Certains auraient désiré voir fusionner ces deux associations, si fraternelles par leur but'. On 12 August 1947 Henri Naisseline, Protestant High Chief of Netché Maré, and Rock Déo Pidjot, Catholic chief of Conception and president of UICALO, met and agreed to the fusion of the two associations 'mais des influences extérieures s'y opposent'. According to O'Reilly this union was possible and would have brought together the 30,000 members of the two associations: 'Les indigènes, quand ils ne sont pas excités extérieurement par des fanatiques ou poussés par des initiés particuliers, s'accordent, naturellement, une mutuelle tolérance, très supérieure à celle que se témoignent entre eux des Européens, par exemple.'

<sup>177</sup> 'Après avoir pris contact avec nos Indigènes des Iles et reçu les rapports des différents districts de Calédonie, j'ai le regret de vous informer que nous ne pouvons faire partie de l'Union des Indigènes Calédoniens. Soyez assurée cependant, Monseigneur, que l'Association de nos Indigènes travaillera aux mêmes fins que l'Union et que nous serons toujours prêts à présenter, avec vous, à l'administration toute revendication légitime et nécessaire touchant à l'élévation progressive de l'Indigène pour lequel, vous et moi, avons été envoyés ici par Dieu.' (Archives de l'Archevêché de Nouvelle-Calédonie (Nouméa), cited in Kurtovitch 1997, p. 37).

<sup>178</sup> Fr Luneau, *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*, was a priest in New Caledonia for twenty-eight years; he was a founding father of the UICALO and died tragically in a DC4 accident, in Bahrain in 1950, en route to Rome. Also on the plane was Luc Amoura, who in 1946 became one of the first Melanesian

enemy religions was not lost on the native pastors who for more than a century had been denounced and discredited by Catholic priests who had warned their congregation against the soul-destroying error of Protestant heresy. Religious conflict was never dormant for long; it erupted again when Catholics who attempted to recruit for their Union from the Protestant tribes were confronted by angry pastors.

The UICALO, even without Protestant support, had political weight. It represented fifty percent of the indigenous population, 45 missionary priests, 40 brothers, 180 Melanesian catechists 42 missionary sisters, 69 Melanesian missionary sisters and 46 priests in training. There were 50 self-funded Catholic primary schools to cater for 2155 students, and the Catholics were a force to be reckoned with (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 39). The Union aimed to maintain the religious influence of the Church over the natives, who had been newly liberated from colonial bondage imposed by the *Indigénat* (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 45). At the first meeting, which was held at Païta in March 1947, 41 delegates were elected to represent 4000 adherents, and Rock Pidjot of La Conception was elected President (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 43; O'Reilly 1952, p. 184).<sup>179</sup> Membership was restricted to indigenous men and women of New Caledonia and its dependencies. Apart from warding off communist infiltration, the Union sought to establish democratically elected councils within the tribes to defend the native right to liberty. Following the example of the Communist campaign, the Catholics had seen the advantage of having a Party directed by natives for natives, and although Luneau and Bresson acted initially in an advisory capacity, total control was progressively handed to the Melanesians. The Administrative Council of the Union received reports from tribal delegates and drew up a list of laws and sanctions to deal with alcoholism, indigenous employment, training programs and hygiene in relation to housing, clothing and food. The reserve was to remain the property of the tribe in order to preserve economic, cultural and social stability, and it was non-transferable. A two-tiered legal system, French and customary, was proposed so that problems of an indigenous nature could be resolved by customary law. This initiative, endorsed by the Governor, predated the *Sénat Coutumier* of the Noumea Accord by some forty years, yet one can see in it an aspect of the latter's attempt at reconciliation:

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priests to be ordained (Garrett 1997, p. 211). 'La mort du R. P. Luneau vient priver la Mission Catholique d'un de ses rares éléments véritablement capables de s'adapter et de prévoir.' (Guiart 1959, p. 55).

<sup>179</sup> Note differing orthography: Pindio (O'Reilly 1952, p. 186), Pidjot (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 44).

[...] qu'il est juste que les Indigènes qui constituent les trois cinquièmes de la population du pays, soient consultés toutes les fois qu'une question les concerne ou les touche de près. Et ces questions sont nombreuses [...] sa préférence, l'élection par ces mêmes indigènes de quelques-uns des leurs au Conseil Général.

(Territorial archives of New Caledonia, cited in Kurtovitch 1997, p. 72).

Under the tutelage of the missions and within the framework of these institutions, the Melanesians successfully reconciled traditional and Christian values. The success of the project was celebrated by the clergy, who nevertheless remained cognisant of latent European aversion to native liberation, and of the possibility of conflict re-emerging at the slightest provocation, as O'Reilly (1952, p. 187) noted:

Dieu veuille que les directions européennes ne viennent pas freiner malencontreusement cet essor, ni rompre l'harmonie par une incompréhension à contresens ! Dieu fasse également que les Indigènes, enhardis par leurs premiers succès, ne prennent pas à l'égard des Blancs une attitude de surenchères hostiles !

In 1945 the Protestant Church in New Caledonia was stagnant. The SMEP was unable to supply enough missionaries to meet the colonial demand, which meant that throughout the war years there were only two resident missionaries in New Caledonia: Marcel Ariège in Noumea, and Pierre Bénignus at Do Neva in Houaïlou. These two missionaries were aided by a lay preacher on Maré, two deaconesses on Lifou, one on Ouvéa and one at Do Neva and 124 Melanesian pastors under the direction of Apou Pwacili Hmae. Isolated, and with communication cut with France their only support was from the International Missionary Council in New York and American military chaplains stationed in New Caledonia. When communication to France was restored, Pastor Bénignus began to solicit help for the understaffed mission. Descriptions of the dire situation in the Church were sent to the Director of the SMEP, Emile Schloesing, with pleas for additional manpower. The mission was still functioning but he felt that it would not be able to withstand the social and political challenges being applied by the communists. The message was heard, and three missionary families, Lacheret, Charlemagne and Brabant, were sent to the Territory with three deaconesses. With additional human resources, it was decided that the Territory should be divided: a mission on Lifou would be responsible for the Loyalty Islands, and one at Houaïlou for



*Grande Terre*. However, signs of the schism, which was to rock the church in 1958, soon became apparent.

Charlemagne, at Houaïlou, found himself in deep water. He was critical of the training of indigenous pastors, which, in his opinion, was inadequate and limited to such an extent that it was contributing to the 'withering' of the Protestant Church. At the same time, he was aware of their invaluable contribution, their ability to gain the acceptance of tribal chiefs, and of their success in combating the pervading communist forces. The training of the Loyalty Islander pastors was anathema to Charlemagne and he attempted to protect the people of *Grande Terre* from their influence. Conflict and confrontation between *Grande Terre* and Loyalty Islands missions was not new. Both Maurice Leenhardt and his nephew Rey-Lescure had been opposed to the paternalistic approach and colonial mentality of the Loyalty Island training programs, which, they believed, failed to embody Kanak verve, festivity and custom. However, it was the more authoritarian Lifou program which the SMEP considered to be a better way forward for the Church and the training of the future ministry was transferred to Lifou.

The Protestant entry on the political scene encountered its share of pitfalls. Charlemagne, in a radio broadcast to explain the aims of the AICLF, was critical of European colonists, of their abuse of cheap labour and their inhumane materialism. The broadcast caused a flurry among the Europeans, silence from Lacheret, and a three-month ban on the Protestant use of radio broadcasting (Kurtovitch 1997, pp 87-88). Even Father Luneau was surprised by this attack on the colonial regime. The overriding concern of the Protestant Church, however, was the advance of communism and with it the possible loss of personal liberty.

The inaugural meeting of the AICLF at Tibarama, Poindimié, in June 1947 was organised by Kowi Bouillant from Touho and Doui Matayo Wetta from Ponérihouen, with 4600 members in attendance. Later that year the AICLF claimed to represent half of the indigenous population (Territorial archives of New Caledonia, cited in Kurtovitch 1997, p. 100). The AICLF brought together Protestant Christianity and native custom in an association whose membership was totally indigenous. The association brought ancient custom face-to-face with the modern technology of the printing press. The association printed a newspaper, *Le Messenger*, which reconciled Catholics, Protestants and the secular in the publication process. Funds raised by the sale of the paper supplemented the voluntary contributions on which the association relied. Charlemagne

and Lacheret were often called upon for advice, as was Jean Guiart, Professor of Anthropology and friend, colleague and supporter of Maurice Leenhardt (Kurtovitch 2000, p. 106).<sup>180</sup> Although it was founded with the help of the Protestant Church, the AICLF was in fact secular. There were no pastors in positions of authority, and this allowed the Church to retain an apolitical stance. Wetta cast broadly for advice and sought to have the Association's claims heard. He collaborated with Gabriel Monin, a socialist General Councillor, Maurice Bichon, a Councillor of the Assembly of the French Union, and Maurice Lenormand, Deputy in the National Assembly. Pressure was put on the Association when Maurice Leenhardt returned to *Grande Terre* to take up the position of Director of the *Institut français de l'Océanie* (IFO), in 1947.

The return of Leenhardt, the first white Protestant missionary on *Grande Terre*, was met with suspicion. At Do Neva, the school he had founded in 1902 for the vocational and religious training of the predominantly indigenous local population, Leenhardt had encouraged teaching in the native language. This gained him the friendship of the natives and the enmity of the Government and settler population. Memories are long, and Leenhardt's return during this period of indigenous political activity was viewed with reservation. To make his return even more difficult, the site chosen for the IFO offices was a building vacated by the Americans at Anse Vata, which had been earmarked by developers of *Le Nickel* as a potential tourist facility. The Government and the IFO were successful in their bid for the site due to the effort of René Catala, an entrepreneur, who was expecting to be appointed director of the institute. Leenhardt's return to New Caledonia caused further discontent. Government and colonists were concerned about his pro-native reputation, developers were annoyed about the loss of a valuable site, Catala was unhappy because he had not been chosen as director of the IFO and the IFO feared that Leenhardt had been sent from France to merge the institution with the Paris *Office de la recherche scientifique et technique Outre-Mer*, (ORSTOM) (Clifford 1982, p. 192). Some of the opprobrium Leenhardt may have brought upon himself. Not being one to mince words he wrote:

Beyond the scientific interest it presents, this Institute is the first creation in the French Pacific which can show the large French population of these islands that colonialism is something other than a money-grubbing

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<sup>180</sup> This is confirmed in correspondence 24 April 1957 from Wetta to Charlemagne: 'Je compte sur votre aide comme toujours, et veuillez me faire savoir si mes idées sont bonnes et aussi si elles sont mauvaises.' (Cited in Kurtovitch 1997, p. 106).

enterprise for the benefit of Metropolitans and that its dignity resides in its extension of culture, furthermore he warned that big business will exploit the country without leaving her any other benefit other than that of making her people into a proletariat.

(Clifford 1982, p. 192).

Comments like this earned him the reputation of being a communist and political agitator who was dangerous, and in these circumstances, Leenhardt did not participate in any church assemblies or AICLF meetings.

In many respects, the Catholic Union and Protestant Association ran in tandem. The religious rivalry which had torn the Loyalty Islands apart during the nineteenth century was unknown on the mainland where LMS Protestants had been barred by the French Administration. It was only after missionaries of the SMEP had replaced those of the LMS on the Loyalty Islands that Protestants were able to establish missions on *Grande Terre*. This circumvented French–British religious antagonism on the mainland. Between French Catholics and French Protestants, fellow countrymen isolated in a strange environment, there was a certain religious tolerance and acceptance, which enabled the newly established indigenous associations to enjoy a degree of interdependence and social cohesion. The first sentence of the preamble to the *Pensées de base de l'Association des indigènes calédoniens et loyaltiens français* emphasises the need for unity in the quest for freedom and peace, as ‘un pays qui n’est pas uni du cœur cessera vite d’exister’ (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 113).

Both associations considered as a matter of high priority the acquisition of adequate land for those tribes whose property had been reduced to such an extent that they were no longer able to support themselves. Also on the agenda were measures for an improved quality of life: the provision of work with adequate remuneration, issues of health, hygiene and education, and the need for political inclusion so that claims and complaints made by indigenous people would be given due consideration. The ‘Aims and Objectives’ of the Association included the prohibition of alcohol within the tribes,<sup>181</sup> the right of those able to read and write to vote,<sup>182</sup> the provision of a native

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<sup>181</sup> Alcohol had become a major problem among the indigenous people, as Maurice Leenhardt noted: ‘Mineurs, éleveurs, planteurs, s’accoutumèrent à obtenir tout du Canaque par de la boisson.’ (O’Reilly 1952, pp. 166-167).

development bank and a weights and measures authority. Issues that had smouldered for years surfaced. There was a plea to France to allow Melanesians to live in harmony in their own communities, with their own customs and traditions, and to honour the promise of 25-hectare settlement blocks that had been made to native veterans of the First World War and which had never eventuated.

After almost one hundred years of repression, the newly enfranchised Kanak voters had a voice on the political stage. Western democratic ideals and Melanesian custom were united and Melanesian requests were heard. New schools were built. In 1946, there were 34 public schools in tribal reserves; by 1952, this number had increased to 55, and by 1953 to 61. During this period, mission schools doubled from fifty to one hundred. An Inspector of Schools, Antoine Griscelli, was appointed to ensure equal opportunity for Melanesian students and to maintain the educational standard of schools (Kurtovitch 1997, p. 126). Dispensaries and roads were built. Vaccinations for tuberculosis were made available for children in tribal areas. Professional schools were built to ensure vocational improvement and to train Melanesian teachers, nurses, midwives and mechanics.

Although the early concerns of the AICLF and UICALO were based on social issues, in time they became increasingly political. With increased political awareness and the right to vote, Melanesians now had a powerful voice. This was seen as an advantage for those wishing to breathe new life into the colony by the inclusion of equal civil rights and the ousting of the ruling plutocracy. Maurice Lenormand was chosen as a suitable New Caledonian candidate for the National Assembly. He had studied with Maurice Leenhardt at the *Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales* (School of Oriental Languages) in Paris (INALCO); he was married to Simone Wapata, a granddaughter of high chief Boula of Lifou and was a practising Catholic. In a vigorous campaign, support for the Lenormand candidature was obtained from Charlemagne, Mataio Doui Wetta, secretary of the AICLF, Rock Déo Pidjot, the president of UICALO and the High Commissioner (Guiart 1959, p. 62). The electoral success of Lenormand was attributed to the strength of the Kanak vote, and in victory he was dubbed the ‘Canaque Member of Parliament.’ The result for Charlemagne was

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<sup>182</sup> The *Indigénat* reduced the possibility of Kanak achieving literacy and numeracy skills.

bittersweet since, by backing Lenormand, he had antagonised the *Société le Nickel* (SLN) which, as a financial benefactor of the mission, reduced its funding.

The electoral list for the elections, drawn up by Lenormand, included militants from the UICALO and AICLF under the banner of a new political party, the *Union Calédonienne* (UC), which united Melanesians and whites under the slogan *deux couleurs, un seul peuple*.<sup>183</sup> The objective of the UC appeared in the first issue of *L'Avenir Calédonien*, the weekly UC newspaper:

We want to build a New Caledonia freed from the economic feudal system by which it is stifled and enslaved; we want to give to all Caledonians, white, black or yellow, the possibility of a better life in their small country.

(*L'Avenir Calédonien* 11 September 1954, cited in Henningham 1992, pp. 50-51).

The strong Melanesian vote gained nine Melanesian seats in the *Conseil Général* and brought into sharp focus the division between Noumea and the 'bush.' Once elected, the UC began a program of progressive economic and social reform. Approvals were given for a new dam to be built and for a new SLN factory. Workers went on strike to campaign for equal pay and social advantages for all workers. A fund, the *Caisse de compensation des prestations familiales, des accidents du travail et de prévoyance des travailleurs salariés* (CAFAT), was established to provide workers compensation and welfare benefits free of racial discrimination (Lenormand 1991, p. 142). The associations, which had begun as support for Kanak rights and justice within the established order, had with the emergence of the UC, become political, and in the context of New Caledonian society at the time, this would lead to conflict in spite of its vision for reconciliation.

## **Protestants, politics and pastors**

The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society conscientiously refrained from political involvement. This distanced it from the Catholic Church whose adherents frequently continued to claim a *union sacrée* between Church and State. Despite his allegiance to

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<sup>183</sup> The UC came into being during the year of the celebration of 100 years of French presence in New Caledonia and was seen as a good omen for the new political party (Lenormand 1991, p. 142).

the SMEP, Charlemagne found in the UC an ally through which he was able to promote agricultural, technical and pastoral training at Do Neva. This went against the grain of the Paris Mission, which viewed the Charlemagne program with suspicion, it being apprehensive that he was returning to his Catholic roots<sup>184</sup> and collaborating with Catholics. Rumblings of discontent began to rock the Protestant camp.

Charlemagne found himself in more trouble when he sent Do Neva trained pastors to the New Hebrides, a territory which was already being evangelised by British Presbyterians. This intrusion was not viewed kindly: 'On sentait que les Anglophones tiquaient quand les Français s'implantaient.' (*Mwà Vée* 2000, p. 5). This was an extraordinary move by Charlemagne, as the Paris Missionary Society and the Presbyterian Church were both members of the Reformed Alliance of Churches, and an agreement of 100 years standing had been struck by the Protestant Churches as they carved up the Pacific. When Charlemagne needed more money for his pastors on Malekula and none was forthcoming either from the mission or from France, he was forced to turn to the Catholics for funding through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon. With criticism growing, the SMEP disapproved of the practice of mixing religion and politics, and missionaries who had joined the *Union Calédonienne* with Charlemagne withdrew their membership. Tension between the missionaries increased, and this prompted the Director of the SMEP to visit New Caledonia in 1956. In an attempt to diffuse an explosive situation, the director isolated weaknesses in the organisation and decided on a redistribution of parishes.

Charlemagne was to retain the directorship of Do Neva and the care of its alumni, the AICLF and the Maré mission. His colleagues were to control the rest of *Grande Terre*, the missions on Lifou and Ouvéa and finances. The Do Neva school, which had previously been able to manage its own financial affairs, was now dependent on Noumea. With 500 students in residence, Do Neva relied upon a regular income from Noumea, and this was not always forthcoming. Many in the capital opposed Kanak emancipation, and Charlemagne's ideas were at odds with those of his colleagues. The situation between the mission stations deteriorated, and requests, including one from the Director of the SLN, were sent to Paris to have Charlemagne recalled. Like his forebear Maurice Leenhardt, Charlemagne was a forceful character with a strong sense of justice.

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<sup>184</sup> Charlemagne had originally trained as a Catholic Priest.

He made many enemies. Amidst the clamour, his colleagues began to distance themselves from him, and this left Charlemagne isolated. As was the case with his predecessor Philippe Rey-Lescure, thirty years earlier, Charlemagne was not given the right of reply to settle differences and the missionary society acted sharply and decisively.

The SMEP refused to recognise native opinion; missionaries threatened to resign; a stalemate was reached; and Charlemagne was recalled to France. When he refused to go, he was suspended from the Society and in 1959 he was excommunicated as a pastor of the Reformed Church (Garrett 1997, p. 214). In consequence, Charlemagne left Do Neva and began a new school a few kilometres away at Nediva with his wife, who was a missionary teacher, and their two sons. The breakaway group formed the Free Evangelical Protestant Church of New Caledonia or *Église Charlemagne*.

Native pastors were reluctant to choose between the two Protestant Churches; they were mere victims of a ‘white’ conflict. In the aftermath of the fallout, most Protestant tribes on *Grande Terre* followed Charlemagne and became members of *L’Église libre de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, while Loyalty Islander Protestants remained overwhelmingly loyal to the SMEP and the *Église évangélique en Nouvelle-Calédonie et aux îles Loyauté* (Evangelical Church of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands) (ÉÉNCIL) (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a, pp. 273-287).<sup>185</sup> Protestant-Catholic religious antagonism, which had caused so much tribal angst in the mid-nineteenth century, had resurfaced in the mid-twentieth century in the guise of a Protestant-Protestant divide.

As Leenhardt had realised fifty years earlier, the missions on *Grande Terre* and the Loyalty Islands had been founded on different philosophical traditions and developed in differing historical circumstances. Divergent methods of British and French evangelism, dissimilarities in land expropriation and *cantonnement* which frequently involved the Church, and disparate educational methods, made conflict inevitable. In addition, the relationship between the Protestant Church and State had, for almost a century, been thorny, and rather than risk further aggravation, it was considered prudent to separate

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<sup>185</sup> Currently 55 mainland tribes belong to the Free Church, 23 to ÉÉNCIL and 151 are Catholic; on the Loyalty Islands eleven tribes belong to the Free church, 46 to ÉÉNCIL and 21 are Catholic. ÉÉNCIL in 2013 changed its name to EEKNCIL, the Evangelical Church of Kanaky, New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands.

the two. The breakaway Church was not limited or controlled by either the State or the SMEP.<sup>186</sup>

Some mainland tribes, such as the Embouchure at Ponérihouen on the East Coast, continued to support ÉÉNCIL. Philippe Gorodé of that tribe had worked with Leenhardt on his studies of the Paicî language and custom. His son Waia,<sup>187</sup> after attending school at Do Neva, trained as a Pastor at Bethanie on Lifou. This tribe, as a member of the Evangelical Protestant Church has strong *indépendantiste* loyalties. In 1974, Waia's daughter, Déwé Gorodé cofounded with Nidoïsh Naisseline the *indépendantiste* group *Foulards Rouges*, and in 2001 she became the first female Kanak Vice-President of the country.<sup>188</sup> The Evangelical Church, which is based on a more vertical hierarchical structure than the Free Church, is firmly aligned with the *indépendantiste* movement. In 2013, ÉÉNCIL, as a further demonstration of its political stance, made the controversial decision to change its name to the Evangelical Protestant Church of Kanaky New Caledonia.<sup>189</sup> Although Charlemagne's political activity was a major factor in his demise, his Free Church distanced itself from political involvement.<sup>190</sup> Members of Charlemagne's church were encouraged to accept their newly acquired democratic freedom and determine their personal political preferences.

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<sup>186</sup> As has been noted, the Loyalty Islands never suffered the confiscation of tribal land as was seen on *Grande Terre*. From the end of the nineteenth century all land on the Loyalty Islands was declared 'reserve land'.

<sup>187</sup> Waia Gorodé was a writer and pastor who worked with Jean Guiart. He wrote *Mon École du Silence* and *Souvenir d'un Neo-Calédonien, ami de Maurice Leenhardt* (Mwà Vée 2002, p. 9).

<sup>188</sup> Déwé Gorodé has been an elected Member of Congress since 1999.

<sup>189</sup> The addition of the word 'Kanaky' was considered by many to be unacceptable and divisive. The President of the Protestant Church of Kanaky-New Caledonia, Pastor Wakira Wakaine, received complaints from Simon Loueckhote, Evelyne Lèques and Léonard Sam. Evelyne Lèques (wife of the recently retired Mayor of Noumea, Jean Lèques) and Léonard Sam were members of the church, and their fathers, Marc Lacheret and Léonard Sam, were both pastors who had been key figures in the establishment of the Church. Both were also members of the Congress of New Caledonia and were engaged in bridging the ethnic gap to facilitate the move towards a 'common destiny'. Both agreed that, according to the terms of the Noumea Accord, a name change could only be decided by the approval of three-fifths of the Congress. Article 5 of the Organic Law states: 'La Nouvelle-Calédonie détermine librement les signes identitaires permettant de marquer sa personnalité aux côtés de l'emblème national et des signes de la République. Elle peut décider de modifier son nom. Ces décisions sont prises [...] à la majorité des trois cinquièmes des membres du congrès.' This had not occurred, and in the opinion of many, the Church had acted inappropriately and outside the law.

<sup>190</sup> The schism had a destabilising effect on the UC as Charlemagne followers who had been active in the AICLF under the leadership of Matayo Wetta now abandoned the UC. Some turned to the anti-independence camp which, in some cases, reflected ancient rivalry between the clans and *chefferies* (Trepied 2010, p. 174).



Despite close family ties and similar Protestant histories, the Napoemien tribe at Poindimié and the Embouchure tribe at Ponérihouen chose divergent political and religious pathways.<sup>191</sup> Eleicha Nebaye of the Napoemien tribe, and Philippe Gorodé were among the second group to graduate from the Do Neva School in 1912,<sup>192</sup> and they both continued to work with Maurice Leenhardt on the translation of the Bible into the Ajië language of Houaïlou. This exercise of ‘intercultural translation’ was not only to translate the gospels, but also to provide them with ‘dynamic equivalences’ and local flavour. This task continued for 15 years (Clifford 1982, pp. 83-85).

Notwithstanding that Waia Gorodé married Nebaye’s daughter Laura (Jouve 2014),<sup>193</sup> these tribes, at the time of the schism, chose to follow different pathways. Ancient tribal rivalries, believed to be buried in the mists of time, resurfaced as ideological differences during this period of religious trauma. Although Maurice Nenou of the Napoemien tribe believed that religion had broken down intertribal barriers and encouraged the abandonment of intertribal warfare (*Mwà Véeé* 1994, p. 18), centuries old rivalries were not easily erased. Tribal conflict and language difference were often closely aligned. However, this was not the case for the Embouchure and the Napoemien tribes which both spoke Paicî. At Houaïlou, the site of Do Neva, Leenhardt’s pastoral school, Ajië was spoken, and even within the Christian milieu Waia found that ‘c’est déjà une frontière entre nous’ (*Mwà Véeé* 1994, p. 18). Waia, on his engagement to Laura, speculated on alliances between rival linguistic communities:

Il y avait à Do Neva des filles et garçons de Ponérihouen-Touho-Poindimié-Koné [...] Ces filles et garçons auraient beaucoup aimé que je prenne une fille paicî au lieu d’une fille ajië, car dans le temps il y avait toujours des querelles, disputes et bagarres entre les filles et garçons paicî et ajië. [...] Car ici Wailu on n’aime pas le paicî. Et le paicî n’aime pas l’ajië.

(Jouve 2014, p. 8).

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<sup>191</sup> Discussions with these tribes and at Leenhardt’s school Do Neva on field trips I undertook in 2002, 2006, 2009, and 2014 provided much background material.

<sup>192</sup> Eleicha Nebaye, a devout Protestant pastor, was an orator who spoke with ‘the eloquence of his clan and his habitat; his words, gestures, and breath express the Melanesian sense of local pride, of mythic attachment.’ (Clifford 1982, p. 8).

<sup>193</sup> Eleicha Nebaye was the grandfather of New Caledonian politicians Maurice Nenou and Déwé Gorodé.

In this land of contradictions, Waia, in an autobiography written after Laura's death, muses about elitism of the Rey-Lescures in their desire for him to marry Laura, a surrogate daughter to them: 'Ils voulaient que leur fille serait un jour une épouse pour l'un de leurs anciens élèves. Il était comme un homme des affaires.' (Jouve 2014, p. 10).

It would appear that Rey-Lescure, despite his championing of Kanak culture, an ideal which cost him his position in New Caledonia, retained remnants of occidental paternalism which, on occasion, came to the fore to overrule tribal custom. As Protestant unity crumbled and the protection that had been provided by the Church was torn apart, tribal members retreated to the security of ancient tribal customary bounds, boundaries which the politician Maurice Nenou thought had been destroyed by the Church:

Mais si c'était par le côté traditionnel, moi, je ne suis pas le droit d'aller faire un discours politique dans le Nord: ma tradition me l'interdit, mais c'est par l'évolution, par l'Évangile, que je peux aller partout maintenant. Est-ce que nos ancêtres avaient le droit de traverser un creek ou la chaîne ? Non !

(*Mwà Vée* 1994, p. 18).

For both European and Kanak, deep-rooted cultural traits were always on standby and ready to emerge into new forms of dispute.

The Napoemien tribe followed Charlemagne in the establishment of the Evangelical Free Church, and it has remained firmly loyalist to this day. Maurice Nenou was eighteen in 1957 when he left his tribe to begin his education at Do Neva. He spoke no French but was well versed in native custom, which equipped him with a solid point of reference.<sup>194</sup> Of equal importance to Nenou (later to be a signatory of the Matignon Agreements for the anti-independence *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR) and member of the National Assembly), was religion. Nenou considered custom and religion as his two feet, without which he would be unable to

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<sup>194</sup> Kanak Custom is defined in the Charter of the Kanak People: '[Kanak Custom] is the action that we do in life on specific occasions (birth, death, marriage, etc.). It is also our way to see things and the values that we are giving to these things.' (Customary Senate of New Caledonia 2014, p. 7).

walk. In an address to the National Assembly on 8 July 1986, Nenou defended Kanak identity and custom, which he placed firmly within the modern world of France:

Mon clan a les droits et des devoirs dans un ‘périmètre coutumier’ pas au-delà. La Calédonie est ainsi faite que, avant l’arrivée des Français, elle était une mosaïque des grands clans dominants, indépendants les uns des autres, possédant chacun leur propre territoire, leurs propres règles coutumières et leur propre langue [...]. C’est donc la France qui, au fil des années, a réalisé l’unité de la Nouvelle-Calédonie par l’organisation administrative et par la langue. Cette unité s’est doublée d’un apprentissage de la démocratie qui a trouvé son aboutissement dans l’égalité des citoyens français de Nouvelle-Calédonie entre eux, sans distinction de couleur de peau ni d’origine sociale. Elle a ainsi ouvert à tous, et notamment à nous, Mélanésiens, l’accès à la modernité dans un système économique et social évoluant vers le progrès.

(Journal Officiel de la République Française [JORF] 9 July 1986, pp. 2967).

The scission of the Protestant Church was, and remains, according to Bafue Huen, the chaplain at Do Neva, a sad occasion for Protestants. Elia Thidjinie also recalls with sadness the split, which was not brought about by Melanesian Pastors or by members of the Church, but was the result of a disagreement between Raymond Charlemagne, the white missionary, and his superiors in the Evangelical Mission of Paris who were responsible for the Church in New Caledonia. With the break in Protestant relations, Charlemagne had control of all of the schools except Do Neva and two other small schools (*Mwà Vée* 1993b, p. 51). The scission:

[...] est restée comme une plaie ouverte, dans la société kanak protestante, il y a beaucoup de querelles dans les familles. On essaye d’en sortir par la réconciliation, mais le chemin reste difficile, car il y a encore beaucoup de vieux qui ont vécu cette division et il nous faut aller doucement.

(*Mwà Vée* 2000, p. 13)

The Evangelical Church of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands gained autonomy from the Paris mission in 1960. In August 1979, the synod of ÉÉNCIL held at Houaïlou decided, as the result of a unanimous ‘yes’ vote, to endorse the independence

movement. The vote was taken only after lengthy deliberation and consideration. The suffering and injustices inflicted upon Melanesians in the past, and the overt and covert oppression of the present were recognised, and it was decided that the Church should take up the fight for independence. The synod was cognisant of the good intentions of France, but also of promises which were never fulfilled. The Church believed that the Kanak people should be responsible for their own destiny in their own country and should not be subjected to external domination. According to Pastor Weté, President of ÉÉNCIL, the decision was not political but a revival of the spirit of the AICLF: a renewed attempt to liberate the Kanak people in order that their aspirations and needs might be fully met. Successive waves of migration had forced the Kanak to become an economically and socially disadvantaged minority in their own country. The resolve of the Church attracted so much criticism that its President travelled to France and other European countries to explain the reasoning (*Mwà Vée* 2000, p. 14). In European circles, the decision was not well accepted, and in the hope of achieving a basis for dialogue and reconciliation, it was decided to unite the three major churches in an œcumenical week of prayer.

According to Elia Thidjine, past President of the Evangelical Church, attempts to reunite the two branches of the Church have met with little success. Others, such as Marc Gowé, linguist and teacher at Do Kamo, continue to hope for Church reunification. At the exhibition at the Tjibaou Centre in 2002 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Maurice Leenhardt and Do Neva, he stated;

Il est à souhaiter que le centenaire de Maurice Leenhardt continue au rapprochement de l'Église protestante. Pour moi chaque fois que l'on est capable de surmonter les fractures liées à la méconnaissance de l'autre et à l'incompréhension on se rapproche du concept de citoyenneté.

(*Mwà Vée* 2002, p. 47).

Pastor Weté, while wishing for reconciliation between the Protestant Churches, considers the *Église libre* as a sister Church to the Evangelical Church with which it shares certain ceremonies. The Kanak adherents of the three major Churches remain closely bound by native custom, and on auspicious occasions, such as the inauguration

of the Evangelical Church at Windo in December 2006, they unite in the spirit of oecumenism.<sup>195</sup>

Many of those who followed Charlemagne in the establishment of the Free Evangelical Church had been influenced by the work of Maurice Leenhardt. Charlemagne, like Leenhardt, saw the need to incorporate Kanak culture within a framework of higher education for indigenous students, and although the *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* agreed, it was not prepared to ruffle colonial feathers. The Kanak educational ceiling thus continued to be the *Certificat d'Études Primaires*, CEP. Monitors, CEP in hand, were then sent into the bush to teach. Charlemagne continued to push for higher education and increased vocational training for his native flock. The first Kanak to achieve a college *brevet* from Nedivin College graduated in 1962. Charlemagne's newly founded Church and school, the Free Evangelical Church of New Caledonia and the Federation of Free Protestant Education were independent, autonomous and free from French bureaucratic obstructions. Members of the Church were encouraged to pursue personal social, educational, political and spiritual goals. ÉÉNCIL gained autonomy in 1960. Unlike the ÉÉNCIL, the Free Church has not ruled on matters of independence, enabling its heterogeneous membership to make personal political decisions as liberated Christian members of society. Within the Free Church, politics and religion are considered as two separate entities.

The schism within the Protestant ranks was predictable. When the French arrived on the Loyalty Islands, the undercurrent of British–French, Protestant–Catholic hostility was well established. This led to the ‘wars of religion’ when French priests, Protestant missionaries, Governors and Commanders were expelled in acrimonious circumstances. After fifty years of LMS evangelisation, the decision was made to replace the British Protestant missionaries with French Protestant missionaries.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Personal testimony. The High Commissioner of New Caledonia, Michel Marie, was also present, and the President of the Province Nord, Paul Néaoutyne, raised as a Catholic, also gave it his support.

<sup>196</sup> The request was made for a replacement by the Protestant Minister for the Navy and Colonies, who wrote to the Council of the Reformed Church: ‘[...] interpellé par le gouverneur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie sur les agissements anti-français du pasteur anglais Jones et sur la nécessité d’envoyer un pasteur français pour contre-balancer dans ces parages l’influence fâcheuse du ministre anglais, il dispose de moyens (traitement, voyage, logement) pour qu’on trouve, sans tarder un pasteur qui

By this time, the roots of British Protestantism were firmly embedded in the Loyalty Islands. On *Grande Terre*, the only officially recognised missionaries were French. The Anglo-French divide was to know a long history, with echoes into the present day.

### **Conflict in other forms: Laws, decrees and statutes**

Post World War II, France was in a state of constant flux, stitching together a country which had been shattered in defeat and deeply divided. To restore faith, improve confidence in the State, and preserve the *grandeur* of Empire, the French Government had to act quickly. To avoid the protracted deliberation generally associated with the introduction of new laws, the Government decided to introduce a framework law, the *Defferre loi-cadre*,<sup>197</sup> which by decree could take immediate effect. The *loi-cadre* was designed to facilitate the transition to greater autonomy within the Territory.<sup>198</sup> It was envisaged that administrative and political decentralisation would enable Melanesians to progress towards complete autonomy within the French Republic. The General Council was replaced by a Territorial Assembly, which was elected by universal suffrage, and from this a Governing Council of six Ministers and a Vice-President were chosen. The nominal Head of Government was the French High Commissioner and the State retained responsibility for defence, finance, public order, international transport and public relations (Chappell 2014, p. 44).

With the support of a strong Melanesian vote, the UC claimed 18 of the 30 seats in the new Territorial Assembly, and Maurice Lenormand, a self-proclaimed *gaulliste de gauche*, was elected Vice-President.<sup>199</sup> Advantage in Government did not translate to the successful realisation of demands for the UC. The newly elected Government was faced with opposition from the New Caledonian gentry, a right-wing government in

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fût disposé à accepter la mission patriotique d'aller fortifier l'influence française aux îles Loyauté.' (Cited in Zorn 2012, p. 176).

<sup>197</sup> Gaston Defferre, socialist Minister for Overseas Territories, 1 February 1956 to 13 June 1957, in the Guy Mollet government. The *loi-cadre* took effect on 23 June 1956.

<sup>198</sup> The local conservative bourgeoisie, threatened by the expansion of the electoral roll, attempted to increase European control by resorting to a decree of 2 April 1885 which provided the *Conseil Général* with extended powers (Lenormand 1991, p. 142). See also *Le Monde* 2 February 1956, 15 March 1956 and 23 March 1956, and JORF 24 June 1956, p. 5782.

<sup>199</sup> Lenormand was Vice-President from 22 October 1957 until 18 June 1959. His successor was Michel Kauma, chief of the Loyalist Catholic Fayaoué tribe, great grandson of Weneguei of Fayaoué and Boula of the Lossi district on Lifou, and married to the daughter of Nekelo. All of these chiefs were politically active before annexation (see Chapter 1).

France and its representative in New Caledonia, the High Commissioner. Opposition gave way to critical abuse. In 1957 the Prime Minister, Michel Debré, published his newspaper *Le Courrier de la Colère*, in which he criticised the ‘communist’ Government in New Caledonia (Lenormand 1992, p. 143).

In 1958, with the fall of the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle was swept into power and Imperialism was again in the spotlight. Many of the colonised countries were calling for independence, and de Gaulle, true to his word at Brazzaville, provided them with the option of choosing self-determination by way of a referendum. New Caledonia chose to become a *territoire d’outre-mer*. As the country emerged from the chrysalis of colonisation, the *Union Calédonienne* increased its demand for social, cultural, and economic reform; however, change was slow to come and as hopes were dashed, enthusiastic expectation, albeit in association with France,<sup>200</sup> turned to disillusionment. Lenormand found himself further at odds with the powerful European community which accused him of ‘blind hatred’ and of ‘sowing disaccord and hatred among people who had lived in peace for one hundred years’ (Chappell 2014, p. 45). The Conservative campaign gathered pace with walkouts from the Assembly, shouting matches, an attempt to dynamite Lenormand’s home, an attack on Vice-President Rock Pidjot, and the imprisonment of 12 councillors by ‘activists’ in what Lenormand described as ‘le quatorzième des treize complots du 13 mai’ (Decraene 1963).<sup>201</sup>

Colonial pressure on the French Government for change resulted in a revision of Section XII of the Constitution, which recognised the right of French Overseas Territories to independence but not to domestic autonomy in association with France (Decraene 1962). This amendment was a disappointment for the UC, which believed that the country should be responsible for local economic and social development within the French fold. The battle continued when an article published in *L’Avenir Calédonien* by the UC suggested that the Territory’s future depended on the installation

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<sup>200</sup> Section XII, Article 77 of the Constitution of 1958 states:

‘Dans la Communauté instituée par la présente Constitution, les États jouissent de l’autonomie ; ils s’administrent eux-mêmes et gèrent démocratiquement et librement leurs propres affaires.

- Il n’existe qu’une citoyenneté de la Communauté.

- Tous les citoyens sont égaux en droit, quelles que soient leur origine, leur race et leur religion. Ils ont les mêmes devoirs.’

(<<http://www.legifrance.gov.fr>>). [14 February 2015].

<sup>201</sup> This referred to the coup on 13 May which saw the downfall of the Fourth Republic and the return of De Gaulle to power. Interestingly, Michel Debré was named as one of those involved in the plot.

of new mining ventures to break the monopoly of the SLN (Gendron 2009, p. 119). The recommendation was poorly received and brought upon the UC the opprobrium of the SLN,<sup>202</sup> the local oligarchy, and the High Commissioner. The new High Commissioner, Laurent Pechoux,<sup>203</sup> was experienced in the suppression of nationalism. As Governor of the Côte d'Ivoire, he had repressed the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* of Félix Houphouët-Boigny and he now had his sights set on 'the skin' of Lenormand (Lenormand 1992, p. 145).<sup>204</sup> Pechoux supported the *Rassemblement Calédonien*, the local captains of industry, and under his tutelage local autonomy was short-lived.

In the midst of the political maelstrom, the International Nickel Company (INCO), the world's largest nickel producer, proposed an INCO-led nickel project in New Caledonia which was to include the building of a \$100 million refinery. Because the French Government considered that such a project would weaken French–New Caledonian adhesion and pose a threat to the 'national interest', the plan was rejected.<sup>205</sup> To stave off competition which had been welcomed by many in New Caledonia, certain powers previously held by the Territorial Assembly were returned to the State.<sup>206</sup> The trend of reducing the power of the Ministers of the Territorial Government continued with the enactment of the Jacquinot laws in 1963.<sup>207</sup> These laws were contested by Lenormand who considered them to be a retrograde step and a return to colonialism:

Il semble impensable que le représentant du Gouvernement central puisse, en 1963, remettre en cause unilatéralement notre statut, alors qu'au moment du référendum et de l'option en 1958 le ministre de la

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<sup>202</sup> The UC Government fell foul of the SLN, the major employer in the Territory, by refusing to fund the modernisation of the Doniambo smelter. With outdated technologies and equipment, the smelter had become uncompetitive and was unable to meet Japanese demand during the nickel boom of the Korean War (1950-1953). As production costs exceeded the market price set by INCO, the SLN was in a poor bargaining position.

<sup>203</sup> Laurent Elisée Pechoux, Governor, 1 December 1958 to 9 January 1963.

<sup>204</sup> According to Lenormand, the new Governor left France saying: 'I will have the skin of Lenormand within six months.' Following the bombing of the *Assemblée Territoriale*, the garage of a republican lawyer and the UC headquarters, Lenormand was imprisoned and deprived of civil rights for seven years for failing to stop the bombing. See also Chappell (2004, p. 53).

<sup>205</sup> The French Government was against the establishment of foreign companies in the territory as this could strengthen the call for independence and result in a reduction of French control over lucrative nickel deposits, and loss of influence in the Pacific (Gendron 2009, p. 119).

<sup>206</sup> France was accused of sacrificing 'New Caledonian concerns to French interests at the expense of stagnation in the territory', and of the fact that the SLN 'dominated and exploited New Caledonia's rich natural resources for its own advantage and returned insufficient economic and other benefits to the people of New Caledonia'. (Gendron 2009, p. 118).

<sup>207</sup> Louis Jacquinot, *Ministre de la France d'outre-mer*, 11 August 1951 to 19 June 1954.



France d'outre-mer de l'époque avait donné au territoire les assurances les plus formelles.

(JORF 11 December 1963, p. 7794).

This law effectively dissolved the Territorial Assembly and stripped the Territory of its post-war political advances. Ultimate power had been returned to the Governor. It was a case of when France sneezes, New Caledonia catches a cold. In 1962, after eight years of war, Algeria gained independence. This was a bitter blow for de Gaulle, whose 'certain idea' of France as a major world power depended for its grandeur upon the remaining 'confetti of Empire.' The French right-wing Government had the support of the European settler majority and this further disadvantaged the *indépendantistes*. Protests, forbidden by Pechoux and organised by the UC, resulted in dynamiting of the Territorial Assembly, the garage of the president of the Gaullist *Union pour la nouvelle République* (UNR), Georges Chatenay, and the UC offices. Ciavaldini, a member of the UC, gave evidence which led to the arrest and incarceration of Lenormand.<sup>208</sup> Although Ciavaldini retracted his statement, Lenormand was stripped of his civil rights for seven years. According to Lenormand the first peaceful step towards independence had been foiled. By 1968, the Territorial Assembly had been disbanded and the UC had lost its seat in the Senate to Henri Lafleur of the *Rassemblement Calédonien*.<sup>209</sup>

In this colonial milieu, promises were broken, laws were changeable, and individualism triumphed. The Melanesian faith in 'la parole' as sacrosanct, and in cooperation for the common good, were not European attributes. The unsavoury aspects of the Imperial regime were described by Aimé Césaire: 'colonialist Europe has grafted modern abuse onto ancient injustice, hateful racism onto old inequality' (Césaire 2000, p. 45). During these turbulent years the inconsistencies of the various French Governments were to engender further conflict. The anti-colonial literature of the day, the Algerian War of independence, and the May 68 student-worker uprising had a profound radicalising effect on the Caledonian students and led to what became known as the 'Kanak Awakening'. Given the intransigence of the entrenched local population and the self-

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<sup>208</sup> No one claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Territorial Assembly and no one ever knew whether the graffiti painted on the wall—FROLICA—was an acronym for *Front de libération calédonien* or *Front de libération canaque* (Bergeroux 1975).

<sup>209</sup> The *Rassemblement Calédonien* emerged as a new conservative political force in 1958, led by Henri Lafleur a wealthy mining magnate.

serving interests of the French State, the situation was bound to lead to conflict. It is to this that we shall turn in our next chapter.

### **Conclusion: Chapter 3**

World War II woke New Caledonia from its colonial lethargy. The capitulation of France and the possibility of a Petainist Government in the colony caused concern in the Anglo-Pacific, and for Australia and New Zealand in particular.<sup>210</sup> When Japan became a signatory of the Tripartite Pact on 29 September 1940,<sup>211</sup> the strategic importance of New Caledonia and the wartime value of its large nickel deposits became apparent, and by way of undercover diplomatic manoeuvring Australia ensured that de Gaulle's Free French gained power. With the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the Americans were quick to react by establishing a military base in New Caledonia. The passage through the Territory of an estimated million allied troops posed a challenge to French hegemony<sup>212</sup> and helped to liberate the Kanak who, until 1944, had been severely restricted by the *Indigénat*.

Post-war Kanak liberation, and a growing interest in Communism, brought a swift reaction from the Churches and the encouragement of the Church-sponsored Kanak entry into the political arena. The Kanak, with a demographic majority and a viable political voice, were now able to challenge the ruling oligarchy and violent conflict erupted. As the Churches became more enmeshed within the political agenda, the threads uniting the disparate strands of the Protestant Church began to unravel. The Church was torn by different educational, theological and political ideas that led to bitter conflict and its eventual schism. This in turn led to political divisions, notably for or against 'autonomy', 'independence' or remaining 'loyal' to France. With multiple cracks in the Church and growing political division, the opportunity for reconciliation quickly evaporated and the scene was set once again for a return to conflict.

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<sup>210</sup> This vindicated the opinions aired by Australia and New Zealand almost a century earlier in the quest for annexation.

<sup>211</sup> The Tripartite Pact linked Germany, Italy and Japan. Each followed its own course of action in the fight against the Allied forces. This Pact was also known as the 'Axis Alliance'.

<sup>212</sup> Fundamental differences between the French and Americans led to a deep misunderstanding. According to De Gaulle, 'reconciliation with the Americans was not possible' (Munholland 2005, p. 178).

## CHAPTER 4

### The Kanak Awakening, May 68 and Beyond

World War II was a period of liberation for the native population of New Caledonia and the Kanak were now a force to be reckoned with. They outnumbered Europeans, had a political voice,<sup>213</sup> and with improved educational opportunity were able to pursue higher studies in France. When the first Kanak students arrived in France in the early 1960s, the country had emerged by way of the Marshall Plan from post-war devastation to an era of strong economic reconstruction and expansion, the heady days of *Les Trente Glorieuses*.<sup>214</sup> An explosion of industrial activity called for an increased labour force and this was supplied largely by the colonies. Enthusiastic recruitment campaigns and wars of emancipation led to a colonial diaspora, which meant that many uprooted, marginalised people were living in France in cultural limbo. From Algeria alone one million French settlers, *pieds-noirs*, and Muslim pro-French Algerians, *harkis*, moved to France where, after having championed the French cause in Algeria, they were treated as an underclass and alienated from French society (Stoppard 2006, p. 207).

Although some Kanak may have been confronted with racial discrimination in the Metropole, Nidoïsh Naisseline, the son of the High chief of si-Gwahma on Maré, was welcomed into the Protestant milieu (Chappell 2010, p. 42). When Naisseline arrived in France in 1962 to attend the Lycée Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Montmorency, he was guided by Pastor Marc Boegner, an active resistance campaigner during German occupation, Head of the Protestant Church of France and an advocate of Christian unity

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<sup>213</sup> The framework legislation which led to the Defferre law of 26 July 1957 granted the right to vote to all Caledonians without distinction. The *Conseil Général* was replaced by the Territorial Assembly of 30 members from which were elected 6 to 8 Ministers. Of the 30 members of the first Assembly 18 were from the UC, 7 were Social Republicans, 4 *pro-indépendantistes*, and 1 from the workers' party, *Rassemblement Ouvrier Calédonien* (Lenormand 1991, p. 141).

<sup>214</sup> '*Les Trente Glorieuses*' referred to the years between 1945 and 1975 and was coined by Jean Fourastié in his book *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*.

through the œcumenical movement.<sup>215</sup> Slowly, Kanak pride began to replace the complex of inferiority inculcated by a century of imperial rule.

The 1960s were years of conflict as the forces of order confronted the forces of protest and liberation. The Black Power and Civil Rights movements were focusing the world's attention on the American black–white divide. The black-power salute of black athletes at the Mexican Olympic Games in 1968 was beamed around the world. In this changing socio-cultural climate, the Kanak students discovered that the great men of the time, Martin Luther King, Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh, were not European. Inspired by the mood of the era, the Caledonian students joined the fight for equality, justice and human rights. It was a Kanak awakening.

Among the early New Caledonian students to arrive in France from New Caledonia in the 1960s were the non-Kanak Jean-Paul Caillard, a medical student, and Max Chivot, an economics student who joined Naisseline in the *Association des étudiants de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et des Nouvelles-Hébrides* (AENCNH). They became involved with the student magazine *Trait d'Union* (acronym TU, translation 'hyphen') in which Caillard, as editor, encouraged an emergent interest in Kanak culture. Articles were written which provided a Melanesian perspective of events of the past, which had generally been confined to oral histories. Naisseline, influenced by the anti-colonial writers Aimé Césaire and Franz Fanon,<sup>216</sup> published an article titled *Coutumes canaques et civilisation occidentale: face à face ?* which reflected on racism and the clash of civilisations in New Caledonia. In his analysis Naisseline described the three stages of denaturalisation of the Kanak: first was the attempt to assimilate to escape the shame of cannibal ancestors; second was disillusionment with the realisation of having being duped; and third was the total rejection of Western civilisation (Chappell 2010, p. 46). Naisseline spurned Kanak imitation of Europeans and argued in favour of equality, mutual respect and the recognition of Kanak identity:

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<sup>215</sup> Boegner wrote to Pétain pleading for a more humane treatment of Jews throughout the period of German occupation. After the war, he received a Yad Vashem award which was given to non-Jews who saved Jewish lives during the war. <<http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4042772>>. [2 January 2016]. In 1963 he became a member of the *Académie Française*, the only Pastor ever to achieve this honour. <<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-immortels/marc-boegner?fauteuil=2&election=08-11-1962>>. [2 January 2016].

<sup>216</sup> Frantz Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925. He studied medicine in France and specialised in psychiatry. He practised in Algeria during the War of Independence and joined the revolutionaries. He died of leukaemia, aged 36, shortly before Algerian independence.

Nous dialoguerons avec les civilisateurs, à condition qu'ils acceptent d'extirper l'Homme de ce tas de ruines. Nous les aiderons avec plaisir s'ils nous le demandent. Pour cela, nous pourrions par exemple, avec eux, faire une balade du côté des tribus canaques, pour qu'ils apprennent à découvrir ce qu'est une société sans prison, sans orphelinat, sans homme seule une société où tout le monde se donne la main.

(Naisseline cited in Banaré 2014, p. 8).

It became apparent that values fundamental in Europe—equality, democracy and liberalism—did not extend to non-Europeans. Colonial Manichaeism was firmly embedded; the Kanak and European existed in two separate spheres. In general, Europeans were not interested in the world of the Kanak. In the politics of white assimilation it was the black colonised who had to wear 'white masks', to use Fanon's expression.<sup>217</sup>

Dissatisfaction in France during the sixties culminated in the crisis of May 68. De Gaulle had lost support because of the disastrous war with Algeria, and the war in Vietnam sparked student protests against American imperialism. Protests were organised by militant student and teacher organisations.<sup>218</sup> The wartime sentiment of the Free French Movement against American Imperialism was reignited.<sup>219</sup> Students of the post-World War II 'baby boom' generation in France were joined by students from the newly liberated colonies, with the effect that universities were poorly equipped and overcrowded. Protest meetings organised by Daniel Cohn-Bendit<sup>220</sup> called for a broad gamut of reforms to perceived injustice. One theme which resonated with the Kanak was 'the attempt of bureaucrats to turn men into objects [...] and of mankind's refusal to be treated in this way' (*Woroni* 10 June 1971, p. 8). The protest spread.

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<sup>217</sup> See Boyden (1970). Genetically, humans have remained unchanged for thousands of years. It follows, according to Boyden, that hunter-gatherer societies were, by natural selection, best adapted to the earth's habitat. The enormous environmental and lifestyle changes that have occurred in recent years have resulted in stress and signs of maladjustment. As a consequence, 'modern' man has much to learn from the 'primitive' or less technologically advanced.

<sup>218</sup> The *Union Nationale des Étudiants de France* (UNEF) and the teacher organisation, the *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (SNESUP).

<sup>219</sup> In New Caledonia, imperialism was running unabated, the Billotte Laws had returned control of the Territory to France, and this included the control of the mining industry at a time of unprecedented growth, the nickel boom. As well, the country was flooded with new immigrants, which ensured that the Kanak voice would never be heard.

<sup>220</sup> Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Dany le Rouge, a German Jew, subsequently became a Member of the EU Parliament for the Greens.

New Caledonian students were quick to join the fray, which soon changed from passive protest to violent conflict. Barricades were raised, the *Compagnies républicaines de sécurité* (CRS) was brought in and revolutionary slogans abounded, highlighting student discontent with a repressive technocratic society that espoused liberty and fraternity but practised social inequality (Bureau of Public Secrets n.d.). Radical labour unions affronted by police brutality took industrial action and within two months France was at a standstill as ten million workers joined the general strike. A general election swept De Gaulle back into power with promises for sweeping reforms. For those New Caledonian students in Paris these events had a profound effect; it was an experience which would affect future political confrontation on the *Caillou*.<sup>221</sup>

Nidoïsh Naisseline was at the centre of the action which challenged and contested imperial, racial, political and educational oppression. Amid this turmoil, in a country eighteen thousand kilometres from his homeland, Naisseline began to appreciate Kanak culture which he believed should be accepted with pride and not subjugated to western values: ‘l’on a toujours appris à Nouméa, selon la première conception, que pour devenir quelqu’un de bien, il suffit de se hausser au niveau de l’Européen.’ (Naisseline cited in Banaré 2014, p. 4). In 1969, while still living in France, Naisseline wrote an article for the review *Canaque Homme Libre*,<sup>222</sup> which he titled *Aspects noirs du problème blanc*. In this article, he criticised the way in which Europeans had stereotyped the Kanak as a race of footballers and *pilou* dancers who lacked the ability to reason or recognise the difference between good and evil: ‘Si l’homme devient réellement homme à partir du moment où il pense, d’après certaines paroles entendues à Nouméa, l’indigène serait à la frontière entre l’humanité et l’animalité.’ (Banaré 2014, p. 6). The student rebellion in 1968 was for Naisseline a defining moment of self-acceptance: ‘La grande leçon que je tire de 68, c’est que le regard du métropolitain m’a réconcilié avec moi-même.’ (Brandeau 1998). Like Fanon, Naisseline believed that the only way for the native to extricate himself from the imperial clutch and to restore the Melanesian personality was by dialogue or revolt (Banaré 2014, p. 7).

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<sup>221</sup> When violence erupted in the streets of Paris, New Caledonian student Gabriel Paita and medical student Jean-Paul Caillard were pursued and clubbed by the CRS.

<sup>222</sup> In December 1968, the radical students formed a new association, the *Association des Jeunes Calédoniens à Paris (AJCP)* and in February they published the journal *Canaque Homme Libre* (Chappell 2003, p. 193).

In 1969, Naisseline returned to New Caledonia with ideas which had radically changed during his student years in France. He brought together those concerned with reasserting Kanak identity and culture through a movement called the *Foulards Rouges*, a name which symbolised both the Paris Commune and the red commune scarf which Louise Michel is reputed to have given to Ataï during the 1878 insurrection. Students who had returned to New Caledonia after taking part in the May 68 insurrection in France took pride in Kanak culture and in ‘black power’ and sought, with Naisseline, a return to the roots of *Kanakitude*. The return to the ideals of Kanak traditional society; of being in tune with the rhythm of nature, and of working and living together for the benefit of the community, was seen by the French anthropologist Alban Bensa to be an acceptance of the ‘Fourierist’ principles of utopian socialism practised by Guillaumin in the previous century (Kajman 1985).

Eminently political, the group made its presence felt by painting anticolonial slogans on ‘white only’ restaurants and bars. Slogans such as ‘À bas le colonialisme’, ‘Les Blancs dehors’ and ‘Calédonie Libre’ which appeared around the city led to the arrest of Naisseline and Caillard. The imprisonment of the son of the High Chief of Maré caused riots in the city and publicity for the objectives of his *indépendantiste* party.

To broadcast the aims of the *Foulards Rouges*, a monthly magazine, *Réveil Canaque*,<sup>223</sup> edited by Naisseline, published revolutionary commentaries. The publication of this magazine in Nengone, the language of Maré, resulted in another term of imprisonment for Naisseline. The use of languages other than French had been forbidden by law in both education and publishing since 1863 and this law still held.<sup>224</sup> While in prison Naisseline wrote: ‘We are struggling for humanity and not against the White [...]. The condition for racial harmony in New Caledonia [is that] each ethnic group should

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<sup>223</sup> According to Angleviel (2002, pp. 191-196) the name given to the indigenous population of New Caledonia has metamorphosed with time. Originally ‘kanaka’, which is the Polynesian for ‘man’, was used generically for all Oceanians. This became Kanak (Garnier 1991 [1871]). Trentinian in his report in 1879 ‘frenchified’ the name into ‘canaque’, but as the French-*Indigène* relationship deteriorated, this name was considered to be pejorative. Others, including Fr Lambert (1855-1903), used the name *Néo-Calédonien*. Between the wars *canaque* signified the indigenous people and *calédonien* the ‘Europeans’. After the Brazzaville conference ‘*mélanésien*’ became the *lingua franca* of the Administration. In the press, the spelling varies: *Le Monde*: canaque, *Le Nouvel Observateur*: kanak, *Paris Match*: kanak. During the events of the 1980s the *kanak* form was adopted as a symbol of independence. This spelling was retained in the Noumea Accord and seems to have gained traction. I have generally used ‘Kanak’ irrespective of the epoch.

<sup>224</sup> Hamid Mokaddem speaks of *schizes*, *scissions*, *ruptures* that have had a destabilising effect on Kanak culture and the first of these ruptures is the outlawing of the use of the maternal tongue in favour of French, the language of prestige and social and educational success (cited in Jouve 2014).

develop its personality' (Naisseline cited in Chappell 2010, p. 50). It was a battle for acceptance as intellectual equals. The popular belief was that intelligence was the domain of the coloniser and not the colonised, and according to Naisseline, if a Kanak challenged this order he was suspected of plotting murder. In reality, Naisseline admitted, he would like to commit two murders, 'that of the myth of White superiority, and that of the myth of Kanak savagery' (Chappell 2010, p. 51). News of the arrest of some of her former classmates, members of the *Fouards Rouges*, aroused Déwé Gorodé's awareness of the Kanak struggle for independence, and she with other educated women such as Susanna Ounei joined the group.

Conflict continued throughout the 1970s. Naisseline was arrested and imprisoned again when he intervened in a dispute between a French official and Kanak shopkeeper (*Le Monde* 24 March 1972). His incarceration was likened to that of other freedom fighters, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who had also paid the price and even died for racial liberty, humanity and dignity. The slogans of the French Revolution—liberty, equality and fraternity—had little meaning in New Caledonia, where the Kanak continued to be considered as a lower species on the evolutionary ladder. This was despite Guiart's suggestion that 'there is being created a young, vigorous people, who have already happily joined the humanism of the French to the solid virtues of the Melanesians' (Aldrich 1993, pp. 46-47).

The Kanak optimism of the 1960s began to fade in the 1970s. The pluriethnic UC lost seats in the Territorial Assembly. Melanesians became a minority as French nationals, lured by a healthy remuneration of up to five times that offered in the homeland, flooded the country. The Mayor of Noumea, Roger Laroque, who favoured closer integration with France, told *L'Express*: 'We must make whites, make metropolitans come here. That way there will be no Canaque problem.' (Chappell 2010, p. 55). This sentiment was reinforced by the Prime Minister Pierre Messmer who in a letter addressed to Xavier Deniaux, Minister for the DOM-TOM:

La présence française en Calédonie ne peut être menacée sauf guerre mondiale, que par une revendication nationaliste des populations autochtones appuyées par quelques alliés éventuels dans d'autres communautés ethniques venant du Pacifique. À court et à moyen terme, l'immigration massive de citoyens français métropolitains ou originaires des départements d'Outre-mer (Réunion), devrait permettre d'éviter ce



danger, en maintenant et en améliorant le rapport numérique des communautés.  
(LDH-Toulon 2008).

For the Kanak, the battle for equality, respect and recognition continued. To gain respect, the pejorative name *canaque* was changed to Kanak (Angleviel 2002, pp. 194-195; Douglas 1998, p. 70; Henningham 1992, p. 67)<sup>225</sup> and to gain recognition, the annual celebration of French annexation on 24 September became, for the Kanak, a day of national mourning, rebellion and confrontation (Waddell 2008, p. 122). Faced with an intransigent Government which was slow to act on issues of Kanak inequality, a group of young radicals led by Déwé Gorodé and Elie Poigoune broke away from the conciliatory *Fouleurs Rouges* in 1974 to form a new, more militant party, *Groupe 1878*, which took its name from the Kanak insurgence of 1878. The claim was now for independence not autonomy.<sup>226</sup>

The *Groupe 1878* supported issues that were of concern on *Grande Terre*, in particular land rights and the restoration of ancestral land. As land was expropriated, the Kanak were ignored in a distribution which favoured the few: 95 people, or 5% of landholders, who owned 70% of the confiscated land, and of this, three people, the ‘Caledonian plutocracy,’ held one third of the total holdings (Ward 1982, pp. 33-34). Disenchanted, the small landholders, *petits blancs*, joined the Kanak in their fight against the injustice of land distribution. On the Loyalty Islands, land was not an issue as the islands in their entirety were tribal reserves. In addition, the overriding objective of the young Loyalty Island activists was to achieve cultural recognition and political, economic and social equality within a pluricultural framework. Naisseline, who was at the forefront of Melanesian political activity, sought to unite all those who had been exploited in the quest for equality: ‘under the domination of a common enemy [...] all the exploited people are for me legitimate allies that we must not ignore.’ (Chappell 2010, p. 57). In February 1976, in a reshuffling of political parties and action groups, the *Fouleurs Rouges* and *Groupe 1878* combined to form the political party *Parti de libération kanak*, PALIKA (Henningham 1992, p. 68).

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<sup>225</sup> The upper-case *Kanak* has a strong attachment to the independence movement and remains a powerful symbol of identity

<sup>226</sup> The *Fouleurs Rouges* was predominantly Loyalty Island based; it was divided into three subgroups to represent each island. *Groupe 1878* pursued mainland issues including land rights. The Loyalty Islands in their entirety were ‘native reserves.’

## More laws, statutes and plans: Billotte, Stirn, Dijoud and Lemoine

Throughout the 1960s, pressure was brought to bear on the French Government to end the monopoly of the SLN, which was seen to advantage France and French companies while returning little economic benefit to the local inhabitants. A memorandum submitted to the Territorial Assembly by four of its members outlined widespread discontent with the company (Gendron 2009, p. 119). The memorandum was ignored, and in 1969 the draconian Billotte laws,<sup>227</sup> known locally as *lois scélérates*, were introduced. These three laws stripped the country of the last remnants of autonomy; they placed all mining activities, including exploration, under State control, and transferred the administration of the 31 communes from the Territory to State-appointed *chefs de subdivision*. The management of all major investment in the Territory was relocated to France. The approval of these laws was contested by Caledonians on the premise that as the decision had been made without consultation, it contravened Article 74 of the French Constitution (Decraene 1968a)<sup>228</sup> and gave rise to excessive centralisation:

Véritables lois d'exception qui donnent non pas les pleins pouvoirs, mais la tyrannie, à un seul homme, le ministre d'État. En conséquence, [des élus de l'Union calédonienne] s'opposent catégoriquement à l'adoption de ces textes qui concernent le régime fiscal, le régime minier et les communes de moyen exercice de Nouvelle-Calédonie.

(Decraene 1968b).

Conflict and a jail term for Naisseline resulted in widespread media coverage. Naisseline had disputed the authority of the *chef de subdivision* and accused the young administrator of interfering in tribal affairs on native reserve land. Naisseline was charged with 'flagrant offences' and arrested. Hundreds flocked to the courtroom for his trial and Max Chivot published front page anti-colonial cartoons. This resulted in the cartoonist being incarcerated with his *soixante-huitard* friend (Chappell 2014, p. 110). Naisseline admitted to offending the *chef de subdivision* but was non-repentant: 'I do

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<sup>227</sup> Pierre Billotte was a General in the army during the Second World War, and Minister for Overseas Territories in the Pompidou Government from 8 January 1966 to 30 May 1968 (*New York Times* 3 July 1992).

<sup>228</sup> 'Les territoires d'outre-mer de la République ont une organisation particulière tenant compte de leurs intérêts propres dans l'ensemble des intérêts de la République. Cette organisation est définie et modifiée par la loi après consultation de l'assemblée territoriale.'

not respect the uniform of a man who agrees to wear it and then commits a crime against humanity' (Chappell 2010, p. 54). Calls for the abolition of the Billotte laws reached fever pitch when 75 hectares of reserve land on Maré were appropriated without consulting the native landowners (Chappell 2014, pp. 113-114).

Anti-colonial sentiment had again been aroused, but according to Naisseline, the major cause of conflict was due to Caledonian politicians: 'It is not France who is colonising [...] but a bunch of conniving politicians in the service of big money' (Chappell 2010, p. 55). During these events, the Human Rights League came out in support of Naisseline who was not anti-white, but against repressive colonialism (Chappell 2014, p. 121).

Frustration surfaced again for the Kanak when, with the mass migration of the nickel boom years, 1969-1972, they became a minority in their own country. In the seven year period from 1969, the New Caledonian population increased from 100,836 to 133,233. The new immigrants were mainly from the *métropole*, but 7426 arrived from the French Pacific possessions and they, as French citizens, were eligible to vote in local elections (Aldrich 1993, p. 120). Such an increase had been welcomed by the Mayor of Noumea, Roger Laroque, and the French Prime Minister, Pierre Messmer, who were both anxious to increase the loyalist vote, to make New Caledonia white and to eliminate the Kanak problem (Chappell 2014, p. 115). This was a flagrant breach of the rules of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which prohibited an influx of immigrants that could upset the population balance of nations awaiting decolonisation. The new arrivals caused further conflict and resentment (Lenormand 1992, p. 144).

Indigenous disadvantage was both political and economic.<sup>229</sup> The profits of the nickel boom were not evenly distributed and the gap widened between Melanesian and European: 'un déséquilibre humain et social, faisant craquer les cadres de la société autochtone' (Lacouture 1964). The situation became worse when the French franc and then the French Pacific Franc (CFP) were devalued during the monetary crisis of 1969 (*Le Monde* 7 November 1969). The increased cost of imports was compounded by the spiralling inflation of the boom years. Salaries skyrocketed and this attracted workers from outside the Territory. The housing market boomed and in this atmosphere of

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<sup>229</sup> According to Chappell (2014, p. 51), 'France subsidised New Caledonia partly for national prestige, yet the value of nickel exports was five times the financial aid that Paris provided.'

unprecedented economic growth it was feared that the Caledonians were in the process of killing the ‘hen which laid the golden egg.’ As wages increased, so did the cost of nickel production, to such an extent that New Caledonia was no longer competitive on the global market. During this time the UC was anxious to lure the Canadian nickel giant INCO into the New Caledonian marketplace to break the monopoly of the SLN. Pitted against powerful stakes, this bid was doomed to failure. The Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou, had been an employee of the owners of the SLN, the French Rothschild family, and when he ratified the Billotte Laws it was suggested that it was to protect the interests of the Rothschilds. This conjecture resurfaced in 1973 when, during the global oil crisis, the State made good the financial losses of the SLN, and subsequently took over the company (Gosse 1984).

The Billotte laws, by means of generous tax concessions, had hoped to entice external investors, to be vetted by the French Government. When development failed to eventuate, Rock Pidjot travelled to France to have the laws abolished. Paradoxically, despite the lack of foreign investment, the Territorial Administration, remote-controlled from France, acted in anticipation of the new development. Each year the budgetary forecast and the number of imported public servants increased. In a period when the population barely doubled, public servant numbers rose nearly six-fold, from 700 to 4000. Budgetary expenditure during the seven ‘Billotte years’ skyrocketed from 3 million francs to 11 million (Pidjot 1976). At the same time, the Doniambo smelter was struggling with outdated technology, was unable to meet Japanese demand, and with new global players in the marketplace, market share was lost. A loss of faith in the local economy, a lack of external investment, and mass immigration had a Malthusian effect and New Caledonia was left to fend for itself.

Frustrated in its appeal for greater internal autonomy and with the gap between Melanesians and colonists widening, the *Union Calédonienne* moved progressively from a claim for total internal autonomy to one for independence. Yann Céléné Uregeï, Acting President of the Assembly, stated:

Si M. Billotte n’avait pas voulu, lui le premier, modifier notre statut, notamment en amputant l’Assemblée territoriale d’un certain nombre de ses prérogatives, nous sommes à peu près certains qu’il n’y aurait jamais eu de motion sur l’autonomie interne.

(*Le Monde* 9 March 1968)

Billotte and de Gaulle refused to meet with future delegations from New Caledonia and this led to a plea by Armand Ohlen, President of the Assembly, for the Billotte Laws to be abandoned (*Le Monde* 4 June 1968). Michel Inchauspé, Secretary of State for Overseas Territories, declared on a visit to New Caledonia that France did not intend to modify the statute as it applied to New Caledonia (*Le Monde* 2 October 1968).

With the numbers stacked against them and the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, categorically refusing total autonomy, there was little room left to manoeuvre for those seeking independence. Olivier Stirn, the Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM,<sup>230</sup> favoured the departmentalisation of France's overseas territories,<sup>231</sup> and was categorically opposed to those who had voted against independence, enjoying both the benefits of association with France and total autonomy (Decraene 1976). In December 1976 a new statute, the *Statut Stirn* created regional councils with little real power (JORF 21 December 1976, pp. 9776-9778). In Stirn's 'neo-conquistadorian' plan, the State was omnipotent in what *Le Monde* reported as being a barely masked and shoddy optical illusion:

Le Stirnisme, c'est d'abord un fanatisme, celui de la départementalisation. Pour vous c'est la panacée universelle. Malheureusement ce n'est ni une idée neuve ni une idée juste, car qui dit centralisation dit engourdissement et étiolement.

(*Le Monde* 15 November 1975).

Rock Pidjot described the Stirn laws as a retrograde step that withdrew the autonomy conferred in 1958 by the Defferre laws, in favour of departmentalisation and the dirigist policies of France which offered limited personal freedom or economic opportunity (*Le Monde* 29 May 1976). These laws, like apartheid, favoured the dominant class, and were racially divisive (Colombani 1977). To prevent the Balkanisation of the country, a new electoral system was proposed. This also met with disapproval and was rejected.

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<sup>230</sup> Olivier Stirn, Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, 6 June 1974 to 31 March 1978 and 12 May 1988 to 23 June 1988.

<sup>231</sup> Césaire was critical of *Stirnisme* and its aim to remove all traces of the colonial époque: 'J'ai peur que ne subsiste la trace du collier.' (Jullien 1975, p. 36). The question of *Stirnisme* also met the acerbic wit of Césaire: 'Monsieur le secrétaire d'État, je dirai, parodiant Molière, que vous êtes un « départementalisateur à toutes mains »'. (Hénane 2010).

Discontent was widespread in the territory when Paul Dijoud replaced Stirn as Minister of Overseas Departments and Territories in 1978.<sup>232</sup> Dijoud confronted the unacceptable socio-economic environment of high unemployment, high cost of living and reduced purchasing power by proposing a five-year rescue plan. Almost 600 million francs were to be made available for agricultural, mining and tourism reforms. The ambitious plan envisaged Kanak social and cultural evolution within a pluricultural framework (Féraud 1978). Land redistribution (Ward 1980, p. 193),<sup>233</sup> Kanak education, a Melanesian Cultural Centre and a second nickel smelter were all on the drawing board. However, the large subsidy and increased dependence on the State could only be at the expense of independence. France was still at the helm—‘it is the Government of France who will command’ (Ward 1982, p. 37)—and the devil of the plan was in the detail. This was revealed at the last minute when it was discovered that the proposal included a ten-year moratorium on independence. The support of the UC for the plan evaporated and another opportunity for a kind of reconciliation was lost.

With the *indépendantiste* group offside, Dijoud attempted to shore up the loyalist vote and unsettle the *indépendantiste* movement by the elimination of the plethora of small *indépendantiste* political parties. A change in the rules made it necessary to obtain a minimum of 7.5% of the vote to hold a seat in the Assembly (Spencer, Ward & Connell 1988, p. 107).<sup>234</sup> It was expected that many of the *indépendantiste* parties would fall by the wayside. Against all odds, these parties responded by uniting under the banner of the *Front indépendantiste* (FI) (Ward 1980, p. 196). Even so, mass migration had been sufficient to give the *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR) a parliamentary majority in the 1979 territorial elections. By a strange quirk of fate, dissension in the loyalist camp led to the resignation of RPCR members. Accusations of ‘irresponsibility [...] summary Machiavellianism and derisive ambitions’ (Chappell

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<sup>232</sup> Paul Dijoud, Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, 6 April 1978 to 13 May 1981.

<sup>233</sup> Although land on the Loyalty Islands and Isle of Pines is held entirely by the Kanak, on the *Grande Terre* the situation is very different; in 1980, 950,000 hectares were held by the Territory, 380,000 hectares by private citizens and 165,000 inhabited by 24,000 Kanak. This imbalance was a source of tension.

<sup>234</sup> In September 1977, 17 parties contested 35 seats.

2014, p. 169) were directed towards the centrist *Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne* (FNCS),<sup>235</sup> and the UC gained control of the Governing Council.

The situation in New Caledonia became increasingly critical. Nickel prices had almost halved, unemployment soared to 30%, agricultural returns plummeted from 16.8% to 4% of GDP (Ounei 1978), and within 14 years, 1969-1983, the population had mushroomed from 100,000 to almost 150,000.<sup>236</sup> Imports rose to meet increased demand and the cost of living escalated, to the great economic disadvantage of poorly paid Melanesian workers. Wary of the intentions of the French, Rock Pidjot brought to the attention of the National Assembly the reasons for Kanak discontent: the 23 million CFP promised by Chirac as Prime Minister had not been paid and there was concern that the current plan would be a return to colonialism:

Les Calédoniens, principalement les Mélanésiens, n'acceptèrent pas la départementalisation. Une telle solution équivaudrait à régresser. Ce serait un retour à la colonisation, que désirent d'ailleurs certains monopoles, mais qui risquerait de provoquer des troubles aux conséquences fâcheuses.<sup>237</sup>

(JORF 16 November 1978, p. 7700).

By denying the country political autonomy and the ability to chart its own development strategies, the Dijoud plan paved the way to the pernicious consequences of aid dependency. It did nothing to ease the crisis,<sup>238</sup> and was doomed to the same fate as the statutes proposed by previous governments of the 5th Republic (Ounei 1978). In the midst of these grandiloquent plans, a suggestion made by Rock Pidjot, had a certain visionary appeal as a proposal for reconciliation:

L'entité calédonienne doit être considérée sui generis. L'autonomie conférée par le statut de territoire, permet, en particulier, une autonomie de la vie politique. Nous devons la respecter. A la crise économique et à

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<sup>235</sup> The NSC subsequently reorganised to become *La Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne* (FNCS).

<sup>236</sup> Figures from INSEE, <www.insee.fr>. [14 January 2015].

<sup>237</sup> At the same time, Pidjot demanded that the National Assembly respect Article 74 of the French Constitution: 'Les territoires d'outre-mer de la République ont une organisation particulière tenant compte des intérêts propres dans l'ensemble des intérêts de la République.'

<sup>238</sup> French President Giscard d'Estaing reinforced the French paternalism in a speech delivered in Noumea: 'Votre territoire serait définitivement ruiné s'il n'était protégé par son appartenance à la France', but then the contradiction, '*vous êtes responsables de votre avenir*'. (Bergeroux 1979).

la crise politique vient s'ajouter une crise d'identité culturelle. Mélanésiens et Européens s'interrogent sur leur mode de vie commun, sur le respect des différences.

(JORF 16 November 1978, p. 7701).

Land was a major source of conflict, and the Dijoud vision for its redistribution was contentious. Throughout the years of incarceration, tribes (by way of oral histories), preserved memories of the location of ancestral land and it was on this basis that claims were made. The process of redistribution was slow and did little to remedy inequalities. The average European rural property was 364 hectares and that of the Kanak, 32 hectares (*Le Monde* 13 October 1978).<sup>239</sup> Discrimination led to demonstration and counter-demonstration. According to Jean-Marie Tjibaou, the future leader of the FLNKS, it was the reclaiming of tribal land in the Hienghène area which led to a souring of the relationship between his tribe at Tiendanite and the settler families of Lapetite, Mitride, Garnier and Francheschini. As the situation deteriorated in the Tiendanite valley, settlers' horses on Kanak land were impounded, tribal members were threatened, dogs were poisoned, and eventually Louis Tjibaou, the High Chief, took Garnier to court. From that time, communication between settler and tribe degenerated (Fraser and Trotter 1996, p. 246).

The election of a Socialist Government in France in 1981<sup>240</sup> raised the hopes of the *indépendantistes*. The newly elected Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, Henri Emmanuelli,<sup>241</sup> after surveying the 36,000 hectare property of Jacques Lafleur, declared that 'il y a des choses inacceptables surtout pour un socialiste' (Lenormand 1991, p. 146). It was decided, after months of ministerial deliberation led by President Mitterrand, that desperate measures were needed to stop the cycle of violence and to provide all New Caledonians with a more equitable share of political, economic, social and cultural responsibilities when 'le terme colonial n'a pas été tout à fait évacué' (cited in McCallum 1993, p. 40). To avoid opposition from the RPCR and the FNSC<sup>242</sup> in the

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<sup>239</sup> Ovington, in Spencer, Ward and Connell (1988, p. 116) says that 'less than 900 Europeans were actively involved in cultivating 432,000 hectares', while 39,000 Melanesians lived on 165,000 hectares.

<sup>240</sup> François Mitterrand was elected President of the French Republic on 10 May 1981. He was the first Socialist President of the Fifth Republic.

<sup>241</sup> Henri Emmanuelli, Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, 22 May 1981 to 22 March 1983.

<sup>242</sup> The FNSC was a centrist party in favour of autonomy but not independence, founded in 1979 by Jean-Pierre Aïfa. It had aligned with the RPCR but in 1982 joined with the FI.



Territorial Assembly and to avoid lengthy Parliamentary delays, Emmanuelli decided to resort to the ordinances provided by Article 38 of the French Constitution.<sup>243</sup> In this way, administrative control could be returned to France and changes made. With the necessary statutory and administrative modifications in place, the Government was able to put into action its six-point plan. Tribal land claims were to be administered by a ‘Territorial Lands Office’ staffed by equal numbers of Kanak, Europeans, and representatives of the State. Reform of the mining industry would ensure that the country’s natural resources would be utilised for the common benefit. Offices to recognise Kanak identity—the Office for Kanak Cultural, Scientific and Technological Advancement, and the Office for the Development of the Interior and the Islands—were planned. Provision was also made for Melanesian advisors to give advice on customary law in civil cases which involved Melanesians (Henningham 1992, p. 72). These measures were to be reinforced by judicial, administrative and financial organisations to ensure greater equality in the economic and social development of the communities in the various regions. To conform with Article 74 of the French Constitution, the Government had to consult with the Territorial Assembly but it was not obliged to heed its advice. The potential of conflict was evident.<sup>244</sup> Emmanuelli realised that these reforms were merely piecemeal and that the possibility of lasting peace was unlikely while the future of the territory remained undetermined (*Le Monde* 11 December 1981). As a probationary step on the way to self-determination, the Emmanuelli reforms failed to ease the tension.

On 19 September 1981 the Secretary-General of the UC and President of the FI group in the Territorial Assembly, Pierre Declercq, was assassinated at his home in Mont-Dore.<sup>245</sup> The assassin, who was believed to be an anti-independence extremist, was never found. In response to this assassination Maurice Lenormand declared:

La question de l’indépendance est maintenant posée dans le sang, Pierre Declercq est mort à cause de cette question, mais également pour que celle-ci reçoive une réponse sans plus de retard. Le gouvernement

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<sup>243</sup> Article 38 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic provides the Government with the possibility, after authorisation by the Parliament, to intervene in domains of legislative power normally held by the French Parliament.

<sup>244</sup> For explanation of Article 74, see footnote 228.

<sup>245</sup> Pierre Declercq was a teacher who had been a long-term member of the UC, a ‘white Kanak [...] despised by the opponents of independence’ (Aldrich 1993, p. 241).

français doit, lui aussi, procéder à son auto-détermination sur la question calédonienne et canaque. C'est ainsi seulement que la Calédonie sera sauvée et que ses habitants sauront où ils vont.

(Féraud 1981).

The assassination, which was intended to weaken the Front indépendantiste, could only strengthen the Kanak commitment to liberation. The cycle of violence was reignited. Declercq's murder was a decisive moment in Kanak political history. Six thousand attended his funeral, shocked at the indifference of the country to this crime. The assassination inspired a new unity among the Kanak for whom 'on a cultural level, everything is founded on blood. If blood flows somewhere, we are touched to the core of our being' (Elie Poigoune, cited in Chappell 2014, p.181). This led to the amalgamation of the FNSC and the FI which provided the *indépendantistes* with a majority in the Territorial Assembly and Jean-Marie Tjibaou, as head of the FI, became Vice-President.<sup>246</sup> The *indépendantistes* were now in a strong position to negotiate with the Socialist French Government.<sup>247</sup> Violent outbreaks, however, continued to erupt in *la France Australe*, distanced as it was physically from the *métropole*, and psychologically from its anglophone neighbours in the South Pacific where customary law and French law were often in opposition (*Le Monde* 12 January 1983).

The conflict continued. At Sarraméa, two mobile police were killed while attempting to clear barricades from the road to a sawmill. Roadblocks had been put in place by the Kanak to stop the mill from pumping its effluent into the tribal water supply and killing freshwater fish. The Kanak ascribed these deaths to the authorities who had failed to observe local custom: 'Si des gendarmes sont morts, c'est la faute des autorités. Ici, la loi ne remplace pas la coutume.' (Bole-Richard 1983a). The gap between European and Melanesian increased: 'Il y a des lois pour protéger des forestiers, il n'y a pas de texte pour protéger les Canaques de la pollution. Cette légalité-là n'est-elle pas coloniale ?' (Bole-Richard 1983a). By now the battle lines had been drawn. Roger Laroque, retired CEO of the House of Ballade and Mayor of Noumea, declared his readiness to take up arms against the Kanak should independence be declared: 'Si la France décide de

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<sup>246</sup> The French High Commissioner, Jacques Roynette (9 October 1982 to December 1984), was *ex officio* President of the Assembly.

<sup>247</sup> Composition of the Tjibaou Government: FI: J-M. Tjibaou, A. Gopéa, H. Bailly, Y. Hnada; FNSC: G. Morlet, S. Camerlynck; RPCR: H. Wetta. <<http://nouvellecaledonie.lalere.fr/emissions/les-conf-du-centre-culturel-tjibaou/actu/il-y-25-ans-le-gouvernement-tjibaou.html>>. [2 January 2016].

l'indépendance nous sommes prêts à aller à la bataille en souhaitant que cela n'arrive jamais. Nous sommes plus forts que les Mélanésiens.' (Bole-Richard 1983b). Throughout the country, militancy was mounting and violent conflict was looming.

For those with their sights set on independence, voting rights continued to be contested. Jean-Marie Tjibaou in 1982 stated: 'Seul le peuple indigène, à l'exclusion donc des Français établis sur place, devra être consulté sur une éventuelle possibilité d'accéder à l'indépendance.'<sup>248</sup> Outnumbered, the Melanesians realised the futility of a vote for independence: in 1981, the local population was 60,000 Melanesians, 50,000 Europeans and 30,000 'others' who included Wallisians who favoured the *status quo* (*Canberra Times* 16 November 1981, p. 5). The restriction of the electoral roll was unacceptable to the RPCR, the High Commissioner, M. Roynette, and President Mitterrand who acknowledged the Kanak right to independence provided that it was achieved by a majority vote. They also recognised the rights of later arrivals, who were now established in the country. There was no common ground, frequently the extended hand met a vacuum (Kajman 1985), and reconciliation was a Caledonian chimera.

Not all European New Caledonians were against independence. Although numbers were unknown, it is suggested that as many as two thousand whites were UC members and denounced the unjust treatment of the Kanak. Many were critical of the Ballandes and Lafleurs who, by exploitation of the Kanak, had amassed great personal wealth (*Le Monde* 31 January 1983).

In March 1983 in a reshuffling of the Mitterrand Ministry, Emmanuelli was installed as Secretary of State for Budget and Georges Lemoine became Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM.<sup>249</sup> The question of self-determination remained unresolved and antagonism between the *indépendantiste* and anti-independence camps was becoming more violent. In an attempt to initiate dialogue and effect a reconciliation, the French Government, under the auspices of Lemoine, arranged a round table conference at Nainville-les-Roches in July 1983. The communiqué resulting from this conference provided in three paragraphs a focus for development: firstly, the abolition of the colonial state and Kanak equality, secondly the recognition of the Kanak as the first

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<sup>248</sup> This was later revised to include *Caldoches* who had been living in the Territory for more than 20 years (De Beer 1983).

<sup>249</sup> Georges Lemoine, Secretary of State for DOM-TOM, 24 March 1983 to 20 March 1986.

inhabitants and of their innate and active right to independence, and finally the granting of internal autonomy as the country moved toward independence (Godard 2001, p. 178).

At the end of the conference Lemoine expressed his satisfaction with these ‘exploratory negotiations’ even though the outcome remained uncertain. In a climate of *liberté et fraternité* the hostile parties had discovered that dialogue, mutual recognition and the right to difference had a place in New Caledonian society. Unable to accept either increased autonomy or the separation of Territory and State, or the right of Melanesians to independence, the RPCR members refused to sign the agreement (Aldrich 1993, p. 242). However, fifteen years later this document of reconciliation resurfaced, barely disguised, as the Noumea Accord.

The recognition of the innate and active right of the Kanak to independence provided the *indépendantistes* with a symbolic victory although its significance was not always clear. In a Senate debate, M. Etienne Dailly questioned the meaning of ‘innate and active’, and concluded: ‘peu importe, nous demeurons dans le royaume des ambiguïtés !’ (JORF 24 July 1985, p. 1952). A major concern for the *indépendantistes* was the vulnerability of the electoral roll to mass migration from francophone countries, and a request was made to limit the vote in the 1989 referendum to second generation islanders (*Canberra Times* 17 November 1984, p. 6). The request was refused.

Despite dissension, the Lemoine ‘round table’ was a step towards reconciliation, agreement was achieved by negotiation between State, *indépendantistes* and loyalists. In conception, this was a departure from earlier statutes, which had been unilaterally decided in France. The statute, a ‘declaration of intention’, was generally treated with suspicion.<sup>250</sup> Most of the powers which were held by the State in 1976 had been retained, and in 1984 others were added. The Stirn Statute in 1976 had attributed the *réglementation minière* to France (JORF 21 December 1976, pp. 9776-9778); this was expanded by Lemoine in 1984: ‘Article 5.4: exploration, exploitation, conservation et gestion des ressources naturelles, biologiques et non-biologiques de la zone économique exclusive de la République.’ (JORF 7 September 1984, p. 2841). France clearly did not

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<sup>250</sup> Dick Ukeiwé ‘thundered’ against the proposed transition to self-determination: ‘l’anarchie politique [...] L’effondrement économique et social [...] La guerre civile [...] La domination assurée des anglo-saxons ou pire des pays de l’Est, de Cuba’. (McCallum 1994, pp. 46-47). Pidjot’s discontent was such that he withdrew from the Socialist group of the National Assembly (*Le Monde* 13 June 1984).

intend to relinquish control of the Territory. Other changes signalled by the statute included the creation of six customary *aires*, each with a consultative council appointed by the *chefferies*: ‘gardiennes du droit ancestral non-écrit et de la vie traditionnelle dans les tribus’. A Government elected by universal suffrage replaced the Territorial Council, and an executive council and President were chosen by Council members, thus reducing the power of the High Commissioner. The statute had a dual function: it provided the Kanak with a genuine political role without sacrificing the rights of the European community.

The decision regarding independence remained distant and a thorn in the side of the *indépendantistes* who believed that ‘the French position is a sham Parisian window-dressing designed to convince the rest of the world that France should retain power in this corner of the Pacific’ (Coomber 1984). In protest, Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, the leader of the FI, led a walkout from the Territorial Assembly during a visit by the Minister for Overseas Territories. Disgruntled *indépendantistes* of the FI travelled to France to submit a counter-proposal to the President of the Republic but the envoy returned without securing an audience with Mitterrand.

In April 1984, Lemoine visited New Caledonia and travelled to various localities in the Kanak-dominated provinces where he was generally poorly received. Empty villages and placards left little doubt about local dissatisfaction: ‘Statut Lemoine=fumisterie’, ‘Peuple kanak=9000 chômeurs’, ‘[que] la Calédonie ne devienne pas un pays de misère comme le Biafra’, and in Hienghène where Tjibaou was Mayor, ‘Non à l’autonomie, l’indépendance au bout du fusil’, and ‘Nos terres aujourd’hui ou le fusil demain’. The only welcome was from the loyalist Nawetta tribe whose chief Gilbert Wetta disapproved of the attitude of the militant *indépendantistes*:

Dans la situation troublée où nous vivons, seuls des femmes et des hommes ouverts au dialogue pourront peut-être proposer des solutions et faire exception en réussissant là où d’autres ont échoué.

(Rollat 1984a).

This statute—*arrêté à l’Élysée*—was also unpopular with the Europeans (Frappat 1984). Anti-Lemoine placards of disgruntled *Caldoches* indicated a growing resentment of what was perceived to be the Government’s *indépendantiste* bias: ‘On est nés ici, on veut rester ici, les terres à ceux qui les travaillent, Lemoine, y en a ras-le-bol’. (Frappat 1984). Lemoine had underestimated the depth of feeling of the opposing groups as he

struggled to bring the warring communities together to focus on consensus, coexistence and reconciliation.

In an impassioned speech, Rock Pidjot, as an *indépendantiste* Member of Parliament in the National Assembly, criticised the statute which failed to recognise the 130 years of subjugation of the Kanak and a situation which he said:

[...] nie de fait l'existence d'un peuple colonisé. Le peuple kanak y est folklorisé, caricaturé, présenté d'une façon réductrice et passéiste. Il semble qu'il suffirait de lui concéder une chambre coutumière, même consultative, pour lui donner satisfaction.

(JORF 29 May 1984, p. 2728).

The suggestion that certain aspects of Kanak custom might be introduced in European institutions met with European derision. Instead, it was recommended that all should respect the laws of the French Republic (Rollat 1984c). The vote in the Territorial Assembly unanimously rejected the statute which was judged to be 'monstrous' and at odds with the politics of assimilation favoured by the State. The Territorial Assembly had no powers of government reform and its no vote was overridden in the National Assembly. The Lemoine Statute was short-lived due to the extent of Territorial opposition from both sides of the political divide. Existing conflict, as well as the intransigence of the antagonists, was brought into focus. Before joining the scrapheap of failed statutes, the Lemoine Statute provided a topic for lively discussion in the National Assembly, and an object of severe criticism by the opposition.

The initial optimism of the independence movement following the election of the Mitterrand Government had turned to disenchantment by November 1984 at the time of the Territorial Elections. Mitterrand had not kept his promises, the objectives of Nainville had not been put into action, and the French position in relation to independence was considered a sham. Internal tension led to a split in the FI and the creation of a new, more moderate independence party, the *Libération Kanak Socialiste* (LKS), which was composed mainly of Loyalty Islanders under the leadership of Naisseline. On 24 September 1984 the FI metamorphosed and became the *Front de libération national Kanak et socialiste* (FLNKS) by uniting the UC and diverse *indépendantiste* parties. Its leader was Jean-Marie Tjibaou.

In the view of the FLNKS, participation in the Lemoine plan would be to sign the death warrant of the Kanak people. The decision was made to boycott the election on 18 November 1984 with a strategy of ‘symbolic violence’ masterminded by Eloi Machoro.<sup>251</sup> It was expected that this would force France to capitulate and negotiate with the Kanak. In the lead-up to Election Day, the number of strikes and roadblocks increased. On Ouvéa 100 unarmed FLNKS organised a peaceful protest in the courtyard of the gendarmerie.<sup>252</sup> As the protest gained momentum police numbers doubled to 700 and an additional 280 riot squad police arrived from France. Barricades were erected, electoral booths were burnt and photos of Eloi Machoro axing a ballot box in Canala received worldwide media coverage. On the day of the election, journalist Helen Fraser, a journalist for *The Age* newspaper, was witness to resistance around the east coast township of Ponérihouen where, during a day of violent confrontation, 12 were injured and only 73 votes were registered (Fraser 1985). In the absence of a Kanak vote, the result was a landslide victory for the RPCR, which won 34 of the 42 seats. After some creative accounting, the French High Commissioner, Jacques Roynette, managed to provide a participation rate in excess of 50%, and the voter turnout recorded was 50.12% (*Canberra Times* 20 November 1984, p. 4). Following the election Roynette was recalled to France in disgrace and Georges Lemoine was stripped of the New Caledonian portfolio (Fraser 1985).<sup>253</sup> Naisseline’s moderate LKS party, which had refused to join the boycott, gained six seats.<sup>254</sup>

In the wake of the election, the cycle of conflict returned and indeed gained momentum. Four FLNKS leaders and twenty supporters were jailed and an arrest warrant was posted for Eloi Machoro (*Canberra Times* 20 November 1984, p. 4), while Dick Ukeiwé, the RPCR candidate from Lifou, became President of the Territorial Assembly.

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<sup>251</sup> Machoro was from a tribe from Canala, the region that had aided the colonial army in the capture and beheading of Ataï in 1878. In a ceremony of reconciliation in 1983, the east coast tribes of Thio-Canala requested a pardon from their west coast brothers for the part they had played in the death of Ataï during the insurrection of 1878 (Kajman 1985).

<sup>252</sup> *Le Monde* journalist Daniel Schneidermann describes the peace-loving Kanak: ‘Profondément imprégnés d’esprit religieux, les Mélanésiens, au fond d’eux-mêmes, sont rebelles à toute idée de violence’ (*Le Monde* 12 November 1984).

<sup>253</sup> The two were held co-responsible for not having foreseen and not preventing the violence during the Territorial elections. In the electoral disaster, 80.88% had abstained from voting on the East Coast and 78.8% in the Loyalty Islands had believed that it was impossible to prevent an election (*Le Monde* 4 December 1984).

<sup>254</sup> According to Naisseline, he no longer spoke the same language as the FLNKS and asked himself whether they still shared the same values. It was, however, only two days later that he decided not to sit in the Assembly (*Le Monde* 22 November 1984).

In his opening address to the Assembly Ukeiwé stated his desire to ‘promote a renaissance of traditional Melanesian values while keeping the country within a French institutional framework’ (*Canberra Times* 24 November 1984, p. 6). The hostility continued. In Pouebo militants occupied the police station; on Lifou, the island’s Administrator was taken hostage; and the township of Thio was under siege. The Thio gendarmerie was held for seventeen hours in an act of non-violent ‘symbolic occupation’ (Filloux 1984). For over a week roads throughout the Territory were cut so that commodities became scarce in outlying areas. In a move of solidarity, PALIKA, a more militant *indépendantiste* group, formally joined the FLNKS for the Territorial elections and, on 1 December 1984, Jean-Marie Tjibaou was elected President of the Provisional Government of the socialist, decentralised republic of Kanaky.<sup>255</sup>

The plight of the Kanak hit page one when a group of FLNKS members was sent to Libya to train as bodyguards for the new Provisional Government of Kanaky.<sup>256</sup> In a conflictual and deteriorating environment, the Kanak were obliged to accept any support offered. Jean-Marie Tjibaou likened the Kanak situation to that of a drowning man who is not concerned with the colour of the life support, but with the priority of being rescued (*Canberra Times* 15 May 1987, p. 5). In the same way the Kanak were forced to ‘enlist the support of any country—provided it is neither racist nor fascist in its struggle for liberation’ (*Canberra Times* 17 November 1984, p. 6). The 17 Kanak in Libya brought New Caledonia onto the world stage. In Australia, the Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, was critical of the Kanak action and concerned about the effect that this action might have on Australia’s bilateral relationship with France (*Canberra Times* 12 May 1986, p. 3). The prospect of Khadafy in the Pacific ruffled Antipodean feathers.

### **Edgard Pisani: A new negotiator**

The new Socialist Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, saw as a matter of urgency the need to reduce violence and to establish order and dialogue. He also realised that unless the vote on self-determination was brought forward, there could be no dialogue between the

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<sup>255</sup> The Tjibaou Government was baptised ‘le gouvernement de la planète des singes’ by *anti-indépendantistes* of the *Rassemblement pour une Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR) (Lenormand 1991, p. 148).

<sup>256</sup> On the same day as the self-proclaimed Provisional Kanak Government came into being, Edgard Pisani was named special delegate of the French Government in New Caledonia, and members of the GIGN were sent to New Caledonia to protect the new delegate.



antagonistic parties. It was decided that the vote should be advanced by four years and held in 1985. A special Government negotiator, Edgard Pisani, was sent to New Caledonia to establish dialogue and oversee institutional change and economic, social and cultural development.<sup>257</sup> The situation was such that Lionel Jospin, First Secretary of the Socialist Party, caused a stir in the National Assembly when he suggested that the two communities should vote separately in a federal system of pluriethnic independence. This would provide equal rights and participation in Government for both loyalists and *indépendantistes* (*Canberra Times* 6 December 1984, p. 4). The suggestion was criticised by Jacques Toubon of the *Rassemblement de la République* party (RPR) as being ‘a sort of apartheid.’

Fabius was a voice in the wilderness and the time for compromise had for the FLNKS passed. In the words of Rock Pidjot, ‘your ancestors have sown the wind, now you are reaping the storm’ (*Canberra Times* 6 December 1984, p. 4). It was now too late to repair 25 years of errors and it was only the Kanak vote that could determine the future direction of the country (*Le Monde* 5 December 1984). The Kanak, imbued with a spirit of Christianity, had for years avoided violence, preferring psychological harassment to physical confrontation.<sup>258</sup> With a poorly equipped armoury and no financial backing, the Kanak posed no real threat to French sovereignty. On 4 December Jean-Marie Tjibaou met with Edgard Pisani and agreed to remove the barricades. Despite the way in which events unfolded, Tjibaou honoured his promise and the barricades were removed on 6 December 1984. This suggested that reconciliation between opposing groups could be possible, but these hopes were soon dashed as tragic events unfolded, revealing deep-seated multiple conflicts in rural New Caledonia that were brought to the fore by ongoing political tensions.

### **The Hienghène massacre: Settler vs Kanak**

In Hienghène, and along the road through the valley to Tjibaou’s tribe at Tiendanite, the situation was tense. Houses had been burnt, rocks thrown and 294 people had left the

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<sup>257</sup> According to Alain Rollat in *Le Monde*, ‘le titre de « grand exorciste » serait plus approprié que celui de délégué général du gouvernement pour qualifier la mission impossible.’ (Rollat 1984b).

<sup>258</sup> Although the horizons had broadened, the Kanak strategy of warfare had changed little since pre-annexation times (see Chapter 1). This was now, however, not for intra-Kanak conflict, but for ‘national liberation’ against a European coloniser.

area as the sense of survival overtook the fear of losing property (Duroy 1988, pp. 18-19). After a FLNKS meeting in Hienghène, on 5 December 1984, two trucks carrying seventeen Kanak from Tiendanite tribes were ambushed. Ten men, including two of Tjibaou's brothers, Louis and Tarcissus, were killed in the attack. The vehicles were incinerated and the assailants, poor whites and mixed-race settlers who had lived in the valley since the earliest years of French settlement, fled after setting fire to Jean-Marie's house (Waddell 2008, p. 136). It was suggested that the target of the ambush had been Jean-Marie Tjibaou himself, but this was disputed by Guiart who believed that the assassins had found their mark, Louis Ty, the chief of the valley. Ty had begun the Kanak land claims in the Hienghène valley and the claim included the Pukepaek valley which had been the domain of the Lapetite family for a century (Guiart 1997, p. 98).

The self-confessed assassins<sup>259</sup> gained hero status among the loyalists and gendarmes who had become exasperated with FLNKS threats (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 62). Florent Lapetite, a nephew of Raoul Lapetite, stressed that the attack was not racist, the victims were 'terrorists'. The Lapetite and Mitride families were on friendly terms with the Melanesians, they played football together and engaged in conversation with them daily:

Nombres de familles avaient des liens coutumiers très forts avec la tribu des Tiendanite. Ma grand-mère était une fille de chef mélanésien. Les métis sont les plus tolérants au niveau racial, c'est le FLNKS qui a tout politisé.<sup>260</sup>

(Schneidermann 1984b).

The depth of the tragedy was all the more dismaying as at least some of the protagonists thought that the substance of reconciliation and tolerance had previously prevailed.

Jacques Lafleur, the leader of the anti-independence political party RPCR, in an interview with *Le Monde* journalists, denied that the ambush was politically motivated as Raoul Lapetite had been a longstanding member of the UC who had recently joined the less militant EPA party (*l'Entente pour l'autonomie*), and his son Jean-Claude was

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<sup>259</sup> Maurice Mitride, Raoul Lapetite and his sons Jess, José, Jacques and Jean-Claude and his adopted Melanesian son Robert Sineimene.

<sup>260</sup> In addition, according to José Lapetite, 'le racisme lui est étranger comme il semblait étranger [...] à la population essentiellement pluri-ethnique de Hienghène' (Duroy 1988, p. 302).

number six on the PALIKA party list (*Le Monde* 8 January 1985). According to Lafleur the perpetrators of the ambush were unreservedly *indépendantistes*:

Ils assistaient tous les jours aux réunions du FLNKS où l'on décidait de brûler les maisons une par une. Un des inculpés, Lapetite, assistait à ces réunions, et comme il y avait une logique de la terreur pour faire partir les gens de la brousse, il savait bien que la prochaine maison brûlée serait la sienne [...] C'était une fusillade entre indépendantistes !

(Passeron & Rollat 1985).

Pisani had been sent as the French High Commissioner into this maelstrom to mediate and to resolve the deadlock between the Territorial Assembly and the newly elected Provisional Government of Kanaky. His objectives were to establish dialogue between the warring parties, to put in place a contract to safeguard the geopolitical interests of France in the South Pacific, to preserve the rights of the *Caldoche* community, and to satisfy the Kanak claim for independence. To achieve these aims the Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, considered it important to find common ground from which negotiations could begin:

Il ne peut pas y avoir de solution durable si l'on ne respecte pas les droits légitimes de chaque communauté. Le dialogue devra se faire avec tous les interlocuteurs, tous les partis, les autorités coutumières, les églises, etc.

(*Le Monde* 5 December 1984).

The Hienghène massacre caused further polarisation. In order to reach a better understanding of the two fiercely antagonistic groups and to reconcile their conflicting interests, Pisani produced two questionnaires, one for those who wanted New Caledonia to remain in the Republic, and the other for those who wanted independence. The loyalists were asked what measures would be taken to ensure equality and the harmonious co-existence of customary and common law;<sup>261</sup> and the *indépendantistes* about the future of non-Kanak citizens and mineral exploitation (Schneidermann 1984a).

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<sup>261</sup> This would be in reference to Article 75 of the French Constitution which states: 'Les citoyens de la République qui n'ont pas le statut civil de droit commun, seul visé à l'article 34, conservent leur statut personnel tant qu'ils n'y ont pas renoncé.'

From the survey, Pisani developed a plan for independence in association with France. The plan was rejected by Lafleur, the RPR member for New Caledonia, who in a thinly-veiled reference to Pisani was critical of those who, within 48 hours of arriving in Noumea, believed that they understood Kanak culture and were able to solve the country's problems (Passeron & Rollat 1985). In Lafleur's opinion, these fly-by-night bureaucrats had destroyed Kanak culture and tribal order (*Canberra Times* 17 December 1984, p. 5). Dick Ukeiwé, the Kanak President of the Territorial Government, echoed these sentiments and sought the removal of Pisani as well as the annulment of the referendum on self-determination that had been scheduled to be held in July 1985. The Pisani plan was destined to become yet another to join the scrapheap of failed statutes.<sup>262</sup>

The Pisani plan for New Caledonia aimed to bridge the gap between the State, loyalists, and *indépendantistes*. The compromise proved to be more antagonistic than conciliatory: it was a step towards neo-colonialism for the Kanak *indépendantistes*, and a move in the direction of independence for the RPCR loyalists. Hostility mounted and the agreement between Tjibaou and Pisani to lift the barricades was not universally accepted. Marc Fifita-Ne, chief of the Nakéty tribe, and Eloi Machoro, Minister for Security in the Provisional Government of Kanaky,<sup>263</sup> decided to continue the fight. With twenty teams of twelve supporters, Machoro traversed the *Chaîne centrale* to La Foa to dynamite a bridge and disrupt communication between the north and south of the island (Bolis 2014). On the outskirts of La Foa, Yves Tual, a young *Caldoche*, was killed by a Kanak militant and this triggered violent reprisals. Several thousand settlers rioted in Noumea setting fire to houses, cars, businesses and offices of *indépendantiste* sympathisers. In a vigorous attempt to avoid further incitement, Pisani declared a state

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<sup>262</sup> According to Rollat (1985b), every time a Government appointee attempted to advance a solution to the Caledonian problem it would be scotched by those in favour of retaining the *status quo*: Paul Dijoud was judged too progressive with his land reform package and endured contempt and obloquy during the d'Estaing regime; Henri Emmanuelli was accused of sectarianism for denouncing patently obvious social and economic inequalities; Christian Nucci was maligned for favouring Tjibaou in his rise to the Presidency; and Georges Lemoine was considered to be too conciliatory with his proposed statute for internal autonomy.

<sup>263</sup> Alban Bensa in an interview with *Le Monde* journalist Michel Kajman, 21 January 1985, described Machoro as being 'éminemment politique ; indépendantiste, avec passion ; actions ayant une forte portée symbolique'. He was also described as being characteristic of the Thio-Canala natives who, armed by the colonial army, had killed Ataï in 1878. Thio had become a stronghold for the independence movement which relied on passive protest without bloodshed. The loss of Machoro was felt by both Melanesians and whites, and his death was the final chapter in the history of symbolic violence. Machoro was no *enfant de chœur*, he played to the media, in a country where fantastic rumours gained long-term credence.

of emergency.<sup>264</sup> Firearms, demonstrations and gatherings of more than five people in public places were banned, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew was declared (*Le Monde* 28 January 1985b). Gendarmes, the GIGN and helicopters began the search for Machoro. When the farmhouse in which he was sheltering was discovered, it was surrounded by sixty armed police and Machoro and his companion Marcel Nonnaro, who made no attempt to return fire, were shot down in cold blood (Bolis 2014). It was death by assassination (*Canberra Times* 14 January 1984, p. 1), and the order to shoot had come from Noumea: ‘Tir de neutralisation sur la personne d’Eloi Machoro et de Marcel Nonnaro’ (Guiart 1991, p. 137).<sup>265</sup>

As the FLNKS death toll rose, it appeared that the French were effectively creating the hotbed of discontent that they were trying to suppress. A new cycle of violence was underway as the FLNKS increased their demands:

The FLNKS now demanded the restoration pure and simple of the Kanak people’s sovereignty over their country [...] 14 FLNKS militants have now been killed. The death of Mr Machoro showed the violence of colonialism, which does not hesitate to fire on Kanak.

(*Canberra Times* 13 January 1985, p. 5).

In anticipation of Kanak retaliation, France sent another 1000 gendarmes, riot police, soldiers and paratroopers to New Caledonia where the forces of order now numbered 3200 (*Canberra Times* 15 January 1985, p. 5). Tension was high when, a few days later, President Mitterrand made a lightning visit to the Territory to establish peace, dialogue and order. Conspicuous signs of pro-French sentiment filled the streets of Noumea—even the pedestrian crossings were painted in the national colours of France. The pro-France sentiment did not extend to the President, who was greeted by 20,000 angry settlers opposed to the Pisani propositions. According to the *Canberra Times*, the seeds of settler discontent had been sown long ago: ‘the essential defence has been built around well-honed stratagems dating back to the mid-19th century colonial times of

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<sup>264</sup> The right of Pisani to call a ‘state of emergency’ on 12 January 1985 was challenged in the courts (*Le Monde* 15 January 1985c). ‘The state of emergency in New Caledonia and in the dependencies was extended by law until June 1985 (*Le Monde* 28 January 1985a).

<sup>265</sup> Pisani claimed that the order had been to wound and not to kill. He added that the crack marksmen of the GIGN had aimed at the shoulders of the Kanak and missed (*Le Monde* 6 February 1985a). In the official version of events ‘l’autorisation d’ouvrir le feu est donnée par le général Deiber conformément aux instructions qui lui ont été données par le délégué du gouvernement’ (*Le Monde* 15 January 1985a).

non-cooperation with, and personal abuse against the French pro-consul' (Shineberg 1985).

Mitterrand's meetings with political leaders failed to ease the situation, which was believed to favour the FLNKS. In an effort to assure the RPCR of continued French support in the Territory and secure a French geostrategic presence in the region, Mitterrand announced plans for major investment by France in naval and air facilities. This did little to appease the FLNKS (Rollat 1985c). As the situation became more explosive, additional troops arrived from France. The Territory was now patrolled by 6000 law enforcement personnel, one for every 24 inhabitants including men, women and children (*Canberra Times* 29 January 1984, p. 1).

It was an inauspicious start for Pisani. He had underestimated the depth of the divide that separated France, the loyalists and the *indépendantistes*, and he had a misplaced confidence in his ability to bridge the gap. The plan to return all land, including the mineral rich sub-soil, to the Kanak and the suggestion of independence could only raise the hackles of the *Caldoches* (*Canberra Times* 12 April 1985),<sup>266</sup> whilst retention of sovereign powers by France unsettled the Kanak who suspected a move towards neo-colonialism. Nevertheless, Pisani, with the naivety of the French administration with regard to reconciliation, and a poor understanding of the historical situation, was convinced that the wisdom of his plan would be realised and eventually accepted.<sup>267</sup>

In theory, the Pisani Plan could have relieved the New Caledonia headache and provided the possibility of a less turbulent future (Rollat 1985a) but in practice, both the FLNKS and the RPCR were intransigent and there was no room for compromise. The RPCR unreservedly rejected the plan and demanded the return of Pisani to France. With politico-economic dominance under threat and no guarantees of a continued association with France should the country become independent, the loyalists refused to engage in dialogue. On the other hand, the *indépendantistes* were single-minded in their quest for independence which, without a restricted electoral roll, was unachievable. This was considered to be unconstitutional and denied.

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<sup>266</sup> According to Article 53 of the French Constitution, 'no cession [...] of territory is valid without the consent of the people concerned'.

<sup>267</sup> 'Je suis personnellement convaincu, maintenant que je suis en contact avec les populations, que le plan [d'indépendance-association] tel qu'il a été esquissé, le 7 janvier, et tel qu'il est en train de se préciser, fera la majorité en Nouvelle-Calédonie.' (*Le Monde* 6 February 1985b).

Dick Ukeiwé, RPR President of the Territorial Government, was critical of the Government's failure to re-establish order in the Territory, and of the FLNKS which, refusing to accept universal suffrage, had decided to impose their own reign of terror by the forcible occupation of public buildings and gendarmeries. To re-establish dialogue, Ukeiwé suggested a three-point rescue plan of New Caledonia which foreshadowed the Noumea accord: New Caledonia would remain in association with France, with France responsible for the sovereign powers; a Territorial Government and President would be elected by universal suffrage; and the Territory would be divided into three or four regions each with an elected regional Government and President. Also envisaged was a Customary Senate which would have consultative power over customary matters (*Le Monde* 26 January 1985). His belief was that this plan would unite the mosaic of New Caledonian inhabitants in Christian communion (Ukeiwé 1985). The Ukeiwé plan for reconciliation was also quashed.

As the country teetered on the brink of civil war, Nidoïsh Naisseline travelled to France to discuss the need for dialogue and decolonisation. He suggested that the regional assemblies should be abolished as they divided rather than united the Kanak and white worlds. He was also critical of the inequality existing between the city and the bush. Power and money were concentrated in the hands of a few, and an increasing level of financial reliance upon the *métropole* did nothing to aid the future development of the country.<sup>268</sup>

Conflict became increasingly violent. Lafleur engaged 50 Wallisian 'strongmen' for RPCR manoeuvres. Wallisians were physically strong, they disliked the Kanak, and as many were on social security they were readily available for recruitment. On 8 May 1985, following the Victory Day celebrations, the Wallisian protective service was transformed into a task force to attack a peaceful PALIKA rally. In the battle that ensued, a thousand Europeans descended on the Place des Cocotiers, leaving one young Melanesian, Celestin Zongo (Rougier 1985), dead and fifty injured (Filloux 1985c). Despite the bloodbath, Jacques Lafleur remained resolute and reaffirmed his

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<sup>268</sup> The need for dialogue and self-determination was not lost on a young Caldoche who wrote in the local newspaper: 'Au lieu d'appeler les gens à descendre dans la rue et d'organiser des liturgies tricolores pour fanatiser les foules, nos leaders feraient mieux de dépenser leur énergie à susciter la réflexion calme, l'échange, la discussion au sein de leurs adhérents, comme avec l'opposition locale.' (Schneidermann 1985b).

determination to oppose any independence rally on Noumea soil, including that planned by the FLNKS to prevent the installation of the military base (Filloux 1985a).

In May 1985, in what appeared to be a promotion of convenience, Pisani was recalled to France as special Minister for New Caledonia. In a skilful *Fabius–Mitterrandien* political move, Pisani's lack of success in calming the situation in New Caledonia was glossed over: 'En décembre, il arrivait à Nouméa en libérateur. Il s'y est vite retrouvé prisonnier [...] surtout de ses préjugés idéologiques'. (Peyrefitte cited in *Le Monde* 23 May 1985). Faced with almost unanimous rejection of his statute, Pisani with socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius prepared a new, more cautious plan, the Fabius–Pisani plan. This plan, by the innovative interpretation of Article 88 of the French Constitution, introduced independence in association.<sup>269</sup> It provided Melanesian rural areas with greater territorial representation by creating four self-administering regions—North, South, Central and Loyalty Islands—each with their own council.<sup>270</sup> The Territorial Assembly was renamed the Territorial Congress, and the High Commissioner became the Chief Executive of the country. In this way the stronghold of the RPCR was reduced (JORF 24 August 1985, pp. 9775-9778).<sup>271</sup>

Fernand Wibaux, a diplomat who had worked in conflict zones,<sup>272</sup> was appointed High Commissioner with the instruction to prepare the country for a smooth transition to independence (*Le Monde* 6 June 1985):

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<sup>269</sup> Article 88 of the French Constitution states: 'The Republic may enter into agreements with States which wish to associate with it in order to develop their civilizations.' <<http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/langues/welcome-to-the-english-website-of-the-french-national-assembly>>. [2 January 2016].

<sup>270</sup> The Territorial election in September 1985 had a participation rate of 80.62%.and provided a clear indication of the polarisation in existence between the two groups. Jacques Lafleur and his RPR party won 51.99% of the vote and the FLNKS 28.75%. Predictably the vote on the Loyalty Islands and the east coast was overwhelmingly in favour of the FLNKS: Pouebo: 93.7%; Hienghène: 80.7%; Ponérihouen: 68.1%. The moderates, the *troisième voie* of the central region, polled poorly with Jean-Pierre Aïfa, the mayor of Bourail and leader of the OPAO [Organisation politique d'alliances d'Opao], losing his seat. The moderate *indépendantiste* party of Nidoïsh Naisseline, the LKS, which had won six seats in the election in November 1984, retained only one seat. Although the FLNKS held three of the four regions, a polling of 10.74% in the populous south was a cause for grave concern. The possibility of the FLNKS obtaining a majority in the forthcoming referendum on self-determination was virtually impossible.

<sup>271</sup> Article 4 determines the number of Councillors per region: North: 9, Centre: 9, South: 21, Loyalty Islands: 7. This met with the disapproval of the RPCR. Article 25: 'Le haut-commissaire est l'exécutif du Territoire. Il prépare et exécute des délibérations du congrès. Les services du Territoire sont placés sous son autorité.'

<sup>272</sup> Fernand Wibaux was the French Ambassador in Lebanon: 'Au Liban, j'ai eu la chance de rester en contact avec les sunnites, les chiïtes, les chrétiens et les druzes. Sans tromper mes partenaires, je ne tenais pas le même langage à chacun. Ici, c'est la même chose. Au lieu de dire, c'est tout blanc ou tout noir, je sais, comme chacun, qu'en général c'est plutôt gris.' (*Le Monde* 15 January 1986).



Mon objectif est de préparer la Nouvelle-Calédonie à l'accession à l'indépendance. Si le plan a changé, même si le plan Fabius a remplacé le plan Pisani et le plan Pisani le plan Lemoine, la finalité reste toujours la même.

(JORF 24 July 1985, p. 1952).

Wibaux believed that conflict was not caused by religious or political difference but by a lack of communication between the warring parties, and for reconciliation to occur the antagonists needed to engage in dialogue. With a look-and-listen approach, Wibaux was no more successful than his predecessor Edgard Pisani (Filloux 1985e),<sup>273</sup> whose *modus operandi*, according to Tjibaou, had been electric shock therapy: 'Les deux hommes sont différents [...] mais, globalement, je n'ai pas noté de changement dans le projet.' (Filloux 1985f).

To establish dialogue was no easy task; the gulf separating the pro- and anti-independence camps proved to be unassailable and conflict became more intense. The Thio region was a battle zone. Mobile gendarmes camped near the Saint-Philippo-II tribe<sup>274</sup> were the cause of native malaise. The Kanak countered this by blocking the entry to the wharf and Wibaux, despite his 'allergy' to exceptional measures (*Canberra Times* 15 June 1985, p. 4) sent more than 400 special gendarmes, parachutists, helicopters, and VBRG (*véhicules blindés de reconnaissance de gendarmerie*), to reinforce the existing forces of order (Filloux 1985g). Long on rhetoric and short on action, Wibaux appeared to be a 'brake rather than a motor' in the application of promised reform and the Kanak were soon asking France to recall their delegate (*Canberra Times* 24 January 1986, p. 1).

This new statute caused general disgruntlement. It did nothing to improve the overall position of the FLNKS, and reduced the power of the RPCR. For many the 'waltz of the statutes' provided a field day of amusement for journalists (Rollat 1986c)<sup>275</sup> and within the National Assembly (JORF 24 July 1985, p. 1957). Clearly Fabius and Pisani realised the need for a more inclusive approach to reconciliation but they had not

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<sup>273</sup> The inconsistency is apparent: within two weeks, the stated aim of Wibaux changes from independence to independence-association.

<sup>274</sup> Sainte-Philippo II was the tribe of Maurice Moindou, a suspect in the killing of Yves Tual.

<sup>275</sup> The troublemaker was the right-wing parliamentarian Jean-Pierre Soisson whose comment 'three reforms in three years to prepare a fourth statute', had the effect of itching powder on the parliament. The neophyte *canaque* is Maurice Nenou, the new RPR member.

counted on the strength of the settler population and their powerful right wing allies in France. Decisions were made in France, and hegemonic laws and statutes were firmly embedded in a Western conceptual framework, entangled in colonialism and its legacy. There was little understanding of Kanak custom in terms of time, *la parole* and even the restorative power and importance of Kanak silence in mediation. With no common ground, reconciliation was impossible.

### **Bernard Pons, Minister for the DOM-TOM in the Chirac Government 20 March 1986-8 May 1988**

In 1986, with the change of Government in France, the Socialist President, François Mitterrand, was forced to cohabit with a conservative Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac. Chirac abolished the position of special Minister for New Caledonia, and the Minister for the DOM-TOM, Bernard Pons, became responsible for the Territory. Pons began a program of reform to end any illusion of New Caledonian independence (*Le Monde* 20 February 1987). Tjibaou described the autocratic management style of Pons: ‘J’ai compris pour vous, et je décide pour vous que la situation ne doit pas changer, que la France décide de votre avenir et de votre destin et estimez-vous heureux.’ (Rollat 1986b). According to Waddell, the appointment of Pons led to ‘a spiral of increasing prejudice, sectarian violence and injustice’ that gave rise to the Kanak loss of faith in the French institutions of democracy and integrity (Waddell 2008, p. 165). To fulfil his program of reforms, the Pons Law was announced in July 1986, reducing the power of the regional governments in relation to rural policy and financial management. The Office for Regional Development and Lands was replaced by a State agency,<sup>276</sup> the power of the High Commissioner was increased, and the Fabius–Pisani statute became *peau de chagrin*. The President disavowed the changes to land distribution: ‘Le système foncier actuel représente une offense grave à la dignité du peuple canaque.’ (*Le Monde* 29 March 1988). Tjibaou suggested that Pons was not acting as a free agent (Fraser & Trotter 2005, p. 197) and that rather than calming an already strained situation he was

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<sup>276</sup> The new statute replaced the Lands Office with *Agence de développement rural et d’aménagement foncier (ADRAF)*, an agency that favoured the colonial barons as land was shuffled between members of the RCPR and Kanak with loyalist sympathies. This was met with reports of *copinage* and *favoritisme*. Claims by clans were treated with indifference by the head of the agency, Denis Milliard, former RPR Minister in the Ukeiwé Government: ‘La revendication clanique, c’est de la poudre à perlimpinpin juridique’. The sale of a Lafleur property absorbed 40% of the agency’s budget in the first year (*Le Monde* 12 September 1987b).

igniting a powder keg. Property was burnt, people were killed, street demonstrations were held and more gendarmes arrived.

At the request of neighbouring Pacific Forum countries, New Caledonia was added to the United Nations list of countries to be decolonised. The UN in a damning report stated: ‘Bien sûr, il y eut des affrontements entre communautés mais c’est la situation d’apartheid que met le système français qui était dénoncé et rejeté par le peuple Kanak.’ (Nations Unies 2010). In the ensuing cycle of conflict, the Australian Consul-General in New Caledonia, John Dauth, was expelled for the alleged role which he had played in determining the UN decision (*Canberra Times* 11 January 1987, p. 1). Pons, however, continued his ‘slash and burn’ mission to clean up the ‘Caledonian mess’ before the 1988 Presidential election. The attack by the CRS on a peaceful sit-in in the Place des Cocotiers in Noumea on 22 August 1987 was televised in France and Australia to outcries of indignation. In response, more ‘law and order’ reinforcements were sent to the Territory, swelling the number to 6500, and the level of nomadisation among the tribes was increased.<sup>277</sup>

The decision made by the National Assembly in April 1987 to hold a referendum on self-determination met with the disapproval of the South Pacific Forum, the LKS, and the FLNKS and reopened the question of voting eligibility. At a demographic disadvantage, the FLNKS sought to restrict the vote to second generation inhabitants using a post-World War II precedent to support their claim. The return of Tende and la Brigade to France by the reconciliatory Paris Peace Treaty in 1947 secured for the French the strategic hydro-electricity plants and made future invasion by fascist Italy more difficult.<sup>278</sup> This required the approval of those residents concerned.<sup>279</sup> To ensure success, a hastily implemented law was introduced—‘sans discussions et voté en cinq minutes’ (Kajman 1987)—which restricted the vote to those born in the region and who were still living there,<sup>280</sup> those not living in the Territory but with parents who were born there, and those who were able to prove that they had been living there before 28

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<sup>277</sup> Nomadisation is defined as the circulation of small military units in areas where enemy are expected.

<sup>278</sup> This territory had previously been annexed to Italy by Napoleon III in 1860.

<sup>279</sup> According to Article 27 of the Constitution of 27 October 1946, ‘nulle cession, nul échange, nulle adjonction de territoire n’est valable sans le consentement des population intéressées’.

<sup>280</sup> This prevented those who had moved to Italy from voting against the terms of the ‘Peace Treaty’ and created organisations of *profughi* of the alpine regions ceded to France (Rainero 2001).

October 1922, the date when Mussolini came to power (Couttenier & Gastaud 2007, pp. 94-95). The result was a resounding success for the French.<sup>281</sup> It was found that due to historic, political and constitutional differences between Liguria and New Caledonia, the French were unable to consent to a similar modification of the law for the Kanak. It was decided that the referendum on self-determination must be based on universal suffrage, equal for all and voluntary (*Le Monde* 4 December 1984). This only served to unleash further antagonism.

The date of the referendum was finally announced without consulting the independence parties. This did not surprise Tjibaou who believed that the High Commissioner, Jean Montpezat, was being paid by the RPCR. Tjibaou refused to enter into discussion with Pons, ‘un ministre qui est le porte-parole de la droite locale’ (*Le Monde* 7 October 1987). Among the loyalists, politics, customary divide and religion united to produce formidable foes, and these scissions were expected to advantage the loyalists. Against all odds the ‘falcons and doves,’ the old enemies of the independence family (*Le Monde* 30 January 1987) became reconciled, and Naisseline gave his support to the FLNKS and agreed to boycott the next referendum. For Pons, there were to be no half measures—it was independence or nothing: ‘Il n’y a pas de moitié de l’indépendance, je ne vais pas reprendre à mon compte les manipulations intellectuelles de M. Pisani.’ (*Le Monde* 11 January 1987). Dialogue with the patently anti-independence Pons became impossible and the message which had been delivered by Chirac in Noumea on 29 August 1986 for hope, tolerance and solidarity a chimera.

Under the new administration, the *indépendantistes* were progressively stripped of the powers they had gained during the Pisani era. The Presidents of the Kanak-dominated *aires*, unable to obtain finance for basic public works, were forced to complain of misappropriated funds to the Prime Minister. In response, those *aires* were placed under permanent military surveillance. The application of such drastic psychological pressure belied Pons’ belief that the FLNKS were non-existent (JORF 5 June 1986, p. 1347). When a *Le Monde* journalist asked Pons whether this desire had become a reality in his mind, Pons replied:

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<sup>281</sup> In the vote which took place on 12 October 1947, 91% voted for the disputed territories to become French (*Le Monde* 11 April 1987).

Je ne nie pas qu'il y ait un mouvement indépendantiste, je dis que sa représentativité me paraît en baisse parce que j'ai rencontré des gens qui m'ont dit avoir voté jusqu'à présent pour le FLNKS et qu'ils ne le feraient plus maintenant.

(*Le Monde* 20 February 1987).

In an election a few months earlier the FLNKS had polled 35% of the vote.

Pons was determined to establish order, but his strategy of applying a military solution to a complex problem led to further conflict.<sup>282</sup> In the months before the referendum, antagonism increased between the *indépendantiste* movement, which had the support of the Protestant Church and the decolonised States of the South Pacific<sup>283</sup>, and the loyalists who were backed by the Government and local business. In May, the FLNKS organised a peaceful march for independence in their 'occupied territory.' The march was outlawed by Pons and Air Calédonie flights between the mainland and the Loyalty Islands were cancelled to prevent an influx of *indépendantiste* supporters. The march went ahead and was violently suppressed by loyalists and Government forces. The brutality of the suppression was captured by photojournalists and their publication led to public outcry. When peaceful protest countered violent repression, the right to rebellion was recognised: 'When the Government violates the rights of the people, insurrection is, for the people and for each group of people, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties'.<sup>284</sup>

By boycotting the referendum, the FLNKS, which had an overall abstention rate of 40.89%, provided the RPCR with an overwhelming victory of 98.30%. The rate of abstention in the Kanak dominated Loyalty Islands rose to 75.08% (Reno, Fortier & Gold-Dalg 1987, p. 134; Lenormand 1991, p. 152).

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<sup>282</sup> This was against the advice of M. Lemoine who recommended the delaying of the referendum in view of the 'fragile' state of the country, the inequality which was still marked, and the possibility of violence. The objective was, in his opinion, to maintain peace. Chirac, on the other hand, applauded Republican power and was unprepared to engage in constructive dialogue (*Le Monde* 21 January 1987).

<sup>283</sup> By this time all of the British Empire 'east of Suez' had been disbanded, despite Britain's early belief that many of the micro and mini island States lacked the resources to become self-governing.

<sup>284</sup> The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1793. Article 35 : 'La convocation se fait, en ce cas, par la municipalité du lieu ordinaire du rassemblement'. <<http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-du-24-juin-1793.5084.html>>. [2 January 2016].

## **The trial of the Hienghène assassins, France vs Kanak, and the prospect of reconciliation thwarted by ‘judicial process’**

Conflict was never far from the surface. On the anniversary of the Hienghène massacre, loyalists in a violent rampage bombed and attacked the law courts in Noumea, the courts’ underground parking lot, the car of the leader of the Socialist Party of Kanaky, the Kanak cultural centre and the Lands Office. In the rubble of the law courts investigators found documents, ‘for the eyes of Gauzère’ (Gauzère had lost his sight after being hit by a CRS bullet), calling for the release of the Hienghène assassins in the name of ‘a secret army organisation for the defence of French New Caledonia’ (Filloux 1985d).

On 29 September 1986, the case against those responsible for the Hienghène ambush was heard before M. François Semur,<sup>285</sup> who found that there was no case to answer: the state of anxiety of the accused was sufficient for the ambush to be ‘legitimate defence.’ To justify his findings Semur had ‘exhumed’ Line 2 of Article 329 of the Penal Code of 1810, which continued as law until 1994: ‘Si le fait a eu lieu en se défendant contre les auteurs de vols ou de pillages exécutés avec violence’ (Code Pénal 1810). At the time of the trial, there were no Melanesian magistrates, and the application of the law in the colony was not representative of the justice in France: ‘La justice, dans la bonne tradition des antipodes, marche ici, la tête en bas.’ (*Le Monde* 11 February 1988).<sup>286</sup>

For all except the loyalists of the extreme right, the verdict was an embarrassment. All the indications were that the attack had been premeditated. The road was blocked by a felled tree, armed men were strategically placed, and the wounded were shot at close range in the presence of witnesses. M. Tubiana, the secretary of the Human Rights

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<sup>285</sup> Semur had nothing against the FLNKS or the Melanesians; he was Christian, passionate about customary justice and frequently travelled to the ‘bush’ to effect reconciliation between Kanak and *Caldoche*. In February 1985, by means of custom, and the brandishing of *l’épée de Damoclès* he brought about the reconciliation of the Touaourou tribe, which had been accused of theft and burning property, and an old *Caldoche*, M. Cornaille. Prison was avoided, and for the Kanak, ‘la justice ait fait un pas vers eux’ with a ‘bougna (repas mélanésien traditionnel) de fraternisation’, and a ‘poignée de main entre le vieux caldoche barbu et le grand chef Albert Ouetcheo, et l’échange symbolique d’objets entre les deux hommes’ (Filloux 1985b).

<sup>286</sup> The Kanak and the *indépendantistes* had always denounced the *justice coloniale à deux vitesses* and this ruling confirmed that belief (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 62).

League for the DOM-TOM, was astounded, and with three other lawyers in France,<sup>287</sup> decided to enter an appeal to have the ‘no’ case annulled and M. Semur removed from any file concerning the Kanak. As retaliation, additional appeals were made to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and to the European Court of Justice to pardon those *indépendantiste* sympathisers who had been imprisoned (*Le Monde* 6 October 1985). In October 1987, the trial was brought before the Court of Assize in Noumea where the Attorney General, M. Lucazeau, recommended a jail sentence of nine years for Raoul Lapetite and Maurice Mitride, and seven years for Robert Sineiméné and Lapetite’s four sons. He found that the attack had been premeditated, there was no evidence that shots had been fired by the victims, and there was little room for improvisation. Before M. François Semur and a jury on which no Kanak were included (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 68), arguments in favour of the accused included ‘psychological disarray in a climate of extreme tension’ when the gendarmerie was unable to ensure the security and protection of isolated farming communities:

Quand l’ordre ne règne pas, quand tout est insécurité, on a le droit de se défendre soi-même [...] cet état d’abandon résultait d’une intention délibérée des socialistes de laisser le champ libre au FLNKS.

(*Le Monde* 30 October 1987).

Having heard the case M. Tubiana agreed that the accused should be acquitted; to condemn them would be to legitimise the Kanak revolt (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 64). On 29 October 1987, the Hienghène assassins were acquitted.

For the Kanak this was a travesty of justice, where politics had skewed the justice system. Small comfort was gained from the knowledge that nothing could now stop the Kanak (*Le Monde* 30 October 1987). In France many were equally perplexed by the judgment. Lionel Jospin, First Secretary of the Socialist Party opined: ‘un déni de justice [...] C’est afficher le mépris du droit et peut-être, dans le contexte difficile de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, une espèce de provocation politique.’ (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 67). The Communist League commented on the findings that ‘la justice de Chirac ressemble à celle des républiques bananières’ (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 67) and for the Communist Party, Pierre Juquin declared that the judgement ‘bafoue les lois de la morale et de la République’ (Plenel & Rollat 1988, pp. 66-67).

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<sup>287</sup> MM. Tubiana, Roux, Ottan and Felice (*Le Monde* 6 October 1986).

The pastor at Montravel, Anjapunja, described the Kanak as being confused by the decision which allowed Kanak to be killed with no right of defence. The subtleties of Article 329, Line 8 which allowed the judgement *non-lieu* remained a mystery (*Le Monde* 11 February 1988).

This was a bitter blow for the Kanak, leaving them with no recourse to justice and little possibility of countering Western hegemony other than by resorting to violent conflict. In the words of Tjibaou:

Cela veut dire qu'on peut abattre comme des chiens [...] Il n'y aura pas de justice pour les Kanak tant qu'il n'y a à se faire qu'avec les coups de fusil. Il faut que le peuple Kanak, maintenant, prenne ses dispositions.  
(Plenel & Rollat 1988, pp. 62-63).

The release of the assassins strengthened the resolve of the FLNKS to stop the planned Territorial elections. Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, number two of the FLNKS declared the defeat of their strategy of non-violence:

La stratégie de non-violence que nous avons suivie avant le référendum du 13 septembre n'a pas tout à fait été comprise par le peuple kanak qu'elle a un peu démobilisé. Elle a été interprétée comme une faiblesse. Maintenant nous avons décidé de ne pas laisser se dérouler les nouvelles élections régionales annoncées par le gouvernement. Il ne s'agit pas de se lancer dans le même mouvement que 1984, mais le jour de scrutin nous serons là pour empêcher ces élections.  
(Picard 2010, p. 32).

The time for reconciliation in the Tiendanite valley had passed. Ancient tribal lands were reclaimed by the Kanak. The jubilation of the white population was short-lived. The *broussards* had lost their land but the white residents of Hienghène had lost everything and found themselves refugees in Noumea. The Lapetites sought refuge in their old hunting grounds in the mountains behind Hienghène and it was there, six months to the day after the decision of the Court of Assize, that José Lapetite was killed (Duroy 1988, pp. 319-320). The case continued in 1989 when the masterminds of the massacre sued Lionel Duroy for use of the word 'assassin' in his book *Hienghène: le désespoir calédonien*. The claim for compensation was 3,500,000 francs (*Le Monde* 19 May 1989); the wives and children of the assassinated claimed nothing.



## Conflict and a theory of conspiracy

The ‘victims of history,’ poor whites and *métis* were most commonly loyalists, they had struggled for generations to eke out a living from the land, battling cyclones, grasshoppers and Kanak. They were now fighting to retain their land and for a legitimate place in the future of New Caledonia. The assault on the road to Tiendanite was believed to be part of a carefully orchestrated ambush originating, not in the Tiendanite valley, but in the *métropole* under the code name of *Plan d’Araignée*. The plan was purported to have been hatched to eliminate the charismatic leader of the *indépendantiste* movement, Jean-Marie Tjibaou. In letters written from prison, Guy Dijou,<sup>288</sup> a right-wing extremist and a commando in the *Organisation de l’armée secrète*, posed the following questions relative to the attack: who put the plan into action, who executed it, why were phone calls made to the High Commissioner and Franck Wahuzue (RPCR) from the Hienghène Post Office on the night of the attack? Raoul Lapetite (UC) was a *métis* with Kanak blood of the Bourate lineage in his veins. Jean-Marie’s mother was also a Bourate (Waddell 2008, p. 41), and the two families were inextricably bound by native custom, while property was protected and sacrosanct. Central to Dijou’s enquiry was the need to discover who set fire to houses that were protected by custom: ‘qui a mis le feu dans une de ces maisons « couvertes » par la coutume acceptée, déclenchant de la part des familles [...] une réaction extrêmement violente qui devait faire dix morts par contrecoups.’ (*Le Monde* 20 April 1996). It was this denigration of custom that led to the assault. At the last minute, the target, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, had changed his plan to return to Tiendanite with the others. This overall context with multiple ‘victims of history’ highlights yet again the lost opportunities for reconciliation that line the history of New Caledonia.

## Conclusion: Chapter 4

The conflict that tore France apart in 1968 was a pivotal moment for the young Kanak students in France as they became aware of the power of protest. In what appeared to be

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<sup>288</sup> Guy Dijou was a proactive loyalist. His field of action was not against the Kanak or Kanak property but that of non-Kanak FLNKS sympathisers. Property destroyed included the Law Courts (twice) to liberate those responsible for the Hienghène massacre, the Lands Office (twice), an institution that prevented *Caldoches* from buying and selling land acquired legally, and the Taxation Office, which paid malingers who worked only when they wished. The garage of André Dang was also targeted.

a David and Goliath contest of student versus government, the student voice was heard. On the global scene, the voice of black protest was making its mark; this was consolidated by the writings of Fanon and Césaire and had a profound influence on the Kanak students at the time. There was also an awareness, appreciation and re-evaluation of native custom which for over a century had been ignored or denigrated. On their return to New Caledonia, the claims of student-led political groups met with stiff and often sanguinary opposition from the ruling plutocracy. With each change of government in France, new statutes, which provided and withdrew Territorial autonomy, came into being in what became known as the *valse des statuts*. In general, the statutes were conceived to alleviate the tension in the Territory but the depth of the separation of the antagonists was under-estimated in France and conflict became increasingly violent. All attempts to find a common ground whereby the process of reconciliation might be achieved failed. The Hienghène massacre in 1984 was a particularly gruesome instance of political and social tension that set the scene for a more general escalation of violent conflict across New Caledonia.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Conflict, Tragedy and Reconciliation: the *Événements* and Beyond**

Confident that the question of self-determination had been settled by the 1987 referendum,<sup>289</sup> the Chirac Government engaged in some creative restructuring of the Territorial institutions, and replaced the Fabius–Pisani statute of the Socialist Government with a statute of the new Minister responsible for the DOM-TOM, Bernard Pons. This statute transferred some power to the regions and communes, but the lion's share, including the exploration, exploitation, conservation and management of natural, biological and non-biological resources was retained by the State. As a concession to the Kanak, provision was made for the establishment of a Customary Assembly,<sup>290</sup> which was to play a consultative role in Kanak affairs, and a Caledonian Cultural Office to promote cultural pluralism. The 'sting', however, was in the realignment of electoral boundaries on a longitudinal east-west axis, which disadvantaged and antagonised the already disgruntled *indépendantistes*. Just as the Fabius–Pisani north-south division had favoured the nationalists, the Pons redistribution provided the loyalists with an electoral advantage and a possible majority in two of the four divisions.

Further exasperation was caused for the Kanak when the request to limit the electoral roll to long-term inhabitants was refused by Chirac who believed that such a move would lead to minority rule: 'une minorité, une petite minorité dans la République, imposer sa loi' (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988d).

In the opinion of the *indépendantistes*, the new statute represented a return to the economic slavery of colonialism and 'la négation du peuple Canaque' (*Le Monde* 8 April 1988). The expectation in France that the new law would suppress Kanak activism

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<sup>289</sup> This confidence was misplaced. Lionel Jospin, First Secretary of the Socialist Party, was surprised that the Chirac Government ignored the abstention rate. He was also critical of a statute that was seen to be a return to the colonial period with all of its aggression and political pressure. On the other hand, Jean-Marie Tjibaou had realised that for the Kanak to vote would be to commit cultural genocide (*Le Monde* 12 September 1987a).

<sup>290</sup> Article 4: 'L'assemblée coutumière regroupe les représentants de la coutume de l'ensemble des aires culturelles de la Nouvelle-Calédonie: Hoot Waap, Paci Camuki, Ajie Aro, Tei Araju, Dumbea Kapone, Nengone, Drehu, Iaai et Faga-Uvea.'

and lead to peace and reconciliation was a gross miscalculation. In reality, tension increased and the FLNKS' resolve was for greater militancy and conflict. Peaceful protest had failed, and in the lead-up to the 1988 Presidential election, the situation became more conflictual. As violence escalated, press reports became increasingly critical of the administration, and Pons reacted by bringing in more troops.<sup>291</sup> For a population of 60,000 there were now up to 12,000 'men in arms' on the island (Fraser & Trotter 2005, p. 276.) In this hostile environment, and with mounting RPCR pressure, it was decided that the first Territorial election under the new statute would be held on the same day as the first round of the French Presidential election. This defied French law<sup>292</sup> and was a new source of provocation for the FLNKS.<sup>293</sup>

Division within the community ran deep; opinion was polarised, entrenched, and intransigent. The *indépendantiste* ÉÉNCIL was concerned that the 'national consciousness' of the Kanak<sup>294</sup> was being demolished by continual marginalisation, and that violence was being condoned as a final solution. This sentiment was shared by Catholic priests working among the Kanak who, while remaining apolitical, were unable to disregard race-related prejudice, the denial of justice, and increased military nomadisation.<sup>295</sup> On the other hand, the anti-independence RPR Minister, Maurice Nenou-Pwataho, argued in the National Assembly that the root of the Caledonian problem was the employment by the previous socialist Government of pro-separatists, who needed to be replaced as a matter of urgency: 'faites vite. Ne laissez pas développer et la haine, et le racisme, et l'anti-France' (JORF 9 July 1986, p. 2968). Pons remained anchored in his opposition to Kanak nationalism; he believed in the existence of a single community in the Territory—and that was French. This belief also absolved him from the electoral reform required by the FLNKS. Pons refused to

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<sup>291</sup> Tjibaou recounts the words of an Algerian FLN director: 'Les Français n'ont pas de parole ; ils ne connaissent que les rapports de forces'. (*Le Monde* 28 April 1988).

<sup>292</sup>In France, by law, the cantonal and Presidential elections were held separately, and by combining the two, Pons had effectively dissociated New Caledonia from French law (*Le Monde* 28 January 1988). This also allowed the RPCR to benefit from the new electoral boundaries that could be altered with a change of Government in France.

<sup>293</sup> The decision confounded Lemoine, who predicted a FLNKS boycott of the double election and resultant conflict (*Le Monde* 6 March 1988).

<sup>294</sup> 'National consciousness, [...] the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people [...] which in adverse circumstances may become an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been.' (Fanon 1963, p. 119).

<sup>295</sup> This put them at odds with the Archbishop in Noumea who, with a largely white loyalist congregation, kept religion and politics separated.

recognise cultural difference. Kanak identity and 'Kanakitude' was, he argued, a post-colonial invention. In pre-colonial times, disparate warring tribes had been geographically and linguistically divided. This attitude exacerbated political tension and encouraged Kanak militancy and distrust of the integrity of the French State (*Le Monde* 9 September 1987). The referendum on 13 September 1987 had failed to solve any of the Territory's problems and serious political dialogue, mediation and reconciliation between the two communities was still impossible. The political aspirations of the FLNKS had not diminished, and solutions were now being sought beyond the confines of French institutions. Despite the warning 'il faut cesser d'humilier les dirigeants canaques' (*Le Monde* 6 March 1988), it appeared that the course was set and that violent conflict would prevail.

On 16 March, during a twenty-four hour visit to the Territory, Bernard Pons cautioned against any activity that might disrupt the forthcoming elections. The High Commissioner, Clément Bouhin, the military, and specialists of the gendarmerie were all on alert:

Tous les scénarios et toutes les hypothèses furent envisagés [...]. Nous avons arrêté toutes les dispositions permettant de donner aux forces de l'ordre les moyens de rapidité d'intervention pour neutraliser immédiatement toutes les menaces à l'ordre public, où qu'elles puissent se développer.

(*Le Monde* 17 March 1988).

In April 1988, New Caledonia was a tinderbox. The Kanak had been fighting for independence for thirty years and the FLNKS, spurred to action by the Pons Statute, decided to boycott the territorial election. PALIKA and the *Union progressiste mélanésienne* (UPM), although reticent, joined forces with the UC, while the *Front Uni de Libération Kanak* (FULK), generally noted for its militancy, decided against the boycott. This was perhaps in retaliation for the expulsion of Yann Céléné Uregeï, the FULK leader, from the provisional government of Kanaky due to his Libyan connection (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988a).

Rancour was sparked when it was announced that police and gendarme numbers would double for the election. Sixteen squadrons of gendarmes and twelve CRS companies

swelled the law enforcement numbers to almost 7000, and to this was to be added a garrison of 2000 backup forces (Henningham 1992, p. 103).<sup>296</sup> Coercion and the use of force were the key elements used by Pons to promote his political interests, to eliminate any major challenge and to manage possible conflict. In this he had miscalculated Kanak fortitude. Systematically maligned, and discriminated against by a tarnished legal system, the FLNKS decided to draw attention to the situation by the non-violent occupation of the gendarmerie at Fayaoué on Ouvéa.<sup>297</sup> Scheduled for the eve of the second round of the Presidential election, this followed similar ‘sit-ins’ in Poindimié and Thio. In the uneasy pre-election political climate one of the gendarmes, when confronted by armed and menacing Kanak, drew his pistol (Michaud 2011). In the mêlée, shots were fired and four gendarmes were killed. The Melanesians panicked and fled, taking 27 gendarmes hostage. One group headed south, the other north. The southern group was soon released, and Robert Kapoeri, the leader of the hostage-takers, was arrested and gaoled. According to one of the hostages, Jean-Paul Lacroix, the Kanak were untrained, unprepared and unable to use the firearms taken from the gendarmerie. They were simple citizens caught in an adventure that had gone horribly wrong. The northern group sought refuge in a sacred cave five kilometres from Gossanah<sup>298</sup> in the north of the island.

The battle for political supremacy was at its height in France and decisive action on the Ouvéa crisis provided an opportunity for political kudos. Jacques Chirac, who was attempting to oust François Mitterrand in the Presidential election, was trailing the incumbent after the first round. Buoyed by the successful release of French hostages in the Lebanon, this new drama presented a ‘page one’ opportunity for Chirac.<sup>299</sup> To have

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<sup>296</sup> This figure is substantially less than the 12,000 quoted by Tjibaou.

<sup>297</sup> As Father François-Xavier de Viviès explained in a letter dated 26 April 1988: ‘Quand le pouvoir utilise toutes les ficelles, toutes les arguties, tous les chantages pour fermer les portes de l’avenir au peuple colonisé, quand, à travers les projets annoncés, il n’y a plus aucune lueur d’espérance, celui-ci n’a plus le choix : il ne lui reste que la pression pour essayer de se faire entendre.’ (Cited in Legorjus 2011, p. 125). The organisers of the assault were Yeiwéné Yeiwéné and Franck Wahuzue, two FLNKS leaders (Legorjus 2011, p. 134). A similar operation to that planned in Ouvéa had already taken place in the Poindimié gendarmerie without incident.

<sup>298</sup> I have chosen to use the spelling Gossanah, after Hossanah as the Israelites returned to the promised land, but other spellings include Goosana (the original spelling), Gossanay (Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre), Gosanah (Jean Guiart), Gossen/Gosen (Protestant Bible), Goshen (Catholic Bible) (*Mwà Vée* 1999, p. 39).

<sup>299</sup> In 2005, Jean-Charles Marchiani, who had engineered the release of the Lebanon hostages with Jacques Chirac and Charles Pasqua, was on trial for allegedly receiving kickbacks from military contractors (*Sydney Morning Herald* 7 October 2005).

French gendarmes held hostage, and unable to be located on French territory (Michalski 2004, p. 118) was intolerable for Chirac who raged at the ‘savagery and the barbarity’ of the FLNKS. He accused the socialist government of 1981-1986 of aiding and abetting the action (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988d) and suggested that ‘interlocuteurs privilégiés et uniques’ of the President were supporting the terrorists (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988c). As head of Government, Chirac authorised Pons, the Minister of Overseas Territories, to set the course of action for the release of the hostages and the arrest of the assassins.<sup>300</sup>

As the situation deteriorated, Pons isolated the island, cut communication links, and banned the press (*Le Monde* 28 April 1988). Crack troops were flown in: the GIGN, the Marine Fusiliers, Commando Hubert, EPIGN and the commandos of the *Ile Choc*<sup>301</sup> in a political ploy to demonstrate the firmness and strength of action of Chirac as opposed to the portrayed procrastination of his adversary, Mitterrand (*Le Monde* 3 May 1988a).<sup>302</sup> Despite the possibility of dramatising an already difficult situation, General Vidal, Chief of Armed Forces in New Caledonia, and Clément Bouhin, the High Commissioner, agreed to deploy the army and the judicial police to find and free the hostages (Vidal 2010, p. 44). This replacement of gendarmes by Armed Forces of the third category<sup>303</sup> transformed what was ostensibly a regular police exercise into full-blown civil war (*Le Monde* 24 May 1988).

This decision, although legal,<sup>304</sup> was controversial,<sup>305</sup> as no state of emergency or state of siege had been announced. The risk of involving the army in the maintenance of

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<sup>300</sup> Article 15 of the French constitution states that the president is the Commander in Chief of the armed services. Article 21 states that the Prime Minister is responsible for national defence and the regulation of civil and military posts.

<sup>301</sup> GIGN: *Groupe d'intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale*; Commando Hubert: the ‘supermen’ of the marines; EPIGN: *Escadron parachutiste d'intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale*; *Ile Choc*: the spearhead group of the *Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure* (DGSE).

<sup>302</sup> The macrocephalic command of multicephalic forces led to confusion as each force had its own method of operation. Command and counter-command reduced the efficiency of a military operation which traditionally worked on the principle of ‘un chef, une mission’.

<sup>303</sup> Article 19-22 of the *Instruction inter-ministérielle* 20 July 1970 lists the three categories of armed forces employed to maintain order and their areas of activity: (i) departmental gendarmerie; (ii) mobile gendarmerie; (iii) air, sea and land army.

<sup>304</sup> Cedric Michalski found justification for the action by referring to Article 20 of the Constitution of 20 June 1958, which defined the requisitions. The first enabled the army to engage the necessary troops to maintain public order, to liberate those illegally held, and to arrest the perpetrators of the crime. The second approved the use of arms (Michalski 2004, pp. 111-146).

public order<sup>306</sup> was questioned by Jean-Marc Berlière, Professor of History at the University of Bourgogne:

L'armée ne fait plus de maintien de l'ordre en France depuis 1914. Avec [...] les policiers en uniformes, les gendarmes mobiles et les compagnies républicaines de sécurité (CRS) créées en décembre 1944, le pouvoir exécutif dispose aujourd'hui d'un instrument à trois claviers en cas de trouble à l'ordre public.

(Béguin 2013)

Conflict in New Caledonia had been brought onto central stage, Chirac wanted a quick fix, Ouvéa was declared a war zone, and the decision was made to launch *Opération Victor* (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 126) The decision to employ the army and gendarmes in a single operation was an enigma: the army was trained in violent retaliation and the GIGN in mediation and reconciliation. This ideological incompatibility led to confusion and disillusionment (Legorjus 1990, p. 272). Among the forces of order there was a total ignorance of customary knowledge: 'personne ne nous a expliqué le contexte coutumier. Ça a été une véritable erreur car la coutume est au centre de tout'. (Bérard 2010).

The Pons plan of action was criticised for its weakness, insensitivity (*Le Monde* 29 April 1988a) and failure to find a negotiated solution (*Le Monde* 29 April 1988b). Pons was intransigent in his attitude towards the Kanak. As Minister of DOM-TOM he made no allowance for cultural difference and by resorting to violent repression he had expected that Kanak submission would result in cultural and ethnic fusion within the French 'melting pot'. This approach, embedded in a Western conceptual framework, dictated the action taken on Ouvéa as politicians sought to fulfil political interests, the army fought to uphold its honour, and gendarmes battled to exact vengeance for the deaths of their colleagues and for the humiliation they had suffered as the result of the Kanak occupation of the gendarmeries at Canala, Poindimié and Thio. As Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, number two in the FLNKS, explained: 'il faut comprendre que nous sommes

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<sup>305</sup> The law of 14 December 1791 states: 'Aucun corps ou détachement de troupes de ligne ne peut agir dans l'intérieur du royaume sans une réquisition légale.' (*Le Monde* 24 May 1988).

<sup>306</sup> The gendarmes favoured dialogue and conciliation, while army solutions were generally more sanguinary.



humiliés par la politique de M. Pons et que nous sommes traités avec mépris' (*Le Monde* 1 May 1988).

In the operation to locate the prisoners, men, women and children of the Gossanah tribe were rounded up at gunpoint and interrogated (Plenel & Rollat 1988, pp. 96-97). Djubelli Wéa, a Protestant minister and charismatic chief of the tribe, despite being incapacitated with malaria, was handcuffed to a coconut palm, questioned and tortured. He was bluntly told by General Vidal: 'La France déclare la guerre aux Canaques.' (*Le Monde* 21 June 1988). The Mayor of Ouvéa, Hosséa Ohwane, who was in France on the day of the hostage taking, was also arrested (*Le Monde* 26 April 1988).

In a replay of the strategies employed by the army during the 1878 rebellion, advantage was taken of the ancient tribal rivalries between the Gossanah tribe of High Chief Imwone and the Weneki tribe of High Chief Bazit. Antonin Filimoehana of the Catholic RPCR Weneki tribe collaborated with the French Army,<sup>307</sup> while the Gossanah tribe supported the hostage takers with daily supplies of food and drink. Negotiations between Alphonse Dianou, the leader of the hostage takers, Patrick Destremau, an officer of the *Régiment d'infanterie de marine du Pacifique* (Marine Infantry Regiment) and Filimoehana failed. Filimoehana was denounced as a traitor and Destremau was taken prisoner. It was only by the grace of the sacred land of the grotto that Filimoehana's life was saved: 'On ne tue pas un Canaque sur la terre de ses ancêtres.' (Picard 2010, p. 123).

In an attempt to negotiate a reconciliation, Jean Bianconi, a lawyer from the Public Prosecutor's Office,<sup>308</sup> Legorjus and five GIGN members were also captured. This increased the possibility of violent conflict, further endangered the lives of the hostages and was considered an error of judgement by GIGN Captain Barril: 'il a réussi ce que

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<sup>307</sup> The Weneki tribe of High Chief Bazit was of Wallisian descent, Catholic, loyalist and Faga-Uvea speaking. The hostage takers were also Catholic, and Alphonse Dianou had studied to become a priest. Because of this connection to the Church, Archbishop Calvert of Noumea was solicited to make a goodwill mission to the cave. However, on Ouvéa, radio communication failed and the priest was able only to send a message to the group (*Le Monde* 3 May 1988b).

<sup>308</sup> Bianconi came from Noumea to negotiate with the hostage takers. On *Grande Terre*, he was known for his pro-Melanesian sympathies and it was expected that his reputation would be known on Ouvéa, but this was not the case; his standing on Ouvéa had been miscalculated. Fearing for Bianconi's safety, Legorjus, chief of the GIGN, with GIGN members accompanied him to the grotto.

nous avons toujours su éviter: faire prendre des gendarmes en otages'.<sup>309</sup> As members of the group responsible for the assassin of the Kanak hero of the independence movement, Eloi Machoro, the GIGN were at particular risk, especially Jean-Pierre Picon who had directed the operation in 1985. It had been a strange choice for the GIGN command to send Picon on this mission.

According to Vidal, Legorjus decided to capitalise on the tension existing between the President and the Prime Minister by appealing to the President who was known to favour reconciliation.<sup>310</sup> Mitterrand was sympathetic to the FLNKS claims and nominated a mediator.<sup>311</sup> Notice of the appointment was sent to the Prime Minister but there was no response, and no contact was made with Dianou (Picard 2010, p. 188). Appeals to the FLNKS leaders were ignored (Picard 2010, p. 188), and the plan for a military attack on the cave was being pushed by Pons.<sup>312</sup> In a climate of polarisation all possible sources of reconciliation had dried up.

Dianou was anxious to find an honourable and safe way out of the crisis but not until after the 8 May elections. He was not the *fou de Dieu* trained in Libya as Pons had suggested, but a former seminarian, an advocate of non-violence who, after training in Suva, worked with Kanak youth, encouraging them in sporting activities and discouraging their use of drugs and alcohol (*Le Monde* 13 May 1988). Dianou and the FLNKS had not envisaged the loss of life of the hostages and warned the French Government:

Le FLNKS a toujours garanti la vie des détenus tant que le gouvernement dispose à trouver une issue pacifique à l'affaire d'Ouvéa. Dans le cas contraire, tout peut arriver et le gouvernement français

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<sup>309</sup> <<http://www.tour-de-nouvelle-caledonie-2010.com/Images/commentaire-kasovitch.pdf>>. [20 February 2016]. [Originally available at <<http://www.gazetteinfo.fr/2011/11/23/jean-bianconi-veut-en-finir-avec>>.]

<sup>310</sup> It has been suggested that it was due to his relationship with Christian Prouteau, Mitterrand's technical advisor, that Legorjus was able to gain the confidence of the hostage takers, gain press coverage and generally be considered as the chief of the 'victor' mission. Legorjus had also been in charge of security for High Commissioner Pisani (*Le Monde* 14 May 1988).

<sup>311</sup> Franck Wahuzue had changed his political affiliation from RPCR to FLNKS.

<sup>312</sup> Dianou sought the help of Yeiwéné Yeiwéné and Frank Wahuzue, the men who had planned the attack, to release the hostages, to remove the armed forces from Ouvéa, to cancel the regional elections on 24 April 1988, and to have the President select a mediator to discuss a referendum on self-determination (*Le Monde* 24 April 1988b). When Pons discovered that Legorjus had ignored protocol and made direct contact with *l'Élysée* he warned Legorjus against further political involvement (Picard 2010, p. 188).

prendrait la lourde responsabilité de mettre directement en péril la vie des détenus.

(*Le Monde* 5 May 1988).

This was ignored by Pons (*Le Monde* 21 May 1988a) and the military, police, GIGN and EPIGN gathered in Noumea to flesh out the details of an attack.

For Legorjus, Ouvéa was a maelstrom of conflict. He was at odds with Dianou for failing to secure a solution, with Pons for having interfered in politics, with Vidal due to opposed ideologies, and even with other GIGN members for having allowed his men to be taken hostage. Despite his considerable effort, he had been unable to influence the course of events (Legorjus 2011, p. 19). Physically and mentally exhausted, Legorjus was of the opinion that, given time, mediation was possible. The politicians, on the other hand, had competing interests and logics. They had a deadline and were obsessed with the idea of obtaining a resolution before the Presidential election. On 5 May 1988, Chirac, with the approval of the President, gave the green light for Operation Victor to go ahead. Seventy-five men were engaged in total warfare.

The attack was two-pronged. Four hours and forty minutes separated the attacks, and this would have provided adequate time for the hostages to be assassinated if that had been the plan. The Kanak, ‘savage barbarians’ as Chirac would have the world believe, made no attempt on the lives of their captives, and all escaped without injury. The resulting death toll of 19 Melanesians and two of the *Ile Choc* led to a rapid backpedalling by the politicians, army and gendarmes. Mitterrand who, as the constitutional Chief of the Army, was ultimately responsible for the action taken, declared his preference for conciliation and mediation rather than a military solution.<sup>313</sup>

At the outset of military intervention, when Mitterrand had sought written estimates of the cost in terms of human life from General Vidal, the reply had been immediate: ‘Au mieux 2 tués, 10 blessés, au pire 10 tués 20 blessés dont environ la moitié dans le commando et la moitié chez les otages’ (Vidal 2010, p. 96). Pons disputed the upper estimate (*Le Monde* 6 May 1988b). Mitterrand maintained that he had not given

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<sup>313</sup> Mitterrand denounced the *politique du bulldozer* and emphasised that ‘les communautés ethniques qui vivent en Nouvelle-Calédonie ont le droit de vivre en paix dans le respect mutuel’. He also expressed a desire for France to remain in the South Pacific and considered how this could be best achieved (*Le Monde* 6 May 1988b).

approval for military action when he had been informed of the likely cost in terms of human life and he questioned the sequence of events (*Le Monde* 7 May 1988).

For Chirac there were no recriminations; the operation was a success, all who had been involved were congratulated (*Le Monde* 7 May 1988), and the engagement of the military against those who had flouted the ‘values of our civilised country’ was justified. In this political wager, Naisseline held Pons and Chirac responsible: ‘Ils ont préféré échanger du sang kanak contre des bulletins de vote des amis de M. Le Pen.’ (*Le Monde* 10 May 1988a).<sup>314</sup> In the opinion of the FLNKS leaders, hostage lives had never been in danger. The exercise was to highlight the Kanak demand for independence and the draconian measures of Pons’ military intervention.<sup>315</sup>

After the release of the hostages the conflict continued. Of the nineteen Kanak killed, the deaths of at least three were suspicious. According to witnesses, Alphonse Dianou and Samuel Wamo were killed after being wounded, and another two other unarmed Kanak after surrendering (*Le Monde* 10 May 1988b). The accusations of murder were taken up by the press, the League of Human Rights, and a quartet of lawyers, Felice, Ottan, Roux and Tubiana. The voices of Kanak witnesses, which had seemed inadequate when confronted with the power of the French State, benefited from the addition of these new participants. In the course of further enquiry, the veracity of the official version of Operation Victor was contested.<sup>316</sup>

The deaths, claimed to be *corvées de bois*,<sup>317</sup> of Alphonse Dianou, Wenceslas Lavelloi, Samuel Wamo, and a simple tea-bearer, Amossa Waina, when aired publicly were further investigated.<sup>318</sup> It was found that Dianou, who had been shot in the knee, was treated on site by a medical officer of the *11e Choc* (*Le Monde* 26 May 1988b). When he arrived at the airport at Ouloup his compression bandage and perfusion line had disappeared, his face was contused, and he was dead. The autopsy on 11 June found

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<sup>314</sup> The ÉÉNCIL believed that ‘la politique du gouvernement français y a trouvé un intérêt électoraliste’.

<sup>315</sup> Pons considered that the affair implicated the honour of France. It was noted, however, that the honour of France would have been better served by treating the Kanak with less cynicism (*Le Monde* 6 May 1988a).

<sup>316</sup> Photos of Paris-Match photojournalist, Charles Villeneuve, published on 27 May 1988 discredited the official version.

<sup>317</sup> Summary executions during the Algerian War were called *corvées de bois* by French soldiers.

<sup>318</sup> Four gendarmes had been killed in the gendarmerie. The suspicion that there was foul play in the killing of Dianou, Lavelloi, Wamo and Waino suggests an eye for an eye and the law of retaliation.

‘des lésions thoraciques au niveau du sternum’. This confirmed witness reports that he had received a barrage of blows from combat boots and rifle butts (Picard 2010, p. 231). The report was at odds with that of the army which found death by infarction, ‘une phlébite, en somme’.

Samuel Wamo was initially wounded by a single bullet, for which he received medical treatment. When he was autopsied, seven bullet wounds were found (Michalski 2004, p. 206). Waina Amossa, an 18-year old tea-bearer from Gossanah, and Wenceslas Lavelloi were shot when unarmed. Lavelloi’s GIGN assassin informed his *confrères*: ‘le tour de Lavelloi est fini, au suivant’ (*Le Monde* 10 May 1988b).

When the scope of the violence was realised (*Le Nouvel Observateur* 27 May 1988, pp. 46-47), two enquiries were opened: one relating to Alphonse Dianou and the ‘lack of assistance to a person in danger’ and the second into ‘voluntary manslaughter’ and ‘deliberate assault’ after surrender.<sup>319</sup> The Public Prosecutor of the Republic travelled to Ouvéa to interview the tea-bearers (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 172) and the judicial police in Paris simultaneously interviewed the thirty *indépendantistes* who had been imprisoned in France. When the accusations were verified, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence were drawn into the vortex of New Caledonian conflict.

André Giraud, Minister of Defence in the Chirac government, denounced the press for its monstrous insinuations and for ‘defaming the army.’ The new Socialist Minister for Defence, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, however, ordered an enquiry into the ‘Ouvéa Affair.’ In his opinion, not all channels of mediation had been exhausted: a letter from Pons on 29 April indicated that Legorjus had been prohibited from returning to the grotto for further negotiations which may have led to a less sanguinary solution. The request by Dianou for Frank Wahuzue to mediate had also been refused (*Le Monde* 22 May 1988). The Minister also ordered the exhumation of the bodies of Dianou, Lavelloi and Amossa for autopsy. The post-mortem findings were damning.<sup>320</sup> The report to the

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<sup>319</sup> According to Jean Guiart (1997, p. 87), what Dianou could have revealed in court ‘could have been dangerous to the leaders of both the *Union Calédonienne* and RPCR, so there could be no court case. The Government in Paris and the leaders of both the independence and anti-independence movements were here in full agreement. Dianou, captured, could have survived. His death was in answer to the same orders that cost Eloi Machoro’s life on 13 January 1985. They came from very high up and had to be obeyed.’

<sup>320</sup> The officer of the mobile gendarmes responsible for the evacuation was suspended from duty (*Le Monde* 23 July 1988).

Ministry of Defence from the two generals found that ‘des actes contraires à l’honneur militaire’ and ‘des négligences’ had been committed (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 173).

In the spring of 1988, torture, summary execution and lack of assistance to a person in danger had replaced liberty, equality, and fraternity on Ouvéa, a small French island in the Pacific. In the words of Bénéoit Tangopi, one of the hostage takers, ‘dans cette affaire, on est tous victimes, eux aussi les autres... on est tous victimes des politiques’ (*Le Nouvel Observateur* 9 May 2008). Amid accusations and denials, careers were destroyed, honour lost, and reconciliation seemed inconceivable.

Although Guiart (1997, p. 88) notes, ‘there has never been any co-ordination between Kanak acts of resistance’, in 1988 on Ouvéa decisions were made in haste and everyone was affected. Thirty-three Kanak were arrested and, without trial, incarcerated in France with nothing other than the clothes they were wearing. Medical examinations authorised by judge Jean-Louis Mazières found that chains had left several prisoners with deep wounds to the feet and hands. Other injuries resulting from *tortures à la française* included haematomas of the eye, a contused lip that needed stitching, a broken nose, infected wounds and internal injuries (*Le Monde* 8 August 1988).<sup>321</sup> The suffering and horror of the conflict surpassed Kanak comprehension. Although conflict was innate in traditional life (see Chapter 1), violence of this extent was not. The survival of indigenous communities depended upon customary order in warfare and a massacre of this dimension would have a significant bearing on future events.

The prisoners included Djubelli Wéa, an innocent bystander who had offered to act as a mediator provided that Kanak political claims were heard.<sup>322</sup> His offer was rejected by Vidal; in this war there was no room for negotiation. The FLNKS lawyers filed a complaint of ‘violence and assault’ for those incarcerated in France, and for theft, intimidation and violent interrogation at the hands of the military, for those who had suffered in Gossanah (*Le Monde* 7 July 1988).<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> ‘See also Plenel & Rollat (1988, pp. 93-117).

<sup>322</sup> Djubelli Wéa had wanted to participate in the Matignon negotiations on behalf of the Ouvéa *comité de lutte* and the other prisoners; instead he returned to Gossanah where an uncle had died: ‘depuis les événements, expliquaient-ils, nos vieux se laissent mourir de chagrin’ (*Le Monde* 21 June 1988).

<sup>323</sup> The complaint was referred to the Minister for Defence in accordance with article 687 of Penal Code, ‘lorsqu’un officier de police est susceptible d’être inculpé ou d’un délit’. See also Plenel & Rollat (1988, pp. 93-117).

Conflict on Ouvéa led to protest on the streets of Paris. Nearly ten thousand protesters rallied to claim independence for New Caledonia and to question the newly re-elected President's role in the Ouvéa butchery. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, historian at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS), blamed not only the army for the atrocities of war but also the politicians who had authorised it: 'Si cet assaut criminel a été lancé pour des raisons électorales, il faudra alors faire passer Bernard Pons devant la Haute Cour de Justice, elle est faite pour cela.' (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 188). Pisani, the ex-Minister for New Caledonia, was also critical of the *opération de massacre* which could, he believed, have been avoided. Lives had been put at risk with the decision to attack and the four who made the war—Pons, Giraud, Chirac and Mitterrand—were collectively responsible: 'Cette responsabilité politique est collective, et nous devons tous l'assumer.' (*Le Monde* 26 May 1988a). It was a return to the *imaginaire impérial* and the *déculpabilisation du racisme* of the previous century when Commander Testard had written: 'il faut commencer par détruire cette population si l'on veut vivre en sécurité dans le pays' (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 12).

The loss of life during the years of violent conflict had, by ripple effect, a wide-ranging effect on the New Caledonian community. For generations, Ouvéa, Lifou, Maré and the East Coast had been connected by a network of family alliances. This meant that the loss of the nineteen on Ouvéa was felt by thousands. The significant demographic effect on New Caledonia of the 1984-1988 years is illustrated by a proportionate comparison with France. During these years 73 lives were lost in New Caledonia; this equates to the loss of 26,000 lives in France. The 1200 refugees who fled from properties on the East Coast is equivalent to a displacement of 400,000 people in France. On Ouvéa the loss of 19 lives corresponded to 313,767 in France.<sup>324</sup> Operation Victor had been disastrous; it appeared to have sounded the death knell for reconciliation between loyalists and *indépendantistes*.

*Les événements* brought into focus the impossibility of transposing French law to New Caledonia, a country that differed historically, socially and culturally. Statutes formulated 18,000 kilometres away were unable to satisfy two diametrically opposed cultures, one based on individualism and the market economy, the other on communal ownership and ecological harmony. In the absence of consensus, dialogue and cultural

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<sup>324</sup> These figures have been calculated by the author using INSEE population figures for the 1989 census.

exchange, real democracy and peace could not be guaranteed (*Le Monde* 21 May 1988a). Michel Rocard, the new Prime Minister, was faced with the challenges of addressing the legacy of violence, destroying insurmountable barriers, and reuniting enemies within a French legal framework. The referendum in 1987, which had been boycotted by 80% of the Kanak, had served only to aggravate tension. It was a hollow victory that comforted the whites but left the question of self-determination unanswered.

Rocard recognised the need to stop conflict<sup>325</sup> and establish dialogue between the warring parties as a matter of priority for the Government.<sup>326</sup> As a Social Democrat and Protestant he believed that he would be accepted by the Kanak, but not by the RPCR, which held the view that socialist governments favoured independence. The task of appeasing the loyalists<sup>327</sup> while defusing the *indépendantistes* was an exercise that would take considerable diplomatic effort. To gain the confidence of both loyalists and *indépendantistes*, Rocard decided to appoint a team of six, a ‘mission of dialogue’ that would include both pro and anti-independence sympathisers. On 15 May, the ‘Mediators of the Pacific’ were announced. Christian Blanc was to head the mission. He was a politician who had some knowledge of the country. He had been a principal adviser to Edgar Pisani in Noumea at the time of the Hienghène massacre in 1984 (Christnacht 2003, p. 56) and as well an advisor for the *Front de Libération Nationale* during the Algerian war of independence. Politically left-wing, his pro-Melanesian sympathies would enable him to engage in dialogue with the Kanak.<sup>328</sup> Two senior public servants, Jean-Claude Périer and Pierre Steinmetz, were selected to add balance to the group. Périer had been a military magistrate and Director of Gendarmeries, and Steinmetz had worked at the High Commission in Noumea from 1972 until 1975. Both

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<sup>325</sup>This was also recognised by Mitterrand, who in his pre-election *Lettre aux Français* (cited in Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 251), stated: ‘La Nouvelle-Calédonie avance dans la nuit, se cogne aux murs, se blesse. La crise dont elle souffre rassemble, en miniature, tous les composants du drame colonial. Il est temps d’en sortir.’

<sup>326</sup> Olivier Stirn, the author of the ‘Stirn statute’, and the interim Minister for DOM-TOM. was also aware of the need for everyone to be included in discussion, which he envisaged as being ‘une œuvre de longue haleine’ (*Le Monde* 15 May 1988).

<sup>327</sup> ‘Aux intérêts et aux phantasmes des plus égoïstes des Calédoniens qui ne voient d’autre alternative à une départementalisation qu’ils refusent, parce qu’ils ne la contrôlèrent pas, qu’une autonomie gérée par eux, à leur profit, avec les crédits et la protection de l’État.’ (*Le Monde* 21 May 1988a).

<sup>328</sup> Christian Blanc was also an advisor to Pisani when the latter’s role in the Machoro assassination came under scrutiny. It seems odd that someone with this connection to conflict should be selected as a mediator at a time when Kanak sentiment was at fever-pitch.



of these candidates were right-wing and would share common political ground with Jacques Lafleur and the loyalists.

In what may be seen as a paradox for a secular Republic, the final members of the *mission* were representatives of the Churches and of the Grand Lodge. As already noted, throughout the history of New Caledonia the Churches have played a determining role in the Caledonian imbroglio (*Le Monde* 3 September 1989), and it was decided that the delegation should have an œcumenical character. Monsignor Paul Guiberteau, Director of Catholic Education, was selected to establish a relationship with the mainly Catholic loyalists; Jacques Stewart, President of the Protestant Federation of France, was chosen to initiate dialogue with the predominantly Protestant Kanak and the final member of the team was Roger Leray, Grand Master of the Grand Orient Lodge, who had been responsible for establishing freemasonry in New Caledonia.<sup>329</sup> Each team member was judiciously selected in respect of the protagonists and special interest groups in New Caledonia. In this, the Kanak had no say; there was no discussion and no consensus. Decisions were made in France without reference to cultural difference—the terms of mediation were clearly French.

The mission was greeted with scepticism in Noumea where it was doubted that such a delegation would be able to establish dialogue between the warring parties. Jacques Lafleur realised the need for dialogue but also for the Kanak to forego any thought of independence if reconciliation was to be achieved:

Les gens de ce territoire ont perdu l'habitude de se parler, de travailler ensemble, cette situation ne peut pas durer toute la vie. Il y a obligatoirement pour ceux qui réclament une indépendance raciste, au nom de premier occupant, une part de sacrifices à faire... l'espoir pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie est parfaitement possible.

(Plenel & Rollat 1988, pp. 197-198).

While he voiced the need for the participation and empowerment of the Kanak in any process of reconciliation, Lafleur, a faithful advocate of Western hegemony, conceded nothing. By imposing obligation on the Kanak, the possibility of a mutually acceptable resolution was greatly reduced.

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<sup>329</sup> Roger Leray was also Mitterrand's choice as an independent mediator during the Ouvéa hostage taking.

When the ‘mediators’ arrived the country was bitterly divided and in mourning. The hope of being able to establish dialogue was dashed when, shortly after their arrival, a young Kanak on the East Coast was killed by the military and peace was again threatened (*Le Monde* 25 May 1988). Everyone was on edge. The delegation, despite hostility, traversed the country, meeting Chiefs and initiating dialogue. On Ouvéa they met Chiefs Daoumé and Bazit (RPCR) and Chief Wenegui (FI); in Hienghène, Tjibaou (FLNKS); and in Canala, Léopold Jorédié (FLNKS). Meetings with these political leaders provided an opening for more meaningful dialogue. All agreed that there was a need to talk and that the current state with roadblocks and gun-toting youths could not continue. Dialogue however, had been restricted to the Chiefs, the mediators did not speak the local languages, and were unable to formulate a framework capable of healing and re-building war-torn communities.

When the mission returned to France, they were reasonably confident that a line of dialogue had been initiated between the rival parties. Propositions left in New Caledonia for deliberation included the division of the country into three partly autonomous provinces, the liberation of Kanak prisoners, a referendum on self-determination after ten years, and the return of administrative power to France for 12 months. This was firmly linked to a Western understanding of how to arrange socio-political communities and how to manage conflict. There was no attempt to enhance Western theories of conflict resolution by bringing cross cultural exchange into the deliberations. In the opinion of Plenel and Rollat (1988, p. 17) France managed to resolve the conflict by replacing an illusion of domination by a reality of solidarity.

The expectation of coming to terms with a century of torment and agony, the deaths of more than thirty compatriots within a period of six months, and the uncertain future of another thirty who were imprisoned in France, left many reeling and the Kanak community divided. The Ouvéa assault had been ‘the scene of the bloodiest operation by a European army in the Pacific since World War II’ (Waddell 2008, p. 163) and the severity of French reprisals had taken its toll. It was during this period of despair and shattered hope that Lafleur and Tjibaou, at the Prime Minister’s official residence, Hôtel

Matignon, sought a new frame of reference for the country, based on coexistence and dialogue. An agreement was drawn up by François Roux, the Larzac lawyer.<sup>330</sup>

The recommendations of this agreement, the Matignon Agreements, included:

- ♦ the transfer of administrative power to the State for a period of twelve months, with the High Commissioner as the State's representative and the Territory's administrative chief;
- ♦ the division of the country into three provinces: North, South and Loyalty Islands, each with an elected government responsible for the economic, social and cultural management of the province;
- ♦ a consultative customary council of provincial high chiefs from the customary *aires* to advise on native affairs; and
- ♦ a referendum in 1998 to settle the question of self-determination.<sup>331</sup>

Article 2 of the annex to the Agreement restricted the electoral roll to those registered to vote in 1988 and any of their children who had come of age in the intervening period. Article 93 of the Agreement provided for the setting up of the *Agence de développement de la culture kanak* (ADCK).

The agreement was signed and the historic handshake between Tjibaou and Lafleur was exchanged. In Tjibaou's view, the choice presented was either an agreement that fell short of Kanak demands or further bloodshed. He chose agreement. The importance of community involvement had been ignored and without consensus and a guarantee for independence, it was doubtful that the agreement would be viewed sympathetically by the *indépendantistes* (Waddell 2008, pp. 175-176). Western law does not always suit other cultural contexts and it would be difficult to convince the people of Ouvéa that their warriors had not died in vain. Yeiwéné was concerned (*Le Monde* 28 June 1988); he felt that they were at the edge of a black hole and if Tjibaou was dragged in, he would be as well (Chappell 2014, p. 204). According to Jorédié, Tjibaou had been outfoxed by Lafleur and the French Government, and French cunning had again won the day: 'Les Français sont trop malins ; ils nous ont roulés si souvent.' (Plenel & Rollat

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<sup>330</sup> Roux successfully represented the Larzac farmers in their battle against the acquisition of farmland for the French army.

<sup>331</sup> A ten-year delay proposed by Dijoud in 1979 for a vote on self-determination had been found to be unpalatable to the pro-independence camp. Now Tjibaou had to confront his confreres with news of a similar delay.

1988, p. 204). For the FULK and PALIKA, who had refused to enter into the negotiations, it was a pyrrhic victory. If they decided to put Tjibaou on the spot, they would find themselves in a strong position.

Six weeks after the massacre, the Matignon Agreements were presented to 300 pro-independence delegates on Ouvéa. After 20 hours of deliberation the conclusion was reached that the agreement failed to provide the required guarantees, and independence was still distant and uncertain (*Canberra Times* 26 July 1988, p. 4). Deep dissatisfaction was also the mood at a meeting of the FLNKS congress at Hienghène and of the President of FULK, Yann Céléné Uregeï. The prospect of gaining the support of the people of Canala was doubtful as their relationship with Tjibaou had been strained since the death of Machoro. In Canala there was the unspoken belief that Machoro had been betrayed by the FLNKS chief. Tjibaou had not visited Canala since Machoro's assassination, and the customary *coutume de réparation* had never taken place. As well, the people of Canala still bore the shame of their forebears who had betrayed the pro-independence leader, chief Ataï, in 1878. Their descendants were conscious of having to make reparation for the errors of the past by continuing the fight for independence (*Le Monde* 12 July 1988). More than a century later, Ataï's head was still in France, and forgiveness had not been granted by his descendants.

One of the principal claims of certain sections of the *indépendantistes* during the Matignon negotiations had been for a general amnesty: 'Pardonner, ouvrir les yeux sur l'avenir en s'efforçant d'oublier les douleurs réciproques du passé, à sa traduction juridique: c'est l'amnistie.' (*Le Monde* 7 August 1988). Injustices of the past weighed heavily on the indigenous population. In what appeared to be a travesty of justice, the 'Hienghène Seven', who were responsible for the death of ten Melanesians, had been acquitted by the Court of Appeal, the 'loyalists' who had killed Pierre Declercq and Celestin Zongo remained at large, yet Jean-Luc Vayadimoin, who had survived the Hienghène massacre, was arrested and imprisoned for the murder of José Lapetite, one of the Hienghène assassins.

## Film as a pathway to reconciliation: residual obstacles

The military action on Ouvéa, and the controversy of the multidimensional conflict that followed, continued in a war of words and a series of books authored by those who had been actively involved and by others who had followed the events<sup>332</sup>. *La morale et l'action*, written by the Captain of the GIGN, Philippe Legorjus,<sup>333</sup> was seen by filmmaker Mathieu Kassowitz as an opportunity to film that which had been hidden by the Pons embargo on outside contact and to answer those unanswered questions that had been buried with a general amnesty.<sup>334</sup> The inability of the mediators to deal with and understand the importance of customary silence and non-verbal communication had also fuelled new forms of conflict. The death of the nineteen had forced a degree of reconciliation, and the common grave symbolised 'la parole commune' (Plenel & Rollat 1988, p. 43). Anger was barely hidden and one year later the assassination of the FLNKS leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné on Ouvéa reopened ancient wounds and the social fabric of the island was in tatters.

Kassowitz hoped with dialogue and film to find a pathway towards reconciliation, but no agreement could be reached. It was still too painful to recover the traumatic memories, and the suffering and horror were too difficult to articulate. Negotiation was delayed for ten years. In the interim, Kassowitz continued face-to-face discussion, sometimes for days. Custom provided a time for *la parole*, a time for listening and a time for decision-making. The process could not be rushed.

It was envisaged that the film would provide a wide audience with an understanding of the human and political tragedy of the Kanak as well as the moral torment of Legorjus who had battled to achieve reconciliation amidst the confusion of political ambition. Opinion on Ouvéa was divided; many Kanak considered Legorjus to be a traitor. In the view of Benoît Tangopi:<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> These include Army General Jacques Vidal, journalists Alain Rollat and Edwy Plenel, Alain Picard of the GIGN, lawyer Cedric Michalski, and Antoine Sanguinetti, a member of the commission of enquiry into the affair for the Human Rights League.

<sup>333</sup> Legorjus wrote the book *La morale et l'action* in 1990 about his life with the gendarmerie, to debrief and 'turn the page' as he left the gendarmerie to begin a new civilian life.

<sup>334</sup> The amnesty included the military as well as the hostage takers and in consequence prevented any real official enquiry into the events (Leblic 2012, p. 119).

<sup>335</sup> Benoît Tangopi had taken part in the attack on the gendarmerie and was taken prisoner in France.

Legorjus nous a trahis. [...] Nous avons dit que nous allions libérer les otages après le 8 mai 1988, deuxième tour des élections présidentielles, et Legorjus le savait, de même l'Élysée et Matignon puisque Legorjus était leur intermédiaire.

(Cited in Leblic 2012, p. 112).

Negotiations for Kanak acceptance were difficult, there was frequent disagreement, and many accused Kassovitz of reigniting the intertribal rivalry that formed part of the collective memory.<sup>336</sup>

Ouvéa reste marquée par ses clivages et, dans les discours, les catholiques sont souvent opposés aux protestants, les locuteurs du Iaai à ceux du faga-uvea, les indépendantistes aux loyalistes, les gens du district Nord à ceux du Sud et ceux du Centre à ceux du Nord et du Sud, etc.

(Faurie & Nayral 2012, p. 130).

Enduring intertribal conflict and discontent dogged Kassovitz's negotiations. For him to be able to film on the island, approvals were required from the families of the 19 victims, the members of all of the tribes involved, the gendarmerie, the mayor and the local council. Some 300 agreements were obtained (Faurie & Nayral 2012, p. 124). Despite the protracted process of repeated negotiation and revision, full agreement could not be reached, differences became irreconcilable, and in the end it was decided to make the film in French Polynesia.

The film focuses on the events from the perspective of Legorjus. It examines his relationship with Dianou and the mutual attempt to achieve a peaceful solution without bloodshed in a game in which they were both pawns. One lost his life, and the other his faith in humanity, the stakes were political and order was not moral (Legorjus & Follorou 2011, p. 211). The film brought to public notice the complex social, cultural, political and military history of a country in conflict and the immorality and cowardice

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<sup>336</sup> See Chapter 1. Weneki in the previous century had been called the Cromwell of Ouvéa, as he plotted to depose his chief Imwone of the Gossanah tribe, and this had led to exile of the tribe to Wadrilla. It was not until after the massacre in 1988 that Imwone's Gossanah tribe was finally recognised by the authorities.

of the politicians<sup>337</sup> and released traumatic memories of violence. One of the conditions of the Matignon Agreements had been a general amnesty, but an amnesty provides no answers. The assassins were never judged and the events were not spoken about. Silence and denial had not brought about oblivion; the page had not been turned.

The film opened the floodgates to a deluge of criticism and conflict when it was released in 2011. Douglas Hickson, the proprietor of the largest cinema in Noumea, refused to screen it. Theatre, he believed, was for entertainment and was not an appropriate venue for the Kassovitz film.<sup>338</sup> For others, the response to the film was encouraging. Macki Wéa, who played the part of his brother in the film, believed that the film would highlight the struggle of the Kanak people and appeal to ‘l’humanité tout entière, pour dénoncer l’injustice et l’oppression et défendre la lutte d’un peuple pour sa liberté’ (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 15 April 2011). Macki Wéa’s children, who were also actors in the film, felt as though the blanket of silence had been lifted: ‘Depuis vingt-trois ans, c’est une histoire qu’on a cultivée en silence, dans nos tripes. Aujourd’hui, on est fiers de poser ce caillou sur le grand chemin.’ (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 15 April 2011). Iabe Lapacas, a law student in Clermont-Ferrand, who played the role of his uncle Alphonse Dianou, believed that the film was liberating: ‘le film a libéré la parole’. For the first time since the massacre, parents were able to speak to their children about the events. The film provided a history which had not been taught in local schools—the subject had been taboo (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 31 December 2011). This film provided, for the young in particular, an insight into the traumatic ruptures and violence suffered by their families and their communities. Ideological commitment and the demand for socio-economic change had led to conflict which, when publicly aired, released concealed memories and, over twenty years later, provided a step towards closure and reconciliation in New Caledonia, as the country is in the final phase of the Noumea Accord.

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<sup>337</sup> The title *L’ordre et la morale* is a play on words based on Legorjus’s autobiography *La morale et l’action*, and the comment of Bernard Pons: ‘Sometimes some deaths are necessary to uphold order and morality’.  
<<http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz/articles/ouv-massacre-film-gripping-tale-betrayal-and-political-opportunism>>.  
[20 October 2014].

<sup>338</sup> In 1988 the screening of the Charles Belmont film *Les Médiateurs du Pacifique* was also banned.

## Ambiguity, reconciliation and *Le Pardon* 1998-2004

Years of marginalisation and foiled independence claims had led to desperate measures being taken.<sup>339</sup> The events of April-May 1988 drew attention to the militant activity of the FLNKS and to Djubelli Wéa who was a regional councillor of the party on Ouvéa. During these events Wéa felt that he had been betrayed and abandoned by the FLNKS executive. When he was released from gaol in Paris, by the partial amnesty which freed those Kanak who had not been involved directly in the killings,<sup>340</sup> he made no secret of his wish to participate in the Matignon negotiations, but this was denied. Wéa was disillusioned; his father had died during the assault, he had been imprisoned without trial, and furthermore he did not agree with the terms of the Matignon Agreements. The people of Ouvéa had paid a high price to bring the issue of independence in New Caledonia to the notice of the world. Yet, when Rocard made a move towards reconciliation, the views of the people of Ouvéa were not sought (*Mwà Vée* 1999, p. 21). These injustices weighed heavily on Wéa.

The fighting in 1988 on Ouvéa had been executed in Western military style. During these political manipulations, difference was vilified, there was no place for customary warfare which, by ritual and control, facilitated the post-war re-establishment of harmony. Although widely applauded in France, the Matignon Agreement in its urgency did little to aid reconciliation.<sup>341</sup> In traditional culture, years rather than weeks are required for those embroiled in the complex cultural, social, political and emotional network to forgive the suffering and ruptured lives caused by unexpected extreme violence. At Matignon, this was not allowed.

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<sup>339</sup> It is interesting to note that Rock Apikaoua considered the State responsible for the assassinations at Wadrilla in 1989: 'Les assassinats de Wadrilla [...] ne se rattachent pas à des dissensions internes du monde kanak, mais bien à l'incapacité de l'État français à assurer le lien entre les différentes communautés pour éviter qu'elles ne se déchirent.' (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 58).

<sup>340</sup> 'Le bénéfice de l'amnistie ne s'étend pas à ceux qui, par leur action directe et personnelle, ont été les auteurs principaux du crime d'assassinat.' (Michalski 2004, p. 246).

<sup>341</sup> Of this Agreement Alain Christnacht wrote: 'La démarche de Matignon fournit d'utiles enseignements pour résoudre les conflits les plus sévères : réunir les adversaires, les aider à se parler, dire, écrire ce qui divise comme ce qui rassemble—il y a de la psychanalyse sociale dans cette démarche ; rechercher ensuite le plus grand commun dénominateur, et, si l'un des problèmes posés paraît alors insoluble, le repousser à un rendez-vous ultérieur'. (Cited in Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 95). The Agreement was not universal; it failed to resolve the conflict which continued to be harboured by some and degenerated into further crisis.



For the Gossanah tribe, the events of May 1988 opened a Pandora's box and reignited old hatreds and divisions. As already noted, in the previous century the tribe had been driven from its ancestral land by rival Catholic tribes, stripped of its sovereignty by the colonial administration, and subjected to the authority of Bazit, a Catholic administrative chief whose authority they never recognised (Guiart 1997, p. 93). For over a century intertribal tension had mounted, and when the hostages were taken to a cave on Gossanah tribal land, the tribe was again caught in the cycle of conflict which, according to Guiart, was rooted in 'ancient local tragedies' that were thought to be extinct but that could not be erased.

On Ouvéa in 1988, Western politics had dictated that the conflict should be resolved by force. The Kanak were unprepared for the butchery and brutality of the attack by modern European troops,<sup>342</sup> and the result was devastating. Fifteen of the twenty-seven villages on Ouvéa had members who were either killed or taken prisoner (Guiart 1997, pp. 95-96). Customary negotiation by way of dialogue was not possible and in the pursuit of political interests there was no time for an attempted reconciliation. To end the conflict and restore peace, Western law, which tends to be adversarial rather than consensual, removed the offenders from the community in what appeared to be a replay of the colonial justice of the previous century when 'Kanak rebels' were sent to Tahiti or Indochina. The law, custom and Christianity were again in opposition as intertribal, Kanak-French, and interdenominational rivalry were re-ignited.

The people of Ouvéa felt abandoned; their plea for help from the FLNKS executive had been ignored (*Le Monde* 7 May 1989), and in grief they turned to custom for answers. Kanak custom dictates that chiefs who fail to support their people will be punished or even killed. Leblic noted the possibility of revenge for the sanguinary events of 1988 for which 'no [customary] act had been undertaken'. She also suggested that 'an ambush during a customary ceremony must be considered as traditional; the oral literature has cases of such attack stories.' (Leblic 2007, p. 278).

Tjibaou had left his tribe at six years of age to be educated by the Marists. It was ten years before he returned to his tribe and during this time he lost his mother-tongue and

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<sup>342</sup> This different mode of warfare was noted by Rev. Macfarlane (see Chapter 1).

knowledge of customary practice.<sup>343</sup> According to Guiart (1997, p. 97), Tjibaou had ‘lost his Kanak vision’ and had no experience of life on the islands such as Ouvéa, devoid of any history of European settlement. By going to Ouvéa without seeking forgiveness, ignoring the warnings of Guiart and Djubelli himself, Tjibaou neglected to observe customary practice, a pillar of Kanak culture.

Tjibaou’s problems were exacerbated when he bypassed the seeking of consensus before signing the agreement at Matignon.<sup>344</sup> The agreement proved to be adversarial. Decisions were made unilaterally and it was a French document which returned power to France. Louis le Pensec, Minister for DOM-TOM,<sup>345</sup> realised the inappropriateness, according to Kanak custom, of focusing on individuals in isolation rather than as members of a community and tried to justify it in terms of French understanding: ‘les accords de Matignon ne liaient pas deux hommes seuls. L’un et l’autre étaient porteurs des espérances de leurs communautés.’ (*Le Monde* 12 May 1989). Tjibaou had been caught between two worlds: a politician in a Western arena, adversarial and isolated, and a Kanak chief in a community that relied on consensus. The divergent logic of these roles led to personal recrimination and communal dissatisfaction.

On 5 May 1989, the concerns of the FLNKS leaders who had signed the Matignon Agreements became a reality when the customary end of mourning ceremony for the 19 killed on Ouvéa ended in a bloodbath. Tjibaou and his deputy Yeiwéné were assassinated by Djubelli Wéa, who was subsequently gunned down by Tjibaou’s bodyguard, Daniel Fisdiepas. The year of suffering had taken its toll on Wéa whose torment was evident in his final words: ‘Vive Kanaky, Vive l’Indépendance’ (*Le Monde* 6 May 1989, cf. Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 57).

Many believed that the assassinations were in response to the failure to observe tribal custom and before the ceremony many had suggested that Tjibaou should not go to Ouvéa. Wéa’s brother claimed that Tjibaou and Yeiwéné had been telephoned by Djubelli and warned not to attend the ceremony (Guiart 1997, p. 100). Six months earlier Jean Guiart had published a paper which recommended that Tjibaou should

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<sup>343</sup> The importance of customary knowledge was advocated by Maurice Nenou in the National Assembly. He had remained with his Napoemien tribe until he was 18, when he left for school at Do Neva.

<sup>344</sup> Tjibaou had also neglected customary reparation following the death of Eloi Machoro and this similarly resulted in intertribal tension.

<sup>345</sup> Louis Le Pensec, Minister for DOM-TOM 28 June 1988 to 29 March 1993.

negotiate with the bereaved families, and that it would be unwise to attend the ceremony without having taken this precaution (Guiart 1997, p. 99).

## **Towards reconciliation**

The tragedies of 1988 and 1989 had plunged the people of Ouvéa into the depths of anger and sadness. They were divided and isolated, and native custom seemed irrelevant. In 1988, the people of Ouvéa had been treated with sympathy as martyrs for the independence cause; one year later the tables had turned and they were now shunned and, as assassins, were despised. The sacrifices made by the Kanak throughout their troubled postcolonial history were recognised by Paul Néaoutyine<sup>346</sup> at the end of the mourning ceremony<sup>347</sup> for Tjibaou in Tiendanite when he stated:

Il faut réaffirmer notre détermination à mener le combat pour la dignité de notre peuple jusqu'à son terme, en souvenir de tous les sacrifices déjà donnés par les enfants du peuple kanak.

*(Le Monde 6 May 1990b)*

The suffering on Ouvéa after the assassination of the FLNKS leaders mirrored that of the Canala tribe whose warriors over 100 years earlier had betrayed the great freedom fighter, Ataï. This death weighed heavily on the people of Canala. Ataï had been decapitated, his head had been sold to a naval medical practitioner and later donated to the Anthropological Society of Paris, where it was conserved in the Dupuytren Museum of Monstrosities. In 1950 it was transferred to the *Musée de l'Homme* and finally, in 2014, returned to its final resting place in Saraméa. It was only then that the customary end of mourning could be observed (*Le Monde* 29 August 2014). According to native custom, it was only after the end of mourning had been observed that reconciliation was possible (Kajman 1985).<sup>348</sup> The significance of customary views cannot be underestimated if we are to understand the relation of violence and reconciliation in

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<sup>346</sup> Paul Néaoutyine succeeded Tjibaou as president of the FLNKS.

<sup>347</sup> For security, the militants of the UC and those opposed to the strategies of Tjibaou, the FULK and *Union syndicale des travailleurs kanaks et des exploités* (USTKE), were banned from this ceremony.

<sup>348</sup> Alban Bensa wrote in 1985: 'Il y a deux ans les gens des côtes est et ouest se sont réconciliés à l'occasion d'un échange coutumier extrêmement important sur ce point. Les gens de Thio-Canala, de la côte est, ont demandé pardon à leurs frères des autres côtes pour leur responsabilité dans la mort du chef Ataï à la fin de l'insurrection de 1878.' (Kajman 1985).

New Caledonia. The multi-layered example of Ataï and the return of his head is a case in point and of relevance to the tragedy on Ouvéa.

On 16 July 1982 at the first meeting of the Chiefs of the Xaracuu region in 104 years, the Kanak of Canala and Thio had asked pardon of the other tribes for their responsibility in the death of Ataï (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 62). For another 32 years the entire tribe of Bergé Kawa, a descendant of Ataï, continued to mourn. When the head was returned, it was finally possible for reconciliation to take place between the tribes of the descendants of Ataï and Ségou, his assassin, and with the French State (*Le Monde* 29 August 2014). In Kanak custom, the shame of a single member of the clan is shared by all and it is only when there is total consensus that *le pardon* and forgiveness can be achieved.

For almost ten years the people of Ouvéa were unable to talk about the events which had devastated the island in 1988 and again in 1989. Sporting and political institutions were boycotted, the Gossanah tribe had cut their ties with the Protestant church and the doors of the church had shut. This emphasised the shunning of Western values by a tribe with long historic ties to the church—Djubelli had been a Protestant pastor. As has been noted, the massacre at the grotto re-ignited the interdenominational conflict which had torn the island apart in the previous century and, according to Girardian theory, the death of a ‘scapegoat’ was needed for peace to return to the island.

After years of misery and voluntary exclusion, the people of Ouvéa needed to free the positive potential of the future from the negative acts of the past. For the community to move ahead together, barriers had to be destroyed, the curse exorcised, and the feelings of culpability overcome. Gogny Dieno, a teacher, Vice-President of ÉÉNCIL and President of the Commission of Languages, believed that although the events of the past had been inspired by politics, the only way to achieve reconciliation was by dialogue, supported by the pillars of Kanak society—custom and religion (*Mwà Vée* 1999, p. 14).

The island’s youth, traumatised by the death of so many, had become undisciplined and had turned to cannabis and alcohol. Their hostility was directed towards the European teachers who were harassed until they finally left the island. All schools—Protestant, Catholic and State—closed. Life was difficult. The fabric of local society had been torn apart, families were divided and people were angry and suffering. When a local youth died in a drunken orgy, a Committee of Dialogue was set up by, among others, Billy

Wapotro, the Director of the *Alliance Scolaire de l'Église Évangélique*. The Committee included those with a knowledge of Kanak culture, psychology, health, law and education.<sup>349</sup> The boycott on education was viewed as a retrograde step in the march toward Kanak emancipation, and was discouraged. An agenda, drawn up by the Committee, brought to the fore all of the problems of concern for the people of Ouvéa. The group met at Eben Eza to reflect upon *la parole*, which had become contradictory, aggressive and conflictual. In Kanak society the elders are the custodians of *la parole* but the trust the young had for their elders had been destroyed, and the young refused to listen to them. On the island the fallout was general.

The Wéa tribe chose to continue their own way of life in isolation and avoided outside contact. Billy Wapotro contacted Hnine Wéa, but he received a negative response. The RPCR loyalists of the Kauma and Luekhot tribes, who had not taken part in the events and had not suffered loss, were excluded from the Committee although they were permitted to attend as members of the wider community. This illustrates the collective nature of Kanak dispute resolution processes and the responsibility of the community as a whole in maintaining customary values. Although war between interrelated tribes was not unknown (see Chapter 1), the situation after the 'events' of 1988 and 1989 was unsustainable. The walls of silence needed to be destroyed so that voices could be heard. Reconciliation was essential.

After nearly ten years the Wéa family was still struggling to come to terms with the torture and imprisonment of Djubelli, the assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, and then the death of Djubelli. Tom Tchako, the Pastor at Gossanah, was a member of the Ognat tribe, spoke the local language Iai and had close family ties with the people of Gossanah. He was aware of the suffering on the island and was anxious to extricate it from 'le mystérieux mal qui commençait à gangréner l'île' (*Le Monde* 6 May 1990a). Communication on the island had broken down completely. Father de Viviès, the Catholic priest at Fayaoué, was also concerned that the people in this extremely religious community had lost faith. The churches were no longer capable

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<sup>349</sup> The Committee of Dialogue included Billy Wapotro, Director of the *Alliance scolaire enseignement protestant en Nouvelle-Calédonie*; Joseph Streeter, President of the *Association Calédonienne pour l'animation et la formation* (ACAF) and President of the *Association protection enfance et jeunesse en difficulté en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (APEJ); Richard Kaloi, President of the *Province des Iles Loyauté*; and Maki Wéa.

of providing the cement required to maintain community bonds. Catholics and Protestants were divided.

## **The renewed role of the Church**

Pastor Tchako realised that differences had to be aired, acknowledged and dealt with, and believed that it was the role of the Churches to initiate mediation. Rock Apikaoua, a Melanesian Catholic priest, came from the mainland to assist Tchako in the reestablishment of dialogue between the rival tribes. To restore confidence within the community it was necessary to talk about the painful events of the past and to listen to what others had to say. Communication was essential in a society which relied heavily on the spoken word, the customary *parole*, as Apikaoua notes:

Le système qui consiste à signer une pétition, les situait, eux, Kanak, entre deux mondes. Une pétition, c'est la manière de faire des autres, alors que la manière de faire dans le monde Kanak, c'est le palabre [...]  
Dans le traitement d'un conflit, lorsque chaque individu ou chaque groupe a le sentiment qu'il est considéré et écouté, cela atténue le conflit.  
(Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 99).

In the spirit of oecumenism, Protestant and Catholic religious leaders united with customary chiefs, political leaders and municipal councillors for the symbolic destruction of barriers.

When the barriers were removed, and questions which had smouldered for years had been answered, it was possible to distinguish a certain mutual understanding. In some instances, century-old manacles were shed. As has already been noted the Protestant Gossanah tribe had, since the early years of colonial administration, lived as vassals to the rival Catholic tribe of Weneki. In the process of post-trauma mediation under the direction of Tom Tchako, the Protestant tribe was at last recognised by the authorities and the administration. This provided the Gossanah tribe with a glimmer of optimism although Niné Wéa stressed that 'nous restons sur nos positions politiques' (*Le Monde* 29 August 2014).

## **A drama of ambiguity: Anthropologists join the conflict and the drama of Ouvéa rises like a phoenix from the ashes**

While a delicate pathway to reconciliation was being trodden on Ouvéa, in 1997 Guiart reopened debate on the subject of the massacre in a controversial article published, after an emotional debate, in the conservative *Journal of Pacific History*<sup>350</sup> In the article Guiart proposes answers to questions that had for a long time been buried by the amnesty. He observes that murders followed by amnesties eliminate the hearing of evidence in court and absolve the perpetrators of crime. In his 1997 article, ancient tribal pathways are tracked to explain how the events on Ouvéa in 1988 and 1989 were embedded in intertribal wars of the past. In academic circles the article created a great deal of angst and for the next three years the journal became a battlefield of claim and counterclaim.

These articles provide a certain view of the conflict which shrouded the island for ten years and of the continuing entanglement of religious, tribal and political conflict. In Guiart's opinion, conflict within Kanak communities has been managed but never totally suppressed and the war on Ouvéa in the mid-twentieth century was the re-emergence of the mid-nineteenth century wars of religion. In his analysis, Guiart appears to have conflated a number of different political social and religious issues. In the 19th century, Marist priests, aided by the French administration, supplied Catholic tribes with guns to provide them with an advantage over their Protestant rivals. Similarities occurred a century later when, according to Guiart, religious rivalry was again ignited. The RPCR group of Catholic tribes on Ouvéa obtained guns, even though there was nothing to hunt on the island, and to redress the balance of power, in Girardian mimetic desire, the Protestants decided to raid the local gendarmerie, the only source of guns on the island. Although religious rivalry was indeed seen during the events on Ouvéa, Guiart's theory ignores the fact that at least two of the attackers of the

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<sup>350</sup> Guiart was a student of Maurice Leenhardt, married to the daughter of a Lifou High Chief and the brother-in-law of Maurice Lenormand. During the 'events' in 1985, demonstrators rioted in the streets of Noumea, burning the house of Guiart's wife, the pharmacy of Maurice Lenormand, cars of several *indépendantistes*, the offices of the USTKE, and the garage of André Dang, a supporter of the independence movement who was described in an article in *Le Point* written by Jean-Yves Boulic as 'ce jaune, ce traître, cet ami des Kanaks'. Dang was living in exile in Australia at the time (Pitoiset & Wéry 2008, p. 57).

gendarmerie were Catholic,<sup>351</sup> and that the Fayaoué gendarmerie was not targeted in isolation. Similar raids were planned for Maré, Lifou and various points around *Grande Terre*. Guiart also contradicts his original argument when he points out that the attack had been planned the week before at a FLNKS meeting attended by Tjibaou, Lenormand and Dianou, all of whom were Catholics.

It is interesting to note that this war which began as a means of highlighting the call for Kanak independence could, according to Guiart, have provided the grounds for an independence claim. The question is asked whether this war, which was orchestrated by the French government and which pitted French citizen against French citizen,<sup>352</sup> was unconstitutional, and whether it could be interpreted as an indirect official recognition of Kanak independence (Guiart 1997, p. 91) In the midst of mourning, official enquiries and incarceration, the opportunity to make such a claim was lost and arrangements were set in place in France to ensure French domination in what was touted as a broadly based reconciliation process. The agreement which was signed to avoid further violent conflict replaced the struggle for emancipation with a promise for economic development. Money provided by the French State to the predominantly Kanak Northern Province and the Loyalty Islands was not a panacea. As Guiart indicated, 90% of the funds were absorbed by local and metropolitan businesses in project management and dozens of these projects failed (Guiart 1997, p. 99). Indeed, as an instrument of reconciliation the Matignon Agreement failed to achieve universal acceptance and was the cause of a bitter schism between Kanak communities.

Also established is a link between the assassination of Eloi Machoro and those in the grotto (Guiart 1997, p. 102).<sup>353</sup> Both had been abandoned by Tjibaou, and for both the order for the attack had come from the same source—the top—and had to be obeyed. Within this tangled web of conflict and conspiracy, it is noted that as Minister for Justice during the Algerian War of independence, Mitterrand had ordered the ‘killing of the nationalist leaders in order to decapitate the anti-colonial revolt’ (Evans 2014) and

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<sup>351</sup> Chanel Kapoeri, a delegate of the independence party *l'Union Calédonienne*, was Catholic and Alphonse Dianou had trained in Fiji to become a Catholic priest.

<sup>352</sup> In the opinion of Apikaoua (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 58), the assassinations were not due to dissension within the Kanak camp but to the incapacity of the French State to preserve social cohesion and harmony in an impartial and equitable way.

<sup>353</sup> See above, Chapter 3.



for Guiart it appeared that this strategy of ‘find the chiefs and kill them’ (Guiart 1997, p. 90) had also been applied in New Caledonia.

The people of Ouvéa had been abandoned and betrayed by their political leaders, negotiations had failed and it was necessary to draw on customary conflict resolution to provide a pathway toward reconciliation. Custom and Girardian ‘scapegoat’ theory were here in tandem; death was required to establish peace. The assassinations in 1989 completed the removal of the chiefs of the independence movement, Declercq, Machoro, Tjibaou and Yeiwéné.

The clash of ethnographic opinion continued when a year later in the same journal,<sup>354</sup> French anthropologists Alban Bensa and Eric Wittersheim (1998) accused Guiart of ‘ethnological delirium’ and ‘hackneyed ethnographic rhetoric’. Disputing Guiart’s analysis they drew attention to the pre-existing conditions which had resulted in conflict: the appalling colonial policy of the French Government, tribal confinement by nomadisation, and the ‘vengeful attitude’ of the Prime Minister and his ‘sinister’ Minister for Overseas Territories. These factors, they believed, were more likely to have caused conflict than the unlikely, uncheckable, apolitical Kanak custom-dictated motives suggested by Guiart.

Finally, three years later, Guiart wrote again to justify his findings, citing the unambiguous role of Mitterrand in authorising the attack on the grotto and the ambiguous plan of the FLNKS which had no backup strategy and rivalry: ‘Over the last 50 years I have seen the old competitions [rivalries] spill over into local politics and elections at all levels: competition [rivalry] being the real working structure of islands societies’ (Guiart 2001, p. 248).

In these small island communities the recurring cycles of mimetic desire have historically caused rivalry which has erupted into violent conflict. Despite differing emphases, these articles find corroboration in the histories presented in earlier chapters of this thesis, where intertribal rivalry, religious rivalry and French hegemony all contributed to violent conflict. In the context of restorative justice and reconciliation, all

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<sup>354</sup> There have been other ‘scoops’ that have been even tardier in arrival: Michalski (2004), Picard (2010), Vidal (2010), Legorjus [& Follorou] (2011).

of these factors must be examined so that damage done and wrongs committed can be addressed in what must be a painful and complicated healing process.

## On the road to reconciliation

Deep-seated conflict, as has been outlined, is not amenable to the short-term solutions presented by fly-in, fly-out mediators from France. Despite being well intentioned, Western approaches to conflict resolution in New Caledonia have failed to give due consideration to cultural differences in this country where pre-colonial custom infiltrates the post-colonial, and Christian belief is inextricably entwined. The successful blending of religion and custom was evident in 2006 at the inauguration of the tiny Protestant Church at Windo, Poindimié, which was attended by some 4000 people who travelled from as far away as Maré for the ceremony.<sup>355</sup> In the two-day œcumenical celebration, religious ritual united with the chants of indigenous choirs, the *pilou-pilou*, *bougna* and customary gift exchange and rhetorical jousting.

Nearly all Kanak identify as being Christian<sup>356</sup> and on Ouvéa all twenty tribes ascribe to religious affiliation: eight are Catholic, five adhere to the Evangelical Church of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands,<sup>357</sup> the Wakat tribe belongs to the Free Evangelical Church; and the Fayaoué tribe has both Catholic and Protestant members (Filippi & Angleviel 2000a p. 287).<sup>358</sup> In such a Christian milieu it is not surprising that it was under the auspices of the Church that the process of mediation and reconciliation was initiated.

Gradually, under the watchful eye of Tom Tchako and the Committee of Dialogue, the yoke of the past was shed, but the realisation remained that divisions had to be

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<sup>355</sup> This Protestant church was inaugurated on 9 December 2006. It was built by the young people from nearby tribes under the auspices of the *chantier école*, a project of the Territorial Establishment for the Professional Training of Adults, and the youth employment scheme of the Northern Province, funded with a grant of 5,000,000 CFP from the French Government. It was an œcumenical project that transcended Protestant, Catholic and French State secular barriers.

<sup>356</sup> Rock Apikaoua comments: ‘j’avais été très surpris de la religiosité des gens, catholiques et protestants [...] la foi très profonde’ (*Mwà Vée* 1999, p. 6).

<sup>357</sup> In 2013 ÉÉNCIL became the *Église protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie* (EPKNC).

<sup>358</sup> The strength of religion is indicated in the listing by Filippi & Angleviel (2000a, p. 287) of religious affiliation in the chart ‘Characteristics of tribes by commune’. On Ouvéa there is also a sharp divide between those who have originated from Wallis Island, the Faga-Uvea speakers who are all Catholics and the Melanesian Iaaï-speaking tribes which are Protestant.

transcended so that the people of Ouvéa could move together to a new future. An œcumenical community office was established to break the ancient taboos between Catholics and Protestants. Once a week this office held a youth club to provide young people with the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their problems. The slogan 'Iaai hier, Iaai aujourd'hui, Iaai demain' was to provide hope for the future while managing the present and honouring the past. From anger, sadness, division and isolation, the inhabitants of Ouvéa, with the help of Rock Apikaoua and Tom Tchako, gradually rediscovered hope and confidence in their shared cultural homogeneity:

Il y a des facteurs sociologiques qu'il faut souligner d'emblée, c'est que l'on a affaire à une communauté qui est culturellement homogène, avec une manière de penser, et de faire qui lui a permis de dépasser assez vite la différence qui existe en elle entre catholiques et protestants.

(*Mwà Vée* 1999, p. 5).

In the wake of violent Kanak–French conflict, the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, had been able to overcome the divisiveness of their creeds to find a common ground for reconciliation and unity in Melanesian custom.

A 'Committee of 4-5 May' organised sporting and cultural activities for the young. Activities such as song-writing about events of the past allowed adults to gauge how the children were managing the mourning for those lost and the stigma of the assassination of Tjibaou and Yeiwéné. Each year on 5 May those who had died in the political struggle for independence were remembered with a pilgrimage to the grotto until it was decided that this caused children, who were too young to understand, undue suffering, and the grotto was closed. The clan played an important role in the life of the child, and on this island with a population of around 3000, many suffered from the loss of a clan member: 'un enfant dans la société traditionnelle n'est pas l'enfant du couple mais c'est l'enfant du clan. Il est socialisé très jeune du fait qu'il est toujours avec les autres enfants.' (Streeter cited in *Mwà Vée* 2005).

Gradually, longstanding battles were resolved. Due to the ancient history of the island, the situation was complex: barriers which had been erected in the past had to be destroyed, and a new framework of action based on current values and traditional culture had to be constructed. The Committee of Dialogue was aware of the high price the people of Ouvéa had paid and sought a means of bringing together custom, women, men, children, clans and the churches. Tchako, de Viviès and Apikaoua did much to

overcome religious prejudice. A connection with the outside world was achieved when Rock Wamytan, President of the FLNKS, and Nidoïsh Naisseline, the President of the Loyalty Islands Province, attended a sports day organised by the ‘Committee of the 10th Anniversary’ in 1997. With the help of the Church and the Committee of Dialogue, the people of Ouvéa now had the strength to approach the families of the gendarmes, the victims of 22 April 1988, and attempt to bring the two camps together in a process of reconciliation.

## **Forgiveness and reconciliation**

The process of reconciliation took a long time, however, and it was not the political agenda of the Matignon Agreements that determined reconciliation but the maturing of a society which, the year later, was moving toward the Noumea Accord.<sup>359</sup>

On 22 April 1998, the initiative of the people of Ouvéa, the Churches, the Committee of Dialogue, and the Committee of 22 April 1988 brought together all of those who had suffered: the wives, mothers and children of the nineteen Kanak who had been killed and the families of the four gendarmes who had lost their lives at Fayaoué on 22 April 1988. An œcumenical service was held by Pastor Tchako and Father Apikaoua at the chapel of Saint-Michel in Fayaoué to mark the reconciliation between the Ouvéa community and the gendarmerie.

The wife of one of the gendarmes, Madame Linda Zawadzki, confirmed her desire for reconciliation in a message of peace:

Du bilan de ces dix années, où il a fallu poursuivre une route semée d’embûches, je ne retiendrai qu’une chose, la très belle promesse de Paix qui va baigner l’Église d’Ouvéa, le 22 avril prochain, qu’elle puisse être le début de nombreuses décennies de sérénité pour toute la population du territoire.

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<sup>359</sup> The scope of this thesis does not allow for elaboration on the Noumea Accord. The reader will appreciate, however, that all of the issues of conflict and reconciliation were already present in the events analysed in this thesis.

C'est le vœu que je forme bien volontiers et que je vous demande de transmettre, au nom des miens, à tous ceux que l'intelligence et la bonne volonté va rassembler le 22 avril prochain, dans la foi.

(Lamboley n.d.).

This ceremony was followed on 5 May 1998 by a pilgrimage to the grotto by representatives of political parties and the customary council. On this day, ten years after the Ouvéa massacre, it was decided to close the entrance to the grotto for five years out of respect for those whose lives had been lost. On the same day, the ninth anniversary of the assassination of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, the Wéa family sought the support of the Church to begin the process of reconciliation with the Tjibaou and Yeiwéné families (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 59), and the Noumea Accord was signed, setting the country on the road to a *destin commun*.

In August of that same year France's Minister for Overseas Territories, Jean-Jack Queyranne, travelled to Gossanah and, as a gesture of reconciliation between the French Government and the Kanak people of Ouvéa, planted a tree in the village. In June 1999 reconciliation was achieved between the Protestant pro-independence Imwone clan of Gossanah and the loyalist Catholic clan of Bazit, who had been bitter rivals for generations.

Where the Western political agenda had failed, custom, working in tandem with the Church, had triumphed. The process of reconciliation took a long time, and this allowed for extensive participation, bargaining and compromise. In a world where custom is oral and time flows with the seasons of the 'yam calendar', reconciliation was achieved.

For the people of Ouvéa a much more problematic reconciliation lay ahead, the pardon between the Gossanah tribe of Djubelli Wéa, the Tiendanite tribe of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and the Nidenod tribe of Yeiwéné Yeiwéné. In customary practice the *pardon* offers not only reconciliation but also forgiveness and this, due to family relationships, was a more delicate matter than the reconciliation with the gendarmes and would take another six years to achieve.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> According to Billy Wapatro, the old Kanak say: 'vous avez un problème entre vous parce que vous ne vous êtes pas rencontrés pour en parler' (*Mwà V'éé* 1999).

For over a decade the process of reconciliation between the Tjibaou, Wéa and Yeiwéné families remained an inaccessible aspiration. The wounds inflicted by the assassinations were deep and the pain intense. Links between Ouvéa and Hienghène had been established from the earliest times by marriage. The father of Lorenza Naheit, the adopted daughter of Jean-Marie and Marie-Claude Tjibaou, was the chief of the Hnagèigèi clan which is of the same lineage as the Wéa clan of Gossanah. Lorenza's biological father, Similien Naheit, was a teacher at the Catholic mission school of Ouaré, Hienghène. When Similien died in 2003, his wish was that he should be buried in Hienghène in order to open a line of dialogue between Hienghène and Ouvéa. Between Gossanah and Maré, there were also familial and customary links. The great-grandmothers of Hnadrune Yeiwéné and Manaki Wéa were sisters, and two of Yeiwéné Yeiwéné's brothers were married to women from Gossanah. Family ties which had been severed had to be reconstructed gradually, but for years the period of silence and mourning continued. Yet in the Kanak world through silence there is communication. Kanak political etiquette demanded five to six years of silence but after ten years there was still no lasting contact between the *Grande Terre* and Ouvéa, although Manaki Wéa had visited Hienghène in 2003 for the funeral of Similien Naheit.

For fourteen years after the assassinations the community remained fractured, and attempts to unite the clans from Gossanah, Tiendanite and Nidenod were in vain. A court case to determine whether Wéa had acted alone or with accomplices was still pending. In 2003, the case was dismissed and officially closed. With the court case over, the Tjibaou and Yeiwéné families had no interest in pursuing the matter; they were now ready to meet with the Wéa family, to discuss their mutual concerns, and to re-establish broken ties. They hoped that reconciliation would be an important step towards the reunification of the country, of 'vouloir vivre ensemble du pays' (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 59).

Under the impulse of Rock Apikaoua and Jean Weté, a Pastor from Gossanah, a meeting was held at which it was decided to create a timetable for the gradual progression towards a pardon and reconciliation. The first meeting was held in December 2003 after an œcumenical service at the Evangelical Church of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands in Noumea. At this meeting, the decision was taken to map a way to reconciliation. Plans were made to hold a meeting once a month for the next six months. At one of these meetings the Tjibaou, Wéa and Yeiwéné families

decided that the Fiseipas family should be included to aid dialogue and establish a work plan. A Reconciliation Committee was set up which included members of the four families as well as the Catholic Church and the two branches of the Protestant Church. At the insistence of Jean-Marie Tjibaou's son, Joël, a final meeting was arranged at the Noumea cathedral. This meeting was to include Djubelli Wéa's brothers, so that unanswered questions about the assassination might be explained. It was important that this should occur before a pardon could be agreed upon. Total faith, trust and agreement was necessary, as if anyone involved had any doubt or uncertainty, the negotiations could not continue.

Sixty members of the Gossanah and Wadrilla tribes came from Ouvéa for the meeting in the cathedral. For eight hours the Tjibaou and Yeiwéné children asked the questions that they believed needed clarification. At 10 p.m. Joël announced 'On n'a plus besoin de se réconcilier, ils ont dit la vérité !' This emphasised the importance of the truth in the process of reconciliation. It was important to know the truth about the past and how this had been interpreted in order to be able to progress towards a shared future. The mere passage of time could not heal the wounds of past violent conflict. As Apikaoua realised, truth had to be internalised; it could not be imposed from above; victims and survivors had to be consulted (Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 60). At the end of the meeting, agreement was reached to continue towards ceremonies of pardon.

The private ceremonies of reconciliation in Ouvéa, Tiendanite and Maré were captured on film, photo, and in text by the ADCK on 17 July 2004. Thousands arrived at Tiendanite from Ouvéa and Maré laden with gifts that marked the culmination of the resolution process and *le pardon*. In the context of reconciliation the exchange of gifts plays an important role. The procession was led by Jean Weté, the pastor from Ouvéa, in a symbolic return from exile. He was followed by Joachim Naheit, the head of the Wéa clan. It was an emotional arrival, a silent stream of humanity pouring into the tiny village of Tiendanite, with bowed heads in an attitude of humble supplication. The arrivals were greeted by Daniel Fiseipas, the mayor of Hienghène.

Maki Wéa, the brother of Djubelli, kneeling before the Tjibaou tribe, made a customary gesture to all of the Tjibaou children. One after the other the Wéa brothers did likewise. Uthang Wéa asked for pardon in Iaaï, the local language of Ouvéa, and this was simultaneously translated by his brother Cyril. Wainia Wéa presented yams, mats, *manou* and money, and Hnuhnoo Wéa recalled the ancient ties which existed between

the people of Hienghène and those of Ouvéa. Joël Tjibaou was obviously moved as he touched each of the gifts as a customary sign of acceptance, and with the help of Daniel Fischeipas, made the customary gift exchange. Then Joël in a subdued voice before thousands of bowed heads gave the pardon: ‘Vous nous demandez d’accepter le pardon, nous l’acceptons.’ (*Mwà Vée* 2004-2005, p. 14).

In a day full of emotion, a plaque was unveiled by the children of the families at the tomb of Jean-Marie Tjibaou. The tomb was draped in the FLNKS colours and inscribed with the words of Tjibaou:

Kanak country green, red symbol of the struggle of the Kanak people, of our unity [...] the blue of sovereignty, the sun is shining today, though in the history of the Kanak people it hasn’t always done so for us.

(Fraser & Trotter 2005, pp. 143-144).

Other speeches made at the tomb included those of Dick Padfi, the pastor at Hwadrilla, Ouvéa; Jean-Pierre Yeiwéné, a brother of Yeiwéné Yeiwéné; Wanakame Gada, in the name of all of the chiefdoms on Ouvéa; and Emmanuel Tjibaou who spoke of the three victims of the assassination. Trees—a *Pin Colonnaire* and a *Kaori*—were planted and an œcumenical service was held by Rock Apikaoua, Jean Weté and Watre Hanye, representing the three historic Churches of New Caledonia.

In each of the reconciliation exercises the Church instigated, guided and concluded every step of the way and, in the final summing up of events by the self-effacing Rock Apikaoua:

[...] au niveau des Églises, nous n’avons été que les outils, mais les acteurs privilégiés de ce grand moment, ce sont les gens eux-mêmes. Notre joie, aux pasteurs et à moi-même, c’est d’avoir participé modestement à cela.

(*Mwà Vée* 2004-2005, p. 50).

This showed that reconciliation was possible in New Caledonia; indeed it was a possible pointer to the future of the island, where the Noumea Accord calls for a *destin commun* for its diverse and historically divided peoples.



## Conclusion: Chapter 5

The result of the attack on the gendarmerie at Fayaoué was a bitter moment in the history of New Caledonia. There were no winners; 25 lives were lost, including gendarmes, soldiers and Kanak. The reputations of the army and gendarmerie were tarnished; the political party of Chirac and Pons, who were major players in the events, was defeated in the Presidential election; and the action of Mitterrand, in signing the requisition for the army to engage in warfare against French citizens, could only be regarded with suspicion.

The enthusiasm which greeted the signing of the reconciliatory Matignon Agreements was not shared by all Kanak. The agreement was concluded without customary consultation and independence was not achieved. The general sentiment was that many lives had been lost in vain. Bitterness and disillusionment led to renewed violent conflict with the assassination of the leaders of the pro-independence FLNKS party.

For ten years the suffering caused by these events made reconciliation elusive. Eventually, with the cooperation of the Churches, meetings and œcumenical services were organised which brought together the victims and survivors of the assault and assassinations. In 1998 reconciliation took place between the families of the gendarmes killed and the people of Ouvéa. A pardon for the family of the assassin of the FLNKS leaders was more difficult to achieve due to family ties and also because it included forgiveness, whereas reconciliation, by definition, is the restoration of friendly relations which will allow the opposing parties to live together in harmony.

It was another six years before a *pardon* was granted to the Wéa family by the Tjibaou and Yeiwéné families in an emotionally charged ceremony which concluded with the words of a catechist from Tiendanite:

Quand vous avez tué notre chef, parce que Jean-Marie Tjibaou était chef de cette tribu, nous ici, à Tiendanite, on a roulé une grosse pierre pour fermer la porte de la case commune, pour qu'on n'ait jamais à vous recevoir. Aujourd'hui, du fait de la réconciliation, je vais pousser cette pierre, ouvrir la porte, et définitivement caler la porte avec la même pierre pour qu'elle ne se referme plus jamais. La réconciliation est définitive, vous êtes ici chez vous.

(Apikaoua & Briseul 2014, p. 61).

In this way, the representatives of the major Churches of New Caledonia, in dialogue with clan members, provided a way by which mediation, forgiveness and reconciliation could take place.

## CONCLUSION

In New Caledonia the cycle of conflict has continued, albeit in different guises, since pre-colonial times. According to René Girard, all violence springs from imitative desire, the innate drive which leads to competitiveness and ultimately to conflict. This theory finds corroboration in the cases that I have studied in this thesis and brings into question the possibility of ever achieving lasting peace and reconciliation. Girardian theory also suggests that, in times of conflict, the death of a scapegoat is needed for the re-establishment of peace. This was also witnessed in pre-colonial Kanak communities whereby custom limited the number killed in conflict so that peace was restored, ecological equilibrium was maintained and reconciliation could be achieved. The effect of traditional regulation on the recurring cycle of conflict and reconciliation enabled the tribes in this multilingual society to forge a network of customary alliances and to co-exist.

When missionaries, sandalwood merchants and colonisers introduced Western values and a regime of domination, the cycle of conflict became more intense and the possibility of reconciliation more remote. Indigenous custom lost its relevance when confronted by a technologically superior armoury and deaths on a scale previously unknown on the island. New Caledonia became a battleground between coloniser and colonised and peace was achieved by force and coercion. Reconciliation was not at the forefront of the colonial approach.

After French annexation in 1853, land became a contentious issue. Land was the source of indigenous life with which the ‘blood of the ancestors’ was intricately entwined in the Kanak psyche. The spoliation of ancestral tribal land stripped the Kanak not only of their source of survival, but also of their cultural identity. As land was alienated, the ties that bound Kanak relationships also disintegrated. Private land ownership replaced communal ownership and the Kanak and their crops were subjected to the whims of the colonial masters and to the appetite of their cattle. Tribal hierarchies were destroyed and administrative chiefs were appointed. The very extinction of the Kanak was predicted, yet despite adversity the Kanak survived, and sometimes rebelled—their fortitude had been underestimated.

Conflict knew no bounds. Even those outsiders who arrived with the best of intentions were soon embroiled in the cycle of conflict. Missionaries who came with a message of peace became themselves a source of intertribal rivalry, which escalated into wars of religion when the Catholic and Protestant denominations of Christianity became involved. Religious conflict was multi-faceted and drew Britain and France into the fray of a 'paper war'. The legacy of British–French religious antagonism was recycled when conflict in the Protestant Church, in the mid-20th century, resulted in the schism that divided the Church and the Protestant community. This division of the Church and its tribal adherents had political repercussions which have persisted until the present day. French colonisation, touted at the time as a *mission civilisatrice*, was no more successful as a reconciliatory force. When violent reprisals and coercion proved unable to achieve peace, the repressive laws of the *Indigénat* were introduced. Law and order was enforced by incarceration, causing further grief.

Western approaches to conflict resolution generally failed and reconciliation remained elusive. In the analysis that I have undertaken of almost 150 years of conflict and of the attempt to achieve peace and reconciliation, I have found that insufficient recognition was given to the injustices of the past, to Kanak custom, and to Kanak tradition. Laws and statutes which were relevant in metropolitan France could not successfully be transposed to New Caledonia; in the different socio-political milieu they led to further conflict, with little likelihood of reconciliation being achieved.

It remains difficult to obtain knowledge of past histories from a Kanak perspective. Indigenous oral histories in which silence is meaningful may be lost in translation; they are not universally understood and frequently devalued. I have therefore relied on the histories of Western academics whose work is naturally steeped in a Western system of values. It is clear that a more inclusive and consensual approach to conflict resolution is needed for lasting reconciliation to be possible in which Kanak voices would be heard.

There have, however, been exceptional events offering some prospect of hope. The multiple tragedies of Ouvéa (1988, 1989) are a case in point. The successful achievement of reconciliation by the Kanak may provide a model for future reconciliatory action. Reconciliation was realised between the people of Ouvéa and the families of the gendarmes who lost their lives in the Fayaoué attack in 1988. Following the success of that reconciliation, the more difficult intra-Kanak reconciliation between the families of the assassinated leaders, Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwéné Yeiwéné and

their assassin Djubelli Wéa was also achieved. Mediation involved the entire community under the guidance of leaders from the major Churches. According to Kanak custom, time was allowed for grieving, for the acceptance of the death, and for the ascension of the dead from earth to the living world of the ancestors. It is this belief in eternal life that binds custom and Christianity, the two major pillars of Kanak life, which, it is clear, need to be included in any deliberative process.

This throws into sharp relief the enormous cultural divide between the French and the Kanak. Although the general *modus operandi* of the French peacemakers was force, coercion, incarceration and legal statutes, French Socialist Governments have provided some notable exceptions: Georges Lemoine opened the way to discussion by bringing the rival parties together at Nainville-les-Roches; Michel Rocard realised the necessity for dialogue and religion leading to the Matignon Accords, but in opting for economic development rather than political emancipation he further divided the Kanak people; Lionel Jospin, the Prime Minister at the time of the signing of the Noumea Accord, recognised past injustices and advocated the need for social dialogue. While the Noumea and Oudinot Accords, a process still underway in New Caledonia, go beyond the scope of this thesis, their logic is coherent with the œcumenical spirit that I have discussed in detail in relation to the Ouvéa reconciliations.

In general, the French underestimated the recuperative effect of time, devalued Kanak customary values and failed to understand the Christian devoutness of the Kanak. The ability of fly-in fly-out mediators to obtain consensus was misjudged and ignorance of the pillars of indigenous society—custom and Christianity—proved to be fatal. Given this history of conflict and the successes and failures of reconciliation attempts, I hope that my thesis might not only provide an analysis of past events but also offer insight into possible forms of the future, both in terms of New Caledonian society and scholarship on the subject. Future study of New Caledonia might, for example, involve further examination of the Kanak approach to conflict resolution and how it might be included in the search for future harmony in a common destiny. As decisions are being made which will affect the future of the country, the power of the Church could be worthy of study—as a reconciliatory partner such as in the Ouvéa reconciliations, as a divisive devil’s advocate as witnessed in the mid-20th century scission of the Protestant Church, in the overt ÉÉNCIL support for independence, or in the controversial addition of Kanaky to ÉÉNCIL. More recently, further dissent within the Protestant Church,

reported in the local press, may emphasise a broadening of the Northern Province–Southern Province divide. This may act as a springboard into further studies of the political power of the Church within Melanesian society and the way in which religion has been adapted to become linked to customary thought.

By examining the history of conflict in New Caledonia, its causes and manifestations, this study has diagnosed shortcomings in the measures taken to establish peace and reconciliation. The traumas of the past continue to haunt the indigenous population, and as long as there may be failure to address the legacy of colonialism, exclusion of the Kanak from the decision-making process, and devaluation of religion and custom within the Kanak community, future peace and reconciliation will remain in limbo. As New Caledonia approaches a referendum to determine its future status—*independence or continued association with France*—, achieving reconciliation in this deeply divided community remains both an official goal and a problematic ideal.







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## APPENDIX

### Maps of the Tribes of New Caledonia<sup>361</sup>



**Grande Terre north**

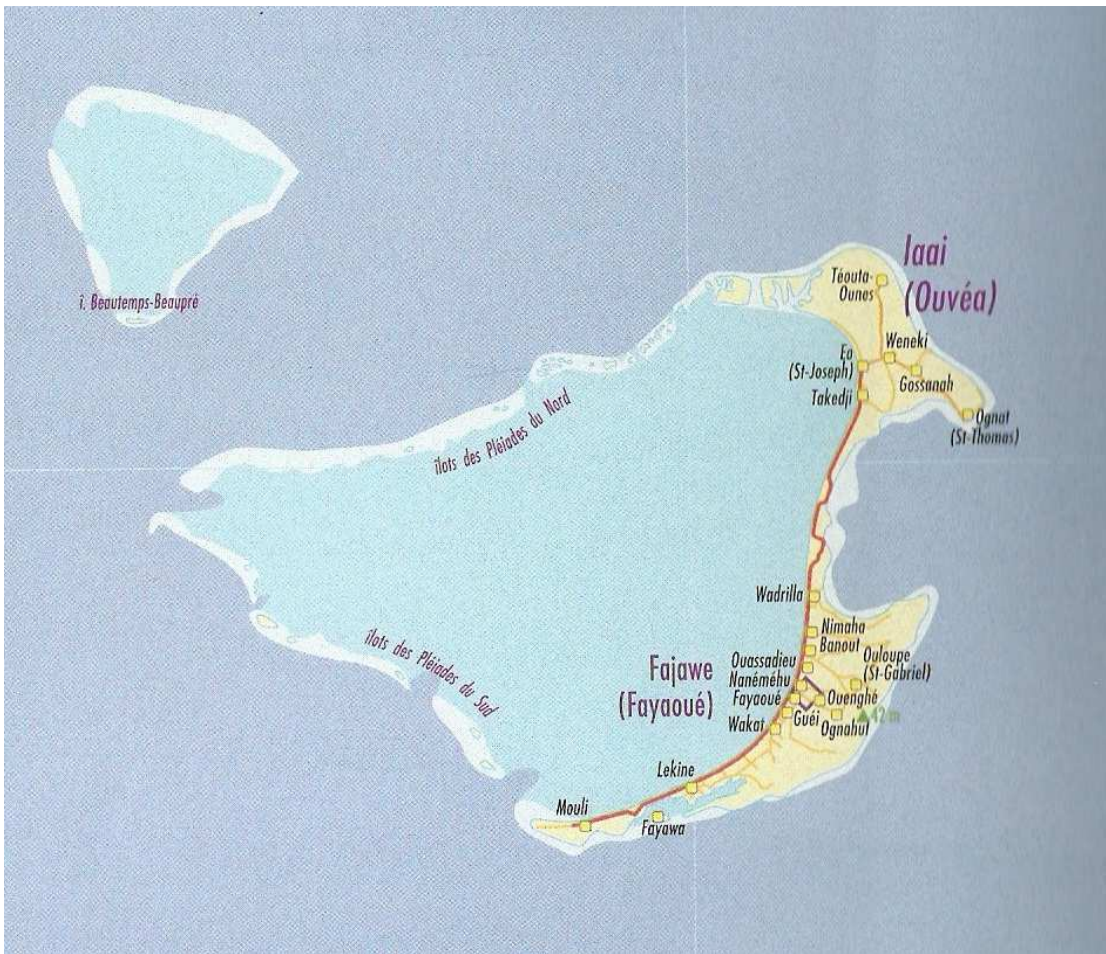
<sup>361</sup> Maps taken from Filippi, O & Angleviel, F (eds) 2000a, *Chroniques du pays Kanak : Société Kanak*, Vol. 1, Éditions Planète Mémo, Noumea.



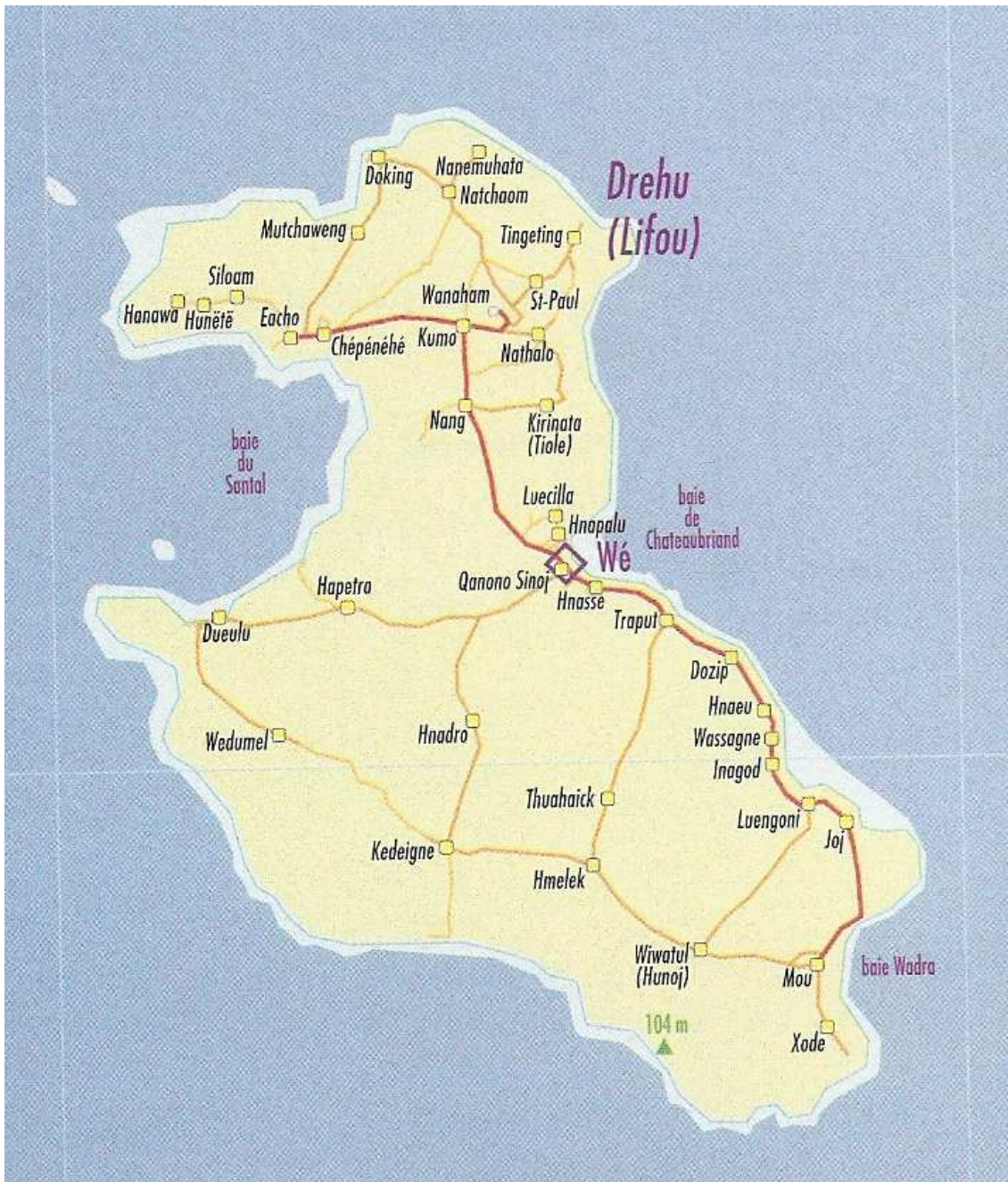
*Grande Terre centre*



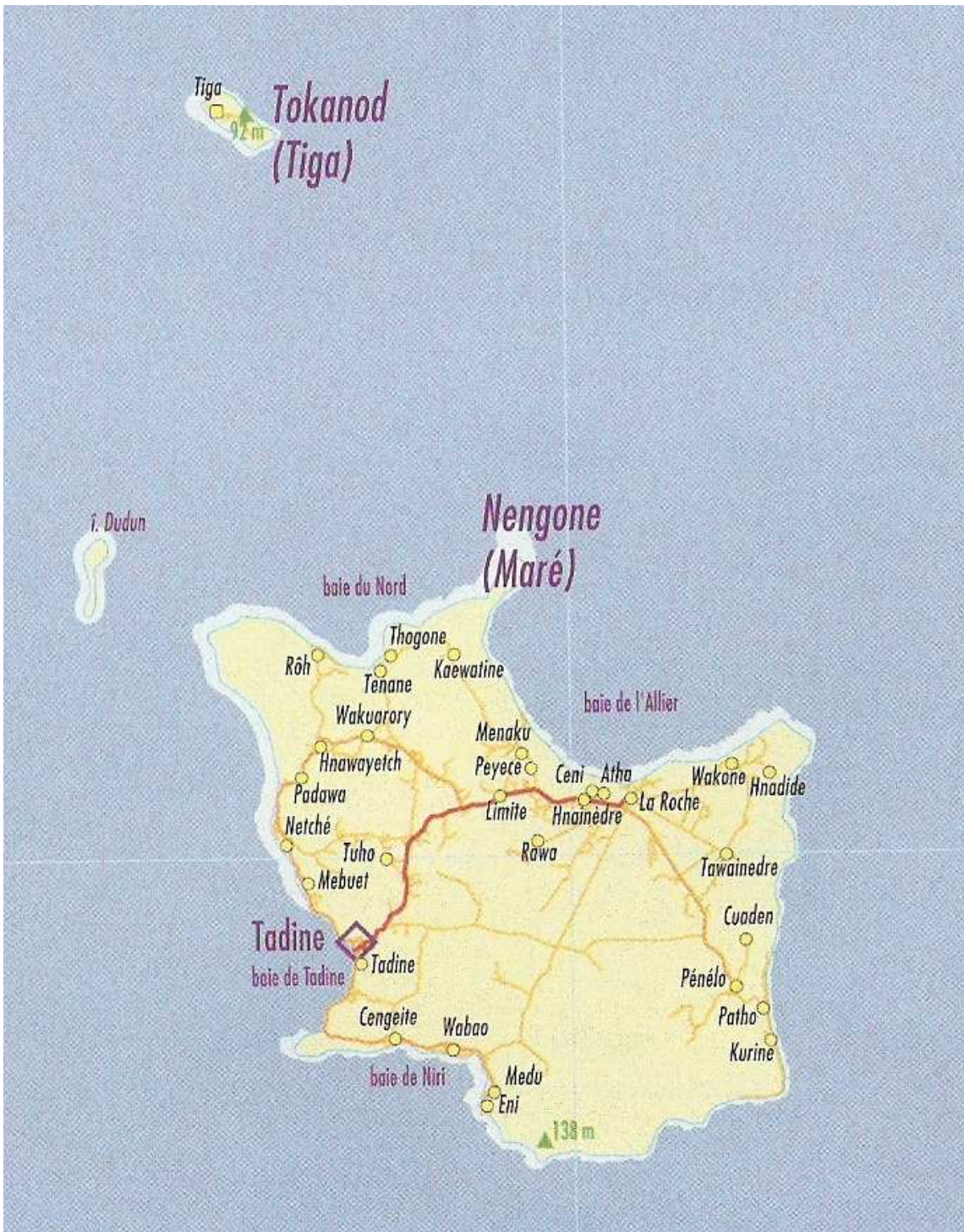
*Grande Terre south*



Ouvea



Lifou



Maré