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(Re)writing Pathways: Oral Tradition, Written Tradition, and Identity Construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie

Emma Sinclair-Reynolds

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**(Re)writing Pathways:
Oral Tradition, Written Tradition, and Identity Construction
in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie**

*Les chemins de la réécriture :
tradition orale, tradition écrite et construction identitaire
en Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie*

Emma SINCLAIR-REYNOLDS

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in French, University of Auckland, 2013**

*Thèse pour obtenir le grade de Docteur de l'Université,
Discipline : Lettres modernes, Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*

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Abstract

Set against the background of a Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie moving towards a future of increasing autonomy with the possibility of independence under the 1998 Noumea Agreement, this thesis maps the pathways of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, found in a number of Kanak oral traditions, as it moves across the New Caledonian literary landscape, both real and virtual. The original contribution of this study is to elucidate, through an exercise in literary cartography, the potential influence of Kanak oral traditions upon on-going identity construction processes underway in contemporary Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie in the context of the Noumea Agreement.

The thesis structure comprises three parts. The Introduction highlights the socio-political and historical contexts in which this research is situated and sets the terms of reference for the study. Part I “Definitions, Approach and Method” contains two chapters: the first defines key terms, and the second introduces the conceptual tools of pathways, (re)writing and encounters, along with the methods and questions that underpin the thesis. Using these concepts, questions and methods, the 48 written versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* in the study’s corpus are analysed in Part II “Pathways of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie”.

Part II is organised into four chapters that examine networks of (re)writing pathways originating in different oral traditions. These networks are charted on the map of the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. The transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* are contextualised and analysed through the lens of the encounters that lead to the production of the texts of the corpus. The images of Kanak oral traditions and cultures that these (re)writings project are also discussed – each (re)writing is viewed as constituting a relational space between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition, and between Kanak communities and the other communities living in the islands, all of which together constitute the projected community of the *destin commun* outlined in the Noumea Agreement.

In Part III, the results of the analyses of the (re)writings are discussed. Conclusions are drawn about the nature and scope of the potential influence of (re)written elements of Kanak oral traditions on identity construction processes, both for Kanak and for the groups that together constitute the community of the *destin commun*. Finally, reflections on the study and future directions for research that arise from it are proposed.

Dedication

To my family.

To Julia and Ian, for their unwavering support and patience, and for so much time and energy generously given, especially in these last two years.

To Eloïse, Loïc and Otis, to whom I owe many hours of my undivided attention. I look forward so much to repaying them.

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I was privileged to interview Déwé Görödé on number of occasions, each of which was informative, entertaining and fascinating, and I am grateful to her for sparing time in her busy schedule to speak with me about questions of oral tradition and literature. I am also grateful to Assia Boai, expert and teacher of A'jië, for his time and for the fascinating insights into the different levels of meaning of *Le Chef et le lézard* that he shared with me. My thanks go to Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta for so kindly granting me access to her DEA dissertation, an important study that vividly portrays the beauty of oral literature in Paicî. I look forward very much to reading her future research.

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Introduction

[...] Dix ans plus tard, il convient d'ouvrir une nouvelle étape, marquée par la pleine reconnaissance de l'identité kanak, préalable à la refondation d'un contrat social entre toutes les communautés qui vivent en Nouvelle-Calédonie [...]

*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.*¹

The atmosphere of near civil war that hung over New Caledonia during the “*Événements*”² of the 1980s was lifted with the signing of the Matignon Agreements in 1988 by representatives of the two main political blocs – the pro-independence *Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak et Socialiste* (FLNKS) and the loyalist *Rassemblement Pour une Calédonie dans la République* (RPCR) – and the French State. Ten years later, the Noumea Agreement was signed, offering a pathway to increasing autonomy (for what was then a *Territoire d’Outre Mer*),³ and the possibility of independence,⁴ to be decided by referendum at some time between 2013 and 2018.

Since the implementation of the Noumea Agreement, the notion of identity has assumed a central importance in discussions of the future of this *collectivité sui generis*.⁵ The social identities of all the communities resident in the territory are referred to (directly or indirectly) in the Agreement, however, two identities are singled out for particular attention. The first of

¹ Taken from *Préambule 4* of the Noumea Agreement of 5 May 1998: [Ten years on, it is time to enter a new stage, marked by the full recognition of Kanak identity, a pre-requisite for the re-establishment of a social contract between all the communities living in New Caledonia, [...]. The past was the time of colonisation. The present is the time of sharing, through the redressing of imbalances. The future must be the time of identity, within a common destiny.] (“*Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie*” n.p.) Note: all translations in square brackets are the writer’s.

This double and simultaneous set of processes – the recovery and recognition of a Kanak identity, and identity seen as a process of future creation – echoes those processes continually in play in Kanak oral traditions as well as those of elsewhere in Oceania, which share the notion of moving into the future while facing (and drawing upon) the past.

² [“The Events”]: a euphemism for the violent conflict that took place in New Caledonia as a consequence of continuing injustices arising from the colonial system that was put in place after the annexation of the islands by France in 1853.

³ [Overseas Territory of France]

⁴ “*et par un partage de souveraineté avec la France, sur la voie de la pleine souveraineté*” [and by a shared sovereignty with France, on the way to full sovereignty] (“*Accord sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie*” n.p.)

⁵ Today New Caledonia has this status in French law, different from the other COMs (*Collectivités d’Outre Mer*) within the French Republic.

these is the group identity ascribed to the indigenous peoples of these islands, who are collectively known today as Kanak. The second is the inclusive identity implicit in the ideologically charged expression “*destin commun*”, an ideal identity to be created or worked towards, encompassing all of the communities present in New Caledonia at the time of signing.

Set within this context of identity (re)construction, the present study explores the interactions and connections between oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie,⁶ in particular examining how elements of oral traditions⁷ have come to be incorporated into New Caledonian written tradition since the arrival of the written word in that group of Pacific islands just over 200 years ago. Representations found in texts that result from encounters between oral and written traditions are also examined, with the aim of elucidating how they might participate in the ongoing processes of identity construction referred to in the Noumea Agreement (specifically those relating to Kanak identity and the collective identity implicit in the notion of a common destiny or *destin commun*).⁸

Researching interactions

Though the perception of a fundamental division in New Caledonian society between Kanak and non-Kanak at the local level is based in historical reality, there has, nevertheless, always been interaction and communication between the two groups. Relationships between Kanak

⁶ “Kanak” is the name officially given by the Kanak independence movement in 1984 to their future decolonised country (Tjibaou, *La présence kanak* 47) and “Nouvelle-Calédonie” the name given to the French colony, which was first named “New Caledonia” by James Cook when he first voyaged to the islands in 1774 (their geography reminded him of the Caledonian region of Scotland). The choice of which name to use for this group of islands is necessarily a *prise de position*. I have chosen Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, as a term that encompasses the main designations used at the moment by different groups in the territory: Kanaky, Nouvelle-Calédonie, Kanaky-Nouvelle-Calédonie, Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, Calédonie... The name of the country is one of the “*signes identitaires*” that are to be agreed upon as part of the Noumea Agreement, and thus is also part of the ongoing process of identity construction taking place there at present.

⁷ In this study, when used in the singular, “tradition” acts as an umbrella term for a number of traditions, in order to focus on the mode of communication e. g. “oral tradition” or “written tradition”. When used in the plural, “traditions” is used to acknowledge the traditions of different groups that use the same mode of communication, whether it be oral or written e. g. “Kanak oral traditions”, “European written traditions”.

⁸ For the purposes of this study, the term “identity” in the singular, whether in “Kanak identity”, or the “identity of the *destin commun*”, is employed as an umbrella term covering a multiplicity of identities - there are at least as many Kanak or *destin commun* identities as there are individual members of these groups, and more when the dynamic and ever-changing nature of identity construction is taken into account. Thus identity in the singular form is not meant to be understood here as denoting a single, monolithic identity.

and non-Kanak since first contact between peoples have resulted in very visible biological *métissage*, however, rather than producing an associated phenomenon of cultural mixing, those with mixed heritage tend to identify as belonging to either one or the other community, as is explained here by the anthropologist Alban Bensa,

L'enfant issu d'un mariage devient soit "kanak", soit "européen", selon le côté de sa parentèle ayant décidé de l'élever. Mais, à l'inverse de la situation antillaise, par exemple, aucune signification particulière n'est attachée à la couleur de la peau. Seuls le statut juridique et corrélativement l'appartenance culturelle (la langue, l'éducation familiale, etc.) établissent de façon quasi irrévocable l'appartenance à l'une ou l'autre des communautés, sans qu'aucune catégorie "métisse" ne soit reconnue (Chroniques kanak 121).⁹

Another perspective on this claim for an absence of cultural mixing comes from Wéniko Ihage,¹⁰ Director of the *Académie des langues kanak* (ALK), in an interview by Virginie Soula for her 2008 PhD, "Des ancrages littéraires et identitaires au "destin commun", une histoire littéraire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie : (1853-2005)." When asked his thoughts on New Caledonian writer Nicolas Kurtovitch's assertion that there is a cultural interface rather than cultural mixing to be found in New Caledonia, Ihage replies,

Je ne crois pas au métissage culturel. Je dis que c'est la création qui est métisse, qui est source de métissage. Le métissage culturel je n'y crois pas, je vous donne un exemple : si un Kanak se marie avec une Européenne, l'enfant ne sera pas métissé culturel, il choisira tôt ou tard. Il aura une prédisposition à l'esprit ouvert aux deux cultures mais il choisira à un moment donné. Et comme ici, on est dans un contexte insulaire, où il y a une diversité ethnique et de par les forces sociales qui existent ici, il devra choisir. Il y a une multiculturalité mais pas de vie commune entre les cultures (343).¹¹

⁹[The child issuing from the marriage becomes either "Kanak" or "European", depending on which side of the family decides to bring the child up. But, contrary to what happens in such a situation in the Antilles, for example, no particular significance is attributed to skin colour. Only the legal status and the accompanying cultural membership (language, family education etc) establish, in an almost irrevocable manner, membership of one or the other community, with no recognition of any 'mixed' category.]

¹⁰ Wéniko Ihage, is a Kanak linguist and writer from Lifou, whose best known work on Kanak oral tradition is entitled *La tradition orale à Lifou* (1992).

¹¹ [I do not believe in cultural mixing. I say that it is creation that is mixed, that is the source of mixing. Cultural mixing I don't believe in, I'll give you an example: if a Kanak man marries a European woman, the child will not be culturally mixed, he will choose sooner or later. He will be predisposed to have a mind open to both cultures, but will choose at a given point. And as we are in an island context here, where there is ethnic diversity, and through the social forces that exist here, he will have to choose. There is a multiculturalism but no shared life between the cultures.]

Despite enduring divisions and the apparent lack of cultural mixing, the scholar of comparative literature, François Bogliolo, would argue that New Caledonian literature is one area in which a certain degree of often unacknowledged reciprocal exchange has taken place, and elements of Kanak and non-Kanak (read French) culture have been woven together in the texts that constitute this literature.

Nous savons tout autant que cette écriture se compose d'œuvres où s'entrelacent des éléments multiculturels voire multilinguistiques. La littérature néo-calédonienne se fait, elle se fait ensemble. Ce tissage dans le texte (Océanie-Europe, oralité-écriture, pro-anti kanak ou transporté, utopie-vérité, etc.) couronne in fine une ouverture : généreuse, difficile, malhabile, volontariste, réciproque... ("Entre langues et terre" 440).¹²

Nevertheless, the impact of the historical segregation in New Caledonian society on academic research undertaken there remains strong, as has been succinctly outlined at the local level by Benoît Trépied in his 2007 doctoral thesis "*Politique et relations coloniales en Nouvelle-Calédonie : Ethnographie historique de la commune de Koné – 1946-1988*".¹³ The social anthropologist notes that up until 2007, no social science research on New Caledonia had focused on the relationships at "grassroots" level *between* colonisers and colonised because of two main factors.

The first is the traditional divisions between the academic disciplines of anthropology and history, which saw the "primitive" Kanak societies as the domain of anthropological research, while the primary focus on texts on the part of historians tended to favour the production of a non-Kanak history of New Caledonia.

Trépied cites the colonial context as the second factor inhibiting the production of research into the relationships between Kanak and non-Kanak. He traces the policy of the French state, which, having designated New Caledonia a settler colony in the mid-nineteenth century proceeded to progressively marginalise Kanak in order to facilitate the settlement of the territory by free settlers or ex-convicts. Already having suffered the impact of introduced

¹² [We know just as much that this literature is composed of works in which multicultural and even multilingual elements are intertwined. New Caledonian literature is becoming, it is becoming, together. This weaving within the text (Oceania-Europe, orality-writing, pro-anti Kanak or convict, utopia-reality etc) ultimately crowns an openness: generous, difficult, awkward, proactive, reciprocal...]

¹³ [Colonial politics and relations in New Caledonia, Historical Ethnography of the Koné Commune – 1946-1988]

diseases, massive land expropriation and military repression, Kanak found themselves at the turn of the twentieth century forced into closed reserves, on the least fertile land situated deep in mountainous valleys, usually far from colonial settlements. This segregation remained in place until the abolition of the regime of the *Indigénat*¹⁴ in 1946 and this history has itself had a strong influence on social science research on New Caledonia, with the physical separation of Kanak and non-Kanak worlds contributing, according to Trépied, to the creation of a “blind-spot” in research on relations between coloniser and colonised (“Politiques et relations coloniales” 21), rather than reflecting a lack of relations.

A parallel phenomenon of separation has occurred in the domain of literary research in New Caledonia. While a growing body of critical work exists on New Caledonian written tradition,¹⁵ and also on Kanak oral tradition,¹⁶ relatively little research has been published as yet on the connections between the two,¹⁷ and this is the case for several reasons.

The first reason is that the main object of study for scholars of New Caledonian written tradition is the French-language text, which is reasonably easy to gain access to in material terms (texts can be published, exist in multiple copies and be available in repositories such as libraries, book shops, archives, online), and which is easily accessible by a large number of researchers, as a result of the French language’s long history of textualisation and historical factors that have led to its spread across the globe, and its presence throughout the academic world. This relative ease of access is not currently enjoyed by literary scholars who are

¹⁴ The *Indigénat* [Native Code] governed the treatment of indigenous peoples throughout the French colonial empire. In place in New Caledonia from 1887-1946, it extended to the governor the power to designate the composition of *tribus*, and to name administrative chiefs and define their powers. A head tax was imposed and freedom of circulation was restricted – Kanak had to apply to *gendarmes* for permission to leave their reserves for any reason.

¹⁵ See, for example, the writings on New Caledonian literature produced by François Bogliolo, Peter Brown, Mounira Chatti, Julia Doelrasad, Micaela Fenoglio, Bernard Gasser, Dominique Jouve, Liliane Laubreaux, Raylene Ramsay, Virginie Soula, Stéphanie Vigier.

¹⁶ See, for example, the writings on the ‘literary’ or ‘aesthetic’ dimensions of Kanak oral traditions produced by Michel Aufray, Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta, Weniko Ihage, Julia Ogier-Guindo, Emmanuel Tjibaou, Stéphanie Géneix, as well as the numerous articles found in the cultural revue published by the ADCK, *Mwà Véeé*. (An arbitrary division has been made here between the writings listed and those attributed to anthropologists and linguists in footnote no. 22 – many of whose writings on Kanak oral traditions contain reflection upon and description of the literary dimensions, in addition to the linguistic and/or anthropological focus of their research. This is perfectly logical as linguistic, anthropological and aesthetic dimensions are intertwined in oral traditions.)

¹⁷ Important groundwork was laid by the late Marc Coulon, in his overview of the history of publication of Kanak oral literature, with annotated bibliography and discussion of the contemporary issues faced, *Introduction à la littérature kanak* (1993).

interested in Kanak oral traditions but who do not have a degree of competence in at least one of the 28+ Kanak languages.¹⁸ Linguistic competence is essential for direct access to “oral performance events”¹⁹ – without it, translations must be relied upon, and information about contexts of creation and elements of oral traditions must also be mediated by a third party. Herein lies a significant practical difficulty in that there is a relatively small and unevenly distributed body of texts dealing with the stylistic and aesthetic dimensions of the more than twenty-eight Kanak oral traditions. Limited access to oral “texts” and critical works can make research for the non-Kanak language speaking scholar a complicated and somewhat challenging undertaking, and currently there are no literary scholars in the academy working on New Caledonian written tradition who are speakers of a Kanak language.

Another factor contributing to the relative rarity of research into the connections between Kanak oral and New Caledonian written traditions relates to the number of works that constitute New Caledonian literature, and the period of time that this literature has been recognised as an independent entity. New Caledonian literature has only relatively recently “emerged” as a subject of academic enquiry in itself, as has the idea of Kanak traditions as contributing to this literature.²⁰ The body of critical work dealing with New Caledonian written tradition in French published since the middle of the twentieth century is also not extensive, as a small group of scholars have been working in this area for a relatively short period of time.

¹⁸ There are at least twenty-eight different indigenous languages spoken in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie at present, excluding the dialectal variants that may exist within a language area, each language corresponds to a distinct oral tradition. Comparative linguistic studies established that these languages have a common origin, that they are related and that they began fragmenting and differentiating over three thousand years ago (Rivierre, *L’Orientation dans l’espace* 5).

¹⁹ This term is developed from the term “performance event”. Richard Bauman, folklorist and linguistic anthropologist, describes the term “performance event” as having “assumed a place beside the text as a fundamental unit of description and analysis [...] directing attention to the actual conduct of artistic verbal performance in social life (*Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* 3). My use of “oral performance event” is meant to distinguish it from its equivalent in written tradition, the “written performance event”, which is referred to in this study as “the act of reading” (aloud or silently, alone or in a group context).

²⁰ The *Mélanésia 2000* cultural festival held in Noumea in 1975, a manifestation which saw Kanak culture become visible to the New Caledonian general public, in many cases for the first time, is often used as a point of reference marking the beginning of a significant period in which New Caledonian literature “emerged”, or at least became more visible to outsiders. The period following the Matignon Agreements in 1988 and the signing of the Noumea Agreement in 1998 also saw a significant increase in literary production in New Caledonia.

Historic divisions between academic disciplines, similar to those in the social sciences as described by Trépied, also contribute to a “blindspot” in research into relations between oral and written traditions. While learning a Kanak language is an essential step for those on the pathway to become linguists or anthropologists working with the peoples of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, it is not a prerequisite for those who are training to become literary scholars specialising in New Caledonian literature. Since the language of expression of New Caledonian written tradition is, at this point, predominantly French, and since the written word is the main object of study,²¹ the literary scholar must be a specialist in the language employed in the text – French. In relation to the organisation of the French university system, the study of both French and Francophone literatures comes under the umbrella of one CNU (*Conseil National des Universités*) section, the 9^e section – *langue et littérature françaises*, in which “*langue*” refers to the French language alone, there is no requirement for profound knowledge of any of the indigenous languages of the Francophone countries represented, (although there are of course scholars who are bi- or multi-lingual, for example, those with origins in Francophone countries).

In the context of the 9^e section at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, courses in New Caledonian literature (in its written form) have been offered since the university’s creation in 1987. Initially offered as a separate subject, since 1992 it has mostly been taught as an “emergent literature”, in comparative literature courses in the first and second years of undergraduate degrees in French and Francophone Literature, where New Caledonian texts are studied alongside Anglophone, Hispanophone, and other Francophone texts in order to situate them in a global context. On various occasions the survival of these courses has been threatened, and it has been necessary to fight for the retention of New Caledonian texts in the undergraduate programmes. This can partly be attributed to the demands of the CAPES²² examination that students who wish to teach in *collèges* and *lycées* must pass – literature students must study a range of texts from different genres covering a time period from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. With the more recent creation of postgraduate courses at

²¹ Of course, the spoken word, particularly as it is used in poetry and theatre, is also the subject of research, however, the overwhelming proportion of academic research in the field of literature is focused on the written text.

²² *Certificat d’aptitude au professorat de l’enseignement du second degré* (Certificate for teaching in secondary education conferred by the *Ministère d’éducation nationale*).

the Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (a *Diplôme d'Études Approfondies* (DEA) was offered from 1995-1998 and a *Master Recherche "Arts, lettres, langues"* programme, mention "*Arts, lettres, civilisations*" option: "*Langues et cultures océaniques*", has been offered since 2008), it has become possible to teach New Caledonian literature as a separate subject and although the texts studied are written, links with oral literature are explored.²³

The study of Kanak languages and literatures falls under the aegis of a different CNU section, the 15^e – *langues et littératures arabes, chinoises, japonaises, hébraïques, d'autres domaines linguistiques* [Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew languages and literatures and those of other linguistic domains] and here linguistic competence in one of the Kanak languages is essential, just as French is for the study of Francophone literatures. This means that in the case of the New Caledonian literary polysystem, literature written in the French language falls mainly within the *domaine de recherche* of researchers in the 9^e section, and literature written in Kanak languages within the *domaine de recherche* of researchers in the 15^e section. Academic divisions persist, however, they are not insurmountable, and studying the links between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition involves finding ways around or across these institutional barriers, for example, through collaborative, interdisciplinary research, or through the examination of works in translation.

A number of translations of various elements of Kanak oral traditions are available in European languages (mostly in French), particularly since the wave of translation activity that began around the 1970s. These texts have in the main been produced by French linguists and anthropologists in collaboration with native-speaker experts, and their primary focus has not necessarily been literary analysis. This has not precluded linguists and anthropologists from writing on the subject of Kanak oral tradition, however, and there is a long tradition of French researchers who have published contextual information about the texts they have used and the traditions from which they are derived.²⁴ These texts, although relatively small in number, are

²³ Personal communications, Dominique Jouve, 20/04/2012 and 14/06/2012.

²⁴ See for example, Ozanne-Rivierre, Françoise. "La littérature orale nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie)", 1975; Dubois, Marie-Joseph. *Mythes et traditions de Maré (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Les Eletok*, 1975; Bensa, Alban, Rivierre, Jean-Claude. "De quelques genres littéraires dans la tradition orale paicî (Nouvelle-Calédonie)", 1976; Bensa, Alban, Rivierre, Jean-Claude. *Histoires canaques*, 1983; Rivierre, Jean-Claude, Ozanne-Rivierre, Françoise, Moysse-Faurie, Claire. *Mythes et contes de la Grande Terre et des îles Loyauté (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, 1980; Bensa, Alban, Rivierre, Jean-Claude. *Les Chemins de l'Alliance: L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (région de Touho)*, 1982; Bensa, Alban, Rivierre, Jean-Claude. "De

an important contribution to the understanding of the aesthetics and dynamics of Kanak oral traditions, and to the foundations upon which descriptive and critical work treating the many oral traditions of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie can be based. More recently, a small number of texts have been produced by mostly Kanak scholars and experts who have been able to give an insight into aesthetic considerations and their work can be seen as spanning the divide between linguistic and anthropological analysis on one side, and literary analysis on the other.²⁵

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing awareness of the significance of oral traditions in the production of contemporary Pacific written literature in English, and of the way in which the local/regional and Western (universal) aesthetics are overlaid,

The Pacific has a great canon of its own – its oral traditions. Not only is this canon a source of inspiration, but it also comes complete with its own form of literary criticism [...]. Indigenous aesthetics, often invisible to the outside eye, allow an appreciation and understanding of this canon and the contemporary literature that springs from it. The recognition of these aesthetic principles, alongside incorporated Western aesthetics, has been the driving force in recent movements to theorize Pacific literature. Investigating critical ways of thinking about indigenous literatures is crucial in their validation and promotion (Tusitala Marsh “Here our words” 167).

This understanding has been echoed in the field of scholarship in New Caledonian literature, with more research taking into account the connections between oral and written literatures.²⁶

l'Histoire des mythes. Narrations et polémiques autour de Rocher Até (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, 1988; Pillon, Patrick. “Listes déclamatoires (“viva”) et principes d’organisation sociale dans la vallée de la Kouaoua (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, 1992; Guiart, Jean. *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*, 1998; Naepels, Michel. *Histoires kanakes. Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la région de Houailou (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, 1998; Godin, Patrice. “Des mythes d’origine kanak”, 1999; Aufray, Michel. “Les littératures océaniques : approche syntaxique et stylistique”, 2000; Aufray, Michel. “Le petit colibri : analyse d’un texte oral mélanésien”, 2001; Illouz, Charles. *De chair et de pierre. Essai de mythologie kanak (Maré – Îles Loyauté)*, 2000; Ogier-Guindo, Julia. “Étude d’un genre cérémoniel de la tradition orale a’jië, le vivaa (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, 2007.

²⁵ See for example, Ihage, Weniko. “Formes du récit dréhu (Lifou) (1re partie), 1990; Ihage, Weniko. “Formes du récit dréhu (Lifou) (suite 1et fin)”, 1990; Tjibaou, Emmanuel. “Analyse stylistique d’un récit traditionnel (Fwâi, Nemi) de la région de Hienghène (Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, 2004; Togna, Octave. “Littérature. Introduction à la littérature (orale) kanak”, 1993; Ihage, Weniko. “Le chemin initiatique à travers le conte”, 1993; Görödé, Déwé. “Introduction à la littérature orale du pays paicî”, 1994; Bouchet, Bernard; Gurrera-Wetta, Madeleine; Siorat-Dijou, Viviane. *Jè pwa jèkutâ. Recueil de textes en langue paicî*, 1984.

²⁶ For example, Brown, Peter. “Récit fondateur et culture politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie. 'Tea Kanake', de Mélanésie 2000 au Festival des Arts du Pacifique (1975-2000)”, 2008; Brown, Peter. “La mémoire comme connaissance et la connaissance comme mémoire. Complémentarité de l’oralité et de l’écriture chez Déwé Gorodé (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, 2007; Jouve, Dominique. “Le mythe à l’épreuve du livre : Téa Kanaké,

My own work develops out of the realisation that the description and analysis of the dynamics and aesthetics of Kanak oral traditions, and the investigation of what happens when stories move back and forth between oral and written traditions constitute areas of research that could enrich the understanding of the written literature of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, as well as contribute more generally to comparative work on the literatures of Oceania. While expertise on the subject of oral tradition has always existed within the Kanak world, at this point in time, relatively little information about this important dimension of Kanak cultures exists in written form. A great deal of work remains to be done both in examining oral and written traditions using comparative frameworks, and in looking at interfaces between these traditions and their relationships of mutual influence.

François Bogliolo's ground-breaking HDR²⁷ thesis, "Entre langues et terre. Émergence de la littérature néo-calédonienne (écriture et identité d'une Île) 1774-1909," defended in 2000, is one of the first academic studies²⁸ to consider the interactions between oral and written traditions and to look closely at the literary history of New Caledonia and the "emergence" of a distinctive New Caledonian literature.²⁹ Bogliolo analyses the relationships between French language and Kanak land, his hypothesis being that the arrival of the French language in New Caledonia, and the encounter with the land and the person of the Kanak "Other" resulted in the emergence of a new and mixed literature. He asserts that interactions between oral and written traditions are central to the development of this new literature,

l'homme aux cinq vies", 2005; Jouve, Dominique. "Négociation de la fracture coloniale, le cas des textes multilingues de Waia Görödé", 2010; Ramsay, Raylene. "(Mis)Reading the figure of the Cannibal Ogre/ Incest through the European Fairy Tale: Narrative Techniques, Metamorphosis, and Meaning in the First Kanak Novel", 2011; Ramsay, Raylene. *Nights of Storytelling. A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia*, 2011; Ramsay, Raylene. "La tradition dans les littératures francophones et anglophones", 2010; Ramsay, Raylene. "Colonial/Postcolonial Hybridity in Camus's *Le Premier Homme* and Jean-Marie Tjibaou's *Kanaké*", 2008; Sinclair-Reynolds, Emma. "Pathways between Traditions: (Re)writing and Identity Construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie", 2010.

²⁷ HDR = *Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches* (this is a qualification in the French university system that can be taken after a doctorate, and enables the holder to supervise and mark theses, as well as being typically a step on the path to becoming a Professor).

²⁸ Along with Liliane Laubreaux's 1996 doctoral thesis "L'Émergence d'une littérature francophone : le cas des nouvelles et des contes calédoniens".

²⁹ More recently, the doctoral theses of Julia Doelrasad, "La littérature kanak francophone, entre revendication d'identité culturelle et interculturalité" (2006) and Virginie Soula, "Des ancrages littéraires et identitaires au "destin commun", une histoire littéraire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie : (1853-2005)" (2008), have also examined New Caledonian literary history.

*Loin de l'Europe aux vieux papiers, une littérature écrite s'est développée à partir d'un antique fonds de genres oraux [...] Les brassages de populations, de langues, de cultures et les échanges entre différents continents ou systèmes d'expression se retrouvèrent dans ses écrits actuels : ils en constituent la spécificité. ("Entre langues et terre" 8).*³⁰

In his introduction ("Entre langues et terre" 15-16), Bogliolo includes a schema for a "polysystème littéraire néo-calédonien" (see Figure 1) which serves as a starting point for my own analyses. The New Caledonian literary polysystem came into existence, according to Bogliolo, following the arrival of the French language on Kanak soil, an arrival which saw the meeting of two quite separate literary systems, respectively "*Littérature écrite française*" (French language/written word) and "*Littérature orale kanak*" (Kanak land/spoken word), and the resultant birth of a New Caledonian literature ("*Littérature néo-calédonienne*" in red ink). Within the New Caledonian literary polysystem, Bogliolo has indicated the existence of various subsystems shown in blue boxes: *Littérature "coloniale" ou "illusionniste"*; *Littérature des transportés*; *Écriture centripète ou Métisse*; *Traductions de la littérature orale*. He explains that the subsystem *Littérature écrite en langues kanak* belongs both to the *Littérature néo-calédonienne* polysystem and the *Littérature orale kanak* polysystem, as the number of written texts in Kanak languages is still too small to constitute an autonomous polysystem.

³⁰ [Far from the Europe of old papers, a written literature developed out of an ancient store of oral genres [...] The mixing of populations, languages, cultures and the exchanges between different continents or systems of expression come together in its contemporary writings: they constitute its specificity].

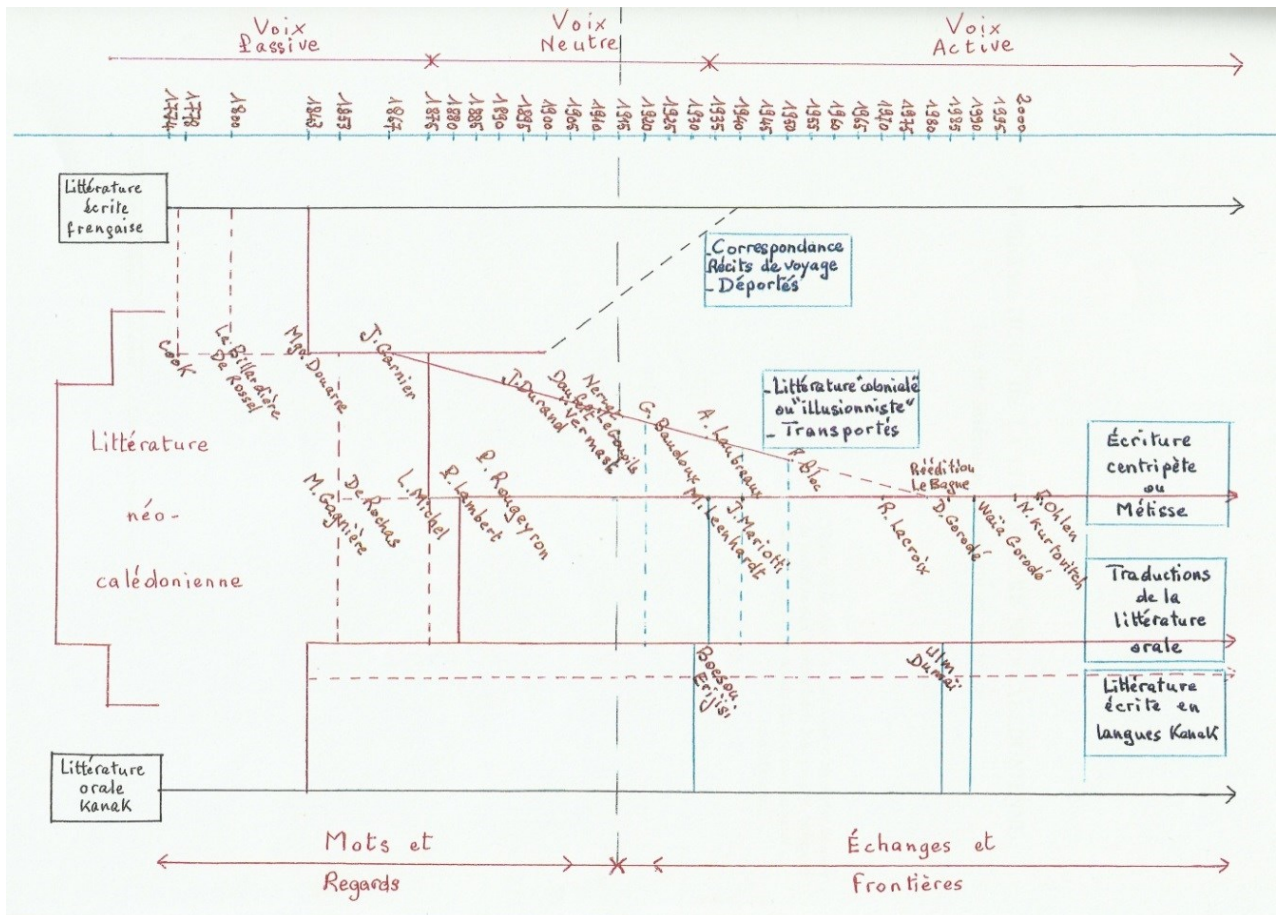


Figure 1 - "Polysystème littéraire néo-calédonien" developed by François Bogliolo

My research takes Bogliolo's schema of the *polysystème littéraire néo-calédonien* and elaborates on the interactions between the categories he describes as "*Littérature orale kanak*" and "*Littérature néo-calédonienne*", expressions of the two powerful thought-technologies, oral and written tradition, that have been co-existing in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie since the nineteenth century.

From the arrival of the first peoples in the Pacific region, oral traditions have been the predominant mode of communication for organising, creating and transmitting human knowledge and expression, and the continuing importance of oral tradition today is less surprising to the extent that it is "humankind's oldest and most pervasive thought-technology, long predating the invention of writing and still today the most widely employed communications technology in the world, per capita" (Foley 2008).

The written word is arguably the most widely used mode of communication involved in the sharing of knowledge about the Kanak world. The strategic potential of this powerful human thought-technology, which first made landfall in the Pacific around the end of the eighteenth

century (Sudul 85), was immediately appreciated by local populations throughout the region, and New Caledonia was no exception.³¹

For a very long period, the traffic was predominantly one-way with respect to the exchange of information between cultures. French cultural and social practices and norms were communicated to and imposed on Kanak by missionaries, institutions such as the army and colonial administration, the education system, and through participation in the capitalist economy. Nevertheless, there has also been reciprocal movement to communicate information about Kanak cultures and societies to non-Kanak. Kanak *transcripteurs*, native-speaker informants, interpreters, pastors and guides have assisted and taught explorers, voyagers, missionaries, traders, military officers, and researchers from different academic disciplines about elements of Kanak languages, cultures and societies from the time of the first European contact with the peoples of New Caledonia. Kanak artists, performers, politicians and educators as well as agencies such as the *Agence de développement de la Culture Kanak* (ADCK) and the *Académie des Langues Kanak* (ALK) and regional cultural centres set up subsequent to the Matignon and Noumea Agreements have, in recent decades, provided information and opportunities for encounter for those who are interested in learning more about the Kanak world. Cultural tourism, too, in the present decade, has intensified interest particularly among French and European visitors.

Notwithstanding a certain movement back and forth between oral and written traditions from the end of the eighteenth century, my study will add a spatial dimension to the model of the New Caledonian literary polysystem, inscribing it into the “literary landscape” of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie and tracing the movements of the widely-known story of *Le Chef et le lézard* in one direction, from oral to written traditions,³² in order to understand how Kanak oral traditions are reaching beyond their usual boundaries to influence processes of identity construction in contemporary New Caledonian society. It will aim to increase the present limited awareness and appreciation in wider New Caledonian society of the aesthetic as well as socio-cultural dimensions of Kanak oral traditions, and of their history of

³¹ For example, in 1885, a report from L. de Salins to the Governor of New Caledonia, Le Bouchet, indicated that on Maré, everyone under the age of 27 years knew how to read and write their own language and that it would be dishonest to deny the results obtained by the English missionaries (Vernaudon 80).

³² That is, from the “*Littérature orale kanak*” to the “*Littérature néo-calédonienne*” of Bogliolo’s polysystem schema (see Fig. 1 above).

interaction with and contribution to New Caledonian written tradition. Analysis of texts of written tradition that are derived from or influenced by oral tradition, and which therefore constitute a meeting place between traditions, a space of shared heritage, provides an opportunity to consider ways in which the Kanak and non-Kanak communities have been brought together, rather than separated.

Before outlining the structure of my study of this shared heritage and the approaches and methods I have employed, a brief overview of its beginnings sheds some light on the research questions it develops. My first encounter with Kanak oral tradition was during a postgraduate seminar in Translation in the French Department of the University of Auckland in 2001-2. In the course of this seminar, existing translations of elements of Kanak oral tradition were examined and translated from French into English, as part of a larger project to bring the literatures of New Caledonia to an English-speaking audience.³³

As we worked on translating the French translations into English, it quickly became apparent that various nodes of difficulty and difference exist when translating between European and Kanak languages and cultures. The inadequacy of both French and English to render certain culturally-embedded concepts and terminology was constantly highlighted. For example, it was a challenge to find appropriate equivalents for culturally-specific Kanak notions of time and tense, for spatial orientation systems (built into Kanak languages and reflecting complex and intimate connections between interlocutors and features of the landscape, the place of speaking), and for important concepts such as the breath of the maternal uncles when a child is born or the meaning of specific terms such as the Ajië “*kavûû nèvâ*”³⁴ and “*orokau*”.³⁵

³³ One of the goals of the project, funded by a Marsden grant from the Royal Society of New Zealand, was the production of a cultural history of Kanaky/New Caledonia which would include translations of significant texts into English. This work, edited by Raylene Ramsay, *Nights of Storytelling. A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia*, was published by University of Hawai'i Press in 2011.

³⁴ In *Histoires de terres kanakes Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la region de Houailou (Nouvelle-Caledonie)* (1998), Michel Naepels explains the term *kavûû nèvâ* in Ajië has a meaning of *fondateur du pays* [founder of the land], an ancestral connection to the land which confers rights and responsibilities of ownership. It applies more to a group than to an individual, and members of this founding lineage would decide on the division of the land amongst the groups who came after. Of the various clans living together in a certain area, only the *kavûû nèvâ* are able to obtain from the ancestor spirits of the land the necessary powers for success in hunting, fishing and agriculture (37-38).

³⁵ Usually translated as either “*maître de la terre*” [master of the land] or “*maître du lieu*” [master of the place], both of which have added connotations related to power relations which are not present in the original Ajië term, and neither of which captures the full significance of the word in its original language. For example, the entry

As well as being struck by the rich imagery of the stories we were translating, I was intrigued by the fact that different translations of the same text could be so markedly different. Most translations encountered used a prosaic, almost simplistic language, and only occasionally did a translation show a more “literary” style – prompting the question, how could the collective wisdom and creativity of over 3000 years³⁶ of Kanak oral traditions, which are among the oldest in Oceania, result in texts that at times seemed so flat? There was obviously more to the story than the act of translation could do justice to, and the translation itself seemed likely to play an important role, hence the beginning of my Masters dissertation “*Translation as Rewriting: Representations of Kanak Oral Literature*” which explored the notion of translation as a kind of (re)writing that projects an image of a source literature and culture to a target culture. The translations of Kanak oral traditions examined were those undertaken by Louise Michel, the idealistic Communard sent to prison in New Caledonia in the late nineteenth century, by Maurice Leenhardt, the missionary-ethnographer and defender of Kanak in the face of the worst colonial excesses in the first half of the twentieth century, and finally by Alban Bensa and Jean-Claude Rivierre, the anthropologist-linguist team who have worked in New Caledonia since the 1960s/70s.³⁷ The results of the study showed that there was a great variation in the strategies employed by each of the translators to deal with the challenges of moving from oral to written mode of communication, and to address the nodes of linguistic and cultural difference that exist between Kanak and French languages and cultures. The representations that they produced were strongly marked by their own ideological perspectives as well as the influences acting upon them at the time of the translation.

orokau in Maurice Leenhardt’s *Vocabulaire et Grammaire de La Langue Houailou* (1935) describes the term as being “an amplification of the idea of the father-son entity contained in the term *oro*. *Orokau* designates he who both perpetuates the powerful lineage of the clan and represents its glory, the *chef*. This meaning of the term shows the true situation of the *chef*, who has an authority as great as he would make it, but who may not violate the rights of his people or he will lose the ancestral blessings that relate to the ensemble of people and rights that he heads. He does not possess the ensemble, he comes from it” (Leenhardt 215). Assia Boai explains that *ōrōkau* can be broken down into its component semantic units as follows: “o” *fls* [son]; “rē” *qui* [who]; and “kau” *grand* [big], which together mean *grand fls* [big son] or *l’ainé* [eldest son] and this is the underlying meaning of “*ōrōkau*” as “*chef*” [chief].

³⁶ Linguistic and archaeological evidence estimates that the Austronesian language ancestors of the Kanak people living in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie today first arrived in the islands between 3000 and 3500 years ago (Sand, “Peuplement” 161 and Rivierre, *L’orientation* 5).

³⁷ Jean-Claude Rivierre since the mid-1960s, and Alban Bensa since the early 1970s.

The potential for translations to project subjective images of Kanak oral traditions that might perpetuate unequal power relations, coupled with the fact that the relationship between Kanak oral tradition and identity outside of Kanak societies had not been the subject of any significant study, led to the formulation of the overarching question that drives this doctoral thesis – what influence might Kanak oral traditions have on identity construction processes in contemporary New Caledonian society?

There are many avenues through which Kanak oral traditions might act in wider New Caledonian society, such as writing, art, music, politics, film, television, radio and the internet. The investigation of all of these is well beyond the scope of a single thesis, and the focus of my research is the potential for Kanak oral traditions to exert influence on identity construction processes through the medium of the written word.³⁸ Using and extending the translation theorist André Lefevere's notion of translation as a (re)writing process that projects an image of a source text to a target culture, I examine the transformations undergone by elements of Kanak oral traditions as they move from the spoken to the written word, as well as within and between different written traditions.

This thesis traces the pathways of a story, found in different Kanak oral traditions across New Caledonia and given the representative title *Le Chef et le lézard*³⁹ for the purposes of this study, as it transcends the boundaries of different cultures of origin within the Kanak world and moves into the domain of New Caledonian written tradition and beyond. The historical, political and literary contexts and the processes connected to the production of (re)writings of the story are elucidated in order to highlight the various forces at work in the creation of these representations of elements of oral tradition. Using the metaphor of the *vā*,⁴⁰ or “space

³⁸ This targeted approach, involving the choice of the written word as object of enquiry for this study, has been employed for several reasons: it constitutes a continuation of my previous research; my position as a cultural “outsider” precludes study of elements of oral tradition directly as I am not a native speaker of any of the Kanak languages; an exhaustive exploration of the connections between Kanak oral traditions and the written tradition in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is beyond the scope of a study of this size; and my research interests lie in the negotiated borders between languages and cultures, hence the focus on crossings from oral to written tradition.

³⁹ [The Chief and the Lizard]. The majority of versions collected in the corpus of this study feature, as the main protagonists, a human or humans (in the majority of cases, a male chief) and a supernatural entity (in most cases a powerful and terrifying lizard or lizard-man). Hence the title “*Le Chef et le lézard*”, which has been settled upon for pragmatic reasons as a shorthand reference to the stories of various oral traditions that share certain key elements.

⁴⁰ Albert Wendt was one of the first scholars to use this notion in an “indigenous-centred critical analysis of post-colonial texts (1999)” (Tusitala Marsh 2010).

between”, the relational space of exchange and encounter that exists in Kanak languages as well as other languages throughout Oceania, I analyse the the encounter between oral and written tradition that takes place within each text, and the image(s) that are projected in the exchange, in order to show the ways in which these texts might participate in processes of identity construction. The question of how the texts resulting from these transformations might influence ongoing processes of identity construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is then considered, with particular reference to the two identities central to the Noumea Agreement, namely Kanak identity and the collective identity implied in the *destin commun*.

In her 1987 essay, “Māori Oral Narratives, Pākehā Written Texts”, referring to the two remembered histories of New Zealand since 1840, the historian Judith Binney wrote: ‘My beginning is Albert Wendt’s theme: ‘We are what we remember; society is what we remember’” (16) and this theme underpins the main objectives of this study, which are to bring to the fore, to “remember” and to examine the contexts and circumstances of the interactions between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written traditions, and the cultures from which they derive. The data collected in this thesis represent a small contribution to the relatively limited store of written resources about Kanak oral traditions available today, and, more particularly, to the very limited store of written resources about Kanak oral traditions available in the English language. Beyond the work of collection and analysis of stories in French (and English), and dissemination of information that I have been able to gather about Kanak oral traditions,⁴¹ a further objective of this study is to contribute to overcoming the linguistic barrier that exists between the French- and English-speaking Pacific as an accident of colonial history, by communicating the results of my research in English. Finally, the underlying aim of this study is to contribute to mutual understanding, respect and a sense of shared history by valorising both the oral and written literary heritage of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. After this introductory chapter setting out the context of the research, “Chapter 1 – Key Words” discusses and defines central notions used in this

⁴¹ From consulting those writings that do exist on the subject, from the generous sharing of information and expertise by speakers of Kanak languages, linguistic and anthropological researchers, and from attending the courses, *Oraliture et Traduction*, and *Comparatisme océanien* offered for the first time at the Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie in the first semester of 2010 as part of the *Master Recherche “Arts, lettres, langues”* programme, mention “Arts, lettres, civilisations” option: “Langues et cultures océaniques”

study – identity, oral tradition, and written tradition. “Chapter 2 – Conceptual Tools, Questions and Methods”, outlines the approaches employed, the central questions addressed, and the methods used to examine the pathways taken by stories once they transcend the boundaries of their cultures of origin and move into domains of written traditions. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, respectively “Pathways originating in Nyelâyu oral tradition”, “Pathways originating in Ajië oral tradition”, “Pathways originating in Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak oral traditions” and “Pathways originating in Yuanga, Nemi, Paicî and Xârâcùù oral traditions”, present the analyses of the contexts of production and the transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* as it travels between the 48 collected texts that constitute the corpus. The seventh and final chapter, “Discussion, Conclusions, Reflections and Future Directions”, examines the findings of the study with respect to: the extent and scope of influence of *Le Chef et le lézard* in written traditions of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie and beyond; the images projected by the (re)writings; and the relationships between these images and their contexts of production. Conclusions about the role of Kanak oral traditions in ongoing processes of identity construction are drawn, and suggestions made for further avenues of investigation based on these conclusions.

Part I: Definitions, Approach and Method

The next two chapters will set out the terms of reference of the study, outlining the context from which it arises, defining key terms, explaining the theoretical approaches used and the method employed to trace and examine the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* through the literary polysystem of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, as versions of the story move out from various oral traditions and into written traditions.

CHAPTER 1. Key Words

Before proceeding to a discussion of the approaches and method employed to investigate the interactions between Kanak oral traditions and the written tradition of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, I will define and discuss the key words, “identity”, “tradition”, “oral tradition”, and “written tradition” as they have been used for the purposes of this study.

Identity

In this thesis, the notions of “Kanak identity” and “*destin commun*” are considered through the frames of social and cultural identity.⁴² In the introduction to the collection of essays, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Henri Tajfel defines social identity as,

*that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (2).*⁴³

In the subsection “Social identity and the self-concept” of his contribution⁴⁴ to the same collection, John C. Turner uses the term “social identification” to refer to “the process of locating oneself, or another person, within a system of social categorizations” and also “the process whereby an individual internalizes some form of social categorization so that it becomes a component of the self-concept, whether long-lasting or ephemeral” (17-18). For Turner, social identity consists of “the sum total of the social identifications used by a person to define him- or herself” (18).

These definitions of social identification and the composition of social identities are useful for examining the role of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions in identity construction, since it can be argued that representations that are created in these textual encounters between oral⁴⁵ and written⁴⁶ traditions may feed into social categorisations

⁴² The notion of identity is the source of a great deal of academic debate, operating as it does at different levels (e.g. personal, psychological, social, national, or cultural) and in different theoretical and disciplinary frameworks.

⁴³ He notes that this is a “limited definition of ‘identity’ or ‘social identity’” (Tajfel 2).

⁴⁴ Entitled “Towards a cognitive redefinition of a social group”.

⁴⁵ Specifically Kanak oral traditions.

internalised during the process of social identification, and subsequently contribute to the production of specific social identities.

Any discussion of social identity needs to take account of the “crisis of identity” that has produced much recent debate in social theoretical circles, and to which the cultural theorist Stuart Hall provides a useful background as he charts the developments in the West of three important conceptions of the subject - the “Enlightenment subject”, the “sociological subject” and the “post-modern subject”.⁴⁷

The Enlightenment subject is defined as a “fully centred, unified individual” whose essential centre remains the same from birth until death. The next conception to develop is that of the “sociological subject”, which reflects the complexity of the modern world and the fact that rather than describing a completely autonomous being, an individual’s identity is seen as being formed in the interaction between self and society in which an individual’s inner essence is “formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds ‘outside’ and the identities which they offer” (*Modernity: An Introduction* 597-8). Hall explains how the sociological subject “bridges the gap between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ – between the personal and the public”:

*The fact that we project “ourselves” into these cultural identities,⁴⁸ at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them “part of us”, helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world (*Modernity: An Introduction* 598).*

The process of identification, defined by Hall as how we project ourselves into cultural identities, has become “more open-ended, variable and problematic”, producing the third conception described by Hall, the “post-modern subject”, with “no fixed, essential or permanent identity” (*Modernity and its Futures* 277). This post-modern conception of identity, “historically defined” (*Modernity: An Introduction* 598), fragmented, and continually open to change, is the source of the so-called “crisis of identity” in which, in

⁴⁶ Predominantly New Caledonian written tradition in the French language.

⁴⁷ See Stuart Hall’s chapter, “The Question of Cultural Identity”, in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (1996).

⁴⁸ For Hall, cultural identities are defined as “those aspects of our identities which arise from our ‘belonging’ to distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and, above all, national cultures” (*Modernity and its Futures* 274).

Hall's words, "identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (*Modernity and its Futures* 277).

The conception of the sociological subject is of relevance for this study insofar as it provides a model for the interactions between the individual and representations in circulation at a given moment in the construction of identity for both Kanak and *destin commun* communities. The third conception, the postmodern subject, is also particularly useful as it brings to the fore the notion of identity construction as a process, as can be seen in Hall's contention that,

No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories which remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity. On the other hand, identity itself is not the rediscovery of them, but what they as cultural resources allow a people to produce. Identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed ("Negotiating Caribbean Identities" 14).

This notion of identity construction as an ongoing process, and the last sentence in particular, is also appropriate in that it resonates strongly with Jean-Marie Tjibaou's oft-quoted affirmation that identity construction involves a "*reformulation permanente*",⁴⁹

The return to tradition is a myth: I insist on saying it and I repeat it. It is a myth. No people have ever experienced it. Insofar as I am concerned, the search for identity, the model, lies before us, never behind. It is being constantly reformulated. And I will say that the challenge right now is to include the maximum number of elements belonging to our past, to our culture, in the model of mankind and society that we aspire to for the creation of the city. Others, perhaps, propose different analyses, but that is how I see things. Our identity is in front of us. Finally, when we die, people will take our image and they will put it in niches, and it will help them to construct their own identity. Otherwise, one will never succeed in killing one's father, and we are done for (qtd in Waddell 102).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ [continual reformulation]

⁵⁰ This quotation, taken from the final page of the interview "Entretien avec Jean-Marie Tjibaou" published in *Les Temps Modernes* (1985), is translated into English in Eric Waddell's 2008 *Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Kanak Witness to the World. An Intellectual Biography*.

“Questions of identity are always questions about representation” (Hall “Negotiating Caribbean Identities” 5), and this fundamental connection is reflected in the present study’s focus on representations created by (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions, representations which can be argued to play a role in the open-ended and ongoing processes of identification involved in the production of both Kanak identity and the identity implicit in the *destin commun*.

KANAK IDENTITY

How can the expression “Kanak identity”, which figures so prominently in the Noumea Agreement, be defined? The term “Kanak”, widely used today to refer to the indigenous people of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, was unknown there until the arrival of Europeans. Around the year 1850, the word *kanaka*, meaning “man”, was first borrowed from Hawaiian by European navigators and traders and used extensively throughout the Pacific. In New Caledonia, it became *Canaque* (conforming to French orthography), a blanket term that grouped indigenous peoples together, regardless of their linguistic or clan affiliations. It was not until after WWII, following the return of servicemen (amongst whom were indigenous soldiers who had fought in the French Pacific Brigades), that *Canaque* was judged too derisive and replaced by *Mélanésien*, a term that had been used by D’Urville in 1832 to designate all of the dark-skinned peoples of the Western Pacific (Poédi, “Kanak” 118).

The word “Kanak”, which significantly does not conform to French morphological or orthographic conventions,⁵¹ was taken up again by the first Melanesian students returning from France in the period following the general and political uprising of May 1968. These students reclaimed the word, giving it a positive connotation as a collective identity for the indigenous peoples of New Caledonia, defined in relation to Caldoche⁵² society or Metropolitan French society in New Caledonia (Poédi, “Kanak” 118).

⁵¹ The phoneme [k] is represented by a “k” rather than usual “c” or “qu” of French, and the form is invariable in the singular or the plural.

⁵² *Caldoche*: a term (not universally accepted) used to designate people born in New Caledonia whose ancestry is European but whose families have been in New Caledonia for several generations. This term is often employed to make the distinction between people of French origin who have recently arrived (commonly referred to as *Métros* or *Métropolitains*) and people of French origin whose connections with this land go back further in time.

According to the Kanak scholar and educator, Gabriel Poédi, if there is a Kanak identity at all, it is the product of history, of an anticolonial struggle while at the same time being the denial of the history of the indigenous peoples of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. For him, the term “Kanak” has a dual signification which collapses a whole group of indigenous societies into one identity, but also assigns a positive cultural and political dimension to this group in creating a sense of Kanak unity in the face of French cultural and political hegemony (“Kanak” 118). Jean-Marie Tjibaou also spoke of the Kanak people as being “*née de la lutte contre la colonisation, née de l’adversité. C’est une réaction collective, une réalité qui s’organise*” (*La Présence kanak* 121).⁵³

From the time of the first European sighting by James Cook in 1774 of the islands he named New Caledonia,⁵⁴ through to the voyages undertaken during the nineteenth century, European navigators and explorers who reached New Caledonia encountered a population of linguistically diverse, dynamic societies. While the imposition of the umbrella term “Kanak” failed to recognise the diversity of these different groups, the shared elements of their worldviews have become the base on which the contemporary collective Kanak identity has been and continues to be built.

Networks of exchange, marriage, alliance existed between these societies and movements were also dictated by environmental pressures or as a result of warfare. Features that were, and continue to be, common to these societies include: genealogical itineraries inscribed in the landscape that confer identity and function upon the clan; the primordial importance of nature, especially of the cycle of cultivation of the yam; and the central role of oral tradition as vehicle of their Custom.

While specific notions of identity vary between Kanak societies, they share the conception of the person as defined through a network of relationships, founded on the mother/father duality,

It is the women whose blood gives life, a single and straightforward reality. The father gives his name, position and social status, but the child – boy or girl – will remember

⁵³ [born out of the struggle against colonisation, born out of adversity. It is a collective reaction, an organised reality].

⁵⁴ The landscape of the *Grande Terre* recalled for him the mountains of Caledonia in Scotland.

forever the bond which ties him to his mother's clan, and especially to her brothers, their uncles on the mother's side, their "uterine uncles": they are the owners of life, the guardians of the blood (Tjibaou & Missotte 28).

Connections to the environment are also central to the construction of personal identity – as Bénéïla Houmbouy explains in his 1998 article “Le Kanak vu par lui-même”,⁵⁵ “it is difficult for a Kanak to speak of identity without specifying the bonds which connect him to the *tertre*⁵⁶ where his ancestors were buried, or to the tree beside which he put his house, as well as to Nature in general” (46).

On a group level, the foundation of the system of relationships that defines identity is the clan, a group of families connected to a founding ancestor from a specific *tertre*. Each clan is known by the name of its *tertre* of origin, and is divided into a certain number of lineages, in a hierarchy from eldest through to youngest, each lineage having specific areas of responsibility and rights. The identity of the clan is inscribed in the landscape by way of the names of places passed through and inhabited by the founding fathers, the clan having rights over the different sites that have been passed through (Poédi, “Clan” 43-44).

In all Kanak societies, identity is intimately connected to the land, with people and locations bearing the same names. The relationships of people to the land and to each other, the genealogies which define networks of relationships (and thus identity) as well as roles and responsibilities in customary and subsistence activities, are carried in oral traditions that connect all aspects of spiritual, material and social life (Poédi, “Clan” 43-44). Elements of oral tradition, such as origin (hi)stories, play a key role in the construction and reinforcement of Kanak identities by defining the relationships that underpin social organisation.

This notion of identity based on networks of relationships and connections to land, common to all of the Kanak societies in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, is the base on which the second meaning of Kanak identity described above by Poédi and Tjibaou is founded, that is, a collective reaction born in the struggle against colonisation, a sense of Kanak unity in the face of French cultural and political hegemony. Rather than being rooted in specific

⁵⁵ [The Kanak as he sees himself].

⁵⁶ *Tertre*: the place of origin or mound from which the genealogical pathways of a clan are traced (Mokaddem, “Par les temps qui courent” 99).

indigenous societies, with their own distinct languages and cultures, the second notion of Kanak identity is more linked to the identity of Kanak as a group, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries, in terms of what unites them as they engage with other groups in contemporary New Caledonian society whose origins are outside Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Kanak societies, in particular through their oral traditions, are constantly incorporating new elements, events and influences, and thus are constantly evolving to adapt to current contexts, and so it must be acknowledged that so-called “traditional”⁵⁷ notions of identity, specific to each Kanak society, may equally be influenced by the developments in the second, more recent definition of Kanak identity. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate this potentially bi-directional feedback between identity construction processes in specific Kanak societies and those of Kanak as a group participating in wider New Caledonian society, and the focus of this study is the second notion of Kanak identity, that is, the group identity in the context of wider New Caledonian society.

DESTIN COMMUN

The second key identity that features in the Noumea Agreement is that of the “*destin commun*”. What is the identity implicit in this expression? Most often translated into English as “common destiny” or “shared destiny”, the *destin commun*⁵⁸ is a projected future identity that embraces Kanak along with all of the other communities that have come to make New Caledonia their home over the last two centuries. Item 4 of the Preamble to the Noumea Agreement explicitly acknowledges the contribution and role of these more recently-arrived communities,

Les communautés qui vivent sur le territoire ont acquis par leur participation à l'édification de la Nouvelle-Calédonie une légitimité à y vivre et à continuer de contribuer

⁵⁷ See discussion of the notion of “tradition” later in this chapter .

⁵⁸ Dominique Jouve has suggested that the choice of the term “*destin*” [destiny] rather than “*futur*” or even “*avenir*” (both of which are translated as “future” in English), recalls the notion of tragic destiny (Personal communication 2011). It would be interesting to further explore the semantic implications of the choice of the term “*destin*” – might it be seen as the use of a less concrete and more remote concept than a “common” or “shared future” for example?

*à son développement. Elles sont indispensables à son équilibre social et au fonctionnement de son économie et de ses institutions sociales.*⁵⁹

Further on in Item 4, the vision for the future, inclusive, collective identity of the *destin commun* is outlined,

*Il est aujourd'hui nécessaire de poser les bases d'une citoyenneté de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, permettant au peuple d'origine de constituer avec les hommes et les femmes qui y vivent une communauté humaine affirmant son destin commun.*⁶⁰

Even though the terms “sovereignty” and “citizenship”, rather than “nation”, are employed in the Agreement, (since independence from France is presented as an option, rather than an inevitable outcome), the agreement does set the foundations for what can be seen as having the essential characteristics of a nation-building project. In this project, the restoration and revalorisation of a Kanak identity “confiscated” by colonialism is put forward as the prerequisite to the establishment of a new “social contract” between all communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, and a step that would then open the way for construction of the future collective identity.

It is useful to consider the situation in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie under the Noumea Agreement in terms of Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as an imagined community,

imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 6).

This notion of imagined community captures a major challenge faced in creating the collective identity of the *destin commun*. To build, indeed to imagine such a community, there needs to be a willingness on the part of its constituent groups to create it together, and as Ernest Renan put it, in his famous Sorbonne address of 1882,

⁵⁹ “Through their participation in the construction of New Caledonia, the communities living in the Territory have acquired a legitimacy to live there and to continue contributing to its development. They are essential for its social balance and the operation of its economy and social institutions. ” Translation of Item 4, Preamble, Agreement on New Caledonia signed in Noumea, May 5, 1998 (SPC Pacific Community translation services, informal translation).

⁶⁰ “It is now necessary to start making provision for a citizenship of New Caledonia, enabling the original people to form a human community, asserting its common destiny, with the other men and women living there.” Translation of Item 4, Preamble, Agreement on New Caledonia signed in Noumea, May 5, 1998 (SPC Pacific Community translation services, informal translation).

*[la nation] se résume pourtant dans le présent par un fait tangible : le consentement, le désir clairement exprimé de continuer la vie commune. L'existence d'une nation est (pardonnez-moi cette métaphore) un plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie (42).*⁶¹

Mutual respect and recognition are the necessary conditions for such a willingness on the part of the constituent groups to form a new inclusive community. Major obstacles to this project can arise if there is a lack of understanding and meaningful contact between groups. A further, necessary condition for the creation of a nation, according to Renan, is the idea of a shared past, and this presents another potential obstacle to the project of the *destin commun*. New Caledonian society is typically described as being divided into two main blocs – Kanak and non-Kanak – each possessing a range of very different interpretations of history, making the ideal of a shared past an ambitious one. Dialogue would seem to be key to the discovery of shared elements of the past, but there are still strong barriers to open debate or discussion or even dissemination of different versions of history, as was so clearly demonstrated by the recent decision by the owner of the only cinema complex in Noumea not to show “*L’Ordre et la Morale*”, the Mathieu Kassovitz film that recounts a version of the tragic events that took place at Gossanah in the 1980s. The justification used was that the material was too “polarising”.⁶²

Tradition

“Tradition” is a very commonly-used word whose meaning may at first glance seem self-evident, however, it is a loaded term that has encompassed a variety of meanings over time and across academic disciplines. A first step in arriving at the definitions attributed in this thesis to the terms “oral tradition” and “written tradition” involves a closer examination of the term “tradition” itself.

⁶¹ [The nation is, however, summed up in the present by a tangible fact: the agreement, the clearly expressed desire to continue to live together. The existence of a nation is (pardon the expression) a daily plebiscite, just as the existence of the individual is a constant affirmation of life].

⁶² See the article “*Un film sur le massacre d’Ouvéa privé de sortie en Nouvelle-Calédonie*” by Claude Wéry in *Le Monde*, 23 October 2011, p.18.

Some of its slipperiness, in particular the difficulty in pinning down its meaning with respect to time, is captured by Jean-Marie Tjibaou in his 1981 address given at the Université de Genève,⁶³

*Traditionnellement – quand je dis traditionnellement, je suis gêné pour définir ce mot, surtout ici, à l’université. Qu’est-ce que cela veut dire “traditionnellement” ? Cela voudrait dire “hier” et, je l’ai déjà dit, pour moi, hier, c’est jusqu’à maintenant (Tjibaou, La présence kanak 103).*⁶⁴

The *Oxford English Dictionary* presents four definitions of “tradition”: “the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way”; “a long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another”; “an artistic or literary method or style established by an artist, writer, or movement, and subsequently followed by others”; and in Theology, “a doctrine believed to have divine authority though not in the scriptures” (“Tradition” *n.p.*).

Other than the legal definition relating to the material transmission of furniture and goods, the definitions of “*tradition*” provided in *Le Grand Robert* under the heading “*Transmission non-matérielle*” largely map onto those of the *OED*:

*Doctrine ou pratique, religieuse ou morale, transmise de siècle en siècle, originellement par la parole ou l'exemple (mais pouvant par la suite être consignée dans un texte écrit)*⁶⁵ as well as the “*Ensemble de doctrines et de pratiques ainsi transmises*”;⁶⁶ “*La Tradition (par oppos. et parallèlement à l'Écriture) : l'ensemble de doctrines et de pratiques attribuées aux communautés fondées par les Apôtres*”;⁶⁷ “*Information relative au passé, plus ou moins légendaire, non consignée dans des documents originaux, et transmise d'abord oralement de génération en génération; ensemble d'informations de ce genre*”;⁶⁸ “*Dans le domaine de la connaissance, des techniques, des arts, des mœurs...*

⁶³ It was recorded and later published as “Être Mélanésien aujourd’hui” in the journal *Esprit* (57:81-93) of the same year (Waddell 96).

⁶⁴ [Traditionally – when I say traditionally, I find it difficult to define this word, especially here, at the university. What does ‘traditionally’ mean? It can mean ‘yesterday’ and, as I have already said, for me yesterday is up until the present moment].

⁶⁵ [Religious or moral doctrine or practice, transmitted from century to century, originally by spoken word or example (but later able to be consigned to written text)].

⁶⁶ [Collection of doctrines and practices thus transmitted].

⁶⁷ [Tradition (contrary and parallel to Writing): the collection of doctrines and practices attributed to the communities founded by the Apostles].

⁶⁸ [Information relating to the past, more or less legendary, not consigned to original documents, and first transmitted orally from generation to generation; the collection of information of this type].

Manière, ou ensemble de manières, de penser, de faire ou d'agir, qui est un héritage du passé".⁶⁹

Both sets of definitions include conceptions of “tradition” as both a process (of transmission) and product, and in the theological as well as the non-religious sense, also equate “tradition” with orality and an absence of writing. Interestingly, the antonym given for “tradition” in *Le Grand Robert* is “*innovation*”, which would appear to associate orality indirectly with a lack of innovation.

In her Milman Parry Lecture in 1991, entitled *Tradition, But What Tradition and For Whom?*, the eminent anthropologist and scholar of oral tradition, Ruth Finnegan, examines the history and meanings of the term “tradition” and some of the assumptions and problems associated with it. Citing reference book and dictionary definitions of the word tradition, Finnegan concludes that tradition can have a number of different meanings, and that while there is a general, reasonably neutral meaning which involves the process of transmission (mainly by word of mouth) and the content of what is handed down (which is linked to custom and what is old), it is often “linked with deeply felt academic, moral and political values” (105). This is because the term “tradition” is fundamental to the scholarly disciplines of Anthropology, Folklore and Sociology, and is linked also to the historical development of these disciplines. In the case of Anthropology, for which the subject of research was initially “primitive” societies, the idea of the one-way evolutionary ladder placed “civilised” European cultures at the top and “primitive” peoples at the bottom. Peoples of “traditional” societies were seen to represent an earlier, less-advanced (“primitive”) stage of human development, whereas the peoples at the top of the ladder, from “non-traditional” societies, represented the more advanced (“civilised”) stage of human development. In this model, vestiges of “tradition” could still remain within “non-traditional” societies, and these “survivals” and “relics” of earlier times were the focus of the academic discipline of Folklore.

Finnegan goes on to discuss the influence of social theories of the nineteenth century, in Anthropology and Sociology which set up a binary division between two types of society, the “non-industrial” (traditional) society characterised by an emphasis on religion and

⁶⁹ [In the domain of technical, artistic and moral knowledge, the way, or ways of thinking, doing or acting that is the heritage of the past].

unchanging tradition from the distant past, face-to-face oral communication, lack of change and closeness to nature, and the “industrial” (modern) society, in which rationality, literacy and individuality were valued and change was a constant. The subject of study for anthropologists was the “traditional” society, and for sociologists, the “modern” society, and Finnegan points out that while there was no evidence to support it, the idea that a society that exhibited one of the traditional characteristics must therefore possess all of the others gained currency (107). She argues that the expansion of colonial empires in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reinforced this idea of tradition equating to backwardness and lack of change, because it justified the West bringing change, literacy and enlightenment to old and unchanging colonies supposedly without history (108).

Tradition has been used to help define academic disciplines and their areas of study, to support the ideology of Western colonial and commercial expansion, and it also served to give “a sense of confidence” to new nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example by contributing to the creation of national identity through the discovery of “traditional” epics, songs and narratives (109).

Finnegan highlights recent developments that have taken place in Anthropology and Folklore, two disciplines associated closely with the study of tradition. There has been a shift in emphasis in which the dynamic characteristics of tradition, change and innovation, and the interactions between oral and written traditions have become increasingly the focus of research. The monolithic image of fixed and unchanging tradition is being broken down, with more studies investigating the creativity and innovative practices of individual artists within traditions. The assumption of a binary divide between oral/traditional societies on one side and written/modern/non-traditional societies on the other is giving way to awareness of the diversity of mixed situations, and there is increasing attention being paid to the historical and political contexts in which traditions exist and develop (111–12). The influential 1983 book *The Invention of Tradition*, which brought to the fore the idea that the age of a tradition⁷⁰ is relative,⁷¹ and that developments and continuation of tradition are shaped by relations of power and the interest of specific groups, is an important example of recent scholarship that

⁷⁰ Tradition taken here to mean a set of beliefs or practices that have been handed from generation to generation.

⁷¹ “[...] it only takes two generations to make anything **traditional**: naturally enough, since that is the sense of tradition as an active process” (Williams 319) (emphasis in original).

focuses on the dynamic nature of traditions, their specificities and the importance of historically and politically contextualising them.

Despite the acknowledgement of the complexity, diversity and dynamic nature of traditions that has taken place in the social sciences in more recent decades, the ethnocentric model of the binary division between that which is traditional/oral/unchanging/non-Western and that which is modern/literate/changing/Western still persists,⁷² embedded as it is in cultural and historical contexts, and the term tradition still carries with it these connotations, making it all the more important to define which aspect of tradition is being examined, by whom and in what context whenever the term is encountered.

Long seen as a product, the term tradition has come to be applied to processes since the later twentieth century. In ethnography and related disciplines, there is a current of thought that focuses on the ways tradition is continually created and adapted by contemporary, living cultures. Rather than static, fixed anomalies, traditions are considered to be linked to the activities that allow cultures to grow and change in order to perpetuate themselves. If the products of societies are the result of ongoing creation and transformation, both the products and their processes can be considered traditions (Cancel 316).

In this study, the term “tradition” is used in its broadest sense to denote both a process of handing down through time and what is handed down. An important distinction is that the mode of transmission may be oral, written, visual, or any other mode – tradition here is not associated particularly with the oral as it is in many reference books and dictionaries. The content, or “that which is handed down” is chosen according to what is considered to be of value at the time of transmission and is thus affected by the decisions of individuals involved in the transmission process. In other words, tradition is subject to variation both as a result of the social and historical circumstances that shape it and because of the actions of individuals during the transmission process.

⁷² As illustrated in the earlier description of the division of New Caledonian society into Kanak and non-Kanak “blocs” which has in turn largely determined the type of research undertaken on each of the blocs, as well as the disciplines in which this research has taken place.

Oral Tradition

The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s entry for "oral" is pertinent to the definition of oral tradition,⁷³ with the definitions of "oral" given as: "spoken rather than written; verbal"; "relating to the transmission of information or literature by word of mouth"; and when used to refer to a society, "not having reached the stage of literacy."

There is an inherent ambiguity in the term "oral", which can be taken to mean either "voiced" in the sense of the articulation of sound by a human being, or to mean that which is "not written", (which is also ambiguous given that in addition to verbalised, "not written" can also encompass that which is visual, gestural, musical...).⁷⁴ The *OED* definition of "oral" as both a spoken or unwritten mode of transmission, and, when describing a society, as a developmental stage that comes before literacy illustrates how embedded the notion of an evolutionary progression from "pre-literate" to "literate" is. Setting aside the problematic nature of the term "oral society",⁷⁵ we see that rather than using a definition of an "oral society" such as Louis-Jean Calvet's, "a society in which the primary mode of communication is orality",⁷⁶ here it is defined in terms of what it is said to lack, or what it has not yet acquired, that is, literacy. Thus a hierarchy is set up in which the written is positioned above the unwritten, in particular with respect to the acquisition and recording of knowledge. In the introduction to his book *La Tradition orale*, Calvet talks of the negative connotations of the term "illiterate"⁷⁷ or "unlettered"⁷⁸ in which knowledge of the alphabet is seen as a prerequisite to all other forms of knowledge, as if knowledge must be acquired through the

⁷³ Aside from the definitions relating to the mouth ("relating to the mouth: oral hygiene, done or taken by the mouth: oral contraceptives"), and to the fields of Phonetics ("(of a speech sound) pronounced by the voice resonating in the mouth, as the vowels in English. Compare with nasal"), Psychoanalysis ("(in Freudian theory) relating to or denoting a stage of infantile psychosexual development in which the mouth is the main source of pleasure and the centre of experience"), and the noun "a spoken examination or test".

⁷⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the multiplicity of human modes of communication, see Ruth Finnegan, *Communicating: The Multiple Modes of Human Interconnection* (2002).

⁷⁵ In her article "How Oral is Oral Literature?", Ruth Finnegan argues that there is no such thing as a purely oral society, and oral and written literatures exist on a continuum rather than being discrete entities – she asserts that "far from only or normally existing in purely 'primitive' and non-literate contexts, oral literary forms can also exist in conditions marked by marginal or even full literacy, and that some co-existence and often interaction with written literature is in practice the most common form as far as the corpus of collected or collectible material goes" (59-60).

⁷⁶ Orality being defined by Calvet as a mode of communication privileging an auditory perception of a message.

⁷⁷ "analphabète"

⁷⁸ "illettré"

medium of writing. He states that this “ideological vision” of the relationship between knowledge and writing is strong in “our societies”⁷⁹ (Calvet 2).

In answer to the question “What is Oral Tradition?”, the scholar of comparative oral tradition John Miles Foley offers the caveat that oral tradition is “a communications medium so vast, diverse and omnipresent that it will always resist easy or final definition, no matter how hard we try”. Adding that for specific traditions these would need to be refined, he proposes a series of “generalizations” that can be used to characterise oral tradition: oral tradition is the oldest human thought-technology and was the only such technology for most of human existence, and that it was sufficient to support all aspects of human social activity; oral tradition is still the most widely used form of human thought-technology in use on the planet, existing in all societies in the world; and oral tradition “far surpasses” written and printed literature in quantity, diversity of content and function (Foley, 2009).

In answer to the question, “Just What is OT Technology?”, in his 2009 article “Navigating Pathways: Oral Tradition and the Internet”, he emphasises the technological dimensions of oral tradition, presenting it alongside written tradition as a form of human thought-technology, defined as “a specialized, dedicated technology that supports human communication, and therefore the sharing of knowledge”. According to Foley, oral tradition is,

far more than “mere talking”, just as written communication involves far more than “mere scrawling”. OT uses patterning of all sorts – with mnemonic structures based on rhythm, music, phraseology, and other aspects of human articulation – to transmit art, history, medicine, law, psychology and scores of other familiar kinds of social knowledge through a network. Oral traditions serve the groups that use them as nothing less than essential tools for living, for keeping available the ideas and know-how we now deposit in books and more recently in data-bases. At its root, OT is a special case of language, a highly coded and idiomatic variety meant to answer particular social needs (Foley, 2009).

⁷⁹ Read here French society specifically alongside Western societies in general.

What are the defining features of this powerful thought-technology? In his influential book *Oral Tradition as History*,⁸⁰ a study of ways in which oral traditions can be used for historical research, Jan Vansina states that oral traditions contain,

verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation. The definition specifies that the message must be oral statements spoken, sung or called out on musical instruments only (27).

His definition focuses on the dynamic aspects of oral tradition – the movement through generations, and the ever-changing composition of any tradition across time:

The expression “oral tradition” applies both to a process and its products. The products are oral messages, at least a generation old. The process is the transmission of such messages by word of mouth over time until the disappearance of the message. Hence any given oral tradition is but a rendering at one moment, an element in a process of oral development that began with the original communication (3).

The entry for “oral tradition” found in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* contains both senses of “oral” (“verbalised sound” and “not written”):

The passing on from one generation (and/or locality) to another of songs, chants, proverbs and other verbal compositions within and between non-literate cultures; or the accumulated stock of works thus transmitted by word of mouth. Ballads, folktales and other works emerging from an oral tradition will often be found in several different versions, because each performance is a fresh improvisation based around a core of narrative incidents and formulaic phrases. The state of dependence on the spoken word in oral cultures is called orality (240-41).

The notion of tradition as process and product of transmission between generations is evident in both Vansina’s and the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*’ definitions. In oral tradition, the process of transmission is primarily language-based, verbal, relying on the spoken (or sung) word (although visual aids, dance and music may also be involved), and what is transmitted, the product, is an oral message or verbal composition. The *ODLT* definition also highlights the importance of the performative dimension of oral tradition, which leads to the presence of multiple versions of a work of verbal art, since there is no “original” work, fixed in form and content, but rather a “core” on which each performance of said work is based.

⁸⁰ A substantially revised and extended version of his pioneering ethnohistorical book published in 1961 - *De la tradition orale. Essai de méthode historique*.

An important dimension of oral tradition that does not figure in the definitions above is the function of oral tradition. What purpose do these “oral statements” from the past serve? Robert Cancel, in his section “Oral Traditions” in *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (2004), succinctly outlines the roles that oral traditions play in societies,

[...] they constitute living representations of significant cultural information: history, values, instructions, ritual activities,[...] they are a dynamic form of entertainment based in the development and appreciation of artistic skills of speech, song, mime, gesture, dance and instrumental music. [...] Indeed, the elements of social function and aesthetic pleasure combine in oral traditions to make a highly effective network of cultural expression, educating and entertaining at the same time. The blurred line between artifice and reality is the space in which individuals create their statements on cultural issues, confirming or challenging old and new assumptions, depending on their respective points of view. These on-going statements and debates are the means by which the culture renews, reaffirms and regenerates itself in words and music (635).

Social function and aesthetic pleasure - education, entertainment, conservation of “significant cultural information”, space for innovation and challenge, cultural renewal and regeneration - oral traditions have multiple roles to play.

In this study, the term “oral tradition” is taken to mean a dynamic “network of cultural expression” that is the repository of the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, rules and practices of a group of people, and educates, entertains and creates social cohesion. Its existence is maintained over time by the selective transmission of what are considered necessary elements from generation to generation, and it is constantly being “renewed, reaffirmed and regenerated” through the creativity of the people whose expression it represents.

In the islands of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie there are many oral traditions to be found – different language communities have their own oral traditions coexisting to a greater or lesser extent with written traditions – and these include oral traditions of groups with origins in Wallis (Uvea), Futuna, Tahiti and the other islands that make up La Polynésie française, Indonesia, Vietnam, France, Corsica, the Basque country, Vanuatu, as well as the diverse oral traditions of the indigenous peoples of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. The latter traditions are the focus of inquiry of this study, and are the source of the story *Le Chef et le lézard* whose paths are followed as different versions move beyond their traditions of origin.

KANAK ORAL TRADITIONS

For thousands of years the Kanak peoples of New Caledonia have transmitted their values, history, customs, relationships, and collective wisdom from generation to generation through their oral traditions. Although there is a remarkable level of linguistic diversity in the islands,⁸¹ the fact remains that there are commonalities between these traditions, attributable to thousands of years of coexistence and factors such as intermarriage, multilingualism and cultural contact and exchange. Of these commonalities, the central significance of the spoken word (translated by Kanak translators as *la parole*)⁸² is one of the most important.

*Comme dans toutes les sociétés dites orales, la parole est un acte sacré dans la société kanak. Au-delà de la simple extériorisation des sentiments, elle est à la fois instrument et lieu d'action de l'individu et de la communauté dans l'esprit même de la mémoire collective (Somdah 88).*⁸³

La Parole, the basis of Kanak oral traditions and vehicle of Custom, plays an essential role in the life of Kanak communities, everything is linked to it and by it, and it is at the heart of a “whole way of being, a philosophy of living, a way to negotiate one’s relationship with the universe” explains Gabriel Poédi,

Dans la langue a'jië, coutume⁸⁴ se dit : nô, qui est la parole de tous, l'histoire d'un peuple, le lien sacré entre le monde de l'invisible et celui du visible. Elle est vivante et

⁸¹ Comparative linguistic studies have established that the 28+ Kanak languages have a common origin, that they are related and that they began fragmenting and differentiating over three thousand years ago (F. Rivierre, *L'Orientalisation* 5).

⁸² The missionary-ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt made this observation in his description of the special terms for “the word” employed in Ajië and Drehu: “in the thirty-six languages of the New Caledonian archipelago, many verbs express various modalities of speech, but the word is signified in only two manners. Either the term which designates it has its root in the morpheme *va*, which is a carry-over from Asia and one of the linguistic contributions of migrations by way of Indonesia, or a special term unrelated to the act of speaking is used. These special terms are *no* in Houaïlou and *ewekë* in Lifou. Surprisingly, it was the Caledonians and Lifouans themselves who, on contact with colonization, each translated the term by *parole* in French” (*Do Kamo* 127).

⁸³ [As in all so-called oral societies, *la Parole* is a sacred act in Kanak society. More than simply the external expression of feelings, it is simultaneously the instrument and the site of action of the individual and the community in the spirit of collective memory].

⁸⁴ Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta (2006) provides a succinct definition of Custom, and “*faire la coutume*” (the ritual of customary greeting): “*Coutume, faire la coutume : prestations échangées pendant les rencontres entre groupes claniques, lors des événements (mariages, deuils, naissances). Elle consiste en dons de biens alimentaires et richesses matérielles (nattes, étoffes, monnaies traditionnelles et européennes). Ces prestations sont toujours offertes avec des discours qui rappellent les liens des clans en présence. La coutume désigne aussi l'ensemble des traditions et de ses règles*” (6). [Custom, “*faire la coutume*”: items exchanged during meetings between clan groups, during events (marriages, funerals, births). It consists of gifts of food goods and material wealth (woven mats, fabric, traditional ceremonial and European money). These items are always offered with

elle respecte des règles précises et pensées. Elle correspond à un ordre et à une organisation, à un chemin, à des étapes par lesquelles il faut obligatoirement passer pour établir une relation. Elle est toute une manière d'être, une philosophie de la vie, une manière de négocier ses relations avec l'univers. La parole kanak ne peut donc pas exister sans la personne kanak. Or, chaque individu est légion. Elle est une porte d'entrée vers des relations sociales et spirituelles complexes dans la tribu mais aussi vers l'extérieur ("Coutume" 69).⁸⁵

In her 2006 DEA dissertation, "*La littérature orale paicî : fonction éducative et transmission des savoirs (Centre-Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie)*",⁸⁶ Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta, Kanak educator and researcher, elaborates on the link between *la Parole multifonctionnelle*⁸⁷ and oral tradition, the former manifesting itself in the latter, which is perpetuated from generation to generation by society, leading to the creation of a heritage of oral literature that has been preserved despite the vicissitudes of history. She notes that oral traditions have been kept alive thanks to ceremonial gatherings and the practice of custom, and through the system of biological and classificatory kinship that has enabled the process of transmission of oral literature (6).

KANAK ORAL LITERATURES

In the first comprehensive anthology of New Caledonian literature, *Paroles et Écritures : Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne* (1994), François Bogliolo uses the heading "*Genres littéraires des traditions orales*"⁸⁸ in the chapter entitled "*Oralité*" that presents translations of Kanak oral literature, often accompanied by the original transcribed text. These "literary genres of oral traditions" are the elements of Kanak oral traditions that constitute Kanak oral literatures and that are widely referred to as "*la littérature orale*

speeches that recall the bonds between the clans present. Custom also designates the collection of traditions and of its rules].

⁸⁵ [In the Ajië language, custom is known as nô, which is the word of everyone, the story of a people, the sacred link between the visible and invisible worlds. It is living and respects precise and thought out rules. It corresponds to an order and an organisation, a path, and the obligatory stages which must be passed through to establish a relationship. It is thus a whole way of being, a philosophy of living, a way to negotiate one's relationship with the universe. The Kanak word cannot exist without the Kanak person. So each individual is legion, the doorway to complex social and spiritual relationships within the tribe but also towards the outside].

⁸⁶ [Paicî oral literature: its role in education and transmission of knowledge (Centre-North of New Caledonia)]

⁸⁷ [the multipurpose Word]

⁸⁸ [Literary Genres of Oral Traditions]

kanak”,⁸⁹ or simply “*la littérature orale*”,⁹⁰ sometimes with the Kanak language specified such as in “*la littérature orale nemi*”.⁹¹

The problematic nature of the oxymoron “oral literature”, which defines the spoken verbal arts in terms of the written⁹² has led to the creation of neologisms such as “orature”, “oraliture”, “auriture” and “oralcy” that challenge the hierarchy set up between oral and written,⁹³ and, as in the case of “orature”, coined in the 1970s by the Ugandan linguist Pio Zirimu, represent an attempt to “counter the tendency to see the arts communicated orally and received aurally as an inferior or a lower rung in the linear development of literature” (Thiong’o 4).

Despite the awareness in writings relating to Kanak oral tradition of the existence of the debate around nomenclature, in particular with respect to “*oraliture*” which is more widely used in Francophone studies of orality on the African continent and in the Antilles, in the New Caledonian context “*la littérature orale*” remains the most commonly used expression both in scholarly and in general circles,⁹⁴ and for this reason, “oral literature” is the expression that will be retained in this study to refer to these elements of Kanak oral traditions.

In the following pages, a brief overview of key characteristics of Kanak oral literatures is given since they are the source of the versions of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that constitute the corpus at the heart of this study. The relationships between oral tradition, oral

⁸⁹ [Kanak oral literature]. For example, in Bogliolo, "De la littérature orale kanak à la littérature calédonienne" (1999).

⁹⁰ [oral literature]. For example, in Collectif, *Littérature Orale : 60 contes mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1980).

⁹¹ [Nemi oral literature]. For example, in Rivierre, "La littérature orale nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie)," (1975).

⁹² See the etymological links between the term “literature” and the written word.

⁹³ See the discussion of the dichotomy between “oral” and “tradition” on the one hand, and “written” and “modern” on the other, discussed earlier in this chapter.

⁹⁴ Despite the acknowledgement of the different terms, as found in the seminar recently offered as part of the *Master Recherche, mention Arts, lettres et civilisations* at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* which was entitled “*Oraliture et Traduction*”, and the discussion of the debate within the course, *la littérature orale kanak* remains the term used in reference to elements of Kanak oral traditions. It would be interesting to investigate further why the term “oral literature” is preferred; whether it is simply a question of no perceived need to change the term, and whether the oxymoron carries the same negative charge in the New Caledonian context. Is the comparison contained within the term “oral literature” seen as affirming the literary value of elements of oral tradition that were so long seen as less valuable in the academy and in general New Caledonian society? Does the strength of the presence of oral traditions in Kanak societies and of orality in New Caledonia in general, serve to mitigate the hierarchical connotations inherent in the expression “oral literature”?

literature and genres such as *conte*⁹⁵ and *légende*⁹⁶ are outlined by Léonard Sam, the Kanak educator and linguist, in his presentation of “Littérature traditionnelle” found in the third volume of the encyclopedic *Chroniques du pays kanak* (1999),

*Les termes de “littérature orale kanak” évoquent invariablement les “contes et légendes”. Or les “contes et légendes” ne sont qu’une composante de cette littérature qui n’est en elle-même qu’une composante de la “tradition orale” que nous pouvons définir comme l’ensemble de faits, de récits, de doctrines, d’opinions, de coutumes, d’usages etc., transmis oralement sur un long espace de temps (106).*⁹⁷

He characterises Kanak oral literature as being inscribed in the collective memory, rather than written down, and cites a colleague’s description in which she likens oral literature to music without a score (106). In a seminar given in 2010 as part of the Masters course “*Oraliture et Traduction*” offered at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Sam presented a general definition of oral literature as, “*la partie de la tradition orale qui est mise en forme selon un code propre à chaque société et à chaque langue en référence à un fond culturel*”⁹⁸ and then went on to provide a definition more specific to Kanak oral literature as “*un ensemble de*

⁹⁵ According to the website of the *Centre Méditerranéen de Littérature Orale* (www.euroconte.org), a *conte* can be defined as: a story situated in an undetermined time and place. A seemingly simple, almost naive story, it is both transparent and opaque and its simplicity is deceptive, as it conceals important meaning, saying more than what is said. Like the dream, it introduces itself with an obvious content that hides a latent content. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of French Literature* gives the following definition of *conte*: “a term sometimes applied in a special sense to a type of short fictitious narrative – distinct from the roman [novel] and at first also from the nouvelle [novella] – which does not purport to represent real life, but interests by its wit or charm, by its allegory, or by its moral” (140). The term is used to refer to genres of Kanak oral literature which appear to share its characteristics and though it does not fully describe these genres of Kanak oral literature, as the closest approximation in French, it has become acceptable shorthand and Léonard Drile Sam’s use of the term will be followed in this dissertation.

⁹⁶ According to the website of the *Centre Méditerranéen de Littérature Orale* (www.euroconte.org), *légende* was a term created in the 12th century from the medieval Latin *legenda*, with the meaning of “that which should be read”. In the late 12th century it came to mean “the life of the saint” (especially those read daily in convents), later it came to mean “a fantastic or popular story” that refers to a past time long ago and that is supposedly true. Since then various definitions of *légende* have insisted upon its variable form, its localisation in a recognisable landscape or geography, its historical character (in opposition to the *conte*, which is situated beyond time and space, and the *mythe* which is situated beyond time), and the fact that its characters are individuals with some degree of connection to a real society and history. Again, as discussed in the previous footnote with reference to the *conte*, the term *légende*, arising from quite different cultural contexts, continues to be used to refer to genres of Kanak oral literature which appear to share many of its characteristics, thus Léonard Drile Sam’s use of the term will be followed in this dissertation.

⁹⁷ [The terms “Kanak oral literature” invariably bring to mind “tales and legends”. But “tales and legends” are but a component part of this literature, which itself is only a component part of “oral tradition”, which we can define as the collection of facts, stories, rules, opinions, customs and usages etc., transmitted orally over a long distance in time].

⁹⁸ [the part of an oral tradition that is shaped according to a code belonging to each society and each language referring back to a cultural foundation].

récits de fiction semi-fixés, anonymes, transmis oralement, variables dans leur forme, mais pas dans leur fond".⁹⁹ The notion of “*semi-fixés*” captures the phenomenon of variation in oral stories, which are never identically reproduced in each performance, but which have a core of elements that are preserved from performance to performance over time.

In the Masters seminar, Sam explored some of the possibilities for the classification of elements of oral tradition, offering one model of Kanak oral heritage (“*la patrimoine orale kanak*”) as comprising two categories – “stories” and “non-stories” (“*récits et non-récits*”). In this model “*récits*” can be “*semi-fixés*”¹⁰⁰ (as in the case of *contes* and *légendes*), or “*pas fixés*”¹⁰¹ (as in the case of some *anecdotes*, for example). “*Non-récits*” can involve practical know-how or “*savoir-faire*”, as well as genres associated with “*récits*” such as *jeux*,¹⁰² *devinettes*¹⁰³ and *proverbes*.¹⁰⁴

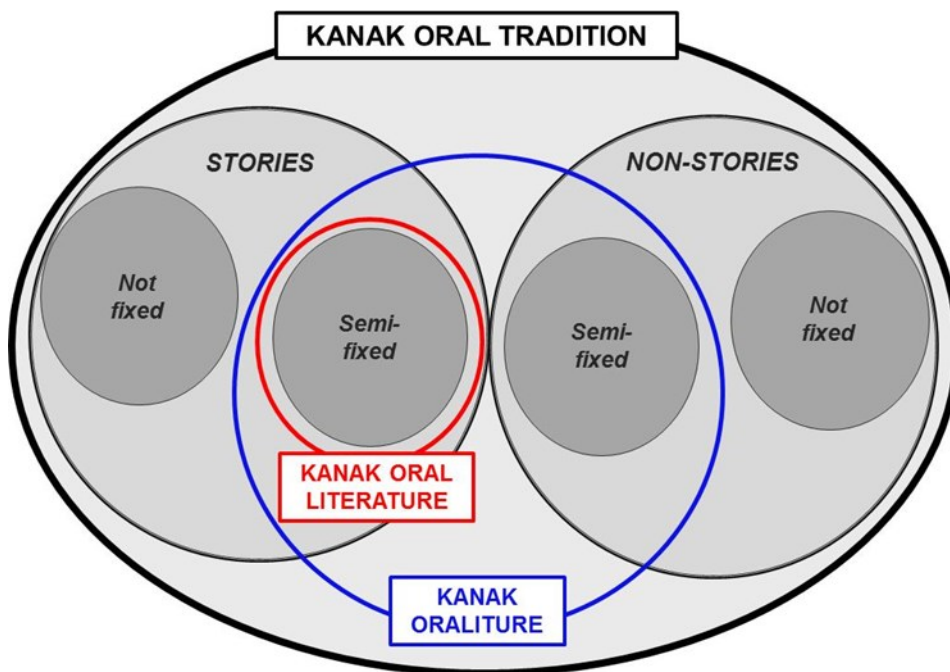


Figure 2 - A Model of the Component Elements of Kanak Oral Tradition

⁹⁹ [a collection of semi-fixed, fictional stories, anonymous, transmitted orally, variable in their form but not their content].

¹⁰⁰ [semi-fixed]

¹⁰¹ [not fixed]

¹⁰² [word games]

¹⁰³ [riddles]

¹⁰⁴ [proverbs]

As can be seen in the model in Figure 2 developed from the information presented in Léonard Drilë Sam's 2010 seminars in the course "*Oraliture et Traduction*", the category of *récits sémi-fixés* maps directly onto that of *la littérature orale kanak*, which in turn is part of *oraliture*, along with the categories of *non-récits: jeux, devinettes* and *proverbes*. There are differing viewpoints as to whether "*mythes*" or "*récits historico-mythiques*"¹⁰⁵ belong in "*la littérature orale*" or "*l'oraliture*",¹⁰⁶ this would seem to depend on whether the emphasis is being placed on their literary or their historical dimensions, which would see them categorised as either "*récits*" or "*non-récits*".

In the section "*La littérature orale kanak*" of his contribution to *Chroniques du pays kanak*, Sam discusses the problems faced in any attempt to classify genres of Kanak oral literature using Western literary categories such as "*contes et légendes*". He agrees with Weniko Ihage's assertion, in *La littérature orale à Lifou* (1992), that there is no direct correspondence between Western and Kanak classifications of stories into genres, however, Sam argues that the multiplicity of Kanak languages and the associated diversity of oral traditions make it necessary, on a pragmatic level, to employ terms used in Western classification.¹⁰⁷ He adds that it is, however, possible to provide more nuanced descriptions, founded on the notion that there are two distinctions that are common to Kanak traditions of different languages, whether explicit terms for these distinctions exist in the language or not, and these distinctions correspond to "*Type I*" and "*Type II*" stories (106).

Broadly speaking, *Type I* stories correspond more closely to *contes*, and Sam would include in this category fantastic stories that most often contain plants and animals but also nameless people (with at most a qualifier), and that they explain a phenomenon or a current fact, or end with a moral lesson. Just as with *contes* and *légendes*, these stories are not anchored in the landscape, nor are they connected with reality other than to be inspired by it. The *Type II* stories, which would be more closely aligned with *légendes*, have "a translation in reality", either because they are a "degradation of myth" which is the "identity card of Kanak society",

¹⁰⁵ This term emphasising the historical dimension alongside the mythic dimension is used by Bensa and Rivierre (1994) and Wetta-Gurrera (2005).

¹⁰⁶ Whether considered stories or non-stories, the (hi)stories are semi-fixed, hence their inclusion in either the category of Kanak Oral Literature or of Kanak Oraliture in Figure 2 above.

¹⁰⁷ It could be said that Western categories are employed here in much the same way as the French language is employed as the *lingua franca*.

or because they provide a detailed explanation, either of the exploits of warrior heroes or the gods and spirits in which Kanak believe. While *Type I* stories may consist of several different versions and can be found in several linguistic areas, the *Type II* stories tend to be more stable and more rooted in the landscape, because the characters are clearly identified and the story is localised. Sam illustrates the distinction with an example taken from the Paicî region – he says that in the Paicî region, people distinguish between *tâgâdé* and *jékutâ*, the first being closer to a *conte* and the second to a *légende* (107).

Sam also highlighted several criteria that might be useful for the classification of elements of Kanak oral literature. The first criterion mentioned was that of “*diffusion*” – some genres are for widespread circulation, others are restricted in their potential audiences and circumstances in which they are allowed to be recounted (often secret). The second criterion involved the “*volume et prestige*” of the genres, which were divided into “*noble*” and “*petit*” categories – *mythes*, *contes* and *légendes* belonging to the former category, with *proverbes*, *dictons*,¹⁰⁸ *devinettes* etc belonging to the latter. The third criterion explored by Sam was that of the “*mode d’énonciation*”, in which he identified four modes: spoken (e.g. *dictons*); recounted (e.g. *conte*); sung (e.g. *berceuse*); and proclaimed (e.g. *discours sur le bois* – speeches given in ceremonial contexts by an orator¹⁰⁹ standing on a high branch as a speaking platform).

The information from Sam’s 2010 seminar presented here offers a glimpse into the scale and complexity of the challenge involved in formulating models and definitions that can be applied to Kanak oral traditions. The complexity is generated by the number of different traditions involved and the fact that while they share many structural characteristics, they also retain their specificity. Despite the great challenge, Kanak thinkers, such as Léonard Drilë Sam, Déwé Görödé, Wéniko Ihage and Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta, have begun to lay the foundations for this work in their various writings on oral traditions, opening up questions and thinking through different approaches that may be useful for the project of describing and understanding the many interlinked polysystems that make up Kanak oral tradition as a whole.

¹⁰⁸ [sayings]

¹⁰⁹ In this particular example, the term “orator” is appropriate according to the Western definition of the term. In this study, the terms orator, narrator and storyteller are used interchangeably to refer to the performer involved in a particular oral performance event,

Keeping in mind John Foley's caveat¹¹⁰ regarding the resistance of oral tradition to complete definition, which is also applicable to oral literature, I will now present selected aspects of Kanak oral literature, with respect to the notions of "process" (transmission of stories), "product" (form and content of stories) and "function" (of stories in Kanak societies), in order to highlight their specific characteristics.

The process of transmission of stories of Kanak oral literature can be seen as operating synchronically and diachronically, and in both cases, works to perpetuate the stories. The diachronic process involves the acquisition of the story by each new generation of tellers, while the synchronic process manifests itself in each performance of the story before an audience, (potentially made up of any combination of generations), familiar with the story to a greater or lesser degree (though its members may or may not retell it) and actively involved in future retellings through their role in voicing approval of the orator and the contents of the story.

The apprenticeship for the teller of a story begins in early childhood, as Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta has described for children of the Paicî region,¹¹¹ and while it is specific to her own culture, her exposition gives an insight into the ways in which elements of oral tradition are transmitted in different Kanak societies. Gurrera-Wetta writes that in Paicî society, in the extended family unit, all children of all ages receive an education in matters of behaviour, attitude and language to be used in different circumstances or in relation to certain people.

From the age of eight to ten years old, boys and girls receive different instruction – girls are surrounded by women (mothers, aunts and grandmothers), and boys by men (fathers, uncles and grandfathers). Education is organised around group activities such as hunting, fishing, weaving, building, and around the seasons (cultivation, harvest, seasonal fishing). Children learn by helping and listening to adults who demonstrate their practical knowhow in the field.

There is also more specialised education such as in matters of medicine, ritual, and communication with the otherworld, depending on the talents of learners who become

¹¹⁰ See page 33 of the present chapter.

¹¹¹ See section 2.1 "L'oralité et sa transmission" of the chapter entitled "La littérature orale paicî" in her 2006 DEA thesis, "La littérature orale paicî : fonction éducative et transmission des savoirs (Centre-Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie)".

initiated adults. Some knowledge is acquired by all, while other knowledge is reserved for a smaller number, and the responsibility for the transmission lies with fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts and grandparents (6-7).

Gurrera-Wetta then describes the transmission of stories as involving much the same process as that for general education. Babies go to sleep listening to lullabies (*ololo*), learn about using their bodies, about music and rhythm through games and songs with their mothers. Later, when children learn to speak, they are told short stories to help them to express themselves and learn the names of animals and plants. Then from the age of 4-5 years, children listen to stories about the travels and bravery of people or animals, stories designed to open them up to the outside world as well as instil in them a sense of danger. Up until adolescence, all children are invited to storytelling sessions.

Only certain adolescents will be taken in hand by the storyteller in order to teach them both the techniques of storytelling and the messages that the stories reveal, in particular, the symbolism of certain elements of Nature. The stories are overflowing with metaphors, and the apprentice storyteller's training also includes ceremonies and activities that echo the concepts expressed in the stories. A growing consciousness of these values brings the adolescents to adult status, at which stage the teacher-storyteller gives them the opportunity to speak, and little by little, the apprentice takes on fully the role of storyteller. Gurrera-Wetta highlights the fact that this mode of knowledge transmission takes place implicitly and is uninterrupted as the child grows into an adult (7-8).

In her doctoral thesis, “Les chemins de l’imaginaire poétique dans le vivaa, discours traditionnel a’jië (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”,¹¹² Julia Ogier-Guindo vividly illustrates the elements of context, transmission and performance involved in the ceremonial oration, the *vivaa* of Ajië oral tradition. She writes that constraints are in operation regarding who can perform a *vivaa* – in the Ajië region, the art of the orator is passed from an elder to one of his classificatory sons or grandsons, who, once he is considered to be sufficiently trained, is permitted to speak on ceremonial occasions for his clan or the group of clans he represents.

¹¹² [The Pathways of the Poetic Imaginary in the Vivaa, Tradition A’jië Oration (New Caledonia)]

The *vivaa*, which comes from the ancestors, belongs to the group, and the orator must have the group's permission before performing it.

The organisers of the ceremonial gathering determine a strict protocol in advance that governs the order of performance of the orators who have been selected and trained by the groups they speak for. The audience participates in the performance, responding to each breath of the orator with “*ëi!*”¹¹³ or “*üü*”.¹¹⁴ Prior to colonisation, ceremonies would take place on the *allée centrale*¹¹⁵ of the village, which no longer happens and today the performance is usually set in the courtyard of the organisers' house. The position of each participating group is precisely determined, each person must stand “at the head” of the pile of yams he is giving. The organisers and guests face one another. In the past, the *allée centrale* was for the hosts, while two parallel *allées* were for the guests.

The content of the speech is the result of a search for consensus amongst the different social groups present – the names pronounced and the order in which they are mentioned are intended to reinforce past alliances. The hierarchy of names in the orations is implicit reference to the clans' status as being “founders of the land” or “adopted”. Often the consensus is difficult to establish, because one group may disagree with the version that an orator gives of its history. A solution for conflict that is generated in this way has to be found in the oration itself, through the adjustment of the story by those who safeguard oral tradition. The constant search for agreement between the different groups within society means that orators are constantly working to establish common representations of the past, and this is what gives the ceremonial genres their dynamism and creativity (25-26).

This last point regarding the constant search for consensus is a dimension of Kanak oral tradition that has echoes in the dynamic and creative processes involved in written history. Though operating in different timeframes, oral and written histories have in common that,

[t]he ‘telling of history’, whether it be oral or written, is not and never has been neutral. It is always the reflection of the priorities of the narrators and their perceptions of the world (Binney 28).

¹¹³ [good, thank you!]

¹¹⁴ [yes!]

¹¹⁵ [central alleyway]

In an essay comparing the life of (hi)stories in Māori oral tradition with those written down in books, the respected historian Judith Binney highlights the common features shared by stories transmitted using two different modes of expression,

History is the shaping of the past by those living in the present. All histories derive from a particular time, a particular place, and a particular cultural heritage. The life of any good written history in Western European culture may itself be only ten to fifteen years before its subject matter is likely to be interpreted by another generation of writers. The life of an oral narrative may be much longer – generations – but all its verifying details, its participants and even its central mythic cell (its symbolic intent, sometimes expressed through parable) may have been altered. It will continue changing, and be changed, as surely as textual history (16).

Thus the process of transmission of Kanak oral literature from generation to generation involves pathways across time frames, as in the case of the storyteller's training and the process of transmission of the techniques and stories from established teacher-storyteller to apprentice. The second dimension of the transmission process, realized in every oral performance of a story, sees the storyteller draw on the "network of potentials" (in the words of John Foley), or the "*mémoire collective*" (described by Léonard Drilë Sam earlier in this chapter) to create a unique version of the story, shaped "in the moment" by the extra-linguistic context in which the performance takes place.

Each unique performance of a story helps to embed it in the mind of the storyteller, and in the minds of the audience members, and this works to maintain the story in that individual and collective memory, ensuring that it remains part of what Sam terms "*le circuit de transmission*" (*Chroniques* 107) enabling the story to be perpetuated from generation to generation.

In "Western" literature¹¹⁶ the author is the locus of the creative and imaginative action that is expressed in the content, the subject matter of the work as well as the formal elements, such

¹¹⁶ Just as the term "Kanak" collapses the identities of the indigenous peoples of Kanaky/New Caledonia into one group, the term "Western" collapses the identities of the different peoples of Western Europe, as well as those in other geographic areas who can trace their origins back to European ancestors, into one group, denying their separate and unique identities. It also follows that just as there are commonalities between distinct Kanak cultures as a function of their interaction and proximity to one another throughout history, so there exist commonalities between so-called "Western" cultures as a function of their shared histories and contact. For the

as genre or use of language. The Romantic notion that each work is an individual creation attributable to the unique creative genius of the author still persists.

In Kanak oral literatures, the orator is also the site of creative and imaginative action, but a different kind of creativity is involved. This is because the storyteller is not the sole creator of the story passed down through generations, as explained by Léonard Drilë Sam,

La littérature orale kanak est composée d'un certain nombre de genres dont certains sont à large diffusion (peuvent être racontés à n'importe qui et par n'importe qui) et d'autres à diffusion restreinte (des dépositaires). Mais qu'ils soient à diffusion restreinte ou non, ils n'ont pas d'auteurs connus, attitrés. Avec la publication de cette littérature orale, on commence à parler d'auteurs. Cela est à nuancer. Il faut parler d'auteur de l'ouvrage (celui qui a recueilli) mais pas des récits. Les personnes en question n'ont fait que retranscrire ceux-ci et les traduire ("La littérature orale kanak" 107).¹¹⁷

The place of the storyteller in the clan dictates which stories that are permitted to be told by that person. Each story is the responsibility of a certain group, and the storyteller must be part of the group responsible for a story in order to be able to recount it. Kanak custom governs who is able to tell which story from which genre, and which audience is permitted to hear it.¹¹⁸

Thus each storyteller's version is shaped not only by her/his own experience, memory and talent as an orator; it is also influenced by the performative context, with factors such as the age, gender and composition of the audience, their response and interaction during the performance, and the social and political implications of the material to be included, all have an effect on the final form of the story recounted. The fact that multiple versions of a story

purposes of this study, "Western" is used as an umbrella term that brings together common features, specifically those relevant to the discussion of literature and oral traditions.

¹¹⁷ [Kanak oral literature is composed of a certain number of genres, some of which are widely circulated (can be told to anyone by anyone), and others whose circulation is restricted (to guardians). But whether their circulation is restricted or not, they do not have known or named authors. With the publication of this oral literature, authors are starting to be spoken of. This needs to be nuanced. We should speak of the author of the work (the person who has collected) but not of the stories. Those involved have only transcribed and translated them.]

¹¹⁸ There is a marked difference here between Kanak oral literature and Western literature. This is not the case for Western literature, where access to the work is unrestricted (assuming that the person is literate), for example the printed version of the work can be purchased, borrowed from a library or an acquaintance, and more and more commonly, accessed via the Internet.

may be in circulation further adds to the variety of material that the storyteller has to draw upon or react to during the performance.

Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta has explained the fundamental role played by *la Parole* in Kanak societies,

La parole dicte les comportements, les devoirs et les droits des uns envers les autres. On entend souvent les gens dire : « c'est la parole des vieux », pour légitimer une allégation. La parole maintient donc l'intégrité de la vie sociale. Elle est aussi créatrice de l'univers et de l'homme. Elle règle les rapports entre le monde visible et l'invisible. Au fil du temps, elle est la mémoire du groupe (6).¹¹⁹

Liliane Laubreaux, who produced the earliest PhD thesis on New Caledonian literature in 1996, highlights the role played by oral literature in the transmission of values and ideas to successive generations, and quotes Léonard Sam in her description of oral tradition as “*la manière de penser et d’agir transmise oralement de génération en génération*”,¹²⁰ and the assertion that “*les valeurs Kanakes sont véhiculées par le conte, une des composantes de la littérature orale mélanésienne*” (Laubreaux 151).¹²¹

In his article on Kanak oral literature in *Chroniques du pays kanak* (Tome 3, 1999), Léonard Sam explains how elements of Kanak oral literature carry and perpetuate social rules and values in Kanak societies,

Les « contes et légendes » véhiculent, diffusent et inculquent ainsi les valeurs morales et les règles de conduite véhiculées par la société : l’obéissance, le respect (de la hiérarchie sociale, des vieux, de ses parents, des interdits, des tabous etc.), l’amour (de la famille, du prochain), le pardon, l’entraide, la bravoure, le courage, la modestie, la franchise, etc. Ils véhiculent aussi les croyances traditionnelles comme les relations avec l’au-delà (avec les morts qui poursuivent les vivants, qui les hantent ou qui leur viennent en aide). La nature offre toujours la matière pour illustrer les leçons de morale (115).¹²²

¹¹⁹ [The Word dictates behaviour, responsibilities rights of each toward the other. Often people are heard to say “it’s the Word of the elders”, to legitimise an allegation. Thus the Word maintains the integrity of social life. It also creates the universe and the person. It regulates the relationships between the visible and invisible worlds. As time passes, it is the memory of the group.]

¹²⁰ [the way of thinking and acting, transmitted orally from generation to generation].

¹²¹ [Kanak values are conveyed by the conte, one of the components of Melanesian oral literature].

¹²² [So “contes” and “légendes” carry, circulate and instil the moral values and the rules of conduct carried in society: obedience, respect (for the social hierarchy, the elders, one’s parents, prohibitions, taboos etc), love (for family, for others), forgiveness, mutual aid, bravery, courage, modesty, straightforwardness etc. They also carry

Kanak oral literatures are filled with people, creatures, geographic features, spirits, ancestors, totems, and supernatural beings such as ogres and giants, and the natural world provides the means for illustrating moral lessons and values, while at the same time entertaining the audience.

Oral literature plays an important role in education and initiation into the cultural life of a given society, and as Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre illustrates in her discussion of the stories from Nemi oral tradition that comprise the two volumes of *Textes nemi...*(1979), this educational function is grounded in concrete lessons about the world in which people live,

Dans tous ces types de textes, la toponomie joue un rôle essentiel. Un conteur qui connaît parfaitement la trame d'un récit mais qui a oublié quelques références toponymiques préférera bien souvent ne rien raconter du tout. C'est que ces textes n'ont pas seulement pour fonction de renvoyer à un vécu social. Ils sont aussi l'occasion, pour les plus jeunes, d'un apprentissage très concret de leur espace social autant qu'un prétexte, pour les plus âgés, à sa mémorisation (Vol 1 16).¹²³

Oral literatures help to bind the community together in their performance, as a shared exchange and experience, in their role in education at all levels, and in entertainment. They are the expression not only of the history, rules, beliefs and practices of a society, but also of the aesthetic and creative dimensions of that society, and each performance of an element of Kanak oral literature contributes to the social cohesion of the group from which the literature arises.

Written Tradition

The expression “written tradition” that figures in the title of this thesis, derives its meaning from the same definition of tradition used in the discussion of oral tradition earlier in this chapter. That is, the broad definition of “tradition” as a process, that involves passing on

traditional beliefs such as relationships with the afterlife (with the dead, who follow the living, who haunt them or come to their aid. Nature always provides the material for illustrating moral lessons].

¹²³ [In all these types of text, toponymy plays an essential role. A storyteller who knows the background of a story perfectly, but who has forgotten some of the toponymic references will most often prefer not to tell the story at all. It's because these stories do not only have reference to a social experience as their function. They are also the occasion, for the youngest, for very concrete learning about their social space as much as a pretext, for those who are older, for its memorisation].

something through time, across generations, and as a product – that which is handed down. Thus the main difference between oral and written traditions rests in the differences between the modes of transmission used, or, to use John Foley’s terms, on the differences between the two human thought-technologies. The content, or “that which is handed down” is chosen according to what is considered to be of value at the time of transmission.

The process by which stories are transmitted in written tradition is different from that in oral tradition in three main ways. The first, it is possible for a great distance to exist between the storyteller (the author) and the audience (the readership) in both distance and time. This is due to the existence of the physical text, which can be duplicated, transported and preserved in ways that the oral performance event, immediate and ephemeral, cannot. The second main difference in the process is related to the rise of printing, and the possibility of mass production of texts. A story written down can be printed and distributed to an almost limitless number of readers, who access it through libraries or bookshops, from generation to generation. It is therefore possible, and in fact, commonplace, for readers to engage with the stories of authors who have been dead for hundreds of years, or who live at a great distance. Physical constraints such as available space, or the projection of the speaker’s voice or of geography make the audience of an oral performance event necessarily smaller, and it is evidently not possible for the storyteller to recount the story in the same way after death.

The “bricks-and-mortar” text that is the product handed down through time is fixed and it cannot be changed in the same way as a story in oral tradition, which can undergo alterations in the moment of performance. New versions can and do arise, however the time frame required to create a new version of a story in written tradition is considerably longer (when the publication process is taken into account) than for an oral performance event, which could in theory be retold immediately after a performance. The performative context involved in reading a story of written tradition is quite different from that of a story of oral tradition. Where the latter involves at least two people, if not more, and both parties involved in the communication situation are physically present, the performative context of a reading generally (and this excludes recitations, book readings or theatrical productions, which use a combination of oral and written modes of expression) involves a single person, silently following a prescribed pathway through a concrete textual object (the book), word after word, paragraph after paragraph, page after page.

Books have an important role to play in societies that make use of written thought-technology. They are involved in education and entertainment, and can also be involved in creating social cohesion (the Bible being a striking example of this), however it could be argued that they do not occupy the central role in societies that oral traditions have and continue to do. Literacy is still not a universal skill in the twenty-first century in the countries where writing has been present for hundreds of years, whereas orality (excluding cases of physical or mental barriers to speech, hearing and understanding) is universally accessible.

In this study, elements of “written” tradition are those texts that have been created through the act of writing (by hand), typing, or printing,¹²⁴ the so-called “bricks-and-mortar” texts described by Foley, that create a lasting, physical record, and that can move through time and space in ways that the spoken word, in its “live” sense, cannot.¹²⁵ “Written Tradition” cuts across the boundaries between writings that have been classified as “literature” or “not literature”, between the “*littéraire*”, the bureaucratic “*littérature grise*” and “scientific literature”. In this study, any text that has been produced in a physical form and that can be attributed to handwriting, typing or printing, qualifies as an element of written tradition, and if it features a (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, it is included in the corpus.

There are several reasons for choosing the expression “written tradition” rather than “literature” to refer to the totality of writings that form the New Caledonian polysystem. The first reason arises from ongoing issues with definitions of literature itself. There is no single, agreed definition of what exactly constitutes “literature”, in fact, there is still significant debate over how it can be defined, though it is widely accepted that the Western notion of literature¹²⁶ is intimately linked with the written word, and the history of literature is closely intertwined with that of printing.

¹²⁴ While there is a proliferation of electronic writing associated with the recent development of information technology and the internet, texts arising in the virtual domain are excluded from the scope of the study, in part so that the corpus of the study can be kept to an appropriate size, and also because the rapidly-changing textual landscape in “electronic tradition” requires a different methodology to be devised (since electronic media can change at such a rapid rate in comparison to written texts), this would be an interesting future topic of research.

¹²⁵ Evidently, the rise of recording technology and the internet make the dissemination of recorded or electronic versions of oral performance events instant and global.

¹²⁶ Western notions of literature (in relation to writing) are of course by no means the only ones in existence. They are considered here, rather than, for example, those found on the Asian, African or American continents,

In the seminal work, *Keywords* (1983), Raymond Williams offers an overview of the etymology and history of the term “literature” in Western societies. In fourteenth century Europe, “literature” was equated with polite learning through reading, and by the eighteenth century, “literature” had come to refer to the practice and profession of writing, the whole body of books and writing, and all works within the orbit of polite learning.

In the nineteenth century, the meaning previously attributed to “poetry”, that is “the high skills of writing and speaking in the special context of high imagination”, became attributed to “literature” (with the exception of the high skills of speaking). Williams also describes the gradual, although not complete, separation of well written books of an “imaginative or creative kind”, which are normally described as “literature”, from kinds of writing such as philosophy, essays and history.

In *Literary Theory: an Introduction* (1983), Terry Eagleton describes how the concept of “literature” has been associated with imaginative writing (but not exclusively), with the use of language in peculiar ways or “language ‘made strange’”, (though it is impossible to define the ‘ordinary’ language that is deviated from), and with highly-valued sorts of writing, which implies a value judgement on the part of the reader and destabilises “literature” as an objective term (since value judgements are “notoriously variable” and closely related to social ideologies). Hence Eagleton’s statement that “literature”, “in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist.”

Added to the impossibility of finding a unified definition of literature, is the challenge of drawing the boundaries of literatures. Just as cartographers are constantly challenged by the mismatch between boundaries drawn on a map and those on the ground, which are most often porous and constantly shifting, so literary scholars who would seek to delineate the boundaries of a particular literature strike practical difficulties that arise on literary terrain. In this study, the aim is to investigate the transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* as it moves beyond the confines of the oral traditions in which it originates. A significant number of the texts in the corpus of (re)writings constituted in the course of my

for reasons of pragmatism, since it is from Western languages that the term “literature” derives, and the arrival of writing in New Caledonia came about through contact with “Western” people, alphabet, and writings.

research might not be considered “literary”, whereas the use of “written tradition”, an inclusive term that does not seek to differentiate between different types of writing, makes it possible to increase the number of texts in the corpus, thus widening the scope of inquiry and allowing a broader picture of how this element of oral tradition has been integrated into New Caledonian writing to emerge. Thus, for pragmatic reasons, “written tradition” is used in this study to describe the collection of tangible repositories of stories, known commonly as “texts”.

The second reason for the use of “written tradition” rather than “literature” is in order to place writings and oral performance events on the same level, as different modes of expression of human creativity and imagination through their communication of stories. Oral tradition is presented in this study as being analogous to written tradition, and in using these terms, the focus is shifted to the human thought-technologies involved, and how these might contribute to the similarities and differences between oral performance event and text. Another effect of the analogous presentation of oral and written traditions, is that they are given equal value, and this contributes to fulfilling one of the objectives of this study, which is to valorise New Caledonian literary output, regardless of the mode of expression used to deliver it.

A third reason for the use of the expression “written tradition” rather than “literature” to designate stories set down in textual form, is to try to free the term “literature” from “the tyranny of the text” as Foley has put it. The “tyranny of the text” residing in the uneven power differential that has come to be accepted as the norm, and that places writings in a higher, more powerful and more influential position. When both modes of expression have been placed on the same level, the literary dimensions involved in storytelling and communication are no longer tied to the text, and the creative and aesthetic aspects of both spoken and written codes can be examined and compared.

NEW CALEDONIAN WRITTEN TRADITION

In *Entre langues et terre. Émergence de la littérature néo-calédonienne (écriture et identité d'une Île) 1774-1909*, François Bogliolo points to the emergence of “la littérature néo-

calédonienne” as the result of the encounter between the French language and the New Caledonian land and its peoples.

He offers a possible definition of New Caledonian literature that encompasses “*littérature d’expression française en terre kanak*”¹²⁷ and the literatures of the various communities living in the islands “*littérature canaque-caldoche-vietnamienne... d’expression française*”,¹²⁸ and where no literature expressed in French outside of Kanak land can ever be New Caledonian. For Bogliolo, in 2000, there was not sufficient literary output in Kanak languages to constitute “modern Kanak written literature” as a significant, separate entity, limited as it is to the rare poetry of Déwé Görödé and Wanir Walepane (which is translated into French and therefore, for Bogliolo, can be included as part of New Caledonian literature) and the creation of *contes*, particularly in school competitions (which he sees as imitations of traditional *contes*, which can therefore be included under the heading of Kanak oral literature) (30).

Arguments can be advanced for alternatives to certain points in Bogliolo’s proposed definition, for example, where he states in 2000 that there is not enough writing in Kanak languages to constitute a modern Kanak written literature, it can be argued that today the body of bilingual publications in Kanak languages, such as found in collections of oral literature put together by linguists and anthropologists, and the more recent publications of children’s books by the ADCK, do indeed constitute a modern Kanak written literature,¹²⁹ and recent interviews with writers such as Déwé Görödé and Weniko Ihage suggest that this literature is considered to exist,¹³⁰ as “*La littérature kanak francophone*”¹³¹ of Julia Doelrasad’s doctoral thesis, *La littérature kanak francophone, entre revendication d’identité culturelle et interculturelité* (2006).

¹²⁷ [Literature of French expression on Kanak land]

¹²⁸ [Kanak, Caldoche, Vietnamese... literature of French expression in Calédonie]

¹²⁹ Also there is the question of classification of writings in French by Kanak authors – do these belong to New Caledonian literature in French, Kanak literature or both?

¹³⁰ See the interviews with Görödé and Ihage in the *Annexes* of Virginie Soula’s 2008 doctoral thesis, *Des ancrages littéraires et identitaires au "destin commun", une histoire littéraire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie : (1853-2005)*, also Julia Doelrasad’s 2006 doctoral thesis, *La littérature kanak francophone, entre revendication d’identité culturelle et interculturelité*.

¹³¹ [Francophone Kanak Literature]

Other arguments that may be advanced are that all of the written literatures of New Caledonia form the New Caledonian literary polysystem (rather than only the French-language writings), or that the creation of *contes* modelled on those of oral tradition would seem to qualify as New Caledonian literature in French (imitation of traditional stories of oral tradition not necessarily being a reason for exclusion from the Western literary canon – the stories influenced by the collections of the Brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century being an obvious example). This illustrates the difficulties of setting the boundaries of a literature, and the reasons for the use of the expression “written tradition” in order to circumvent these debates, which while important, are not central to this study.

So what constitutes New Caledonian written tradition? Bogliolo’s focus on the land is a very useful starting point for deciding whether a work is part of New Caledonian written tradition or not. The content of the work, where it is written and published, and for which audience, as well as the cultural identification of the writer can all be viewed through the lens of connection to the islands of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. It is perhaps impossible to pin down a strict list of “membership criteria” for New Caledonian written tradition, but for the purpose of this study it is seen as encompassing all writing with a connection to the land itself. Regardless of whether a work is written in one of the Kanak languages, in French, in Oceanian languages, European languages or other languages, the connection to the land creates a connection to the written tradition, and thus confers membership of the New Caledonian literary polysystem. This is not to say that a work must necessarily belong exclusively to New Caledonian written tradition, as it is possible to be part of more than one tradition,¹³² and a work may be perceived as more “important” in one tradition than another at a certain moment in time.

In summary, for the purposes of this study, New Caledonian written tradition is defined as the sum of the written traditions in existence in New Caledonia, that share a connection to the land, whether in writing about the land, in writing by people who identify as New Caledonian

¹³² An example of this is one of the texts of the corpus of this study, *Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia* (2011), produced by Raylene Ramsay at the University of Auckland. While it is part of New Zealand written tradition in English, as a literary cultural history, the book can also be considered, in the model of the New Caledonian polysystem, to be part of New Caledonian written tradition in English. This is because it was produced with the collaboration of writers, artists and other actors in the New Caledonian literary scene, and is entirely concerned with literary production arising from within Kanaky-New Caledonia or in reaction to encounter with that land.

or have a very strong connection to the land. New Caledonian written tradition not only encompasses texts commonly referred to as “literary”, but also “*la littérature grise*”,¹³³ administrative texts, advertising and promotional texts, scientific and academic texts, in short, anything that satisfies the criteria of being recorded in writing or in print. Echoing and extending François Bogliolo’s literary polysystem schema, this study considers texts of discoverers, voyagers, and scientists that sit alongside those of advertisers, and regional councils, as part of the rich written heritage of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

LITERARY COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Although this study is not concerned directly with questions related to the concept of “literature” and its possible definitions,¹³⁴ there are certain aspects of literature that can be useful in addressing questions relating to the influence of Kanak oral traditions on processes of identity construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. Once the exclusive connection between literature and the text has been removed, and the creative and aesthetic dimensions of human expression can be compared and examined regardless of the mode of expression employed, the way is opened for the visualisation of a “literary landscape” that ranges over both oral and written terrains (and which may also include other modes of expression, verbal and non-verbal, or a combination of these). A model of the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie will be proposed in the next chapter.

A second aspect of the concept “literature” that is relevant to this study, in particular with reference to the potential for the creation of the community of the *destin commun*, is the idea of literature (in the sense of storytelling) as a form of communication, and a means of community-building.

In his paper entitled “What’s Literary Communication and What’s a Literary Community?”, delivered to the FILLM conference “*Littératures d’émergence et mondialisation : théorie, société et politique*/Emergent Literatures and Globalisation: Theory, Society and Politics”

¹³³ Literally “Grey Literature”, this term refers to those writings that are not considered to be literary.

¹³⁴ The use of “literature” being limited to its occurrence in the oxymoron “oral literature”, while “written tradition” is the concept employed for the examination of the writings in the corpus.

held in Noumea in 2003,¹³⁵ Roger D. Sell discusses the concepts of community and community-building in the context of “emergent literatures” which he characterises as the literatures of groupings of people “emerging from unselfconsciousness into the kind of self-awareness that can attach to a group identity” and “from a state of imperceptibility to *other* groupings” (39). Thus, according to Sell, “the emergence of the grouping’s literature itself sets a seal on the grouping’s very existence and importance” (39).

Here, then, is the great paradox of emergent literatures – of emergent literatures during any period of history at all, but especially in our own Postmodern age: that on the one hand, the emergent literature defines and gives voice to the particular grouping of people from within which it emerges; but that on the other hand, that very voicing can simultaneously undermine the boundary it defines, by improving the audibility, as one might say, between one grouping and another (41).

Sell characterises the two elements of this paradox respectively as “communal self-definition” and “boundary-transgressing enlargement”. The interesting fact in the context of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is that giving voice to the grouping of Kanak people and improving the audibility between this grouping and the wider grouping of New Caledonian society in general may serve to undermine, to a certain degree, the boundary that separates Kanak from the other groups, but this can be seen in a positive light in the sense of moving a step closer to creating space for the *destin commun* identity.

Sell’s work has focused on giving “an account of *literary* communication or community-making”, and his exploration of the idea of literature as a form of communication capable of building a sense of community can be usefully extended to written tradition, and it is the potential for a body of written texts to build community that is of interest to this study.

Sell has developed a list of three main features of literary communication and community-building that are useful for the study of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in the corpus of this study. The first feature is what he terms “genuine communication”, a kind of reciprocal model of communication, rather than a uni-directional process involving a message passed from sender to receiver, and a kind of communication where “neither party enjoys a monopoly of agency and neither party is relegated to a mainly passive role in the way

¹³⁵ Colloque de la FILLM (“Fédération Internationale de Langues et Littératures Modernes”, Nouméa, Nouvelle-Calédonie, 19-24 octobre, 2003.

suggested by the sender/receiver binarism” (42). In terms of the roles of the writer and reader, each enjoys a degree of agency in the communication encounter, for the writer, this resides mainly in the creative act, for the reader, in the process of interpretation in the act of reading. Sell sees “genuine communication” as a “meeting of autonomous minds which conceive of each other as equally empowered” (42), and this idea of respect and equality is very pertinent to the analysis of the (re)writings that will follow in Chapters 3 to 6 of this thesis.

The second feature that is useful in the exploration of the transformations undergone by *Le Chef et le lézard* is the fact that in literary communication, the “communicational contexts are not unitary, and are not two separate contexts either, but are a duality of two different contexts which at least partly overlap”. That is to say, that the writer and the reader each bring their own unique context and understandings to the communication encounter, and while individual contexts differ, they have some common ground (without which comprehension would be impossible). Sell explains that in an encounter between a writer of a literary text and its reader, “the precise structure of this contextual duality will vary as the relationship between the writer’s positionality and the changing positionality of each new reader, and of each reader at different phases in the reader’s own life” (43). In the case of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions, the contexts and understandings brought to the communication encounter by a large proportion of the non-Kanak readership may be quite distant from those of the (re)writer, however, the crucial point is that there is at least some degree of overlap in contexts that allows understanding to take place.

This leads to the third feature of literary communication highlighted by Sell, which concerns the result of the encounter between writer and reader that is mediated by the literary text, “[t]he result of genuine communication is that the area of contextual overlap increases. The two parties are not completely determined by their own positionality. They have sufficient intelligence, imagination and will-power to empathize their way into the minds of people who are different from themselves. They get to know more about each other’s worlds, in that sense actually sharing them” (44). In the context of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions into New Caledonian written traditions and beyond, this increase in “area of contextual overlap” translates into an increase in mutual comprehension, a positive step in the pathway towards the recognition of Kanak identity and towards the building of a common collective identity in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. Sell does make the point that an increase in contextual overlap, or “commonality” does not necessarily mean that there is agreement –

but argues instead that if the communication encounter has been “genuine and undistorted” as he has defined it, then it is possible not only to have agreement between two parties, or agreement to differ.

Whether there is agreement or not, Sell argues for the power of “genuine communication” to build a sense of community that seems to map directly onto the idea of community of the *destin commun* put forward in the Noumea Agreement,

the increased commonality of knowledge does amount to an increase in mutual understanding for which the term “community” is not a misnomer. The community resulting from genuine communication is not at all the same thing as a hegemony. No matter how strange this may at first sound, a genuine community is a social grouping which positively embraces social difference (Sell 44).

His articulation of the notion of “genuine communication” resonates with the following quote taken from an interview with arguably the foremost Kanak writer, Déwé Görödé, in which it is possible to imagine the role that writing might play in the creation of the community of the *destin commun*. When asked if in her writing there is an openness to the other ethnic groups, Görödé replies,

Oui, car écrire pour les autres, c’est entrer en relation avec le lecteur de quelque communauté qu’il soit, de quelque peuple qu’il soit [...] pour moi la création est un acte ouvert, un acte d’ouverture vers l’autre, car pour moi écrire c’est parler à l’autre (Soula 334).¹³⁶

The next chapter will outline the approaches, questions and methods employed in this study to examine the ways in which literature, taken here to be a kind of creative human verbal expression and communication, realised in oral and written forms, might contribute to ongoing processes of identity construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, with regard to Kanak identity, and the community implicit in the notion of the *destin commun*.

¹³⁶ [Yes, because writing for others is entering into a relationship with the reader of whatever community, of whatever people [...] for me, creation is an open act, an act of openness towards the other, because for me, to write is to speak to the other]

CHAPTER 2. Conceptual Tools, Questions and Methods

Examining the influence of stories of *Le Chef et le lézard* as they transcend the boundaries of their places of origin and extend into wider New Caledonian society in a textual form requires an interdisciplinary “toolkit”. No single, theoretical approach can hope to take full account of the complexity of the interfaces or “contact zones”¹³⁷ between cultures, languages and literatures that arise from the interactions between oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. In order to address this complexity, conceptual tools used in this study have been drawn from a variety of approaches – from writings and presentations by Kanak experts and scholars, by researchers in the domain of Pacific Literary Studies (published in French and English), from the “Socio-Cultural turn” in Translation Studies, as well as from work in Linguistics and Social Anthropology, both New Caledonia-centred and more general.

The three conceptual tools underpinning the three main tasks involved in the study – “tracking”, “contextualising” and “interpreting” – are outlined in this chapter. The first tool is the metaphor of the “pathway” which enables the movement of the stories across the literary landscape to be traced and tracked between genres, languages, locations and cultures. The second tool is the notion of “(re)writing”, and this encompasses both the contexts and the processes involved in the transformations that take place when stories move into, within and between target languages and societies.¹³⁸ The third conceptual tool is the metaphor of “encounter”, in which the notions of *vā* (or “the space between”) and “genuine communication” are used to examine and interpret the representations of oral performance events that figure in the corpus – texts that result from encounters between the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* and the (re)writers who transform it. These representations have the potential to participate in identity construction processes in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, and it is through them that the influence of Kanak oral traditions can be felt in wider New Caledonian society.

¹³⁷ A notion developed by Mary Louise Pratt, who defines contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (33).

¹³⁸ For the most part, the stories have moved into the French language, and entered the New Caledonian literature, however, there have also been movements between Kanak languages, French, English, Spanish and Italian.

Pathways

Pathways are powerful metaphors used throughout Oceania, at the regional level as well as that of individual societies. Epeli Hau'ofa and Albert Wendt developed a “politico-ideological concept” of ocean pathways between its islands and societies as “a unifying and inspirational identification” for the peoples of the region of Oceania (Keown 4-5). On a more specific level, the genealogical pathway is a central organising concept for Kanak societies, structuring roles, relationships, and identities. The “*chemin des paroles*”¹³⁹ that figures in Kanak oral traditions is one of the nine metaphors¹⁴⁰ for the word outlined by Michel Aufray in the section “*Les Métaphores de la parole*” of his 2000 HDR thesis,

*Les discours mélanésiens évoquent fréquemment les itinéraires qui parcourent le pays et qui relient entre eux les groupes alliés, routes historiques qui remémorent le trajet suivi par les aïeux et leur implantation territoriale, routes institutionnalisées des échanges matrimoniaux et économiques empruntées par les messagers qui portent la parole de lieux en lieux. La parole des ancêtres vit dans le paysage, elle est inscrite le long de ces itinéraires qui racontent l'histoire de la communauté. Ainsi, l'image de la route apparaît-elle comme la représentation simultanée de la généalogie du groupe, des réseaux d'alliances et de la parole qui assure l'unité du pays (293).*¹⁴¹

Visible and invisible pathways inscribed in the physical landscape and networks of genealogical pathways intimately connected to the land underpin the structure of each Kanak society permeating the oral traditions. The physical processes of articulation, phonation and intonation, the way of speaking and the way that stories unfold are also conceived of through the metaphor of the pathway,

¹³⁹ [pathway of words]

¹⁴⁰ The list of metaphors discussed by Aufray: “*La racine des paroles*” [the root of words], “*Le chemin des paroles*” [the pathway of words], “*Les paroles enveloppées – Les paroles entassées*” [wrapped words – stacked words], “*Les paroles étalées – Les paroles tressées*” [spread out words – woven words], “*Les paroles lancées – Les paroles qui frappent*” [hurled words – words that strike], “*Les paroles lianes*” [vine-words], “*Les paroles nourricières*” [nourishing words], “*Les paroles qui s'écoulent*” [words that flow], “*L'ossature de la parole* [the skeleton of the word].

¹⁴¹ [Melanesian speeches frequently evoke the itineraries that crisscross the land and that bind together allied groups, historical routes that commemorate the pathways taken by ancestors and their settlement of the land, institutionalised routes of matrimonial and economic exchange followed by messengers carrying the word from place to place. The word of the ancestors lives in the landscape, it is written the length of these itineraries that recount the history of the community. Thus, the image of the route appears to be simultaneously the representation of the genealogy of the group, of networks of alliance and of the word which ensures the unity of the land].

*La parole qui sort de la bouche ne se répand pas au hasard, elle emprunte des routes déjà tracées. En nengone, **la-beredr**, le “chemin de la parole”, désigne la voix, le son, la manière de parler. [...] Le déroulement des récits et des discours est également conçu comme une marche (Aufray 293).¹⁴²*

Aufray proposes a further dimension of the spoken word as pathway, highlighting the morphology of Ajië terms that “translate the spoken word’s progression”,

*En Ajië, on note toute une série de termes composés à partir de **vi** “aller” qui traduit le “cheminement” de la parole. On a ainsi : **vijö** “discourir”, **vipere** “discours sur le bois”, **vivaa**’ “discours”, **vinimö** “récit”, **virhenö**¹⁴³ “récit” (294).¹⁴⁴*

An association between speaking and movement through space is not exclusively found in Kanak languages, as Aufray goes on to illustrate with Oceanian examples taken from Tahiti, where orators specialising in genealogies were known as “**haere po** ‘marcheurs de la nuit’” [night-walkers], and from Rurutu, where traditional stories were passed on from elders to young men during ritual marches in the highlands of the island (294).

Its existence and utility as a concept throughout Oceania at both regional and societal levels, and its association in Kanak oral tradition with different dimensions and manifestations of the spoken word, make the metaphor of the pathway a tool well-suited to tracing the movements of elements of Kanak oral tradition across the literary landscape.

Another reason for the appropriateness of the pathway metaphor is that it encompasses the ideas of movement and change implicit in the concept of process, and is thus suitable for the examination of the (re)writing process that is central to this thesis. The extended geographic

¹⁴² [The words that come out of the mouth are not spread randomly, they follow predetermined routes. In Nengone, *la-beredr*, the “pathway of the word”, refers to the voice, the sound, and the way of speaking. [...] The unfolding of stories and speeches is also conceived of as a march].

¹⁴³ As the orthography of the Ajië language is still in the process of being fixed, there are a number of different spellings of *virhenö* featured in the present study, in particular in the chapters in which the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are analysed. The approach has been to use the spelling found in the (re)writing in the section that analyses it, hence we have *virhenö*, *virhenö*, *virhenö*, and *vi rhenö* in different sections.

¹⁴⁴ [In A’jië we see a whole series of terms created from *vi* “to go” which translate the spoken word’s progression. Thus we have: *vijö* “to make a speech”, *vipere* “ceremonial speech (on the branch/platform of a tree)”, *vivaa*’ “speech”, *vinimö* “story”, *virhenö* “story”]. It should be noted that there are two *vi* morphemes in the Ajië language, one *vi* is the verb “to go” that is used by Aufray in the series of terms he lists. However, it is the second etymology of the morpheme *vi* that is in fact involved in the terms listed here – this second *vi* is “a reflex of the middle/reciprocal Proto Oceanic *paRI– prefix (Claire Moyse-Faurie, Personal communication, 21 November 2013). The notion of reciprocity in this second etymology of *vi* still contains the idea of movement, though at a much reduced level.

metaphor of pathways across the literary landscape that lies at the heart of this study serves to model the various processes of transformation undergone by the stories as they are (re)written, and trace their movements into, within and beyond the written tradition of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

In the model of pathways across the literary landscape developed in this study there are five different pathway types: (1) pathways taken by stories within oral tradition;¹⁴⁵ (2) pathways taken by stories between oral and written traditions; (3) convergent pathways with multiple starting points; (4) pathways taken by stories within written tradition; and (5) pathways taken between written traditions. The following sections will elaborate on the main characteristics of these pathways as they relate to the analysis of the (re)writings of the corpus found in chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

TYPE 1 – PATHWAYS WITHIN ORAL TRADITIONS

The metaphor of the pathway operates at different levels within Kanak oral traditions, on one level pathways are associated with the transmission of stories, and on another level pathways feature in the content of the stories.

As has been described in the section presenting Kanak oral traditions in the previous chapter,¹⁴⁶ the pathways associated with the transmission of elements of oral tradition involve travel across time (both within and between generations). There is also movement through space involved in the pathways of transmission. In the spatial dimension, the stories travel from the storyteller to the audience at each oral performance event, moving between minds, and travelling with the physical person moving through the landscape. Just as a text can journey far and wide (in printed or electronic form), so can a story of oral literature carried in the mind of those who know and remember it. In echo of the notion of semi-fixedness described by Léonard Drilë Sam as one way of classifying elements of oral tradition,¹⁴⁷ the locations of stories of oral tradition are also semi-fixed, tied as they are to the physical

¹⁴⁵ Though these pathways within oral tradition are acknowledged in the model, and are integral to the versions that serve as points of origin for the various pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard*, they are not traced onto the map itself, which focuses on the pathways taken by the story once it moves out from its culture of origin.

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter 1 “Kanak Oral Traditions” p. 36.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 1 “Kanak Oral Literatures” p. 38.

location of those people in whose minds it is lodged. The fixedness is manifest in the fact that stories are passed from generation to generation and remain located within the region in which the particular language and oral tradition to which they belong are found, in the communities defined by that language and oral tradition.

This fixedness is partial, however, to different degrees, depending on social and historical factors that can see people move beyond the physical boundaries of the society in which the oral tradition is found, this movement can involve small or great distances. Examples include: the movement of women away from their home to that of their husband upon marriage (this could involve movement into a different linguistic community and society); the restriction of movement out of the reserves that were created during the period of the *Indigénat* in the colonial period; or the great increase in urban migration to the main centre of Noumea that has been taking place since the mid-twentieth century; and the massive potential for movement associated with globalisation in more recent times that has seen Kanak travel to, and frequently settle in, diverse locations across the planet.

At the level of content, pathways, both real and metaphorical, are a significant and frequently occurring feature of stories of Kanak oral literature. The most obvious are geographical pathways, which can have different degrees of specificity, for example, those found in origin (hi)stories that trace the itineraries of founding ancestors across a particular landscape tend to be more detailed and feature a greater number of toponyms than *contes* recounting relationships found in the natural world.¹⁴⁸ As has previously been mentioned, geographical itineraries serve to describe not only the physical world, but also the different relationships between groups of people. The pathways can be mapped out using toponyms, or patronyms (the two being intimately connected, if not interchangeable), or, as in an example from Paicî oral tradition explained to me in the course of an interview with Déwé Görödé¹⁴⁹ in which the *narratrice* enumerated the different bird species living along the riverbanks as part of the narrative, pathways can consist of a list of the identities and locations of different groups

¹⁴⁸ Though this is not always the case, as *contes* may include itineraries of characters as part of their educative function, familiarising the audience with geographic features, for example. Also, once again, it depends on the performative context, such as the composition of the audience – a *conte* may be used to impart more detailed information depending on who is listening, or the historical context – what has been happening and the reason and setting of the telling of the story.

¹⁴⁹ Personal interview, 13 April 2011.

living in the area, (the bird species in question were each associated with a particular clan). The abundant use of metaphor in Kanak oral literatures means that there is creativity and variety in the ways in which pathways can be represented.

While pathways within oral tradition are useful for an understanding of the dynamics of Kanak oral literatures, their analysis is beyond the scope of this study, and they do not feature on the maps of pathways of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the New Caledonian literary landscape that have been drawn during the course of my research. They do, however, provide important contextual information necessary to an appreciation of the variation amongst (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in the corpus. As a way of introducing the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* I will now present the key elements of the story that are shared by the (re)writings I have collected, in light of the different pathways that they contain.

Le Chef et le lézard, one of the most well-known stories from Kanak oral tradition to be found in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, is found in different traditions all over the Grande Terre and also in the Îles Loyauté. In written form, I have located versions originating from nine oral traditions: Ajië, Bwato, Drehu, Nemi, Nixumwak, Nyelâyu, ‘Ôrôê, Xârâcùù and Yuanga. Given the prominence and prevalence of the symbol of the Lizard¹⁵⁰ in societies throughout Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, it is almost certainly the case that more versions exist in other oral traditions, versions that have not necessarily been committed to writing.¹⁵¹ As far as genre is concerned, the majority of the (re)writings in the corpus would seem to be reasonably well described by the umbrella term of *légende*, in the sense that they are stories grounded in history, (hi)stories referring, through the use of toponyms, to locations that really

¹⁵⁰ The Lizard can take different forms, and be both protective and malevolent, depending on the story, the context, the particular oral tradition and the relationship between the Lizard and the society involved. The multiple facets of the Lizard as symbol can also be linked to the fluidity between the forms taken by “totems” (an introduced term that does not fully reflect the nature of these animals, plants or elements of nature to which every Kanak group has intimate and strong connections). It is also interesting to note that a great diversity of species of reptiles (lizard, gecko and skink) exists in New Caledonia, both today and present in the archaeological record, amongst which figure large creatures such as the carnivorous “terror” skink (*Phoboscincus*) and species of monitor lizard (*Varanus*) (related to the fearsome Komodo dragon found in nearby Indonesia). It is not surprising then that such an important element of fear is associated with the figure of the Lizard in oral tradition, as it is likely influenced by actual experience. The propensity of some lizards to drop down out of branches (such behaviour witnessed by members of my family during a walk among the trees) can only add to the “fear factor”, and perhaps is reflected in the action of the Lizard in the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, when it jumps onto the head of the understandably terrified chief of Koné after he releases it from his trap.

¹⁵¹ Emmanuel Kasarhérou has made reference to the existence of a kind of “geography of the Lizard” that extends over the different Kanak societies of the islands (Personal interview, 16 March 2011).

exist or have existed. The variety of contexts in which the stories were recounted (different times, places, audiences) has translated into varying degrees of specificity regarding the toponyms that are found in the stories, which range from precise locations to more broad designations.

Probably the most famous variant of *Le Chef et le lézard* comes from Ajië oral tradition, in the version entitled “Virhenö ne ka to Koné”, written down by Bwêëyöuu Eñijiyi¹⁵² and translated by Maurice Leenhardt as “Le Maître de Koné”. The bilingual Ajië-French text they produced was published in the classic collection, *Documents néo-calédoniens* in 1932.

“Le Maître de Koné” is a *virhenö* or true story/legend¹⁵³ that recounts the plight of a chief who is chased from village to village around the main island by a terrifying Lizard; a consequence of his accidental trapping of the Lizard-totem after setting hunting traps where he had no right to. Each time he finds refuge, the terrifying vision of the approaching Lizard causes his host to cast him out. Eventually he arrives at the village of a chief who, because of his links to the Lizard, is able to call it off using ritual incantations, and the story ends with the grateful and now free chief sending a gift of “ceremonial money” to his saviour as a symbol of alliance.

An underlying structure of “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” is shared in part or in full by all of the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* that figure in this study, and the narrative progression through the four stages of the structure represents a pathway in itself. I

¹⁵² A number of different spellings of Bwêëyöuu Eñijiyi’s name figure in the present study – Ajië orthography has been fluid over time, and as well as different ways of spelling his name in Ajië, there have been different French versions used to render the sound of his name.

¹⁵³ It also translates as *histoire vraie* in French. According to Léonard Drilë Sam’s classification of stories into two types, the difference between a *mythe* and a *légende* in the type II stories can be seen in that the latter offers no explanation of the toponyms, rather they are simply listed (as in “Le Maître de Koné”). Also in the case of “Le Maître de Koné”, he notes that the names of the various chiefs are restricted to locations, toponyms, that are reasonably general. In fact, Leenhardt notes in *Documents néo-calédoniens* that the names such as Moindou, Nouméa and Lafoa are the names of European centres today, and that he has no doubt that the old names have disappeared from the storyteller’s memory and been replaced by those of colonisation, names which in the past were those of places of little importance (27). For Sam, type II stories that correspond to the genre of *légende* do not give more specific detail regarding the identity of the chiefs, and this is the case for the titles used for the chiefs in “Le Maître de Koné” (perhaps with the exception of the *chef de Boéxawé*, who is also referred to as the “chief of the Bourail rivermouth” “the chief of Poéréxo, at Bourail”, “the chief of Pousangué”, “the man from Poéréxo”, “the master of the bay of Pousangué”).

will now use the Efiiji/Leenhardt version to illustrate some of the ways in which pathways can figure in a story.

In “Le Maître de Koné”, the first stage in the narrative, “transgression”, sees the chief (the *maître de Koné*), having made traps to snare game, travel along a pathway, laying the snares as he goes. He sets out from his home at Kone (Koné).¹⁵⁴ Each time he lays a snare, the location is mentioned in the story, creating a pathway of toponyms reflecting his movement through space: Poabut (Pouembout), Nepui (Népoui), Poya (Poya), Moae (Moaé), Kaurua (Kaourua) and finally, Boexawe (Boéxawé). When he has finished laying the traps, he returns home along the same path. The next day, he determines to go and check the snares, and two of the toponyms are repeated as he checks his traps – Poya (Poya), Moae (Moaé) – until he reaches the final trap at Boexawe (Boéxawé), where he finds “that man, the lizard of Boéxawé” with its head hanging, suspended in the trap.

A possible interpretation of the pathway involved in laying the traps is that it involves educational information about the geography of the area described, and also may point to the places mentioned as being suitable hunting grounds for laying traps. The list might also be read as a demarcation of the hunting territory belonging to the group to which the chief of Koné belongs. The significance of the location in which the Lizard is trapped is clearly that it lies outside the area in which the chief of Koné can rightfully place his traps. There are more than likely further readings possible regarding the toponyms chosen for inclusion in the story (in light of the fact that most patronyms are derived from toponyms) and the significance of those that may have been omitted. These inclusions and omissions may have been intentional, adding to the meaning on a different level, or they may have been the result of a gap in knowledge on the part of Efiiji, given that the story did not belong to him to tell.

The second stage of the narrative, “punishment”, sees the Lizard demand to be freed, and as soon it is released by the chief, jump onto his neck and refuse to come down. The terrified man begs for the Lizard to release him, even offering it all of the treasure of Koné,¹⁵⁵ but the

¹⁵⁴ The locations are listed here first in Ajië, from Efiiji’s text, then in brackets using the French spelling employed by Leenhardt.

¹⁵⁵ Explained in Leenhardt’s footnote as being the most sacred treasures of the family, and virtually the life of the Koné people (7-8).

Lizard is neither impressed nor interested, and so the next pathway is taken by the chief of Koné, carrying his terrifying burden back down the line of traps to his home. Along the way he is humiliated when the Lizard refuses to get down while the chief “replies to the call of nature”, and the punishment continues once back at Koné, where the Lizard refuses to descend from its perch on his head. It demands to be fed up there, and further humiliates him by eating, defecating and urinating on him while clamped onto his neck. The Lizard even refuses to let him go when it is time to sleep.

The third stage of the narrative, “flight”, sees the Lizard release the man from its grip when it falls asleep that night, and the chief quietly wake his wife to bid her farewell and offer instructions for the family, before fleeing silently into the night as the Lizard sleeps. This is the beginning of a pathway taken by the chief around the Grande Terre, seeking refuge from the Lizard in location after location, where each time the same story plays out: initially welcomed and offered sanctuary by the local chief, the latter, boasting of his fighting prowess, promises to fight the Lizard and save him from its clutches. In each case, the chief of Koné is cast out by his host as soon as the Lizard is seen approaching, so terrifying is the creature that the host is afraid it will take out its anger on him. The pathway taken by the chief in his flight begins in Koné, where he escapes from the Lizard’s grip in the night, then he flees to Vo (Voh), followed by Goa neva (“*la tête du pays*”),¹⁵⁶ Ubac (Oubatche), Waiemu (Ouaième), Yagen (Hienghène), Xhuo (Touho), Amoa (Amoa), Caba (Tchamba), Pati (Ponérihouen), Moneo (Monéo), Ajiē (Houailou), Whawho (Kouaoua), Anesù (Canala), Bē neva (“*l’extrémité du pays*”),¹⁵⁷ Tio (Thio), Numea (Nouméa), Buruparis (Bouloupari), Lavoia (Lafoa), Moadu (Moindou), until finally he arrives at the bay of Pusage (Pousangué).

The itinerary taken by the chief around the Grande Terre may involve a listing of the allies of the chief of Koné, and the battle prowess of the different chiefs encountered by the chief of Koné is alluded to, through the reaction of each chief in pledging to protect the chief of Koné. Some chiefs offer him shelter and state their intention to kill the Lizard with a spear (in the case of the chiefs of Voh, “*la tête du pays*” and Ouaième), another offers to hide him and

¹⁵⁶ [the head of the land] meaning the north according to Leenhardt’s footnote (15).

¹⁵⁷ [the extremity of the land] meaning the tail of the land, or the southernmost point according to Leenhardt’s footnote (15).

prevent anyone entering to discover him, as in the case of the chief of Oubatche. The chief of Hienghène declares that he will make the Lizard's skull into the conch shell at the summit of his rooftop spire (a symbol of glory in war). The chiefs of Touho and Amoa each enquire about the battle prowess of the Lizard and pledged to be ready with spears and war-axes, and at Canala, the chief offered refuge in the house of Baxéa, great warrior clan. No detail is given regarding the reactions of the chiefs of Tchamba, Monéo, Houailou, Kouaoua, Thio, Nouméa, Bouloupari, Lafoa or Moindou. It is quite likely that an audience listening to this story would read into it judgements on the skills and reputation in warfare of the clans represented in the story, and the pathway works to structure a form of commentary on these matters.

The arrival at Pusage marks the beginning of the final stage of the narrative, “redemption”, which in the texts of the corpus seems to consist of two possible endings – either the Lizard is called off by a ritual performed by a chief whose clan has close connections to it, or the Lizard is decapitated. The first ending is seen in “Le Maître de Koné”. The chief of Koné meets the *maître de Pousangué* and recounts to him the sorry tale of his flight from the Lizard. The chief of Pusage then explains that he should have come to him first, since the Lizard was from there, and then goes on to recount another pathway, that taken by the Lizard, who was from the valleys of Warama (Warama) and Rhemeu (Rhéméou),¹⁵⁸ and had travelled with the lizard-stones and yam-stones carried by the eldest of two young sisters from Rhemeu (Rhéméou) as she came to live near Boexawe (Boéxawé) having married into the Boeara (Boéra) clan. When the Lizard approaches, the chief of Pusage performs a ritual incantation involving a special plant chewed and spat upon the Lizard, and asks it to leave the chief of Koné in peace. The Lizard then disappears into the forest, and the chief of Koné is freed. He thanks his host, then stays with him for several days to rest and recover, but missing his home, sets off again for Koné. The only location mentioned on this pathway home is Mueu (Muéo), where he spends the night, before reaching Koné the next day, where his return “from the dead” is celebrated.

In this part of the story, recounting the pathway taken by the sister from Rhemeu and the Lizard that followed her as she brought the lizard- and yam-stones to her new home after

¹⁵⁸ According to Leenhardt's footnote, these are two mountains situated between Poya and Bourail (28).

marriage, can be read as a way of adding extra information about the alliances (through marriage) between Pusage and Rhemeu, it is possible that the marriage was an event in recent history at the time that the story was recorded, or it may have referred to a marriage from a long time ago. Either way, it would seem to be an example of how stories carry historical information, as well as performing an educational function by evoking the links between groups.

The final pathway mentioned in the story is that on which the chief of Koné sends his messenger, who is told to take the symbolic treasure of ceremonial money as a sign of thanks and allegiance, to the chief at Pusage (*“l’embouchure de Bourail”*).¹⁵⁹ The messenger’s pathway sees him set out from Kone (Koné), then rest the night at Poya (Poya), before arriving at Poerexo (Poéréxo) the next day, where he greets the chief of Poerexo,¹⁶⁰ gives the message and the gift, which are both received and accepted before the messenger returns home and the two chiefs remain in their homes to this day.

Here, the pathway taken by the symbolic ceremonial money, as a token of gratitude and pledge of allegiance, emphasises the connections between the two groups, which may have been a relevant and topical fact at the time the story was recorded. The pathway taken by the messenger that sees him rest the night at Poya could be imparting practical information regarding the distance between Koné and Poéréxo (Poya being a day’s journey from the former perhaps?), or it could be that Poya is mentioned because of some special relationship between the people of Poya and those of Koné.

In a second variant of the “redemption” stage of the narrative, rather than the ritual freeing the chief of Koné and the Lizard disappearing into its home forest, the final stage of the chief’s flight sees him follow a path from dry land to a location under the sea. For example, in the version, “Le chef de Touho” in Père Lambert’s *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900), the chief of Touho flees to the end of the land and meets two young children on the seashore, who ask him his business, and when he explains why and what he is fleeing (a terrifying supernatural being that sometimes takes the form of a hurricane, and is

¹⁵⁹ [the Bourail rivermouth] Leenhardt uses this translation in French rather than repeating the Pousangué (Pusage) of Eñijiyi’s Ajië text.

¹⁶⁰ Another title for the chief of Pusage.

also referred to as the chief of Tendo), they take him on another pathway, from dry land to their house beneath the waves.¹⁶¹ Once there they tell him to hide inside the house. When the chief of Tendo arrives and sees that the chief of Touho has fled beneath the waves, he calls together the different bird species from all over the land and commands them to drink the seawater until the underwater house is uncovered, which they do. When the chief of Tendo pokes his head through the door to catch the hapless chief of Touho, the children, hiding in the doorway, decapitate him, and so the chief of Touho is saved.

The two children could refer to spirits or ancestors, who take the chief of Touho on a pathway from the land to the sea, a journey that can also be interpreted as one from the land of the living to that of the dead (the sea is for many people of the Grande Terre the place to which the spirits of the dead travel), a pathway between the visible and the invisible. This story reflects the vision of the Kanak cosmos as a network of connections between the visible and invisible realms that are constantly interacting, and here the two children can be seen as coming to the aid of the chief of Touho just as the ancestors come to the aid of the living. Another possible reading might be that the ancestral spirits, guardians of the customary law who have the power to punish those who break laws by sending disease or even death (Godin 326), and who are represented in this story, are connected to the chief of Touho, and mete out the punishment of death to the chief of Tendo because he has transgressed a customary law. Taken in the context of the performative context in which the story was recorded by Père Lambert, around the middle of the nineteenth century and just following the annexation of New Caledonia by the French State, the interpretation offered by Lambert is that the chief of Tendo is seen as representing the French, and that the story can be read as the triumph of the ancestors and indigenous groups over the colonisers.

Stories from oral literature such as *Le Chef et le lézard* are open to different readings at different levels according to the context in which they are experienced, and the cultural competence and degree of initiation of the person who proposes an interpretation. The brief interpretations presented above are offered in order to illustrate some of the readings that may be possible, they do not claim to be exhaustive or authoritative by any means. They result

¹⁶¹ In many Kanak traditions, this home under the sea is where the spirits of the dead travel.

from conversations and interviews with a number of experts¹⁶² during the course of my research and time spent living in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie between 2008 and 2011.¹⁶³

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* offers an illustration of the way pathways are woven into the fabric of Kanak oral literature. From the pathways taken by stories as they are transmitted within the group, across space and time, to the pathways within the stories that educate and entertain with their multiple and ever-changing potential readings. These pathways, so specific and integral to the societies to which the stories belong, take on new dimensions, with new resonances and relevance when they move out from their cultures of origin and into written traditions in various languages. These new pathways, between and within different traditions, are discussed in the sections that follow.

TYPE 2 – PATHWAYS BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN TRADITIONS

The transformation of an oral performance event into a written text involves a process of textualisation¹⁶⁴ (the pathway from oral to written mode of communication) and while in many cases, Kanak oral performance events have undergone this process and have been transcribed in their original language, more often, in addition to textualisation, performance events have also undergone a process of translation (the pathway from source to target language), predominantly into the French language. It is technically possible for the two processes to take place simultaneously, that is, for someone listening to the oral performance event in the source language to write it directly into the target language, however, it is most

¹⁶² In particular, conversations with Assia Boai, Auguste Cidopua, Jacqueline de La Fontinelle, Déwé Görödé, Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta, Jean Guiart, Marie-Adèle Jorédié, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, Léonard Drilë Sam and Emmanuel Tjibaou.

¹⁶³ While the patience, generosity and guidance of those experts, in conjunction with the writings that exist on Kanak oral traditions and literatures, have enabled me to increase my understanding of their dynamics and meanings, I am aware that my knowledge covers but the tip of an iceberg that represents more than three thousand years of Kanak oral traditions. As part of an effort to avoid the inclusion of errors of interpretation relating to questions of Kanak oral tradition that might arise from my position as a cultural outsider, I have verified orally at every opportunity the interpretations that I have gathered or developed, and a copy of the final draft of this study was sent to Emmanuel Tjibaou, Director of the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou* and of its *Département Patrimoine et Recherche*.

¹⁶⁴ Textualisation: “a process by which unwritten behavior, beliefs, oral tradition, ritual action, and so forth become “fixed” (as something meant), “autonomized” (separated from a specific authorial intention), made “relevant” (to a contextual world), and “opened” (to interpretation by a competent public). Behavior so transformed becomes susceptible to “reading”, a process no longer dependent on interlocution with a present subject” - definition offered by James Clifford (1982, 245), using terms proposed by Paul Ricœur (1971, 529-62).

often the case in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie that the process of textualisation takes place prior to the process of translation. The decisions and strategies employed by those involved in the processes of textualisation and translation are the source of variation between written representations of oral performance events.

At first glance, the passage between oral and written modes of expression may seem to be a relatively straightforward one, involving the physical recording of spoken word as written text, however, it has been shown that for orality, meaning is largely located in the context of performance, whereas in writing, meaning is concentrated in language itself (Ong 106) and thus the process of textualisation inevitably involves significant loss.¹⁶⁵ When Déwé Görödé, Kanak author, says that the passage from the oral to the written code is “*un gouffre où se perd le rythme de nos langues, un gouffre où se noie la tradition orale*” (Laubreaux 153)¹⁶⁶ or when John M. Foley, scholar of comparative oral tradition, uses the metaphor of the cenotaph for the textual rendering of an oral performance event, it is to this loss that they are referring. As Foley puts it:

Just as no drama worth the name can ever be fully realized within a silent, disembodied, un-enacted script, so no OT [oral tradition] worth the species label can ever be captured alive in a text, no matter how deftly conceived and executed the textual container may be (Foley 2010).

In the process of textualisation, the removal of the “extra-linguistic” context (sound, rhythm, music and gesture,¹⁶⁷ the setting, the interactions between performer and the audience) and of the historical and social dimension, all of which work together to shape the performance, results in the stripping away of layers of meaning from an oral performance event.

The historical and social context of a Kanak oral performance event is vital to understanding its meaning at various levels and this can have consequences for comprehension for readers of texts derived from oral traditions. For example, to the uninitiated reader, there appears to

¹⁶⁵ That is not to say that translation only involves ‘loss’ – translation can also be viewed in terms of ‘gain’, in the sense of ensuring the survival of the source text, adding to its prestige and rejuvenating both the original text and the target language – for discussions of these see Benjamin (16), Steiner (186) and Gertzler (163).

¹⁶⁶ [an abyss in which the rhythm of our languages is lost, an abyss in which oral tradition drowns]

¹⁶⁷ In *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houiïlou*, Maurice Leenhardt recorded elements of the gestural language that accompanies oral performance events and describes the movements of eyes, lips and especially hands and arms that add many details to the story (7-9).

be a great deal of similarity between “Le Chef de Touho” (in Père Lambert’s 1900 *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*) and “Le Maître de Koné” (in Maurice Leenhardt’s 1932 *Documents néo-calédoniens*). In both stories, a chief, who lays a hunting trap where he has no right to and accidentally captures a terrifying supernatural being,¹⁶⁸ is punished when he frees it from his trap – as soon as it is released, the creature clamps itself onto his head and refuses to let go. One night, while everyone is asleep, the chief manages to escape and flees from place to place seeking help, pursued by the supernatural being. At each place he stops, the local chief promises to protect him, only to banish him at the sight of the “monster” approaching. In “Le Chef de Touho”, the creature is finally slain by two children who decapitate it after tricking it into putting its head through the door of their house under the sea. In “Le Maître de Koné”, the lizard is finally called off by a chief who has magical powers over it because it is the totem connected to his land.

Though the form and content of the two versions suggest that they are variations on the same theme, knowledge of the historical context of each story shows that they can be interpreted in quite different ways as a result of the specific historical contexts at the time each story was recorded, which include the fact that they originated in different oral traditions. In other words, their underlying meanings are quite different, as a function of when and where they were told. Père Lambert wrote that “Le Chef de Touo” was in fact meant to incite the audience to war, initially against the people of Tendo, and then against the authority of the Whites (Leenhardt *Documents* 65), and this would have had to be between the time of the annexation (1853) and Lambert’s recording of the story (some time between 1853 and 1863). In contrast, “Le Maître de Koné” is a story about alliances and connections between totems and human groups (Leenhardt *Documents* 1). However, although Leenhardt’s version was recorded more recently than Lambert’s, and clearly focuses on alliances, might it also carry elements of the earlier meaning of violent rejection of alliance, given that it was written down around the time of the 1917 uprising? In any event, without complex contextual information, the reader is able to arrive at only a limited understanding of each of the stories.

¹⁶⁸ In “Le Chef de Touho”, the supernatural “being” is also referred to as the Chief of Tendo, in “Le Maître de Koné”, the supernatural “being” is a terrifying lizard-man.

The circumstances of the textualisation process itself can also transform an oral performance event. A story that would typically be told in a specific context, for example, to a group of adults and children around the fire the evening meal, might instead be recorded by a speaker in front of a linguist or anthropologist and perhaps another person involved in the recording process, in a designated room during the day. It may also, as was the case for the texts of Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens*, involve an orator transcribing into an exercise book an oral performance event that he or she has previously heard or performed, the transcribing exercise being a solitary one. These very different performative contexts, in particular with respect to the composition and participation of the audience, illustrate the importance of knowing the circumstances of production of a text if one wishes to understand the relationship of the text to the original performance event and the kind of oral performance event involved.

A significant element lost in the passage from oral to written codes is what Foley refers to as “the background of variability, the network of potentials out of which any single performance emerges” (Foley 2010) – once an oral performance event is transformed into a text, it becomes a static, fixed object, no longer able to evolve and be shaped by each new performative context. As the scholar of Māori oral tradition Jane McRae so eloquently explains, “the separate, silent, printed text lacks the presence, passion and rhythm of spoken words which evoke and affirm Māori and tribal identity, and which keep open the lively possibility of new versions” (McRae 9) – this comparison is equally valid for oral and written forms of Kanak oral traditions.

A consequence of the transformation of the ephemeral spoken word into tangible textual object is that while in Kanak oral traditions, access to information is controlled by the speaker in the moment of the performance event, there is very limited opportunity for the speaker to control access to information once it has become text. Texts can be disseminated to audiences across time, distance, and, in principle, to anyone who can read, regardless of age, gender and social status, and stories may, through textualisation, gain a status out of proportion to their original significance, simply through the authority attached to the written word.

While those¹⁶⁹ involved in the textualisation process may attempt to compensate for the loss it engenders, any textual representation of an oral performance event will inevitably be partial: an awareness of “what might be missing” from the written text is essential to any understanding of the original event.

The second process that most often takes place when stories follow pathways from the oral traditions in which they originate to written traditions is that of translation. Languages develop in specific historical, geographical and cultural contexts, and it follows that nodes of difference exist between them – this statement holds true in the case of Kanak languages and French, the most frequent destination language into which stories from Kanak oral traditions are translated. These nodes of difference, which represent the distance between source and target cultures, must be negotiated by the translator, and they are a major factor in the generation of variation between transformations of Kanak oral performance events into text. As the translation scholar Mary Snell-Hornby puts it,

The extent to which a text is translatable varies with the degree to which it is embedded in its own specific culture, also with the distance that separates the cultural background of the source text and target audience in terms of time and place (43).

A significant distance exists between Kanak and French cultures and languages in several important areas, including culturally-specific terminology, conception of space and conception of time. Terminology exists in Kanak languages with no equivalent in French because the cultural concepts involved are specifically Kanak. An example of this is the Ajië word *orokau*, which is usually translated as “*chef*” in French and “chief” in English. Although the English and French terms approximate the meaning of *orokau*, they do not represent the full significance of the concept in Ajië, and they bring with them connotations that do not apply in the Kanak world. While the *orokau* has a special role and is a highly respected person in Ajië society, the hierarchical dimension is not the same as in European understandings, and this is illustrated when the differences between French and his own language are discussed by a Kanak *chef* or “chief” who explains: “*Quand je parle dans ma*

¹⁶⁹ There may be any combination of people involved in making decisions in the textualisation process, or alternatively, one person may fulfil all the roles – the teller of the story, the transcriber of the story into the Kanak language, the translator of the story into French.

*langue à mes gens, je les appelle mes frères. Quand je parle en français, on me dit que je dois les appeler mes sujets” (Leenhardt, Gens 211).*¹⁷⁰

Differences between Kanak and French languages and cultures also exist in the expression and conception of time. Time in the French language is expressed by verb tenses and temporal adverbs and adverbial expressions, and is conceived of in terms of a linear progression. The Kanak scholar and educator, Gabriel Poédi, refers to the existence of approximately twenty temporal markers in Kanak languages and describes several of these in the Ajië language.¹⁷¹ Along with different systems of temporal markers, there is also more than one conception of time in Kanak languages and cultures.¹⁷² Poédi describes the linear conception of time, a circular/cyclical conception of time based on kinship categories (he uses the example of self, father, grandfather and great-grandfather) and an absolute time which exists outside of space and physical and linear time, a time in which “the past and the future converge, the living and the dead meet, where men, spirits and Beings are able to form relationships with ease, and a time where life and death merge” (*Temps* 195-96).

Jean-Marie Tjibaou, in *Kanaké: The Melanesian Way*, describes fundamental differences between European and Kanak conceptions of time:

Europeans have in some way removed time from nature; they have made it material. It enables them to gauge the duration of an operation and to go about doing it more quickly. They have turned it into a divided commodity, a tool with which to alter the rhythm of the world and of man. For the Kanak, time is a sensory perception, of hot and cold, of alternating rainy weather or sunshine, of old age and youth, of ceremonies which give life to the community and revive the soul (62).

Déwé Görödé explains the difference between Kanak and French conceptions of time as they appear in the telling of *contes* :

¹⁷⁰ [When I speak in my language to my people, I call them my brothers. When I speak in French, I am told that I should call them my subjects].

¹⁷¹ He points out that the number of temporal markers given is approximate as there has yet to be a study by a Kanak researcher who has both a mastery of all of the French categories of classification and enough critical distance with reference to the ‘programming’ received in the education system (“Temps” 195).

¹⁷² For a detailed study of Kanak notions of time and space in literature, see Stéphanie Vigier’s 2008 doctoral thesis, “*La Fiction face au passé : Histoire, mémoire et espace-temps dans la fiction littéraire océanienne contemporaine*”.

Vous commencez vos contes par “il était une fois”. Dans la formule par laquelle on commence les contes dans ma langue, on ne peut pas employer le passé. Chez nous, quand on raconte le conte, on ramène l’histoire à maintenant.¹⁷³ Comme si on entre dans un cercle : on parle du personnage, comme au théâtre, on est là, ensemble dans le cercle. Dans beaucoup de nos contes, on dit “ils y sont encore aujourd’hui”. Vous, vous dites : “Ils vécurent heureux et eurent beaucoup d’enfants” (Stefanson 84).¹⁷⁴

It is possible in French to use the present tense to recount a story from the past, and it could be argued that for the duration of a story recounted in the present tense, the reader either feels transported to the time of the event, a time in the past that is disconnected from the present, or that the past has been transported to the present, but a present that is not connected with “reality” in the present moment (in fact this notion of transportation is seen as a sign of a skilled storyteller).

The concept of bringing the past into the present, as described above by Déwé Görödé, has a different resonance in Kanak culture, where the past is seen as integral to and not disconnected from the present. Equally, it could be argued that stories told using traditional past tense formulations for the French version will have a different resonance for a French readership, which will be immediately transported to an imaginary or distant past world that may not exist in the same way for a Kanak readership.

Different strategies can be employed by translators to address these and other nodes of difference, and translators’ strategies can have a significant impact on target culture perceptions of the source culture and literature. Behind every transformation is a complex web of interactions between practical, ideological and aesthetic influences from source and target cultures, filtered through those responsible for the production of the text itself, who rather than being neutral agents, must make decisions on multiple levels in a particular social and historical context, and who also bring their own perspectives to the act of transformation of an oral performance event into written text.

¹⁷³ This point about the past being “actualised” in the present at the time of the story’s telling is confirmed by Gabriel Poëdi (Vigier 96),

¹⁷⁴ [You begin your *contes* with “once upon a time”. In the formula used in my language to begin *contes*, you cannot use the past tense. For us, when a conte is being told, history is brought into the present. As if you enter a circle : you speak of the character, like in the theatre, you are there, together in the circle. In many of our contes we say “they are still there today”. You say “they lived happily ever after and had many children”.]

The factors of loss of elements of performative context and the fixedness of the (re)writing, removing the possibility of variation until the next (re)writing takes place, are considered in the analyses of transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that have resulted in the creation of the (re)writings that figure in the corpus of this study. The role and strategies of the (re)writers are also considered – the transformer of Kanak oral performance events into written French has been, in the past, and remains in the present, one of the few sources of information about Kanak oral traditions and cultures accessible to a non-Kanak Francophone readership. While undeniably playing a vital role in the creation and preservation of knowledge about elements of Kanak languages and oral traditions, written texts are unable to do justice fully to the original oral events they claim to represent. The power inscribed in these texts, through their ability to create information in the target culture about the Kanak world, make it even more crucial to contextualise them in terms of their conditions of production, and to be aware of what might be missing, rather than accepting them uncritically as authoritative representations.

TYPE 3 – CONVERGING PATHWAYS

For the purpose of the model of pathways across the literary landscape developed in this study, the (re)writing process can involve converging pathways, in which different versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* are transformed into a single new (re)writing. The different versions involved may originate in oral traditions or written traditions, or a combination of the two, depending on the linguistic and cultural background of the (re)writer(s) and their access to elements of particular oral or written traditions. If the (re)writer is a speaker of one of the Kanak languages as well as a speaker of French, their (re)writing is open to influences from versions in either language and either mode of communication (oral or written). If the (re)writer is not a speaker of a Kanak language, he or she may draw on different versions of the story already in existence in written tradition. A number of examples of each situation are found in the corpus of this study.

TYPE 4 – PATHWAYS WITHIN NEW CALEDONIAN WRITTEN TRADITION

The expression “New Caledonian written tradition” is taken here to encompass writings in each of the languages and language communities present in the islands of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. By far the majority of texts are published in French, the *lingua franca*, however, there is also a growing body of writings in Kanak languages, the majority of which are

bilingual (Kanak language-French). The *Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* also contain an as yet largely untapped collection of writings in Kanak languages, found in newspapers, *cahiers*,¹⁷⁵ and correspondence. Very little writing has been published to date in the languages of the other communities present in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie (from Wallis (Uvea), Futuna, Tahiti and the other islands that make up La Polynésie française, Indonesia, Vietnam, France, Corsica, the Basque country, Vanuatu or English-speaking nations). This means that, for the purposes of this study, the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* within New Caledonian written tradition are effectively the pathways taken by stories that have already moved from Kanak oral tradition to written tradition in the French language or Kanak languages, stories which are then read and (re)written by (re)writers who have competence in French or the Kanak language concerned, or both..

TYPE 5 – PATHWAYS BETWEEN WRITTEN TRADITIONS

These pathways are the pathways taken from one written tradition,¹⁷⁶ into another, for example from French to English, or from French to one of the Kanak languages. These pathways necessarily involve translation and the attendant challenges involved in the passage from between languages and cultures as already discussed in this chapter. Once again, a focus on the strategies employed by the (re)writer(s) helps to draw out and contextualise the images produced in such (re)writings.

The next section discusses the origins and elaborates on the notion of (re)writing as a theoretical approach. Originally developed in the field of Translation Studies, (re)writing is a useful tool for examining the transformations undergone by elements of Kanak oral traditions, such as the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, as they travel down pathways: between oral and written traditions, as well as within and between written traditions.

¹⁷⁵ [exercise books]

¹⁷⁶ For the most part in this study, this means from New Caledonian written tradition in French.

(Re)writing

The notion of translation as rewriting, as put forward by the eminent translation scholar, André Lefevere, is a key tool in this investigation of the interaction between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition, and the influence of Kanak oral traditions upon identity construction through the medium of the written word. Lefevere's notion of rewriting takes into account the pragmatic, ideological and poetological forces at work in the production of a translation, and for two main reasons is particularly useful for the analysis of the pathways taken by elements of Kanak oral traditions between codes (oral and written), between languages and between genres.

The first reason is the focus of his approach on context, on the “extra-linguistic reality”, that is, the historical, political, social, cultural and aesthetic variables that come into play in the production of texts. The extra-linguistic reality, outside the text itself, has a great bearing on the production of all texts in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, but most especially on those generated by the meeting of Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition.

There exists a major cultural and linguistic distance between a Kanak audience listening to, participating in and experiencing the original telling of a story and a Francophone readership reading a translation, often of a transcription, in written French, whether the readership is in France, Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie or elsewhere. Any analysis of interactions between oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie must involve a focus on the ‘extra-linguistic context’ because of the inherently different characteristics of the two codes of expression, and because of the power inequalities that exist between Kanak and French languages as a result of New Caledonia's colonial history.

Linguistic theories of translation which examine translation equivalence,¹⁷⁷ but which fail to take account of socio-cultural and pragmatic factors such as the performative context of the telling, the historical moment in which the (re)writing takes place, the cultural significance attached to the form and content of the story, the highly symbolic nature of oral literature, the motivation and cultural/linguistic competence of the translator and his/her translation

¹⁷⁷ Translation equivalence is defined here as “the idea that translations could somehow convey the ‘same’, necessarily stable and language-independent meaning as their source texts” (Kenny, 2009: 96).

strategy, or the projected readership of the (re)writing, are excluding from their analysis elements of the extra-linguistic reality which play a significant role in the constitution of original and of the translation and which have an impact on the meanings and significance of the story for the source and target culture readerships.

The second reason the notion of translation as rewriting is suitable for analysing interactions between oral and written traditions of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is its focus on the *process* of text production, which enables the transformations that take place, the actors involved, and the justifications, motivations and influences at play to be elucidated.

Lefevere's work is part of a shift in orientation within Western translation theory in the 1990s which saw the theoretical approaches of the Manipulation School develop into what became known as the Cultural Turn. A collection of essays by a group of translation scholars entitled *The Manipulation of Literature*, (from which the title "Manipulation School" is derived) was edited by Theo Hermans and published in 1985, and marked a significant development in the field of Translation Studies. The essays in the collection demonstrated that translations were one of the "*primary* literary tools that larger social institutions – educational systems, art councils, publishing firms, and even governments – had at their disposal to "manipulate" a given society in order to "construct" the kind of "culture" desired." This manipulation of society was achieved by a manipulation of the source text to create a "desired representation" (Gentzler and Tymoczko xiii). Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, in their preface to *Translation, History, Culture* (1990), elaborate on the potentially positive and negative uses that rewritings can be put to, and emphasise the need to critically appraise these "manipulative processes of literature",

[a]ll rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another.¹⁷⁸ But rewriting can also

¹⁷⁸ The history of translation can also be viewed in terms of creative interaction between languages. Literary translation at its best can reveal the innovation, the power, or the difference in the source text in its transfer to the target language, but as well as repressing innovation, it can also render flat or banal (Raylene Ramsay, Personal communication, 17 July 2012).

repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live (xi).

The approaches under the umbrella of the Cultural Turn reject the idea of translation as a simple linguistic transfer undertaken by a neutral agent (the translator) who produces a transparent representation of a source text. Increasing importance is assigned to historical, cultural and political contextualisation of translations, language (and thus texts) are considered as an integral part of culture, and translation is seen as a process of cultural rather than just linguistic transfer occurring within “the networks of literary and extraliterary signs, in both the source and target cultures” (Gentzler and Tymoczko xiii).

The Cultural Turn is oriented towards the investigation of interactions between translation and culture; how culture influences and constrains translation; translation as text; translation as culture and translation as politics. There has been a proliferation of writing from theorists looking at the wider context in which the translation is set, the field has opened up in different directions such as translation and gender, translation and power, postcolonial translation studies, and translation as (re)writing (Munday 127).

Two important approaches drawn upon by André Lefevere in his elaboration of the notion of translation as (re)writing are Polysystems Theory, as developed by Itamar Even-Zohar in the 1970s, especially his ideas on the role of translations as agents of change in literary systems, and Descriptive Translation Studies, as developed by Even-Zohar’s colleague Gideon Toury, which focuses on target culture “norms” in translation behaviour.

Even-Zohar’s Polysystems Theory was published in a series of papers through the 1970s.¹⁷⁹ The term “polysystem” refers to a “heterogeneous, hierarchized, conglomerate (or system) of systems which interact to bring about an on-going, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole”. The polysystem of a given national literature is viewed as an element of a larger “sociocultural polysystem”, which contains other polysystems (artistic, religious or political) (Shuttleworth 197). The term “literary polysystem” refers to the “aggregate of literary systems (including everything from “high” or “canonized” forms (such

¹⁷⁹ These were published as a collection, *Papers in Historical Poetics*, in 1978.

as innovative verse) such as poetry to “low” or “non-canonized” forms (such as children’s literature and popular fiction) in a given culture” (Gentzler *Contemporary Translation* 106) and in each literary polysystem, there is a “continuous state of tension between the centre and the periphery, in which different literary genres all vie for domination of the centre” (Shuttleworth 197).

The polysystem model, which has continued to be very productive in the field of translation theory,¹⁸⁰ is helpful in the analysis of the function and evolution of literary systems in general, but is particularly useful in its focus on the role of translated literature within a given literary system, an area that has tended in the past not to be explored by literary theorists. For Even-Zohar, translation is “perceived as having played a fundamental role in literary and cultural history” (Bassnett, “The meek or the mighty” 13). He examines the socio-cultural conditions of the target culture which affect the commissioning and reception of translations, and suggests that the choice of translation strategy is influenced by the position that the translation occupies in the source literary system. For example, if translated literature occupies a primary position in the polysystem (as in the central canon), the translator is more likely to break with target culture conventions and create a translation that reflects textual elements of the source text closely, whereas if translated literature occupies a secondary or more peripheral position in the source literary polysystem, the translator is more likely to create a translation that conforms to the conventions and poetics of the target culture literary system (Munday 110). Thus translations can play a role in the evolution of the target literary polysystem by acting as agents of “inter-systemic transfer”, introducing new elements from the source literary polysystem, or they can play a conservative role in the target literary polysystem by reproducing and reinforcing existing models.

Even-Zohar proposed that translation be redefined as “no longer a phenomenon whose nature and borders are given once and for all, but an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system” (51). This change in focus from the dynamics of the source text-target text relationship to the relationships between target texts existing in a particular literary polysystem, thus bringing the extra-linguistic context into the field of investigation, is one of the major contributions of Even-Zohar’s work on polysystems to the study of translation.

¹⁸⁰ See Edwin Gentzler’s discussion (*Contemporary Translation Theories* 106-44).

Greatly influenced by his contemporary Even-Zohar's polysystems model, another translation scholar, Gideon Toury developed Descriptive Translation Studies, which, as its title suggests, is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to the analysis of translation activity. Toury's focus was on the behaviour of translators, in particular, he studied the types of strategies typically chosen by translators from a range of possibilities. The concept of translation "norms", which are defined as "regularities of translational behaviour within a specific sociocultural situation" (Baker 189), has been very influential, and Toury was interested in describing the sets of norms for defining translation behaviour appropriate in a given community, norms that had to be acquired by translators if they were to produce translations acceptable to that community (Baker 190).

Drawing heavily on Polysystem Theory and Descriptive Translation Studies, and in particular upon their emphasis on the target culture influences on production of target texts, influences exerted on the person of the translator, Lefevere focuses on translation as part of the literary system of the target culture. He sees translation as belonging to a group of text types that are kinds of "rewriting":

Translations, monographs, extracts in anthologies, and literary histories all have two features in common: they refer to books other than themselves and they claim to represent these books. [...] They are not 'writing' as the texts they write about are; they are 'rewriting' (Translation, Rewriting 138).

For Lefevere, the literary system, of which the translation is a component, is controlled by three main factors: the first, professionals within the literary system (including translators); the second, patronage outside the literary system (academy, academic journals, educational establishment, publishers, media) and powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing and (re)writing of literature; and the third factor, the dominant poetics – literary devices, range of genres, symbols, leitmotifs and prototypical situations and characters, present within the literary system (*Translation, Rewriting* 9).

Lefevere discusses the influences on the translation process, under the headings of "patronage", "ideology" and "poetics". The influence of "patronage" on the translation process is explained as deriving from the authority of the patron, a person or an institution, and enacted through the commission of the translation. "Authority draws the ideological parameters of the acceptable" (*Translating Literature* 117) in that the wishes of the publisher of the translation, based on economic, political or aesthetic considerations, must be taken into

account by the translator for obvious economic and professional reasons. These wishes can affect the criteria for selection of material to be translated as well as the translation strategies implemented by the translator.

Translators are interested in getting their work published. This will be accomplished much more easily if it is not in conflict with standards for acceptable behavior in the target culture: with that culture's ideology. If the source text clashes with the ideology of the target culture, translators may have to adapt the text so that the offending passages are either severely modified or left out altogether (Translating Literature 87).

Constraints on the form of the translation, as well as the type of material chosen for translation, may also be imposed on the translator by the type of publication the translation will appear in. For example, academic journals have their own specifications for the presentation of material and the language utilised tends to be specialist.

Institutions such as governments, churches and universities that commission translations may also influence decisions made by the translator. The translator's perception of the importance of and the amount of power wielded by these institutions may lead him/her to choose to make 'subversive' or 'non-subversive' decisions in the translation process, perhaps in relation to content or choice of material to translate.

Under the heading "poetics", it is the dominant poetics of the target culture literary system¹⁸¹ that also exerts pressure on the translator, who is constantly faced with decisions with respect to whether to accede to or reject the conventions of the target culture literary system in cases where these differ from those of the source language and culture. These translation decisions will be affected by various factors, including the translator's perception or anticipation of the reactions of the readership, the publisher/s, academic and political institutions, and the translator's personal poetics. Another important factor is the type of audience being translated for, which can affect elements of the style and information content of the translation - an academic audience would be accustomed to footnotes, whereas a translation for a children's anthology would more likely adopt a less scholarly style, and include necessary information as much as possible within the text.

¹⁸¹ The literary system into which the translator will be translating.

Lefevere's focus on the process of production and the reception of rewritings in the target culture highlights both the central role of the translator and the pressures and forces to which he/she is subject. The translator is no longer seen as a neutral agent,

Translators, critics, historians, and anthologizers all rewrite texts under similar constraints at the same historical moment. They are image makers, exerting the power of subversion under the guise of objectivity (Translating Literature 7).

and it is here that the influence of ideology most clearly comes into play. The translator wields a degree of power – ultimately deciding whether to submit to or resist influences from within the target culture, and having the power to portray the source literature, and by extension, source culture to members of the target culture. The translator's own ideological perspectives and reaction to dominant ideological perspectives in the target culture play a role in the translator's strategies and ultimately in the representation that the translator produces. In the words of Lefevere,

Translation is the most obviously recognisable type of rewriting, and [...] it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin (Translation, Rewriting 9).

The power of the representation of source author/text/culture produced in the rewriting process is especially potent in situations of unequal power relations. The representation may become an important source of information for a target culture which has limited contact or knowledge of the source culture. As Albert Wendt pointed out in his 1976 article "Towards a new Oceania", by far the majority of representations of Oceanian peoples and cultures have been created by "outsiders" to these cultures,

Up to a few years ago nearly all the literature about Oceania was written by papalagi and other outsiders. Our islands were and still are a goldmine for romantic novelists and film makers, bar-room journalists and semi-literate tourists, sociologists and Ph.D. students, remittance men and sailing evangelists, UNO experts, and colonial administrators and their well-groomed spouses. Much of this literature ranges from the hilariously romantic through the pseudo-scholarly to the infuriatingly racist; from the noble savage literary school through Margaret Mead and all her comings of age, Somerset Maugham's puritan missionaries/drunks/and saintly whores and James Michener's rascals and golden people, to the stereotyped childlike pagan who needs to be steered to the Light (58).

This is particularly the case in colonial situations where interaction between the dominated and dominating cultures mostly takes place in restricted contexts, and is certainly the

situation in New Caledonia, where there is limited interaction with or experience of the “Kanak cultural domain” on the part of non-Kanak.

The creation of a representation involves the creation of knowledge about a certain “reality”, and this is the source of the power inscribed in (re)writings – which can also influence perceptions of the source culture experienced by its own members. In *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, Tejaswini Niranjana outlines the role of translation in the creation of colonial subjectivities, using the example of the English education system established in colonial India, “which still legitimises ruling class power in formerly colonised countries”. Niranjana describes how in this system the “dominant representations put into circulation by translation come to be seen as ‘natural’ and ‘real’” (4) and she adds that the education system would have made Western ways of seeing and modes of translation familiar and “natural” to the “educated” Indian, further reinforcing the authority of the translated texts (31).

In New Caledonia, French is the *lingua franca*, and the language of education and administration. It is a channel through which rewritings are able to project images of Kanak oral literature and culture to Kanak as well as non-Kanak. Though Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is arguably not yet a “formerly colonised country”, it is not inconceivable that through the French education system, (re)writings of Kanak oral literature might influence perceptions of Kanak culture held by both Kanak and non-Kanak students. These representations constitute a rich resource of imagery and ‘knowledge’ that may be fully or partially incorporated or excluded during the on-going process of identity construction, and as such, they need to be critically examined. In the following comment taken from an interview on the power of representation in the medium of film, the Māori writer Patricia Grace articulates clearly what is at stake,

if films do not reinforce values, actions, customs, culture and identity, then they are dangerous... If there are no films that tell us about ourselves but only tell us about others, then they are saying “you do not exist” and that is dangerous... However, if there are films that are about you and they are untrue, that is very dangerous... If there are films about you but they are negative and insensitive so that they are saying “you are not good” that is dangerous (Pihama 239).

It can be argued that her statement is equally valid if another form of representation, the “text” is substituted for “film”. An example of a powerful and potentially dangerous (in the sense put forward by Grace) textual representation is the ethnographic text. In his paper in the

influential collection, *Writing Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Talal Asad describes the potential power and authority of ethnography, the representation of a culture, which is connected to the authority of the ethnographer and the authority of the written word,

It remains the case that the ethnographer's translation/representation of a particular culture is inevitably a textual construct, that as representation it cannot normally be contested by the people to whom it is attributed, and that as a "scientific text" it eventually becomes a privileged element in the potential store of historical memory for the nonliterate society concerned. In modern and modernizing societies, inscribed records have a greater power to shape, to reform, selves and institutions than folk memories do. They even construct folk memories. The anthropologist's monograph may return, retranslated, into a "weaker" Third World language. In the long run therefore, it is not the personal authority of the ethnographer, but the social authority of his ethnography that matters (163).

There is significant potential for the "textual constructs" or rewritings of Kanak oral literature to become a privileged element in the store of historical memory for Kanak. The colonial context of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie has disrupted and disturbed Kanak societies, as has the increasing urbanisation of Kanak populations, and the impact of globalisation particularly with respect to media such as television and the internet which have accelerated processes of change. The Kanak "cultural renaissance", which became so visible with the 1975 *Mélanésie 2000* festival, has seen initiatives put in place to recover elements of culture and history suppressed or hidden in the past. These two factors, along with the assertion of political and land rights by Kanak, mean that textual records of oral literature and Custom collected in the past (this includes translations) have become important sources of reference.

Rewriting has the potential to be used not only as a channel of colonisation, but also a channel of decolonisation. Edwin Gentzler describes the creation of knowledge that takes place in the translation process as a powerful force which can be harnessed for positive action to resist colonial discourses:

Translation does not simply offer a window onto some unified exotic Other; it participates in its very construction. The process of staging translation is a process of gathering and creating new information that can be turned to powerful political ends, including resistance, self-determination and rebellion (216).

The questions of power and representation that arise when investigating the influence of (re)writings on processes of identity construction make it imperative to take account of the

historical, socio-cultural, political, ideological and poetological contexts of their production and reception.

Lefevere's notion of rewriting is a useful analytical tool for contextualising the rewriting process and representations produced. He sees the study of Literary Translation as consisting of three main areas; "process, product and reception" (*Translating Literature* 12). Investigation of these three areas requires the examination of "the finished translation, the strategies behind the making of this product, the objectives with which it is made, the role the product plays in a culture and a literature", the undertaking of "analyses of the product in its total cultural context", and the consideration of the "extremely topical questions of power and manipulation" that will inevitably arise from such analyses (*Translating Literature* 134).

For Lefevere, analysis of translations in their "total cultural context" involves putting them "back into the time in which they were written, into their social, cultural, and political context and into the network of specific conditions of their production, distribution and reception" (*Translating Literature* 138). I have adapted his description of the rewriting process, which is based on the production of a target language text from a source language text, creating a model that takes account of the (re)writing¹⁸² of elements of oral tradition into the French language (by far the majority of published translations involve the translation from Kanak languages into French), in which a target language text is produced from either an oral performance event, or its transcription, as can be seen in Figure 3 below:

¹⁸² The parentheses introduced into the word (re)writing extend the meaning of the term, allowing texts resulting from the transformation from oral performance event into written text (writing – for the first time) to be considered alongside transformations of written texts into other written texts (rewriting).

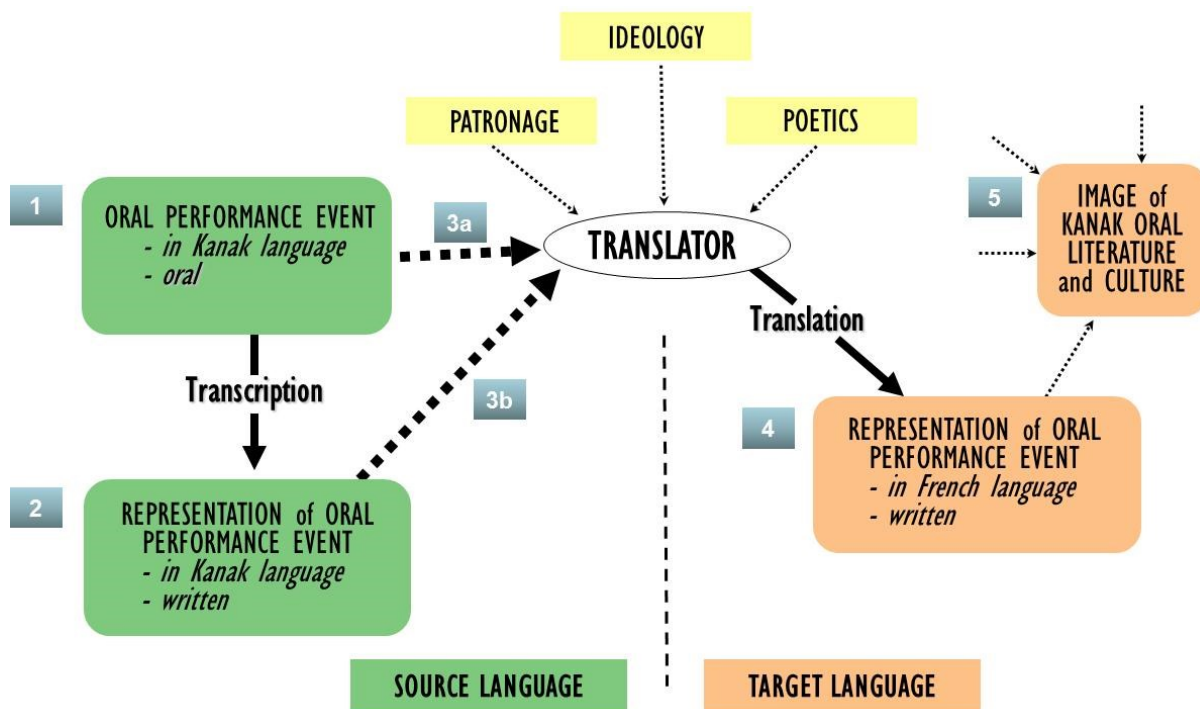


Figure 3 - Lefevere's Rewriting Process Extended to Take Account of Translation of Oral Performance Events into Written French

Rather than with a source “text”, we begin with an oral performance event (1), or sometimes with its transcribed form (2). The translator, subject to influences of patronage, ideology and poetics within source and target cultures, experiences either the oral (3a) or the written (3b) version, for which s/he produces, through translation, a representation (4), which is necessarily partial (there is no such thing as a definitive translation). This representation contributes to the construction of the image (5) in the target culture of Kanak oral literature, and by extension Kanak culture.

The notion of (re)writing can usefully be extended to encompass not only the texts included by Lefevere in his definition (translations, monographs, extracts in anthologies, and literary histories) but also other transformations along a continuum of “fidelity” to an “original”, such as re-editions, adaptations or even works “inspired” by an oral performance event (experienced in spoken or written form). In this extended model of (re)writing, the position of the (re)writer at the centre represents those who transform, to different degrees and in different ways, elements of Kanak oral tradition. The (re)writer can thus be the translator, the anthologist, the literary scholar, the linguist or the anthropologist, as well as the writer who is inspired by elements of Kanak oral tradition.

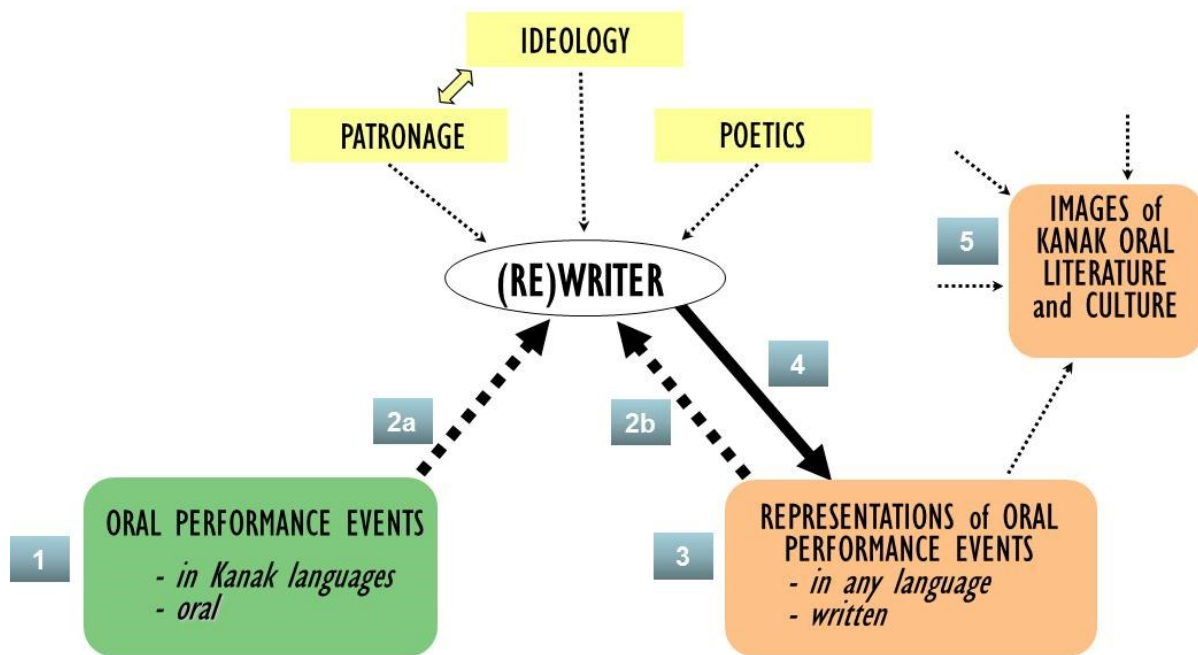


Figure 4 - An Extended Model of Lefevere's Rewriting Process

In this extended notion of (re)writing, a (re)writer who has direct access to Kanak oral tradition (through linguistic and cultural competence) can experience (2a) an oral performance event (1) or read (2b) its transcription,¹⁸³ (3) producing, through the (re)writing process (4), a written representation (3) of this event. A (re)writer who perhaps does not have direct access to oral tradition, or who chooses not to use this source, may experience (2b) an existing written representation (3) to create, through the (re)writing process (4), another representation (3), which then contributes to the image of Kanak oral literature and culture in the target culture (5).

An important difference in the (re)writing process in Figure 3, compared with the translation example given in Figure 4 above, relates to the influences on the (re)writer or translator. In the case of the translator, the translation is, in the majority of cases, commissioned by an external agent, whose demands or requirement (under the heading of “Patronage” in the model) must be taken into account and accepted or rejected by the translator during the process of translation for pragmatic reasons. In the case of a (re)writer of an element of Kanak oral literature who is not a translator, but rather an author, the commissioning of the

¹⁸³ The transcription also being a written representation of the oral performance event.

(re)writing most often arises from inside the (re)writer rather than from external factors, and is part of his or her creative motivation, thus there is an internal interplay between the commissioning of the (re)writing and the ideological frameworks within which the (re)writer operates. This is shown on the model of (re)writing in Figure 4 as a bi-directional arrow between the “Patronage” and “Ideology” influences acting upon the (re)writer.

The model of the (re)writing process (Figure 4) makes it possible for all texts that involve transformation of a story originating in an oral performance event, regardless of the degree or method of transformation, to be analysed and compared under the heading of (re)writing,

The advantage of this extended model of Lefevere’s notion of translation as (re)writing is that as well as taking into account contextual factors at play in the production of (re)writings, it also allows all textual transformations (translations, adaptations, re-editions and works “inspired” by other works) of an oral performance event to be compared under one heading “(re)writing”, regardless of the degree or method of transformation involved. This removes the (false) opposition between the oral and the written, allowing works using these modes of communication to be considered alongside one another on the same continuum of human expression, bringing to light interactions that might otherwise remain hidden, and allowing the extent and nature of the interactions between Kanak oral tradition and New Caledonian written tradition to be considered.

The section that follows explains the interpretation of the notion of “encounter” that has been developed in this study as a means of exploring the interactions that take place within and between traditions during the (re)writing process, and which offers some means of comparison between (re)writings that result from this process.

Encounters

Encounters, be they with strangers, friends, family, acquaintances, allies or enemies, are a feature of travel along pathways. Along the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* from oral to written traditions via the (re)writing process, two types of encounter are found.

The first is the encounter between *Le Chef et le lézard* and the (re)writer. This encounter can involve an oral performance of the story, when the (re)writer experiences the story in its typical performative context, perhaps on a ceremonial occasion, or as part of an evening storytelling session. The (re)writer may encounter the story in the language of its culture of origin, or it may be recounted in French, as *lingua franca*, it may also be told in a less public context, such as in an interview or recording session as part of research undertaken by linguists, anthropologists, or collectors of oral tradition for the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK.

The encounter with *Le Chef et le lézard* may also involve a textual performance of the story by the (re)writer, that is, the performance involved in the act of reading, of engaging with a textual rendering of the story.¹⁸⁴ The text may be a transcription, in the language of the tradition from which it derives, or perhaps a translation, extract or adaptation of the story in another language, whether as a stand-alone text or integrated into another work.

This second type of encounter, which can happen along the pathway taken by the story within and between traditions, is also the means through which the story, and thus the oral tradition from which it derives, has the potential to influence processes of identity construction. As shown in the model of the (re)writing process (Figure 3) earlier in this chapter, the encounter

¹⁸⁴ Borrowing from Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's 2007 article "Notes towards a Performance Theory of Orature", in which he states that "whatever the combination of location, time and audience, orature realizes its fullness in performance" (7), in this study, writings are also seen to realise their fullness in performance. The written "performance" involves a writer and an audience, just as the oral performance involves a storyteller and an audience. There is of course a great difference between oral and written codes in the relationship between storyteller and audience, which is immediate and proximate for the former, and delayed and at a distance for the latter. There may be a time lag of months, years or centuries involved between the writer's performance (the initial commitment of the story to text), and the reader's (the audience's) decoding of the text and recreation of the story, which is also a kind of performance. It is true for writings as well as for orature that they both realise their fullness in performance, as a text is only fully realised when it is being engaged with by the reader.

between the reader and the (re)writing, shown as a written representation of an oral performance event (2), leads to the creation of images of Kanak oral literature and culture in the mind of the reader, and this in turn may feed into the social categorisations internalised during processes of social identification that lead to the production of specific social identities,¹⁸⁵ including those that are the focus of this study, namely Kanak identity and the identity associated with the community of the *destin commun*.

To sum up, referring again to the extended process of (re)writing shown in Figure 4 of this chapter, each text examined in this study represents a direct encounter between a (re)writer or (re)writers and an element of Kanak oral tradition (2a), or between a (re)writer (or (re)writers) and an existing written representation of an oral performance event. Later, the text also becomes the site of encounter between the reader and the story (either in spoken or written form), the act of reading may be performed by another (re)writer as part of the “input” stage of the (re)writing process (2b), or it may be performed by a reader who is not a (re)writer, and whose interpretation of the text will give rise to images of Kanak oral literatures and cultures that may or may not be incorporated into his/her own social identification processes.

The question arises of how to examine these encounters, which in the case of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* involve a great diversity of methods, motivations, genres and actors, across a wide variety of historical contexts and specific circumstances. When examining encounters between the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* and (re)writers, it is necessary to take into account the differences between the two codes in terms of their perceived “authority”. While oral tradition is a highly respected and fundamental mode of communication in Kanak societies, in wider New Caledonian society,¹⁸⁶ authority lies with the written word. The written mode of communication has become closely associated, and even at times synonymous with “truth” and “reality”, and has the ability to project representations of a source culture and civilisation to a potentially massive readership across time and space, these factors mean that a power differential exists between oral and written codes, and this

¹⁸⁵ See the discussion of definitions of identity used in this study in Chapter 1, “Identity” p.19.

¹⁸⁶ As with Western societies in general, and many more societies in which the written word is a well-established communication mode that has come to take on a central role.

inequality is in play in each encounter between oral and written tradition that figures in the corpus of this study.

The (re)writer wields a certain power in creating a representation, and is most often under no formal obligation to produce a respectful representation that reinforces values, actions, customs, culture and identity, and avoids untruths, negative or insensitive portrayal, to paraphrase Patricia Grace's earlier comments.¹⁸⁷ It is the context in which a (re)writing is produced, as well as the ideology, motivation and forces exerted upon the (re)writer(s) that strongly shape the representation produced for the target culture readership.

Examining encounters through the lens of "fidelity" to an original, sees a focus on content and how accurately a (re)writing brings across information, and from this perspective, a departure from the source oral performance event or text would be seen to be a lack of fidelity. The notion of fidelity is difficult to pin down in the study of elements of oral tradition, because by their very nature they are perpetually being modified, and there exists no definitive "original", but rather an unlimited potential number of versions.

In light of this, in place of fidelity, this study makes use of two concepts to examine the encounters between (re)writers and versions of *Le Chef et le lézard*. The first is "genuine communication" as put forward by Sell, in which encounters are seen as an overlap in separate and individual contexts of the participants in the communication process, with the "meeting of autonomous minds which conceive of each other as equally empowered" (42) leading to a respectful exchange that results in an increase in mutual understanding. The second concept is that of "respect", so central to Oceanian cultures, and examination of the encounters between (re)writers and *Le Chef et le lézard* allows them to be visualised on what could be termed a "continuum of respect."

The notion of respect plays a crucial role in relationships in Oceanian societies; between people, between people and environment. Bound up with the notion of the relationship is the concept of "the inter-relational space between people, people and their environment across temporal and spatial boundaries" (Tusitala Marsh 2010) found throughout Oceania. In his

¹⁸⁷ See pages 103-04 of the present chapter.

article, “Tatauing the post-colonial body”,¹⁸⁸ the ground-breaking Samoan scholar and writer, Albert Wendt offers a definition of the concept of *vā*:

Vā is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. A well known Samoan expression is ‘la teu le va’, cherish/nurse/care for the va, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group, unity, and more than the individual person/creature/thing in terms of group, in terms of vā, relationships (402).

As the “constitutive gap in all relationships and the void at the heart of creation” (Sharrad “Albert Wendt and the Problem of History” 111), the concept of *vā* draws attention to the importance of relationships that underpins Oceanian worldviews.

In the New Caledonian context, these relationships are nourished and maintained by what the anthropologist Michel Naepels has described as “*des formes habituelles de politesse et comportement (ce qu’on appelle localement le ‘respect’)*” (“Une étrange étrangeté” 186).¹⁸⁹ The implications of speech, of *la Parole*, are serious – to “*faire la coutume*”¹⁹⁰ or seek to establish a specific relationship with a particular individual at a given place and time, is not something to be taken lightly:

*[...] entrer en communication avec un Kanak, c’est mettre en œuvre des codes et des réseaux de relations complexes ; c’est faire appel à une longue route parsemée d’êtres en voie de devenir, c’est remonter toutes les ramifications généalogiques jusqu’à leur origine, c’est faire se confondre enfin l’alpha et l’oméga. C’est pourquoi la coutume n’a rien d’un geste folklorique. Son efficacité et son authenticité dépendent du degré d’initiation de ceux qui la pratiquent. Ainsi, la parole kanak n’a de sens que si l’on écoute avec respect et sincérité. (Poédi “Coutume” 70).*¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ This article features in the important collection *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the new Pacific* (1999).

¹⁸⁹ [habitual forms of politeness and behaviour (what is locally referred to as “respect”)]

¹⁹⁰ See more complete definition offered by Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta in Chapter 1 “Kanak Oral Traditions” p. 37, footnote 84.

¹⁹¹ [[...] to enter into communication with a Kanak is to bring into play complex codes and networks of relationships, it is to call upon a long path sown with beings on the way to becoming, it is to follow all the genealogical ramifications right back to their origin, and finally it is to merge the alpha and the omega. That is why custom is no folkloric gesture. Its efficiency and its authenticity depend on the degree of initiation of those who practise it. And so, the Kanak word only has meaning when it is listened to with respect and sincerity]

During a recent interview, Déwé Görödé indicated that the expression *taaci mâ wâjuwée* in Paicî closely corresponds to the notion of the *vā*. In an interview with Assia Boai, educator and expert in the Ajië language, he proposed the expression *vi pè kau*, as conjuring up a similar sense to the *vā*. As he explained, *vi pè kau* encompasses the notion of respect: *vi* containing the idea of reciprocity, and *pè kau* translating as “*prendre pour un grand*”.¹⁹² This treatment of someone as an adult implies the notion of respect, and to show a child the respect due to an adult, for example, is to practice mutual respect, which helps to maintain relationships between people.

In *Albert Wendt and Pacific Literature: Circling the Void*, Paul Sharrad describes *vā* as “a space marked by tension and transformation and by confluences and connections” (248), and it is this dynamic space that provides the opportunity for interaction between cultures, between visions of the world, between identities. More recently, in the publication *Negotiating Space for Indigenous Theorising in Pacific Mental Health and Addictions*, the notion of *vā* has been developed into that of a “negotiated space”. Although this idea of “negotiated space” has been developed in the context of research into questions relating to health and wellbeing of Pacific populations in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the interactions between different systems of knowledge relating to health (essentially, indigenous Pacific and Western), this notion of “negotiated space” is very useful for exploring the encounters discussed in this study. Milo-Schaaf and Hudson offer the following definition of the *vā*,

*the negotiated space is the watering hole, the marae atea, the debating chamber, the kava circle. It is a space where intercultural negotiation and dialogue is given permission to take place. It is proposed that this space enables and empowers cultural innovation, acts of imaginative rediscovery, indigenous knowledge theorising and the creation of new relationships (vā) with other forms of knowledge and understanding. In a culturally diverse society, negotiating intercultural space is an on-going and never-ending process which promotes and upholds both individuality and community identities. It also opens up the terrain of mutuality and reaffirms connection – both in similarity and in difference (39).*¹⁹³

¹⁹² [treat someone as a grownup/big person] depending on the context.

¹⁹³ *Negotiating Space for Indigenous Theorising in Pacific Mental Health and Addictions* (2008) builds on the work of the research team and participants of Te Hau Mihi Ata: Mātauranga Māori. The project leader Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, is a leading proponent of Kaupapa Māori methodology and author of the seminal text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), and key researchers are Dr Sarah-Jane

This view of the role of the *vā* as a space in which negotiation, interaction and communication can take place, in the context of a culturally diverse society has particular resonance with the aims of the Noumea Agreement. The (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* can be seen as participating in the opening up of “terrains of mutuality”, that negotiated place, as each text provides a platform for dialogue between different world views, and between the different individual contexts¹⁹⁴ brought to the (re)writing encounter in the form of the (re)writer and the element of Kanak oral literature, *Le Chef et le lézard*. This mutual terrain, or overlap of contexts, especially when it exists in a genuine communication situation, with an emphasis on equality and mutual respect, has the potential to increase understanding while respecting difference, thus helping to fulfil one of the necessary conditions for the construction of an identity that includes all the communities present in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

In Kanak societies, the relational space can be well maintained (through the observance of practices and behaviour that reinforce the notion of respect), or it can be not maintained, as is the case when relationships break down.¹⁹⁵ In the encounters between oral and written traditions of different communities that take place in the (re)writings of the corpus, maintaining the inter-relational space consists of showing respect to the traditions of both participants in the communication situation. When the inherent power differentials at play are considered, this maintenance of the *vā* represents a significant contribution to positive intercultural communication.

Considering (re)writing encounters in terms of the relational space between the story and its (re)writer(s), through the prism of the degree of respect shown during the (re)writing process, allows the interactions between oral and written traditions to be visualised on a “continuum of respect” as a means of comparison, and brings to the forefront some of the ideological

Tiakiwai and Murray Hemi “who have been instrumental in articulating a space where indigenous knowledge can be both affirmed and critiqued” (2).

¹⁹⁴ As seen in the model of “genuine communication”.

¹⁹⁵ In the course of a conversation in 2011 with Susie Ounei, a student from Iaai in the *Langues et Cultures Régionales* department of the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, I learned that although relationships may break down in a particular case because of personality conflicts and the lack of observation of signs of respect, the relationships, the links between groups of people remain despite this temporary discord, and future generations are able to repair and maintain them, through once more observing the customs relating to respect.

dynamics at work during the (re)writing process, contextualising the representations produced and the images projected.

The next section outlines the questions that are investigated in this study using the conceptual tools of encounter, (re)writing and pathways that have been described here.

Questions

Does Kanak oral tradition exert any influence on identity construction beyond the boundaries of Kanak societies? This is the question that arose from a previously-mentioned investigation of translations of Kanak oral literature,¹⁹⁶ and to which the answer appeared to be affirmative. The two-part question that follows from this, and that is central to this thesis, is “What influence does Kanak oral tradition exert on identity construction processes and how does it exert this influence?”

The first part of the question, “What influence does Kanak oral tradition exert on identity construction processes?”, can be broken down into “*how much* influence does Kanak oral tradition have on identity construction, and *in which areas* is this influence exerted?”

To answer the question of how much influence Kanak oral tradition has on identity construction processes would involve a multi-faceted study, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. For an investigation into influence via the medium of the written word, it would be necessary to examine such things as publication figures and locations, library usage, web-based publications, as well as undertake reader response studies, questionnaires and surveys. Information on the number of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition found in the written tradition of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, and the range of genres that they cover, may be useful in elucidating the influence of Kanak oral tradition in wider New Caledonian society.

The corpus constituted for this study has been restricted to (re)writings of one story, *Le Chef et le lézard*, which means that results relating to number and genre-spread of (re)writings can only be seen as indicative. One of the objectives of this thesis, is to act as a kind of “pilot study” that aims to gain an insight into (re)writing activity taking place between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written traditions. The size of the corpus of (re)writings of this single (hi)story (48 texts) would seem to point to the possible existence of a significant total body of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition, and a widening of the corpus to

¹⁹⁶ In my Masters dissertation “Translation as Rewriting: Representations of Kanak Oral Literature”. For details see the Introduction of the present study “Researching Interactions” p. 14.

include all (re)writings would be a useful next step in the study of the question of how much influence Kanak oral tradition exerts.

The question “... and in which areas is this influence exerted?” seeks to elucidate the influence exerted by Kanak oral tradition through different genres. This would require both a mapping of the wider corpus of (re)writings to establish which genres are represented, and a close analysis of the different genres and contexts involved in (re)writings. Such research would feed into the afore-mentioned multi-faceted study, which would then need to explore the question of which genres might be considered more “influential”, for example, with respect to size and constitution of the potential audience or readership. The preliminary findings of the present study show a range of genres represented in the corpus, which includes linguistic, anthropological, pedagogical and literary¹⁹⁷ texts, as well as cultural and museum guide books, promotional material, encyclopedias and academic articles. An extension of this corpus and a comprehensive mapping of the (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition would allow the scope and extent of Kanak oral traditions’ influence in wider New Caledonian society through genres of written tradition to be investigated further.

The second part of the central question of the thesis asks *how* Kanak oral tradition has an influence on identity construction processes in wider New Caledonian society. As has been previously mentioned, it is clear that Kanak oral tradition is influential through other media such as art, dance, film and music, however, this study is centred on the influence exerted through the written word. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the second part of the central question can be rephrased as “How does Kanak oral tradition exert influence on identity construction processes in wider New Caledonian society *through the medium of the written word?*”

There are two stages to this process of exerting influence, the first stage involves stories reaching beyond the boundaries of distinct Kanak societies and communicating with wider New Caledonian society, through the (re)writing of elements of Kanak oral traditions. The second stage involves the images created in these (re)writings being fully or partially taken up, modified, ignored or rejected by people during processes of identity construction.

¹⁹⁷ Represented in the corpus are the literary genres of play, novel, essay/memoir, anthology of stories, story (in a cultural review).

Describing and contextualising the process of production for each (re)writing, and tracing the pathways and connections between pathways on a map of the literary landscape, begins to reveal what is involved in reaching beyond the boundaries of individual Kanak oral traditions.

In order to investigate images created in each (re)writing and made available to processes of identity construction, each encounter between an element of Kanak oral tradition and New Caledonian written tradition is examined according to criteria for the maintenance of the *vā* or “space between” (these include the cultural and linguistic competence of the (re)writer(s), the amount of collaboration with Kanak experts before, during and after the (re)writing process, the “visibility” of the original version). Representations of elements of Kanak oral tradition are then analysed to gain insight into images they might project of Kanak cultures and literatures, of Kanak identities and of the destiny implicit in the *destin commun*. This analysis of encounter and representations sheds light on the way in which each (re)writing “respects” the *vā* or relational space between traditions.

In summary, to answer the question, “What influence does Kanak oral tradition exert on identity construction processes and how does it exert this influence?”, this study takes a (hi)story found in various Kanak oral traditions *Le Chef et le lézard*, and traces its paths as it is transformed in the writing of both Kanak and non-Kanak authors, becoming part of the written tradition of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. After constituting a corpus of these (re)writings, each text is examined in order to elucidate the context in which it is produced and the transformations that it has undergone. Finally, each (re)writing is examined as an encounter between traditions, and by extension, between cultures, using the notion of maintaining the *vā* or “space between”. Attention is drawn to images of Kanak cultures and literatures, Kanak identity and the collective identity of the *destin commun* that are projected by these representations of elements of various Kanak oral traditions, images that have the potential to participate in on-going processes of identity construction.

Methods

Four stages were involved in investigating the influence Kanak oral tradition might exert on identity construction processes: (1) assembling a corpus of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*; (2) plotting the pathways taken by the story across the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie; (3) describing each (re)writing process and the context in which it takes place; and (4) examining the product of each encounter between story and (re)writer.

STAGE 1 – ASSEMBLING THE CORPUS

Originally, the corpus was to be constituted from (re)writings of two stories from Kanak oral tradition – *Le Chef et le lézard* and the origin (hi)story from Paicî oral tradition entitled *Téâ Kanaké*. Four factors led to the selection of these two stories. The first is that two stories were chosen in order to keep the field of study to a manageable size, as an exhaustive exploration of all of the connections between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition since the written word arrived in the islands would have extended far beyond the scope of a single study. The second factor was the relative accessibility of both stories in French (they are very well-known and have been published in numerous versions). The third factor was the wide representation of the stories among the oral traditions of New Caledonia.¹⁹⁸ And finally, they both speak of origins and identity, making them suitable for investigating the questions relating to identity construction that lie at the core of this study.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ In different ways – the *Le Chef et le lézard* exists in written form in many of the languages of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, and quite possibly is represented in every oral tradition (this would be an interesting avenue to explore in future studies), whereas the story of *Téâ Kanaké*, whilst originating in a precise location in a single oral tradition (Paicî, from the Paicî-Camuki customary area in the centre of the Grande Terre), has been used as a uniting figure for Kanak from all of the different communities in the islands, and has a strong presence in the French language, having been adopted as the symbol of Kanak unity by the Centre Culturel Tjibaou. This has meant numerous publications by the ADCK have incorporated the (hi)story of *Téâ Kanaké* as can be seen in the map showing the (re)writings of *Téâ Kanaké* that features in the Appendices of the present study.

¹⁹⁹ *Téâ Kanaké* is a *jèmàà* or origin (hi)story originating in the Paicî region, and tells of the origins of the world and of humans, relating the story of the eponymous founding ancestor and the clans and lineages established in the Paicî lands. It was later utilised by Jean-Marie Tjibaou as a unifying narrative for Kanak identity, explicitly articulated in the play-pageant *Kanaké: jeu scénique en trois tableaux* that was performed at the 1975 *Mélanésia 2000* festival, in which Kanak culture burst into the public domain for the first time. As discussed in the section “Type 1 - Pathways within oral tradition” of the present chapter, *Le Chef et le lézard*, found all over the Grande Terre, addresses the relationships between different groups of people and between people and land.

In previous research undertaken for a Masters dissertation, I had encountered a number of (re)writings of both stories, and the corpus contained around 20 (re)writings initially, mostly comprising the collections of stories published by linguistic and anthropological researchers, the ADCK, as well as a number of pedagogical publications. However, after a considerable amount of time spent searching through other texts, and following leads offered by different experts in the course of interviews, the size of the corpus of (re)writings reached almost 100 texts. It became apparent that to treat of all of these (re)writings in the body of this study would considerably exceed the limits imposed for a doctoral dissertation's length, thus the decision was made to restrict the corpus to (re)writings of just one of the stories. *Le Chef et le lézard* was chosen because the (re)writings spanned the greater period (the first recorded (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* was in 1862, whereas the earliest (re)writing of *Téâ Kanaké* dates to around the 1930s), *Le Chef et le lézard* is also found in a number of oral traditions, with regional variations, compared to *Téâ Kanaké*, which though it too is subject to variation, this variation is considerably less, coming as it does from one specific culture, that of the Paicî-speaking region of the Grande Terre. Though the story has not been examined in the main body of the thesis, a map plotting the (re)writings of *Téâ Kanaké* on the literary landscape has been included in the *Appendices* of this study.

The rules for inclusion of texts in the corpus of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are that the text must contain elements of the underlying structure of the story – the “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” discussed earlier in this chapter. These core elements were relatively easy for me to identify as someone who does not speak any Kanak language; there will undoubtedly be more subtle traces of *Le Chef et le lézard* in other texts, traces that only someone with intimate knowledge of the Kanak languages and oral traditions concerned and of New Caledonian writings may identify in future research. One of the objectives of this study is to ascertain whether there is in fact influence of oral tradition upon written tradition in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, thus it represents a preliminary exploration that is necessarily incomplete, but opens up the possibility of more detailed investigation in the future.

The (re)writings of the corpus can be placed on a continuum, at one end of which we find (re)writings that recreate oral performances of the story as fully as possible, the most obvious example of which would be transcriptions into Kanak languages, in which the textualisation process is the main transformation undergone by the story. Further along the continuum would be translations, anthologies including the story, adaptations, and at the far end of the

continuum, writings that are simply “inspired” by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*. In this last category, it is possible that writings containing very subtle or indirect references to the story, or elements of the story other than its underlying structure may not have been included in the corpus, and again, more work remains to be done by researchers who can operate within and between the codes and cultures. It is hoped that this corpus will serve as a base on which to build, and that future, more detailed studies of the influences and interactions between Kanak oral traditions and New Caledonian written tradition will be undertaken, studies that will extend the limits of the corpus, not only in terms of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* but of other elements of Kanak oral traditions that have travelled into New Caledonian written tradition.

STAGE 2 – TRACING PATHWAYS OF LE CHEF ET LE LÉZARD ACROSS THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE OF KANAKY/NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE

In order to trace the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* from Kanak oral traditions to New Caledonian written tradition, I have devised a model of the New Caledonian literary landscape, onto which the different (re)writings are plotted as locations and the pathways taken between them drawn as lines between these locations.

There are two different dimensions to the model of the literary landscape that I have developed, the first is the “real literary landscape”, which corresponds to the actual, physical landscape of the islands of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. This is the landscape onto which the stories of Kanak oral tradition are inscribed, intimately linked to precise locations in the environment. On the map shown below (Figure 5), this landscape is represented on the left, in the physical outline of the New Caledonian islands divided into *aires coutumières*²⁰⁰ within which different languages and dialects are spoken.

²⁰⁰ [customary areas]. This map is based on the LACITO-CNRS map “Aires coutumières et langues de Nouvelle-Calédonie” (2011) [The customary areas and languages of New Caledonia].

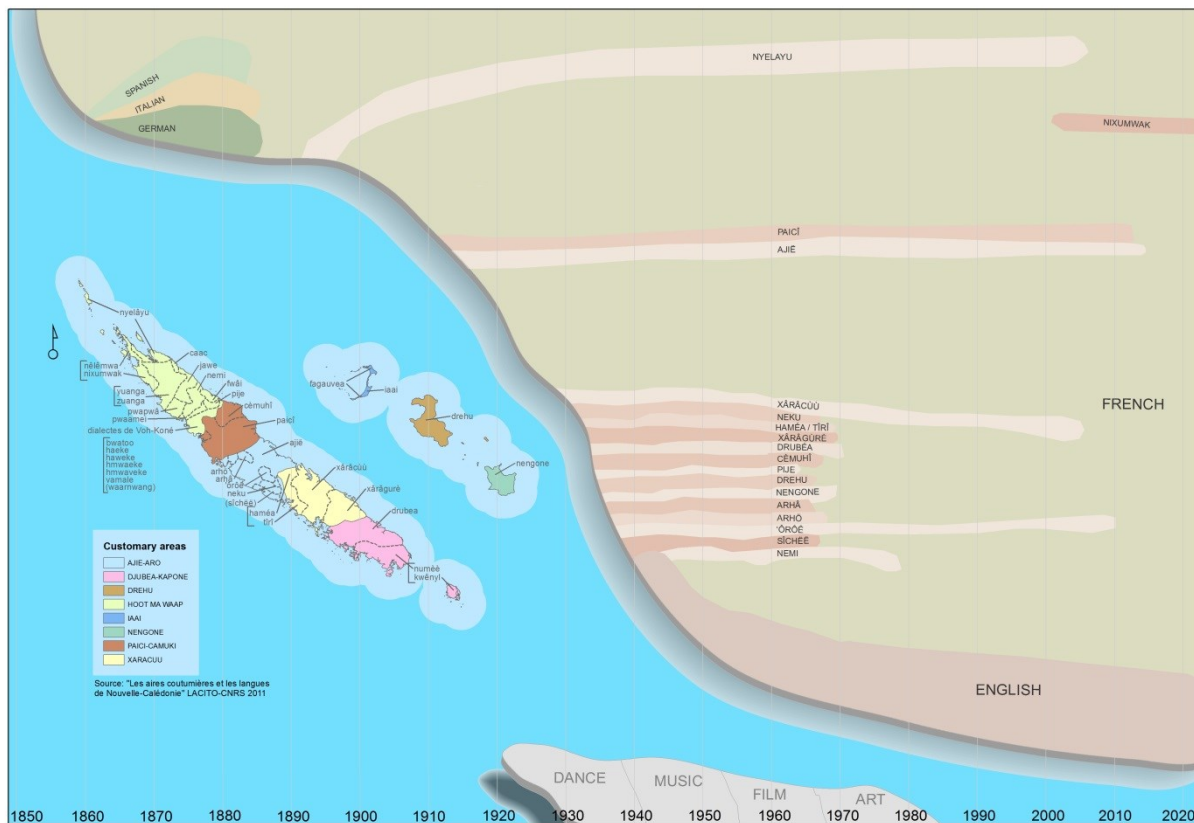


Figure 5 - The Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie

The second dimension to map of the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is referred to in this model as the “imaginary literary landscape”. This map is not grounded in a physical landscape, but rather in a virtual, intangible landscape. On the map shown in Figure 5, this imaginary landscape is represented on the right-hand side, floating above the real landscape of the group of islands. The imaginary landscape is divided up into language zones, geographic areas that correspond to different written traditions (or sub-systems) with European or Kanak origins,²⁰¹ that together form part of the New Caledonian literary polysystem.

²⁰¹ While it is definitely the case that other languages and written traditions are present on New Caledonian soil, only the language zones that feature in the corpus texts are included on the map, which is but a snapshot of part of the polysystem. The idea is that the map is constantly evolving and changing, thus, for example, the first time a (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is undertaken in Vietnamese, a Vietnamese language zone would appear on the map of the landscape to accommodate this new (re)writing. A parallel can be drawn between the ever-

The points on this landscape (shown in Figure 6 below) represent the physical entities, the “bricks-and-mortar” texts that contain (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, the numbers within the points correspond to the identification number of the (re)writing in the corpus.²⁰² The placement of the points in relation to the linguistic zones is also important. Bilingual (re)writings straddle the borders between languages, whereas the points that fall entirely within one language area are monolingual. The physical landscape of the islands is constantly being modified as are the stories that are intimately linked to it, so too, the virtual landscape is constantly changing, and at a greater pace than that of the physical landscape, since every time a new (re)writing is created (i.e. written or published), it works to enlarge or adjust the boundaries of the linguistic zone in which it features.



Figure 6 - (Re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* plotted on the Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie

changing geography found in the map of the literary landscape and the equally dynamic and changing nature of the internet.

²⁰² A list of the texts of the corpus, their identification numbers and the Chapters and sections in which they are discussed is included in the Appendices, page 402.

Onto this landscape that combines the real with the virtual, a time scale, measured in decades, has been added. The pathways on the map of the texts in our corpus move in one direction, from left to right, travelling across literary space and through time.²⁰³ This allows the identification of periods of greater or lesser (re)writing activity in the decades since the annexation of New Caledonia (the first (re)writing is dated 1862) and the arrival of the written word in the islands, and helps to provide historical contexts into the texts that have been produced.²⁰⁴

At the bottom of the map, beneath the literary landscape, the tip of a headland can be seen, and it is marked “Dance”, “Music”, “Film” and “Art”. These are areas for future exploration, or *défrichage*,²⁰⁵ and represent other areas of human creative endeavour upon which Kanak oral traditions almost certainly have had an influence.

Each pathway traced on the map of the New Caledonian literary landscape is a journey between two points, between an oral performance event and a written text, or between two “bricks-and-mortar” texts. The pathway represents the (re)writing process and the transformations that *Le Chef et le lézard* undergoes. As outlined earlier in this chapter, there are five main types of pathway involved in the movements of *Le Chef et le lézard* through time and space.

The first type – pathways within oral tradition – is not traced out on the map of the linguistic and cultural areas in which the story is found. This is because the focus of this study is the textual dimension, for pragmatic reasons related to both the institutional constraints on the size of a doctoral study, and due to the fact that mapping the movements of stories within oral traditions is a task for researchers who are at home in both Kanak and non-Kanak languages, and who can move with facility between the oral and written modes of communication. This unmapped territory on the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie is rich terrain for future research into the different oral traditions present there.

²⁰³ Though the story does move from written tradition back into oral tradition too – an investigation of this is beyond the scope of this thesis for reasons discussed in the introductory chapter.

²⁰⁴ A significant difference between oral and written communication modes is highlighted here, since in oral tradition, new versions effectively “overwrite” older ones, either completely, or partially, and thus the passage through time is not traceable in the same way as it is for written texts.

²⁰⁵ A metaphoric use of a term that is usually used with reference to clearing ground of vegetation in anticipation of cultivating it. In Léonard Drilë Sam’s 2010 Masters seminar, he used the term as a metaphor for research.

The second pathway type – pathways from oral to written tradition – involves movement between the real and imaginary literary landscapes, and is represented by dotted lines moving out from the oral traditions of the linguistic zones marked on the map, beginning at the approximate location in which the story was recounted and leading into texts in the imaginary landscape (see Figure 7 below). In the example below, a version of *Le Chef et le lézard* moves out from Drehu oral tradition (on the island of Lifou) and into the imaginary landscape where it is transformed into text 38 of the corpus, which sits in the English linguistic zone.

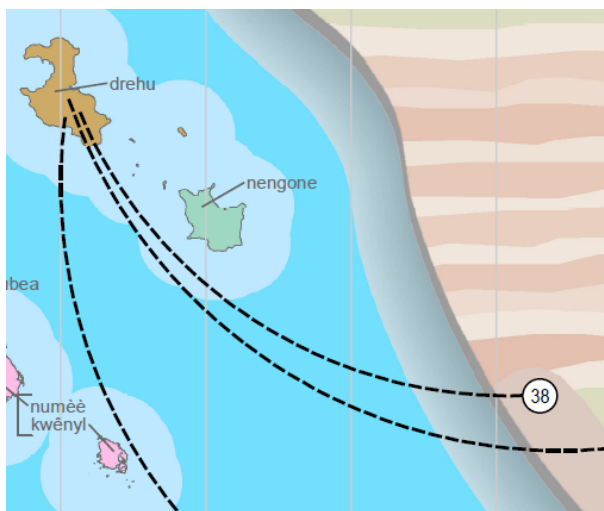


Figure 7 - Example of Pathway between Oral Tradition (Drehu) and Written Tradition (English)

The third pathway type – converging pathways – involves movements from more than one source text or oral performance event into a single (re)writing, and the source versions of the story may be found in the real literary landscape, the imaginary literary landscape, or a combination of the two. In the example given in Figure 8 on the following page, the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* is transformed from text 15 and text 16 of the corpus, into the text of (re)writing 10.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ This figure also gives a snapshot of an indicator of the relative degree of influence exerted by different (re)writings. Texts 15 and 16 each have an influence on a single text, text 10, whereas it can be seen that text 10 has multiple pathways leading out from it, indicating that it has influenced numerous other texts. It would appear, then, that text 10 exerts greater influence than texts 15 or 16, based on the relative number of texts affected, and that text 10 can be said to be more influential than the other two. The actual degree of influence would need to be investigated however, as a simple count of the texts influenced does not take into account the actual influence exerted – information on readership composition and numbers, as well as the genres involved would need to be examined before conclusions as to the degree of influence could be drawn (see discussion in the previous section of this chapter – “Questions”).

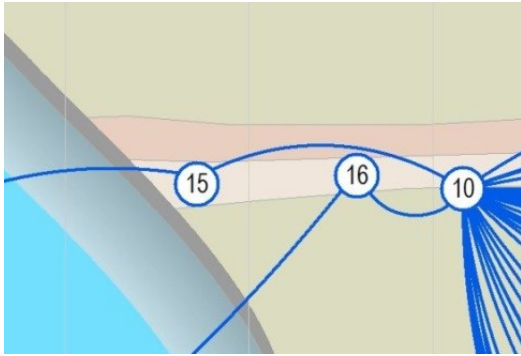


Figure 8 - Example of Converging Pathways

The fourth type of pathway – pathways within written traditions – traces movement across the imaginary landscape over time within a single linguistic “zone” (see Figure 9). In the example given below, a bilingual Nyelâyu-French (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* (text 7) moves into another bilingual Nyelâyu-French (re)writing of the story (text 8). This type of movement, while it does not involve pathways between languages, often involves pathways between genres, opening up the possibilities for a great range of variation in (re)writings.

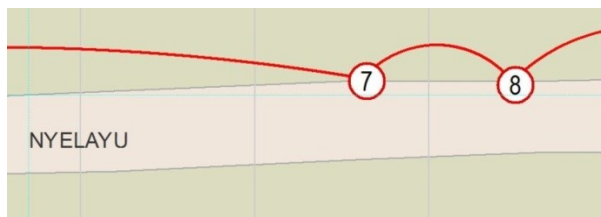


Figure 9 - Example of Pathways within Written Tradition

The fifth and final pathway type – pathways between written traditions – involves movement from one written tradition and language to another, across the literary landscape and through time. In the example given in Figure 10 below, a version of *Le Chef et le lézard* in French (text 2) is transformed three times, into three different written traditions and languages: Spanish (text 3), Italian (text 4) and German (text 5). This movement can take place between traditions and languages that are relatively close, for example between Kanak languages and written traditions, or between traditions and languages that are culturally and linguistically quite different, such as from Kanak written tradition to English written tradition.

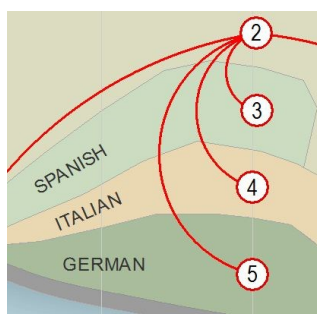


Figure 10 - Example of Pathways between Written Traditions

The 48 (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that comprise the corpus of this study have been organised into four sections based on the oral traditions in which they originate, with each section corresponding to a thesis chapter. The first two sections, “Pathways originating in Nyelâyu Oral Tradition” (Chapter 3) and “Pathways originating in Ajië Oral Tradition” (Chapter 4), contain networks of pathways rooted in versions of the story found in the Nyelâyu and Ajië oral traditions respectively. In Chapter 3, the (re)writings and the pathways between them are in red, those of Chapter 4 are marked in blue on the map. The third section, “Pathways originating in Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak Oral Traditions” (Chapter 5), contains a network of pathways connected by versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in each of the three traditions. The story travels between several collections of stories of oral tradition, and two scholarly works. These (re)writings and the pathways between them are marked in black on the map. The fourth section, “Pathways originating in Yuanga, Nemi and Paicî Oral Traditions” (Chapter 6), contains three separate pathways out of the three different oral traditions of the chapter’s title, and the (re)writings and pathways of this section are drawn in green on the map.

STAGE 3 – DESCRIBING (RE)WRITING PROCESSES AND THEIR CONTEXTS

Each pathway from one point to another on the map of the New Caledonian literary landscape represents a (re)writing process. For each separate (re)writing process, the stages and participants are described, along with the transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, finally, the historical and literary context in which the (re)writing process took place is outlined.

The description of the stages and participants in the process, the commission of the (re)writing process, the influences acting upon the (re)writer(s), and the response of the (re)writer(s) to these influences has been pieced together from information found by close

reading of the texts themselves, of critical writings about the texts (including *comptes rendus*²⁰⁷), information in archives, through interviews, conversations and emails with participants in and experts with knowledge of the circumstances of the (re)writing processes. The historical and literary context in which the (re)writing is situated is outlined after research into existing commentaries, historical texts and articles, and by examining the relationships between the inter-connected literary texts as shown on the literary landscape above. Some (re)writings appear to be either reactions to previous ones, or to arise out of similar historical circumstances, and the map on the literary landscape helps to visualise this extra dimension of influence on the (re)writings.

It must also be noted that the contextualisation of the different (re)writings of the corpus varies in its degree of detail, for a number of reasons. For some (re)writings, especially those undertaken in a long distant time, very little information on the processes, motivations and practical details involved in the (re)writing process is available. In other (re)writings, especially those from more recent times in where reflexivity has become more commonplace, more contextual information is available.

Another important constraint has been the size of the corpus and the difficulty of access either to people or texts that might shed further light on aspects of the (re)writing process. This difficulty of access may be related to geographical constraints, such as when useful documents are located in France, or in New Caledonia. The corpus was gradually constituted by a sort of circular movement in which one text might lead to the discovery of another, and a pathway might branch off, or its starting point shift as a result of the unearthing of new versions. Another avenue for discovery was the interview, which could unveil new variants or even a whole new pathway, and as my physical presence in the locations in which useful documents are or might be held did not always coincide with knowledge of the existence of certain (re)writings, in some cases, a less in-depth contextualisation was possible.

A second, related constraint on the depth of the contextual research was simply that of time, in particular as the number of (re)writings mushroomed towards the end of the study. Upon reflection on the research phase of this study, it is now clear to me that the passage of time

²⁰⁷ [Reviews]

not only enabled me to search more efficiently, having come to know well the various sources and textual resources available for study of aspects of Kanak oral traditions, but also, more importantly, several years spent living in and working at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* enabled me to engage in on-going dialogue with the experts in the area of Kanak oral traditions, especially those involved as educators and students in *Langues et Cultures Régionales* department, and also with members of the multi-disciplinary *Centre des Nouvelles Études sur le Pacifique* (CNEP) research laboratory based in the faculty of *Langues, Lettres et Sciences Humaines* (LLSH) of the university. These many conversations, the privilege of attending numerous courses offered by the LCR department, and various colloquia held between 2008 and 2011 resulted in the discovery of a number of the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* that feature in the corpus, and it is clear that time was a factor in developing the relationships that allowed these conversations to take place.

As a result of these constraints of geography and time, there is an unevenness in the Chapters that follow with regard to the depth of analysis or contextualisation of the (re)writing processes that produced the texts of the corpus. It is also not possible to do justice to the complexity of the contexts in which each text is produced in just a few pages, thus a further constraint in action has been that of the limits in size of a doctoral dissertation. Questions that are as yet unanswered, or avenues to be followed up in future are all signalled within the examinations of each text, and this is part of the role of the present study, to *défricher le terrain*, to open up new directions for future research.

When it came to devising a method for examining the transformations undergone by the story, it quickly became apparent that a single, “original” version of a story from oral tradition is impossible to locate, by virtue of the fact that multiple, and sometimes competing versions of a story may be in circulation at any one time. Rather than comparing (re)writings with an “original” to see what transformations have been wrought during the (re)writing process, I have described the way in which the underlying structure of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption has been treated. Where there is obvious transformation linked, for example, to the change in code from oral to written, or to the introduction of new thematic material, this is signalled in my discussion of each (re)writing. This approach brings to the fore the ways in which the (re)writers have transformed the story to fit new purposes and contexts.

It must be emphasised that the transgression–punishment–flight–redemption framework is a collection of elements synthesised from the variants of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that I have encountered, and in this sense it is an arbitrary rather than a definitive structure. In the event of new (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* being uncovered or created, it is entirely possible that this framework might need to be adjusted. Therefore the framework can be seen as a pragmatic response, valid for a particular moment in time, to the challenge of finding a reference point to compare (re)writings with, in the absence of a single “original” version.

Once the stages in each (re)writing process have been elucidated and the historical and literary contexts in which they take place have been described, the next step is to examine each (re)writing in terms of the encounter that has produced it, and the respect for the *vā*, the space between the story and the (re)writer(s) that can be discerned in the bricks-and-mortar text.

STAGE 4 – EXAMINING ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN LE CHEF ET LE LÉZARD AND (RE)WRITERS

The concrete manifestations of encounters between *Le Chef et le lézard* and (re)writers that comprise the corpus of the present study take the form of physical texts. To examine the encounters that produce each (re)writing, I have used the notion of respect for the *vā*, the relational space between *Le Chef et le lézard* and the (re)writer(s) that produce the new texts, and Sell’s notion of genuine communication.²⁰⁸ In Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, the analyses of the different (re)writings explore the ideas of genuine communication and of respect for the inter-relational space between cultures, and to this end, I have devised a list of criteria that help to bring to light the degree of respect for the space between Kanak oral literature and New Caledonian written tradition found in each textual encounter. The criteria to be considered when exploring the nature of the encounters between traditions are: the degree of linguistic and/or cultural competence of the (re)writer; the level of collaboration between (re)writers and Kanak experts in the (re)writing process;²⁰⁹ the degree of consultation with those who recount the stories and other Kanak experts following the (re)writing process (this refers to

²⁰⁸ See the section entitled “Literary Communication and Community-Building” in Chapter 1.

²⁰⁹ It is of course possible for the Kanak expert and (re)writer to be one and the same person.

feedback regarding the (re)writing produced, in terms of verification as well as approval); and the “visibility” of the source story (in written or oral form) in the (re)writing, generally either through acknowledgement in the text of the (re)writing or inclusion of a version of the source story in the (re)writing itself.

In the case of the first criterion, there is a higher chance that the relational space between traditions will be respectfully maintained the greater the level of linguistic and cultural competence possessed by the (re)writer. The second and third criteria, relating to the collaboration and consultation with Kanak experts, help to maintain the *vā* by allowing the experts to assess the (re)writing in terms of the interpretations and representations it contains, and their expertise helps to avoid cases in which the (re)writer without a high degree of competence makes errors of interpretation. (The power of the (re)writing to project such errors has been discussed in the “(Re)writing” section of this chapter). Regarding the “visibility” of the source story in the (re)writing, its presence works to valorise the original story, as well as providing a means of verification of the content of the (re)writing. This transparency and the affirmation of the value of the source story can be seen as signs of respect for the source story, and by extension, source culture.

Some criteria are more relevant than others to the context of production of individual (re)writings, depending, for example, on whether the source of the story is an oral performance or a recording of an oral performance, or whether the source of the story is textual (another (re)writing that already exists in written form). Together, the criteria proposed allow the interactions that take place in each of these encounters between the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* and its (re)writers to be brought to light and considered in terms of the degree of respect exhibited in the relational space, or, to put it another way, in terms of whether it is an example of genuine communication.

Once each (re)writing has been described and contextualised, the representations of elements of Kanak oral tradition contained within it are examined to gain insight into images they might project of Kanak cultures and literatures, of Kanak identities and of the destiny implicit in the *destin commun*. Texts may contain representations that are negative as well as positive, and each text contains multiple possible readings that are dependent on the historical context at the moment each act of reading takes place, the background and degree of initiation of the reader in matters relating to Kanak oral traditions and cultures at that particular moment in time, as well as the ideological framework within which the reader interprets the (re)writings.

This means that there is a great diversity in the possible readings both amongst readers and across time.

The criteria used to explore the representations created and the images projected by the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* discussed in the chapters that follow allow different readings to be brought out, however, the analyses presented in this study make no claim to be exhaustive: this would be impossible. Rather, the aim is to draw attention to the more obvious images created within each (re)writing, images that have the potential to affect identity construction processes.

The analyses of encounters and the interpretations of representations produced that form the basis of the next part of this study shed light on the way in which each (re)writing “respects” the *vā* or relational space between traditions. They also address the question of whether the notions of identity articulated within the texts have the potential to have positive or negative impacts on the identities that are the focus of this study.

Part II: Pathways of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie

This part of the study traces the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the New Caledonian literary landscape, between the real and the virtual literary landscapes (from oral to written traditions), and across the virtual literary landscape (within and between written traditions). Chapter 3 (Pathways from Nyelâyu Oral Tradition), Chapter 4 (Pathways from Ajië Oral Tradition) and Chapter 5 (Pathways from Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak Oral Traditions) examine (re)writings that form networks of pathways originating in the oral traditions of the respective chapter titles. Chapter 6 (Pathways from Yuanga, Nemi and Paicî Oral Traditions) treats single, independent pathways (rather than networks of pathways) taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* from the oral traditions of the chapter's title.

As the pathways are traced, so the contexts of production of each of the (re)writings will be outlined, as will the transformations undergone by the story during the (re)writing process and, finally, the representations of the *Le Chef et le lézard* will be discussed in terms of their portrayal of this element of Kanak oral tradition and their potential contribution to processes of identity construction, for both Kanak identity and the identity implicit in the notion of the *destin commun*.

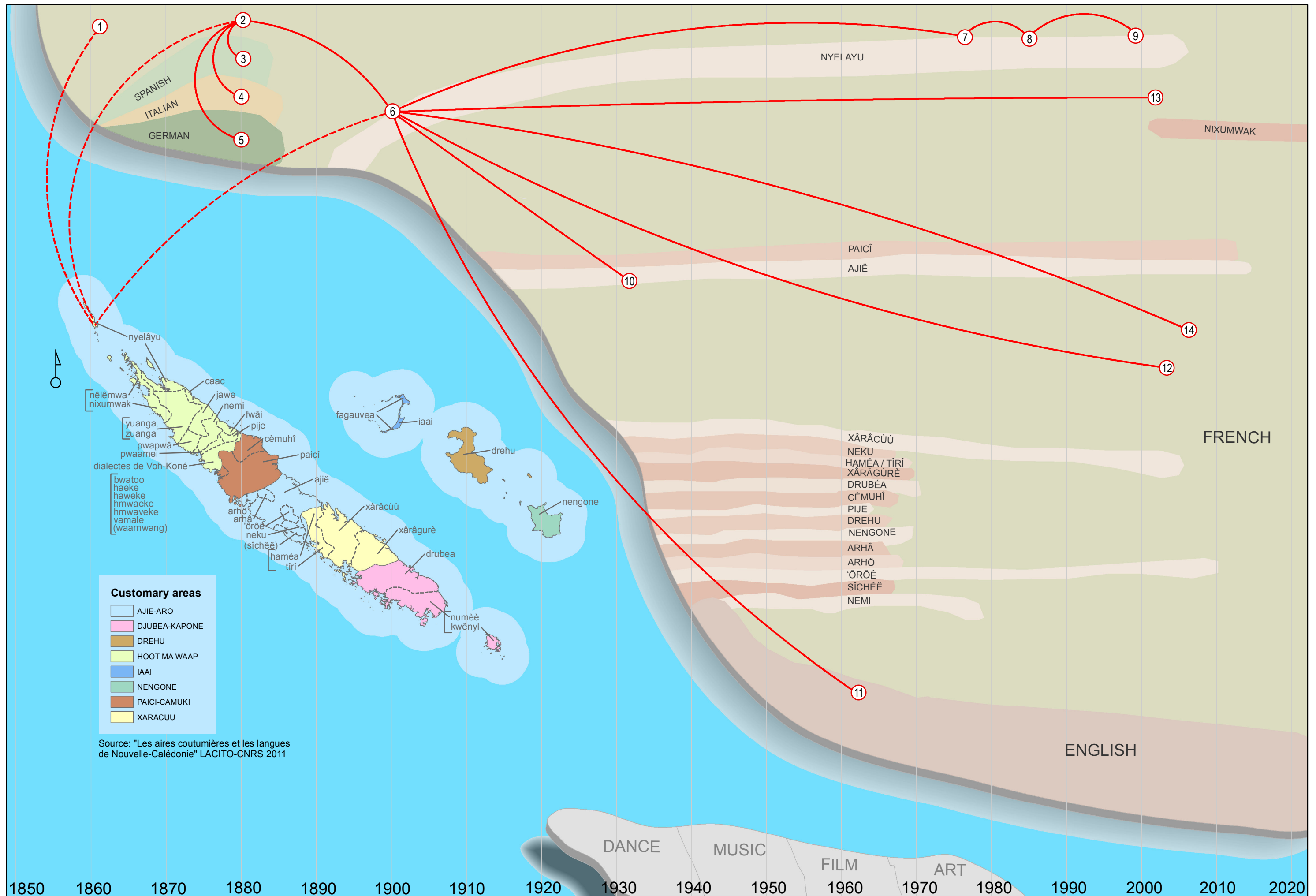
On the following page, a map shows all of the pathways taken by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. The pathways range from the western side of the map, which shows the real landscape divided into Customary Areas, to the eastern side of the map which shows the virtual literary landscape divided into "language zones". The points on the map represent the (re)writings, the "bricks-and-mortar texts" that constitute the corpus of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* considered in this study. The pathways between the (re)writings represent the transformative (re)writing process.

CHAPTER 3. Pathways originating in Nyelâyu Oral Tradition

This section examines (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* originating in Nyelâyu oral tradition, that comprise a network spanning a period of more than 140 years; the earliest text dates from 1862 and the most recent, from 2003. Below is a list of the 14 texts of the network that feature on the map on the following page.

Text ID	Section	Publication details	Page
1	3.1	V. de Rochas. <i>La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants : productions, mœurs, cannibalisme</i> . 1862.	122
2	3.2	Père P. Lambert. "Littérature Néo-Calédonienne" in <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> . 1880.	136
3	3.2	Père P. Lambert. Spanish edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Las Misiones Católicas</i> , Barcelona. 1880.	143
4	3.2	Père P. Lambert. Italian edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Le Missioni Cattoliche</i> , Milan. 1880.	143
5	3.2	Père P. Lambert. German edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Die Katholischen Missionen</i> , Fribourg. 1880.	143
6	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . 1900.	145
7	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1976.	150
8	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1985.	150
9	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1999.	150
10	3.4	M. Leenhardt. <i>Documents néo-calédoniens</i> . 1932.	160
11	3.5	K. J. Hollyman. "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" in <i>JPS</i> , 1962.	164
12	3.6	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	168
13	3.7	F. Garnung. <i>Contes et coutumes canaques au XIXe siècle</i> . 2003.	172
14	3.8	L. Miskelly. "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	182

Figure 11 - Pathways Originating in Nyelâyu Oral Tradition



3.1 TEXT 1: Victor de Rochas. *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants : productions, mœurs, cannibalisme*. Paris: Ferdinand Sartorius, 1862.

“CONTE ALLÉGORIQUE” (PP. 215–18).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from oral to written tradition. Although specific details of the provenance of this first recorded (re)writing of the story are unknown, it is likely that it derives from an element of the oral tradition of the Nyelâyu language spoken on the islands of Belep and on the *Grande Terre* around Balade. The story moves out from Nyelâyu oral tradition (in the Hoot Ma Waap customary area in the northern part of the Grande Terre) and into New Caledonian written tradition²¹⁰ by way of Victor de Rochas’ book *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants : Productions, mœurs, cannibalisme*,²¹¹ published in Paris in 1862 by Ferdinand Sartorius.

La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants : Productions, mœurs, cannibalisme consists of two volumes of *essais* written by Victor de Rochas, a doctor in the French Imperial Navy who spent several years in military service in New Caledonia in the mid-nineteenth century.²¹²

The first volume, *Livre premier*, entitled *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses dépendances – Description géographique et physique*, is a seven-chapter (103-page) account of geographic features, demography, geology, agricultural production and potential of the land, flora and fauna, and the climate of the islands. It is intended to be a “*description succincte*” of New Caledonia that will set the context for the second volume, whose subject matter is the New Caledonian peoples (I).

²¹⁰ *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...*, as an element of Francophone written tradition, can be argued to belong to both New Caledonian and French written traditions, however, only its role in New Caledonian written tradition falls within the scope of this thesis.

²¹¹ This book is also one of the earliest texts to contain rewritings of elements of Kanak oral literature. The first collection and translation of a large number of texts from Kanak oral traditions was undertaken by Père Gagnière, who included them in correspondence sent to his superior in 1853 (Bogliolo, “Entre langues et terre” 141).

²¹² De Rochas completed a doctoral dissertation in 1860 for the *Faculté de médecine* in Paris, entitled “Essai sur la topographie hygiénique et médicale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie”. This dissertation, and *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...* were produced from his research during a three year naval posting to New Caledonia from 1858 to 1861.

The second volume, *Livre second, Les Néo-Calédoniens – Anthropologie et Ethnographie*, is a seventeen-chapter (195-page) presentation of the “*Calédoniens*”,²¹³ their societies and ways of life. It begins with descriptions consistent with biological anthropological approaches (Chapter I – *Portrait et qualités physiques*) and ends with meditations on the morals and character of the “*naturels*”, with particular reference to their origins and to questions of cannibalism (Chapter XVII – *Réflexions sur l’origine des Néo-Calédoniens, sur l’anthropophagie, sur la population*).

Two “*modèles*” of Kanak oral literature in translation (into French) – an *apologue*²¹⁴ and a *conte allégorique* – are presented and commented upon by de Rochas in chapter X, *Littérature – Art oratoire* of the *Livre second*. The *conte allégorique*, which has no title and is embedded in his commentary, runs over four pages of the chapter and recounts the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*.

De Rochas was undoubtedly focused on research and writing. His doctorate in medicine was the outcome of his research in New Caledonia, and he was a member of the *Société de Géographie* and the *Société d’Anthropologie* of Paris. In the *Avertissement* of *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...* the notion of study is a recurrent one, for example he notes that,

*J’ai eu l’avantage d’arriver à l’époque la plus favorable pour étudier une des races humaines les moins connues. Dans quelques années, notre exemple et nos lois auront profondément modifié l’état de ces nouveaux concitoyens. Ceux qui voudraient les étudier alors arriveraient trop tard (II).*²¹⁵

In terms of Lefevre’s model of (re)writing, it seems likely that the commission of *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...* can be attributed primarily to de Rochas, who, having already undertaken so much research in New Caledonia for the purposes of his doctoral thesis, would have been disposed to publish. His membership of the *Société de Géographie* and the *Société d’Anthropologie*, also indicates a readiness to publish his research, and in fact the approaches and presentation utilised in the two volumes of the work would seem to

²¹³ De Rochas uses this term and “*naturels*” to refer to Kanak.

²¹⁴ The *apologue* is the story of a weak and impoverished chief who, with supernatural help, outdoes neighbouring chiefs in a ceremonial show of wealth and then suffers rather serious consequences.

²¹⁵ [I have had the advantage of arriving at the most favourable time for the study of one of the least known of the human races. In a few years, our example and our laws will have profoundly changed the state of these new fellow citizens. So, those who would wish to study them will arrive too late.]

reflect the influence of the two learned *Sociétés*. In the first volume he writes from a geographic perspective to describe the people and land. The second volume, *Les Néo-Calédoniens – Anthropologie et Ethnographie* contains descriptions and analyses that fit with what were contemporary anthropological perspectives at the time, such as a preoccupation with biological data, with detailed descriptions of physical characteristics and measurements, and constant references to the position of the peoples studied on the “ladder of civilisations” – the *Néo-Calédoniens* being placed on a lower rung than the more “advanced” European civilisations..

De Rochas’ stated objective in writing the book was “*de faire connaître les indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, au double point de vue des caractères physiques et moraux*” (I).²¹⁶ Whether this objective arose from personal and intellectual interest alone is not made explicit, it may also have derived from a perception that there was a need for more information on the inhabitants of this new French colony, soon to be penal colony.²¹⁷ De Rochas appears to have been motivated by more pragmatic considerations,

Laissant à d’autres le soin des détails minutieux, et l’honneur des élucubrations d’intérêt purement scientifique, je n’ai eu en vue que l’application et les résultats utiles (I).²¹⁸

He was perhaps responding to demand for information useful to future settlers or members of the colonial administration. Indeed, in his narrative, comments such as the following relating to the potential of New Caledonia as a colony are frequently made:

Dans ces deux localités [Ouagap and Touo] gisent d’immenses lits d’ardoise qui seront certainement d’une exploitation fructueuse, quand la colonisation offrira des bras en nombre suffisant pour les exploiter et des débouchés pour en payer les frais (19).²¹⁹

²¹⁶ [to make known the natives of New Caledonia, from the double perspective of their physical and moral character]

²¹⁷ New Caledonia officially became a penal colony in 1863, a year after *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...* was published.

²¹⁸ [Leaving the treatment of others the meticulous care for details, and the honour of ravings of purely scientific interest, I had in view just application and useful results].

²¹⁹ [In these two localities, [Ouagap and Touo] lie huge deposits of slate which will certainly be successfully exploited, when colonisation provides sufficient manpower to exploit them and markets to make them profitable].

[...] *pas un seul animal dangereux ne menace, en Nouvelle-Calédonie, la vie du laboureur qui défriche la plaine stérile, et du pionnier qui ouvre des voies nouvelles dans la forêt* (70).²²⁰

In the *Dédicace*, he thanks two people for giving him the strength to complete the task he has undertaken. He recognises the *contre-amiral*, le Comte du Bouzet, former governor of New Caledonia, for encouraging him in his research. He also acknowledges Monsieur Reynaud, the Inspector-General of the Naval Health Service for his expertise and endorsement of his *essais*. The nature and extent of the encouragement given by the Comte du Bouzet to de Rochas for this project would be interesting to investigate further, as would the involvement of M. Reynaud. They may have had a greater or lesser role in the commission of the book which, given their high positions in the military administration, may well have been related to the development of the colony.

In the introductory paragraphs of the chapter *X – Littérature – Art oratoire*, de Rochas outlines his reasons for the selection of *Le Chef et le lézard* for inclusion. Drawing a comparison between French literature of the Middle Ages and the indigenous literature of New Caledonia, he casts judgement on the latter, asserting its value and existence while at the same time positioning it on an earlier, less developed rung of the evolutionary ladder,

Sans doute leur littérature n'est ni riche ni bien variée ; les contes de revenants, les récits de combats merveilleux, les histoires de guerriers fameux ou invulnérables en font trop souvent les frais ; à peu près comme chez nous, au moyen-âge, les faits et gestes des chevaliers de la table Ronde, des nécromans [sic], des fées, défrayaient les veillées du château et charmaient les naïves croyances de nos pères (214).²²¹

De Rochas contends that the genres of *apologue* and *conte allégorique* represent the best of this “*littérature des indigènes*”, which, in some cases, can contain “*un parfum de la littérature orientale*”. The two examples of these genres that figure in the chapter have no special merit, he explains. Rather, they have been included for their potential to “*piquer la curiosité*” of the reader, since they were created as a result of interaction with the French.

²²⁰ [in New Caledonia, not a single dangerous animal threatens the life of the labourer clearing the infertile plain and the pioneer who is opening up new roads in the forest].

²²¹ [There is no doubt that their literature is neither rich nor particularly varied: ghost tales, accounts of marvellous battles, stories of famous or invulnerable warriors are too often the consequence; a little like for us, in the Middle Ages, the acts and deeds of the knights of the Round Table, of sorcerers, of fairies, would fill the evenings at the castle and lend charm to the naive beliefs of our forefathers.]

Here the influence of the target culture readership on the choices made regarding the content of the book is made explicit.

While the identity of the target readership is not directly stated, it is possible to build a picture of who de Rochas was writing for. As he writes in the *Avertissement*, the principal objective of the book is to “make known the people of New Caledonia”. The question that is implicit is, to whom and for what reason?

The title of the book is a good starting point. The first part – *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants* : – clearly signals de Rochas’ intent to write a guide to this new French colony and to the people already living there. The subtitle – *Productions, Mœurs et Cannibalisme* – outlines the scope of the book, which discusses economic (*Productions*) and cultural (*Mœurs*) features of the land and its people, while the third noun of the subtitle, *Cannibalisme*, points to the inclusion of sensational subject matter to attract a nineteenth-century European readership enthralled by tales of the “exotic”. It is interesting to note the word order of the subtitle, which could be read as reflecting the relative importance of each element – the economic dimension of the new colony first (*Productions*),²²² followed by the culture (*Mœurs*) of the indigenous people who, for de Rochas, are essential to the economic project,

*Loin de considérer la population indigène comme un obstacle à l’exploitation agricole du pays et au progrès de la colonie, on doit la considérer, au contraire, comme l’élément primordiale de sa prospérité. C’est ce que je vais essayer de démontrer (312).*²²³

The final word, *Cannibalisme*, which plays into exotic notions of the “ignoble” savage²²⁴ prevalent at the time and a source of great fascination for the nineteenth-century public, was doubtless included with an eye to improving sales of the book.

²²² De Rochas’ book was published at a time when economic questions relating to the development of the new colony were being considered. New Caledonia was established as a penal colony in 1863 (the year following the book’s publication) and in 1893 the Governor Feillet’s “free settler” programme was introduced.

²²³ [Far from considering the native population as an obstacle to the agricultural exploitation of the land and to the colony’s progress, on the contrary, it must be considered as the essential element of its prosperity. It is this that I will try to demonstrate].

²²⁴ De Rochas makes direct reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the first line of the chapter entitled “État social et politique” in which he writes “*Les Néo-Calédoniens ont dépassé cet état primitif que regrettait pour nous le bon Jean-Jacques, car ils en sont arrivés à vivre en société*” (240).

It appears that de Rochas is writing primarily for a French metropolitan readership. There are many references to France, and the use of *nous* as he addresses his French readers directly is inclusive. This can be seen again in comparisons made between the landscapes of the new colony and his home country,

*Aussi la solitude des bois n'est-elle point égayée comme dans notre France par de ravissantes mélodies; là-bas un morne silence règne dans les forêts, ou quand un son se fait entendre, c'est le caquetage de la perruche ou le mélancolique roucoulement de la tourterelle (60).*²²⁵

the resources present in both,

*La Nouvelle-Calédonie possède deux plantes tinctoriales qui contribueront peut-être un jour à sa prospérité. Nous sommes loin sans doute de l'époque où les matières colorantes pourront être employées dans la localité; [...] Eh bien! je crois que notre colonie possède deux végétaux propres à cet objet, et j'ajouterai, pour ce qui regarde le premier que je vais étudier, que, s'il pouvait être acclimaté en France, ce qui n'est nullement impossible, il créerait une ressource aussi nouvelle que précieuse à notre industrie (42-43).*²²⁶

the use of the land for agricultural production,

*En Nouvelle-Calédonie, comme dans notre France si favorisée, il y a des sites fertiles et d'autres arides, mais quand l'agriculture y répandra ses bienfaits, le nombre des premiers augmentera aux dépens des derniers (27).*²²⁷

or the differences in socio-cultural organisation,

*La domesticité, telle que nous l'entendons en France, n'existe pas chez les Néo-Calédoniens; la polygamie la remplace (229).*²²⁸

²²⁵ [Also, the solitude of the woods is not at all brightened, as in our France, by ravishing melodies; over there a gloomy silence reigns in the forests, or when a sound is heard, it is the screeching of the parrot or the melancholic cooing of the turtledove].

²²⁶ [New Caledonia possesses two dye-containing plants which will one day perhaps contribute to its prosperity. Without doubt, we are far from the time when dyes will be able to be used locally. Yes! I believe that our colony possesses two plants suitable for this use, and I will add, concerning the first that I am going to study, that if it could be acclimatised in France, which is not at all impossible, it would create a resource as new as it is precious for our industry].

²²⁷ [In New Caledonia, as in our France, so well-favoured, there are sites that are fertile, and others that are arid, but when agriculture spreads its benefits there, the numbers of the former will increase at the expense of the latter].

De Rochas was clearly writing for an educated readership²²⁹ with access to resources, and for those who may have had the intention of establishing themselves in the new colony. The idea of taking a sea voyage to New Caledonia “on a whim” in the passage below would seem to appeal to travellers of means,

*Du moins le Français qui lira les mots tels que je les écris, les prononcera-t-il à la façon des indigènes, et si le caprice d'une promenade sur mer le conduit aux rivages de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, il ne risquera pas de se faire présenter une pierre quand il demandera du pain (III).*²³⁰

De Rochas also evokes the intellectual context of the nineteenth-century salon in the following anecdote relating to Kanak customary dress,

*Le Néo-Calédonien s'habille légèrement quoiqu'avec recherche. Une dame demandait un jour, en France, à un homme d'esprit, quel était le vêtement des indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. « Madame, répondit-il, avec une paire de gants, vous habilleriez dix hommes, mais pour les femmes c'est autre chose, il leur faut plus d'étoffes » (148).*²³¹

and his explanation for the lack of detail in his description of this particular feature of Kanak culture supports the idea that his writing was directed towards members of “polite society”,

*Je ne saurais sans faire rougir la pudeur donner une description plus exacte du vêtement masculin. Ce n'est pas qu'ils n'aient de sérieuses prétentions à cacher leur nudité, mais en réalité, ils ne font que l'orner. Je renonce de grand cœur à peindre tous les caprices de la mode à cet égard (148).*²³²

It is impossible to know the exact details of the circumstances under which this *conte allégorique* came to appear in de Rochas' book, as none of the nineteenth-century translators left any information about their systems for collection or translation of elements of Kanak

²²⁸ [Domesticity, as we understand it in France, does not exist with the New Caledonians: it is replaced by polygamy].

²²⁹ For example, the other members of the *Société de Géographie* and the *Société d'Anthropologie*.

²³⁰ [At least the Frenchman who reads the words as I write them will pronounce them in the same manner as the natives, and if the caprice of a sea voyage leads him to the shores of New Caledonia, he will not risk being given a stone when he asks for bread].

²³¹ [The New Caledonian dresses lightly, though with care. A lady asked, one day in France, of a man of wit, what was the clothing of the natives of New Caledonia. “Madam”, he replied, “with a pair of gloves you would dress ten men, but for the women it is another thing, they have need of more material].

²³² [I could not, without causing embarrassment, give a more exact description of the masculine dress. It's not that they don't have serious intentions to hide their nudity, but in reality, they do nothing but decorate it. I wholeheartedly refuse to paint a picture of all of the whims of fashion in that respect].

oral tradition (Bogliolo, “Entre langues et terre” 143). Examination of the text does, however, seem to confirm Bogliolo’s explanation that de Rochas learned the story from the Marist missionary Père Pierre Lambert, a founding member of the first Catholic mission in Belep in 1856, and who was transferred to Nouméa in 1863, the year following the publication of *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...*

Bogliolo notes the significant role played by Père Lambert in early intercultural communication, acting as an informant for European voyagers who did not have sufficient time to learn Kanak languages, and he cites the example of the version of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in de Rochas’ work, which he describes as a “*version édulcorée*”,²³³ of “Anla Touo”²³⁴ (“Entre langues et terre” 144). “Anla Touo” is a version of *Le Chef et le lézard* that was written down in the language of Belep as well as translated into French by Lambert.²³⁵

Bogliolo’s explanation of the provenance of the *conte allégorique* appears to be corroborated by de Rochas’ text, and by its comparison with Lambert’s versions.²³⁶ In the *Avertissement* (II), de Rochas explains that while he spent a considerable amount of his time studying the land and its inhabitants and saw a great deal first-hand, he also gained information by interviewing the missionary priests who were living in closer contact with the indigenous peoples. The Balade military garrison, which de Rochas visited in his role as naval doctor, was in relatively close proximity to the mission on the *Île Art* where Père Lambert was based, and contact between the two Frenchmen would have been very likely. De Rochas also directly mentions Père Pierre Lambert in the section of Chapter VII – *Dépendances de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* that describes the changes brought about on the Isle Art of the Belep group by the missionaries Montrouzier and Lambert, who de Rochas calls “*civilisateurs de ce peuple*” (107).

²³³ [watered-down version]

²³⁴ “Anla Touo” is the title, in the language of Balade, given by Lambert to the version of the story that he transcribed and published in *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, 1900.

²³⁵ The French-language version of “Anla Touo”, entitled “Le chef de Touo”, was first published as part of a “*Feuilleton*” entitled “*Littérature Néo-Calédonienne*” under Lambert’s name in the religious journal *Les Missions Catholiques*, N° 587, 3 septembre, 1880.

²³⁶ Père Lambert published the story in more than one language (French and the language of Balade) and in more than one publication (*Les Missions Catholiques* and *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-calédoniens*); these versions are discussed further in sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the present chapter.

Further, while de Rochas worked with interpreters during his three-year stay in New Caledonia, and though he was “*sans cesse occupé de l'étude du pays et ses habitants*” (II),²³⁷ he would not have had time to develop the necessary linguistic skills²³⁸ in the language of Balade to record and translate the story himself. Finally, a comparison of the two versions shows that the narrative of the de Rochas text closely follows that of Père Lambert.

De Rochas' and Lambert's interpretations of the *allégorie* (or *chant de guerre* as Lambert classifies it) are also essentially the same: the story was meant to incite the audience to rise up against the French authorities. In the paragraph preceding the (re)writing, de Rochas explains the allegory as being a story about the chief of the *tribu* of Balade (identified as the Chief of Touo in the story), whose title and authority had been taken away as punishment for “various misdemeanours” by the French (the terrible, white, foreign *génie* in human form), and who was drifting among the neighbouring *tribus* where “racial sympathy and common interests” had created a number of supporters for him,

*Telle est la traduction bien abrégée mais fidèle du conte qui s'est débité dans toutes les tribus du Nord pour exciter la haine du peuple contre les persécuteurs étrangers d'un grand seigneur indigène (218–19).*²³⁹

The precise pathway taken by this (re)writing from oral to written tradition is unknown. Did de Rochas attend an oral performance of the story with Père Lambert acting as interpreter and if so, did he write it down directly or at a later date? Did Père Lambert recount the story to de Rochas during an interview or visit? If so, did de Rochas transcribe Père Lambert's oral version at the time or did he write it from memory at a later moment? Or did Père Lambert give de Rochas a written version²⁴⁰ of the story to work from?

²³⁷ [constantly occupied with the study of the land and its inhabitants]

²³⁸ As de Rochas explains in the *Avertissement* of *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...*, he lived for almost three years in New Caledonia and visited most of the *tribus* on various occasions (pII). The large number of *tribus* present in the islands, their geographic spread, and the fact that while de Rochas was in New Caledonia he was engaged in military duties as well as research for his doctoral dissertation in medicine, make it highly unlikely that he would have had time to master any of the Kanak languages to a level profound enough to enable him to transcribe and translate oral performances that he witnessed.

²³⁹ [That is the considerably abridged yet faithful translation of the tale that was recited in all the *tribus* of the North in order to incite the people's hatred of the foreign persecutors of a great native lord.]

²⁴⁰ This may have been possible given that Père Lambert recorded the story in the language of Bélep and then produced a version in French, both of which are published in *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, 1900.

The degree of similarity between the two versions strongly supports the hypothesis that de Rochas heard or read Lambert's version and then rewrote it. It is also interesting to note that on page 219, in the sentence directly following the *conte allégorique*, de Rochas refers to the (re)writing as "an abridged translation".²⁴¹ He does not specify whose work is translated, but it is likely to be Lambert's work,²⁴² an idea that seems to be supported by the following citation taken from Chapter XII of Lambert's *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, and which appears to be referring to de Rochas and his work,

Quelques ethnologistes, dans leurs publications sur les Calédoniens en ont donné des fragments d'après notre récit oral ou d'après les notes que nous leur avons communiquées, mais ces fragments incomplets manquent de cachet (65).²⁴³

A comprehensive examination of the transformations undergone by *Le Chef et le lézard* would require access to the version of the story that de Rochas worked from to produce his (re)writing, in order for comparisons at the level of form and content to be made. In the absence of this version,²⁴⁴ it is still possible to determine some of the transformations by working from a close reading of de Rochas' (re)writing.

The transformation that is evident upon first reading de Rochas' text is that of genre. What de Rochas describes as a *conte allégorique* and introduces with the standard formula in French "*Il y avait une fois...*", clearly does not fit tidily into this genre when the description he offers of the context in which it is performed is taken into account. De Rochas explains how the story was recounted in order to "*exciter la haine du peuple contre les persécuteurs étrangers*

²⁴¹ "*la traduction bien abrégée mais fidèle du conte...*" (219).

²⁴² Lambert's (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are discussed in the following section which deals with the next stage on this pathway.

²⁴³ [Some ethnologists, in their publications on the Caledonians have presented fragments of [this literature] following our oral accounts or following the notes that we had communicated to them, but these incomplete fragments are lacking in style.]

²⁴⁴ As discussed in this chapter, although it is highly probable that the version that de Rochas rewrote, or at least a significant part of it, came to him from Père Lambert, there is no certainty as to which version was rewritten, or whether it was in the form of a text or an oral performance event. Lambert published three versions, two in French and one in the language of Balade, and of course it is possible that de Rochas worked from another (unpublished) written version or notes provided by Lambert, or perhaps even from an oral version recounted to him by Lambert, or a combination of these. This means that it is difficult to pinpoint which version could be used for the purposes of comparison to elucidate the transformations made by de Rochas in the rewriting process. An outline of the differences between Lambert's and de Rochas's published written versions will follow in the discussion of Lambert's "Le chef de Touo" and "Anla Touo" as they appeared in *Les Missions Catholiques* and *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*.

d'un grand seigneur indigène” and he invites his reader to imagine two situations in which the story is performed, the first, an entire village gathered around the fire as,

*un vieillard débite sententieusement sa glose en appuyant sur les points capitaux. Un frémissement d'indignation l'interrompt alors, puis l'auditoire se calme pour écouter avec plus d'avidité ce qui va suivre, jusqu'à ce que le dénouement vienne porter au coeur de tous, l'ivresse de la joie, l'orgueil du succès et la foi dans l'avenir (219).*²⁴⁵

The reader is then invited to imagine the same “*fable*” delivered in a pause in a war dance, in front of men armed to the teeth and “overexcited”,

*Chaque nouvelle injure faite au héros indigène leur arrache des cris d'indignation et de fureur; leur visage s'allume, leurs bras s'agitent de mouvements convulsifs, et, n'y pouvant plus tenir, ils se lèvent en brandissant leurs armes. Le dénouement soulève un hurrah frénétique : « Lélei ! Lélei ! » en même temps qu'il détermine à la guerre des gens heureux d'accepter un pareil augure (220).*²⁴⁶

De Rochas writes that it is possible to understand the power that a *conte* may have for the *Calédoniens*, and how it might be used, likening it to an “*ode guerrière*”²⁴⁷ for the French (220).

The most direct reference to transformation is found in de Rochas’ text in the paragraphs following the story. Here, he describes how he has produced an “abridged” translation, which is “faithful” to the original tale. The absence of the version from which he worked makes it impossible to ascertain exactly the degree of “fidelity” or what has been omitted or altered to produce the abridged version, however, the main elements of the chief’s transgression, punishment, flight, and eventual redemption²⁴⁸ all figure in de Rochas’ version. A comment in the paragraph that follows the *conte allégorique* offers a clue to how the abridged version

²⁴⁵ [an old man disapprovingly reels off his version while stressing the main points. A frisson of indignation interrupts him, then the audience calms itself to listen more avidly to what follows, until the ending arrives, carrying the intoxication of joy, the pride of success and faith for the future].

²⁴⁶ [Each new insult directed at the native hero draws from them cries of indignation and fury; their faces fire up, their arms wave in convulsive movements and, no longer being able to hold themselves back, they rise up brandishing their weapons. The ending raises a frenzied hurrah: “Lelei! Lelei!” at the same time as it sets on the warpath people who are happy to accept such an omen].

²⁴⁷ [ode to war] or [warrior’s ode]

²⁴⁸ The shorthand “transgression-punishment-flight-redemption” refers to the underlying structure common to the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* that are part of the corpus (see Chapter 2, “Type 1 – Pathways within oral tradition”).

was produced, “*j’en ai retranché bien des répétitions et des longueurs et j’en aurais supprimé davantage encore si je n’avais voulu lui laisser son cachet d’origine*” (219).²⁴⁹

Traces of some of the repetitions that have been cut from the story are also evident in the use of “*etc...*” in the text for the moments when the Chief recounts his story as he flees from place to place,

– *Oui, c’est moi qui erre sans asile etc...* (217)²⁵⁰

– *Je suis un grand chef. J’ai tendu un piège aux roussettes et j’y ai trouvé pris un être inconnu, je l’ai dégagé, etc...* (217).²⁵¹

In the passage where the Chief flees to Pouaï, then to Ouagap, and to Kanala, each time he arrives somewhere, he explains his predicament, asks for shelter and is offered it by his allies, who are then so afraid when they see the *génie* approaching that they ask him to move on. De Rochas has reduced these exchanges to two lines,

[...] *et le fugitif se sauve à Pouaï. Même accueil, même déception. Il se réfugie à Ouagap, même évènement, à Kanala, même persécution* (217).²⁵²

These are examples of the (re)writer modifying the text to conform to the target culture norms and expectations, since although repetition is an integral part of the poetics of Kanak oral traditions, and indeed, of all oral traditions in general, its frequent use is less acceptable stylistically in written French. Interestingly, de Rochas does in a subsequent paragraph mount a kind of defence of the repetitions that remain, suggesting that they serve an aesthetic purpose,

[...] *et peut-être sera-t-on d’avis que les répétitions elles-mêmes ne sont pas mal imaginées pour faire sentir la lourdeur du fardeau auquel le malheureux chef essaie*

²⁴⁹ [I have cut out numerous repetitions and lengthy passages, and I would have removed even more if I hadn’t wanted to leave it with its original style].

²⁵⁰ [Yes, it is I who wanders without refuge].

²⁵¹ [I am a great chief. I set a trap for *roussettes* and I found in it an unknown being; I released it, etc...]

²⁵² [and the fugitive flees to Pouaï. Same welcome, same disappointment. He seeks refuge at Ouagap, same thing happens, at Kanala, the same persecution].

*longtemps de se soustraire, la persistance des persécutions, l'ingratitude et la malice du tyran qui trouva enfin la mort [...] (219).*²⁵³

Another example of transformation of the story to conform to target readership expectations can be seen in de Rochas' use of descriptive language and synonyms which conforms to French literary style. It is useful here to make a comparison between de Rochas' *conte allégorique* and the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* published by Lambert, because the latter's translations are known to follow the Kanak language structures and story closely²⁵⁴ and divergences from Lambert's versions may indicate transformations on the part of de Rochas.

Examining the terms used by de Rochas and Lambert for the protagonists of *Le Chef et le lézard* shows how de Rochas has transformed the text through the use of synonyms. The Chief is variously referred to as "*chef*", "*grand chef*", and "*noble fugitif*", whereas in Lambert's versions, the Chief is known only as "*le chef de Touho*". The supernatural being of de Rochas' story is referred to as "*une masse blanche de forme humaine*", "*un génie*", "*le génie blanc*", "*un génie étranger*", "*son persécuteur*", "*le tyran*", "*l'ouragan*", "*un épouvantable ouragan*", "*le terrible persécuteur*", compared to Lambert's use of "*le chef de Tendo*", "*le génie*" and "*la divinité*". There is a more extensive use of adjectives in de Rochas' version, and these are primarily used to describe the characters of the story: "*doucereuse*", "*éffarée*", "*tonnante*", "*vaine*", "*belles*", "*riche*", "*lourde*", "*inconnu*", "*épouvantable*", "*énorme*", "*furieux*", "*terrible*", "*noble*", "*joli*", and "*magnifique*". Although Lambert's versions are considerably longer than de Rochas', they feature fewer adjectives, and those used are, for the most part, less dramatic: "*prises*", "*cru*", "*cuit*", "*facile*", "*libre*", "*assis*", "*malheureux*", "*fatal*", "*belles*", "*certaine*", "*intrépides*", and "*grandes*". This difference in the number and nature of synonyms and adjectives used can be interpreted as a reflection of each (re)writer's strategy, de Rochas modifying the story to a greater degree than Lambert in order to conform to target culture expectations with respect to literary style.

²⁵³ [and perhaps one will be of the opinion that the repetitions themselves are not badly imagined for making one feel the weight of the burden that the chief tries for a long time to extract himself, the persistence of the persecution, the ingratitude and malice of the tyrant who will, in the end, meet with death].

²⁵⁴ Maurice Leenhardt used the term "*précautionneuse*", (a word whose meaning encompasses both "cautious" and "careful" in English), to characterise Père Lambert's translation of elements of Kanak oral tradition (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 144).

The encounter between Victor de Rochas and *Le Chef et le lézard* is marked by the naval doctor's understandably limited competence in Kanak languages, the result of spending only a few years in New Caledonia, and during that period covering a great deal of territory in his role as a military medical officer, moving between military outposts and Noumea and undertaking research for his doctorate. Travelling extensively throughout the islands, de Rochas did not spend a significant amount of time in one place, or indeed, one linguistic area, thus his understanding of elements of Kanak oral traditions and culture, necessarily mediated by Kanak and non-Kanak interpreters, was not profound, and was gained more through observation than participation. De Rochas notes in his *Avertissement* that he has seen a great deal with his own eyes, but never hesitated to ask questions of the missionary priests living in much closer relationships with Kanak, tempering their information with his own observations.

During the (re)writing process that produced the *conte allégorique*, there appears to have been no consultation with Kanak experts, and no information on the source version is given, other than to say that it is told throughout the north, and that de Rochas' version is an abridged one. The performative context, while impossible to fully reconstitute in textual form, is acknowledged in de Rochas' description of two potential scenarios, one in which the entire village assembles in the evening to listen to the story told by an elder, the other context in which "overexcited" men, armed to the teeth, react as they are told the story in a pause between two halves of a war dance.

The encounter between Victor de Rochas and *Le Chef et le lézard* gives rise to a representation of the story that is essentially the interpretation of an outsider with reasonably superficial linguistic and cultural understanding of the peoples whose story he is (re)writing. The representation is couched in a nineteenth-century text that conforms to the ideology of Social Darwinism, with the idea that Kanak societies belong on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder than French society, and the notion of France's *mission civilisatrice*.²⁵⁵ Thus *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...* and the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* that it contains are not examples of genuine communication in the sense of communication between equals outlined earlier in this dissertation.

²⁵⁵ [civilising mission]

Nevertheless, it is possible to read *Chapter X – Littérature orale* and the version of *Le Chef et le lézard* against the grain, and find that it provides access to a particular version of the history contained in the *conte allégorique*, and through de Rochas' observations, presents a vivid perspective on the contexts of performance of the story. The chapter in which the (re)writing figures places Kanak literature on a par with French literature of the Middle Ages – not as sophisticated as contemporary French literature, but at the same time, having value – and this assertion, along with his indirect defence of the stylistic use of repetition (219) is another example of positive representation of Kanak culture, especially given the historical context in which he wrote, where the assertion that the indigenous peoples of New Caledonia were indeed humans was considered debatable. The encounter between de Rochas and *Le Chef et le lézard* can be seen as producing both negative and positive images of Kanak culture, and thus the (re)writing has the potential to have negative or positive influence on processes of identification depending on which reading is chosen.

3.2 TEXT 2: Père Pierre Lambert. “Littérature Néo-Calédonienne” in *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l’œuvre de la propagation de la foi* 587 (1880): 422–30.

“LE CHEF DE TOUO” (PP. 422–29).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from oral tradition to written tradition. The story moves out from Nyelâyu oral tradition of the Hoot Ma Waap customary area, entering New Caledonian written tradition as part of the Marist missionary priest Père Pierre Lambert's contribution to the September 3, 1880 issue (N^o 587) of the weekly Catholic missionary periodical, *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l’œuvre de la propagation de la foi*, published in France.

Les Missions Catholiques... was an illustrated periodical, of which over 15,000 copies were printed, a significant figure at the end of the nineteenth century. The cost of an annual subscription for France was 10 francs and *Les Missions Catholiques...* was also distributed overseas (mainly to Belgium and England) as well as being published in Italian, German and

Spanish editions ²⁵⁶ (Bogliolo, “Entre langues et terre” 136). The section headed “*Feuilleton*”²⁵⁷ of the French-language edition n° 587 of *Les Missions Catholiques...*, dated Friday, September 3, 1880, features a text entitled “*Littérature Néo-Calédonienne*” par le R. P. Lambert de la Société de Marie. This text contains a version of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, recounted under the title “Le chef de Touo”.

Père Pierre Lambert was a Marist missionary and founding member of the first Catholic mission at Belep in 1856,²⁵⁸ then he was transferred to Nouméa in 1863. He served subsequently as chaplain at the penitentiary *Île Nou* in 1869 and was finally sent to the *Île des Pins* in 1876, where he remained until his death in 1903 (O’Reilly, “Lambert” 213). For almost five decades, he lived amongst or alongside the Kanak peoples of Belep and later of the *Île des Pins*, and during this time he took notes and made observations on their customs and ways of life. These writings were to form the basis of his contribution, serialised in 1879-80 and 1893, to *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l’œuvre de la propagation de la foi*.²⁵⁹

Père Lambert spent approximately fifty years of his life living amongst or in close proximity to Kanak communities. For missionaries, learning to communicate in the local languages was necessary not only in order to be able to function in daily life, but also to enable the translation of the message of the Bible into Kanak languages for evangelical purposes. Lambert wrote that an important part of the evangelical project was the in-depth study of Kanak belief systems which enabled the destruction of what he saw as superstitions that were part of their “*prétendue religion*”, by allowing the missionary to demonstrate the latter’s “*inanité*” and thus clear the way for “*la vérité*” [“the truth”] (*Mœurs* I).

²⁵⁶ See discussion of the German, Italian and Spanish editions at the end of this section.

²⁵⁷ *Feuilleton* was originally a term used in nineteenth-century journalism in France to refer to both the sections at the bottom of newspaper pages, and to the material that featured within them, such as fiction, criticism, chronicles and current cultural events – serialised fragments of popular culture written for the purposes of entertainment. Lambert’s writing, featured as a *feuilleton*, was thus included for the main purpose of providing light entertainment for the reader of *Les Missions Catholiques...*

²⁵⁸ The first Catholic mission was established on the Grande Terre at Balade in 1843. Polynesian Protestant missionaries known as *natas* had been teaching and evangelising in the local languages of the Loyalty Islands and the *Île des Pins* since the 1840s and the first European Protestant missionaries arrived in Maré in 1856 (Amiot 171).

²⁵⁹ These notes were also the foundation of his book, often referred to as the first New Caledonian ethnography, *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, published in Noumea in 1900 and discussed in section 3.3 of the present chapter.

Lambert's notes, upon which his contribution to *Les Missions Catholiques...* is founded, were taken by the priest as part of the essential task of understanding Kanak culture in order to better fulfil his evangelical role. Their publication in *Les Missions Catholiques...* appears to have been encouraged, if not commissioned, by his superiors M. l'abbé Laverrière (editor of the periodical) and Père Germain.²⁶⁰ *Les Missions Catholiques...* served a dual role in Europe, publicising the many different missions throughout the globe, ensuring support for them by raising awareness, as well as entertaining the readership with details of all aspects of missionary activities, from the mundane to the exotic, through texts, notes, and illustrations. The great popularity of these publications also served as a means to raise funds, both through subscriptions and through the donations to various missions and causes given by readers and listed on the final page of each edition. Lambert's contributions to *Les Missions Catholiques...* were inscribed within this publicising and fundraising function.

Lambert's initial intention was for the texts to form a sort of manual for Marist missionaries in New Caledonia, so that they might understand Kanak culture in order to better destroy their superstitions, thereby making way for Christianity (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 298). However, he also wrote in order to assert the inherent humanity and value of the Kanak people, in the face of views to the contrary, and to valorise the stories of oral tradition as literature,

En présence de certaines opinions trop osées, exprimées de vive voix et consignées dans certains livres, j'ai senti le besoin d'affirmer, afin d'aller plus loin, que le Néo-Calédonien est un homme au point de vue physique ou au point de vue moral et intellectuel [...] Nous citerons plusieurs pièces que nous pouvons appeler la littérature des illettrés. Ces pièces sont des spécimens de chant de guerre, de roman, de conte, de récits légendaires qui seront placés à la fin du volume (III-IV).²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ See in particular his letter to Père Germain dated 10 avril 1877, in which Lambert mentions Père Germain's previous letter urging him to finish his writing. He lists the sections that he has completed, those that he has sent by post, writes that he has only two or three chapters to conclude, and that he sees no issue with proceeding with publication, given the urgency indicated by Père Germain (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 451).

²⁶¹ [In the presence of certain opinions that are too daring, expressed aloud and found in certain books, I felt the need to affirm, before going any further, that the New Caledonian is a man from the physical point of view or from the moral and intellectual point of view [...] We will cite several pieces that we can all "the literature of the unlettered". These pieces are samples of war songs, novels, tales, legendary stories which will be placed at the end of the volume].

Lambert described his work in terms of ethnography and sociology, and the influence of empirical, scientific thought (in the service of religion) is evident in his writing. In a letter to Père Germain from the Île des Pins, dated 23 October, 1879, he clearly outlined his motivation to publish his notes and observations in the service of the advancement of knowledge, and the advancement of the missionary cause,

En vous envoyant ces notes je les croyais de quelque utilité pour arriver à former des conjectures sérieuses sur l'origine de ces peuplades, pour montrer que les Néo-Calédoniens, qu'on croyait sans religion en ont une fort suivie. Ce travail me paraissait encore être utile entre les mains des missionnaires qui auraient pu s'en servir comme d'un manuel pour arriver à des découvertes plus intéressantes encore (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 457).²⁶²

Lambert was writing for a European audience (the readership of *Les Missions Catholiques...*) but also for a New Caledonian public, as shown in a letter dated 25 August, 1878, to his superior, Père Germain, *procureur des missions maristes*, in which he expresses great disappointment at the delay in publication²⁶³ (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 454) and another letter in which he complains of inaccuracies, caused by editorial errors, that had consequences for his credibility in New Caledonia (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 455). His motivation in representing the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* faithfully and in its full glory is clear in the introductory paragraph of "*Littérature néo-calédonienne*",

Quelques écrivains ont pu donner des fragments d'après notre récit oral, mais d'une manière trop incomplète. Nous voulons mettre sous les yeux du lecteur le vrai genre calédonien, avec ses écarts d'imagination inventive et vagabonde (422).²⁶⁴

The transformations undergone by the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* involve the passage from oral to written through textualisation, and a change of genre from what Lambert refers to as a "*chant de guerre*" in Nyelâyu oral tradition to a *feuilleton* in a missionary publication, divided into sections that feature on the lower half of pages that also contain information

²⁶² [Sending you these notes, I was thinking that they would be of some use in coming to form some serious conjectures on the origins of these peoples, to show that the New Caledonians, who were thought to be without religion, have one that is strongly followed. This work seemed to me to also be useful in the hands of missionaries who would be able to use it as a manual to arrive at even more interesting discoveries.]

²⁶³ He had sent the final notes to France a year earlier in August, 1877.

²⁶⁴ [A few writers have been able to present fragments following our oral tale, but in a manner that is too incomplete. We would like to place before the reader the true Caledonian genre, with its inventive and far-ranging imaginative detours.]

relating to missions in other parts of the world, and intended as an illustration of a “*littérature des illettrés*” (“Littérature néo-calédonienne” 422). The audience was also changed, from a locally-based, physically present public, for whom the story was part of their heritage, to an anonymous European readership, physically remote and to whom the story, and its cultural context, was largely unknown.

At the level of content, Lambert’s (re)writing follows the transgression–punishment–flight–redemption structure. In addition, his (re)writing contains descriptive passages that elaborate on hunting and cooking activities, the treasures possessed by the *chef de Touo* and the finery that he puts on before fleeing his home. It also recounts the detail of the spoken exchanges between the *chef de Touo* and the other *chefs* with whom he seeks refuge during his flight around the Grande Terre, rather than summarising them.

Lambert’s translations remained close to the original language, and to source rather than target culture poetics. As discussed in the previous section (3.1) of the present chapter, this closeness to source culture poetics is reflected in the relatively small number of synonyms and adjectives used in his (re)writing, in comparison to that of de Rochas, which conforms to target readership expectations with respect to descriptive language. The treatment of repetition is another area in which Lambert remains close to the Nyelâyu version of the story that he transcribed. In particular, the repetition is retained in the recounting of the exchanges between the *chef de Touo* and the various chiefs he meets, and in the passage where the various bird species take turns drinking the seawater to expose the underwater house. His aim was to inform the readership about Kanak people and explain elements of culture, and this is illustrated in the text of “Le chef de Touo” by the inclusion and translation of the term *mouaran*, and the inclusion of the Latin species names of the different birds summoned by the *chef de Tendo* to drink the seawater and expose the underwater house,

[...] porter le *mouaran* (signal de convocation) [...] Les *hérons* (*ardea*) commencent aussitôt à boire [...] Les *courlieux* (*numenius*) viennent à leur tour [...] Vient le tour des *mouettes* (*larus*) (“Littérature néo-calédonienne” 428-29).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ [carry the *mouaran* (signal for gathering) [...] The herons (*ardea*) begin drinking straight away [...] The curlews (*numenius*) come to take their turn [...] Then comes the turn of the seagulls (*larus*)].

With respect to questions of linguistic and cultural competence and how these might affect the (re)writing process and the representations produced therein, Père Lambert spoke the language of the people of Belep, participated in the life of the *tribu*, and had access to information that would normally remain beyond the knowledge of outsiders, by virtue of his relationship with Ouaoulo Amabili, chief of the *tribu* of Belep, and Lambert's guide in matters of spiritual significance.²⁶⁶ Clues as to the method Lambert used to create his version of *Le Chef et le lézard* are found in the introductory paragraph before the *feuilleton* in *Les Missions Catholiques* and in the *Observation* that follows it. It appears that he first experienced and understood the story in its original language, and he writes, “*nous allons donc relater quelques pièces qui ont été recueillies dans l’idiome même et traduites aussi littéralement que possible*”²⁶⁷ (“Littérature néo-calédonienne” 422).

While Lambert's transcription of the story in the language of Balade was not published in *Les Missions Catholiques...* which would likely have only admitted French-language texts, its existence is signalled in the introduction of “*Littérature néo-calédonienne*”, and the inclusion of the Nyelâyu term *mouaran* (gathering signal) in the story, and the expression “*Diniri ?*”²⁶⁸ in the “*Observation*”, serve as reminders of the origin of the story in Kanak oral tradition. The oral dimension is also evoked in the (re)writing, near the beginning of the story, following the description of the *chef*'s activities which involve clearing the vegetation around his house, preparing traps and setting them, bringing back the *roussettes*²⁶⁹ that he had caught, his mother digging up yams and taro and preparing the evening meal, the sharing out and eating of the food, retiring for the night, and the next morning the *chef* rising and going to check his net. The narrative is interrupted by a two-line exchange between the orator and a member of the audience who asks,

– *De qui est cette histoire? À qui s’adresse ce récit ?*

²⁶⁶ See Chapter II of *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* – “Caractère de Ouaoulo Amabili. --- Sa droiture le porte à s’attacher aux missionnaires. --- Il me révèle les secrets du paganisme” [Character of Ouaoulo Amabili --- His uprightness leads him to follow the missionaries --- He reveals the secrets of paganism to me] (Lambert, 1900: 10-12).

²⁶⁷ [so we will relate a few pieces that have been collected in the idiom itself and translated as literally as possible]

²⁶⁸ [who is this story about?]

²⁶⁹ The *roussette* is the local term for the endemic New Caledonian flying fox, *Pteropus vetulus*.

– *C'est l'histoire du chef de Tendo qui s'est pris au filet* (Lambert, "Littérature néo-calédonienne 423).²⁷⁰

This point clarified, the story continues in the third person with an omniscient narrator. Lambert relates in the "Observation" that "[a]près avoir copié servilement cette pièce dans l'idiome local, la pensée me vint de la lire, un soir, aux enfants et jeunes gens qui étaient à la maison, sans leur en expliquer le sens"²⁷¹ ("Littérature néo-calédonienne" 430). This comment by Lambert shows that his process of (re)writing involved collaboration with native-speakers for verification of the story's content and/or its performative effect, and possibly also to check the accuracy of his expression in Nyelâyu.

The encounter between Père Lambert and *Le Chef et le lézard* leads to a representation of the story that remains closely connected to the original oral performance event. It can be viewed as an example of "genuine communication" in that it seeks to increase understanding between equals, in a sense, as Lambert defends Kanak as humans of equal value and also argues for the value of Kanak literature, equating the orators of Kanak oral tradition to the bards of the Middle Ages in France. This positive representation is tempered by the view of Kanak literature as less "developed", described in an introductory paragraph of "Littérature Néo-Calédonienne" as "*pâle et défectueuse*",²⁷² yet interesting because of its novelty. This perspective aside, Lambert's (re)writing can be seen as producing predominantly positive images of Kanak literature and culture, by acknowledging the existence of the story in oral tradition, reproducing its structure and the content as closely as possible, and asserting its value explicitly, as well as through the explanations offered in the text and the "Observation" following the text. This (re)writing therefore has the potential to have a positive influence on processes of identification.

²⁷⁰ [– Whose story is this? Who is the story destined for ?

– It's the story of the *chef de Tendo* who was caught in a net]. Interestingly, the narrator identifies the story as being about the *chef de Tendo*, but the title given to the story by Lambert is the name of the other main character, *Le chef de Touho*.

²⁷¹ [After having slavishly written down this piece in the local language, the thought occurred to me to read it, one night, to the children and young people who were at the house, without explaining to them its meaning.]

²⁷² [pale and defective]

TEXT 3: Père Pierre Lambert. Spanish edition of *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi* 587 (1880), published as *Las Misiones Católicas*, Barcelona.

TEXT 4: Père Pierre Lambert. Italian edition of *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi* 587 (1880), published as *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, Milan.

TEXT 5: Père Pierre Lambert. German edition of *Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi* 587 (1880), published as *Die Katholischen Missionen*, Fribourg.

The next stage in this pathway network involves the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* taking three different pathways, from New Caledonian written tradition, in the form of Père Lambert's "Le chef de Touou" from *Les Missions Catholiques...*(1880), and into Italian written tradition in the same year by way of the translation in *Le Missioni Cattoliche* in Milan, into German written tradition by way of translation in *Die Katholischen Missionen* in Fribourg, and into Spanish written tradition through translation in *Las Misiones Católicas*, published in Barcelona (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 136).

The production of translations of the highly popular *Les Missions Catholiques...* into German, Italian and Spanish was the responsibility of the editors of the publication. It would seem plausible, given the glimpse into the editorial practices of the French publication offered by Lambert's correspondence with his superior Père Germain,²⁷³ that Lambert, who had a minimal input into the editorial process for his contribution to the French-language version, was not involved in the (re)writing process that produced versions of his text in these other European languages. The (re)writer (s) in this case would have been the translators, based in Europe, who worked with the editors of the various publications, and it is highly unlikely that they would have had any significant knowledge or experience of New Caledonia or its indigenous peoples.

²⁷³ In which Lambert complains of additions, alterations and errors in his texts as a result of the editorial process (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 455-56).

The commission of these translations would have been connected to the need to maintain support for missionary works by keeping the public informed of their progress, and it was a public with a thirst for the exotic, as the considerable popularity of *Les Missions...* would seem to imply. The commission of the translations would also have been influenced by economic considerations, financing the missions through subscriptions and donations to the periodicals.

Aside from the obvious transformations from French into each of the three European languages, a close examination of the transformations of Lambert's story is outside my areas of linguistic competence. The existence of these (re)writings, part of the network of pathways along which the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* has passed, has also been signalled here in the hope of inviting further investigation. For example, it would be of interest to follow the pathways of these (re)writings within and beyond the written traditions of Germany, Italy and Spain, to see whether they have had an influence on other works, especially given that there are today anthropologists and literary scholars from these countries working in Oceania.

In terms of the encounter between the (re)writers of the German, Italian and Spanish editions of *Les Missions Catholiques...* and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, as has been mentioned above, the (re)writers more than likely had no experience of New Caledonia and no linguistic or cultural competence in matters relating to Kanak culture. The source text (Lambert's version in French) would not have been included as these were not bilingual publications, thus the German, Italian and Spanish versions would have been presented to their readerships as definitive. The nature of the representations produced in each of the three European-language (re)writings depends on the amount of licence taken by the translator and the editor in transforming Lambert's text, it appears that there was precedent for radically altering the content of contributions according to the perceived needs of the publication (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 158) and this would also be an interesting question to explore in future research.

3.3 TEXT 6: Père Pierre Lambert. *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. Noumea: Nouvelle Imprimerie Nouméenne, 1900.

“LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (PP. 311–19) AND “ANLA TOUO” (PP. 319–25).

In this next stage of the network, *Le Chef et le lézard* travels down two separate pathways, one originating in Nyelâyu oral tradition, the other in New Caledonian written tradition in French, and they converge in Père Lambert’s book *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, published in 1900 by the Nouvelle Imprimerie Nouméenne in Noumea. The first pathway, from Nyelâyu oral tradition leads to New Caledonian written tradition in Nyelâyu in the form of a version of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled “Anla Touo”. The second pathway begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French, originating in “Litterature neo-calédonienne”, Père Lambert’s contribution to the edition of *Les Missions Catholiques...* N° 587, September 1880 and taking the form of the “Le chef de Touo”.

Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens is widely referred to as the first New Caledonian ethnography, and is based on Lambert’s notes and observations from his time living amongst the peoples of Belep and the Île des Pins, which were originally serialised in *Les Missions Catholiques...* in 1879-80 and 1883. *Mœurs et superstitions...* is organised into two main sections. The first section comprises 38 chapters relating to different aspects of the lives and beliefs of the people of Belep, and the second section “*Hypogées de l’Île des Pins*” comprises eight chapters dealing with the history and religious beliefs and practices of the people of the Île des Pins. Four of the five *Appendices* consist of examples of different genres of oral tradition, and the final *Appendice* is a letter to the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie commerciale de Paris, Tome X, 1887-1889, N° 2*, which gives an account of the dispossession and repression of Kanak on the Île des Pins and argues for their fair treatment.

The two versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* in *Mœurs et superstitions...* are found in *Appendice I. “Chants de Guerre”*, as “Le chef de Touho” (a (re)writing, in French, of the previously published “Le chef de Touo”), and “Anla Touo”, (a transcription of *Le Chef et le lézard* in “the language of Belep”, which is, significantly, the earliest publication *en langue* of the story).

Letters sent by Lambert to his superior in Lyon, Père Germain, appear to show that *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* was commissioned in 1877 in the course of the editing

process that was to produce Lambert's contribution to *Les Missions Catholiques*.... The idea for the volume was put forward by Lambert in a letter from the Île des Pins dated 5 August 1877,

Si pourtant vous jugez que mes notes aient une valeur quelconque et qu'après leur publication dans les Missions Catholiques vous pensiez qu'il fût bon de les réunir en un volume, soyez assez bon pour me dire votre pensée et m'indiquer les modifications à apporter, les notes à ajouter comme éclaircissement. Je prends la liberté de vous dire ces choses parce que j'entends dire qu'il m'eût mieux valu les faire paraître en volume que dans une revue (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 452).²⁷⁴

The following extract from a letter from Lambert to Germain, dated 12 October 1877, shows that the idea for a book was approved by Germain, and by Lambert's superior in New Caledonia, Monseigneur Fraysse, (to whom *Mœurs et superstitions*... is dedicated),²⁷⁵

Au sujet du volume que vous voulez faire tirer à part j'ai consulté, ainsi que vous me l'avez dit, Monseigneur ; il approuve que vous partagiez les bénéfices avec la direction de la Revue (Bogliolo, "Entre langues et terre" 452).²⁷⁶

It would be another twenty-three years before *Mœurs et superstitions*... was published.²⁷⁷

As has been mentioned in section 3.2 of this chapter, Lambert's aim was to create a sort of guide for Marist missionaries, to help them understand the belief systems of the peoples they were evangelising. In this sense, *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* provided a means of increasing understanding and augmenting the limited information available in writing about Kanak,

²⁷⁴ [If, however, you judge my notes to have any value whatsoever, and that after their publication in *Les Missions Catholiques* you should think that it would be good to bring them together in a volume, be so kind as to tell me your thoughts and indicate the modifications to be made, the notes to add for clarification. I am taking the liberty of telling you these things because I have been told that I would be better to bring them out in a volume than in a journal].

²⁷⁵ *Dédicace "À sa grandeur, Monseigneur Fraysse, Évêque d'Abila, Vicaire Apostolique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Qui a bien voulu m'aider de ses conseils et de ses encouragements. Hommage du plus profond respect."* [Dedication. To the Very Reverend Monseigneur Fraysse, Bishop of Abila, Vicar Apostolic of New Caledonia. Who kindly aided me with his advice and encouragement. With the utmost respect]

²⁷⁶ [On the subject of the volume that you want to produce, I consulted, as you told me to, Monseigneur; he authorises you to share the proceeds with the Revue's management].

²⁷⁷ It appears that editorial delays contributed significantly to the time between the initial appearance of Lambert's writings in *Les Missions Catholiques*... in 1879, the appearance of the final instalment in *Les Missions Catholiques*... fourteen years later, in 1893, and the publication of *Mœurs et superstitions*... in 1900.

Ce que j'ai lu, dans quelques ouvrages, sur les mœurs des Calédoniens m'a paru trop concis. Je tomberai peut-être dans l'excès contraire, voulant reproduire le récit de l'indigène prolix dans sa nature, dans le but de le mieux faire connaître. Plus tard, si de nouvelles notes de divers points viennent s'ajouter à celles-ci, une plume exercée donnera alors un travail complet sur les mœurs des Néo-Calédoniens et servira ainsi la science anthropologique qui, si elle ne s'égare, ne peut que servir la religion, en appuyant les vraies traditions (Lambert, Mœurs II-III).²⁷⁸

Lambert included elements of Kanak literature in the book so that the reader might see evidence of the value he had previously asserted in *Les Missions Catholiques...*,

Nous donnerons dans un appendice à la fin de notre ouvrage quelques récits, qui ont été recueillis par nous de la bouche des indigènes, et traduits aussi littéralement que possible. Comme spécimen de langue nous en reproduirons un dans l'idiôme même. Par là nos lecteurs auront sous les yeux le vrai genre calédonien, avec les écarts de son imagination inventive et vagabonde (Lambert, Mœurs 65).²⁷⁹

He again sought to refute claims that Kanak were somehow less than human, showing interest in establishing the origins of the Kanak peoples, whom he described as descending, like the Europeans or the Asians, from Adam and Eve (*Mœurs* 52). In the *Préface* to *Mœurs et superstitions...* Lambert develops this position in more detail, drawing a connection between Kanak and the peoples of Antiquity,

[...] il me fut possible de distinguer, dans leurs croyances et leurs usages, nombreuses ressemblances avec les croyances et usages des peuples les plus cultivés de l'antiquité (I).²⁸⁰

J'ai cru enfin devoir attirer l'attention sur la concordance de la religion du Néo-Calédonien avec celle de certains peuples des temps anciens et des temps présents [...] (V-VI).²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ [What I have read, in a few works, on the customs of the Caledonians seemed to me to be too brief. I will perhaps fall into the opposite excess, wanting to produce the story of the native verbose by nature, with the aim of making him known. Later, if new notes on various points come to be added to these ones, a practised pen will provide a complete study of the customs of the New Caledonians and will thus serve the anthropological science which, if it does not become sidetracked, can only serve religion by relying on the true traditions].

²⁷⁹ [We will provide several stories, in an appendix at the end of the book, recorded by us from the mouths of the natives and translated as literally as possible. As a sample of the language, we will reproduce one of them in the language itself. That way, our readers will have before their eyes the true Caledonian genre with the detours of its inventive and far-ranging imagination].

²⁸⁰ [it was possible for me to distinguish, in their beliefs and customs, numerous resemblances with the beliefs and customs of the most cultivated peoples of Antiquity].

This was a bold assertion in the context of the late nineteenth century, when Gobineau's notion of the hierarchy of races was prevalent and such ideas were important components of the justification of colonial projects. Lambert's desire to valorise Kanak peoples and improve their situation is also made clear in the closing paragraph of the *Préface*, which refers the reader to the final document in the *Annexes*, an extract from a report by a M. Leseur of the *Congrès de sociologie coloniale* in Paris, in which he calls on the powers-that-be to provide the means of preserving indigenous populations and of improving their moral and material conditions of existence (VI).

The process of (re)writing that produced *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* out of Lambert's contributions to *Les Missions Catholiques...* involved Lambert reworking the original texts and Père Germain editing his writing.²⁸² In the course of (re)writing "Le chef de Touo" from *Les Missions Catholiques...*, only minor adjustments were made to the text, mostly relating to punctuation, and the spelling of Touho with an "h" was also adopted – "Le chef de Touho". The (re)writing in the language of Belep, "Anla Touo", was published for the first time in *Mœurs et superstitions...*

The inclusion of the source-language version is evidence of Lambert's acknowledgement of the oral tradition from which it derives, and the way he produced the (re)writing shows a collaborative approach that was not to be reprised for decades, until the work of Maurice Leenhardt in the first half of the twentieth century. Lambert transcribed the story as he heard it, and recounted it to an audience of mainly young people at the mission in order to gauge their reaction (both to his transcription skills and to the content of the story) (Lambert, *Mœurs* 318-19). Further evidence of Lambert's collaborative approach is found in his acknowledgement in the *Préface* of the essential role played by the chief Ouaoulo Amabili, who was his main source of information on the beliefs of the people of Belep. Lambert writes,

²⁸¹ [In the end I thought that I must focus attention upon the agreement between the New Caledonian's religion and that of certain peoples from ancient and present times]. It is interesting to note that Maurice Leenhardt, the Protestant missionary-ethnographer would make very similar comparisons, particularly with the peoples of the Old Testament in his writings. Lambert's work having been read by Leenhardt, it is possible that Lambert's reflections had some influence on the development of the later missionary's ideas in this regard.

²⁸² See letter from Lambert to Germain, 5 August 1877, cited above.

Mais en faisant au début de cette étude d'ethnologie et de sociologie le portrait de ce grand chef, j'ai fait connaître à mes lecteurs le Calédonien d'un caractère noble, d'une intelligence peu ordinaire, d'une droiture parfaite qui se fit, une fois converti, mon premier et principal guide dans le dédale des théories et pratiques païennes de ses congénères. Sa rencontre fut pour moi une bonne aubaine, car les indigènes de nos îles gardent avec une réserve toujours en éveil le secret de leurs croyances et cérémonies superstitieuses. Si on n'en fait l'objet d'une étude spéciale, on peut vivre cinquante ans au milieu d'eux sans en saisir la clé (12).²⁸³

Acknowledgement of the oral dimension of the story is found in the “*Observation sur le texte*” that follows “*Anla Touo*”, which includes commentary on aspects of the phonology and morphology of “*l’idiome de Bélep*”. Lambert also gives his reason for not adopting the spelling system advocated by missionaries in prayer books. He believed that the language of Belep (Nyelâyu), along with the other Kanak languages, was destined to become extinct, and his decision to produce a transcription using the sounds and spelling of the French language to reproduce as closely as possible the sounds of the Belep language was motivated by a wish to give readers an accessible glimpse of the way of speaking of the people of Belep. He qualifies this by noting the approximate nature of this representation, stating that it is unable to accurately portray the nuances in pronunciation, intonation, speed of delivery, and gesture that contribute to the communication of meaning (325).

François Bogliolo observes that the presentation of the text “*dans l’idiome de Belep*” alongside the French texts confers upon it equal status and an autonomy that validates the “*existence littéraire*” of the oral tradition from which it derives (“*Entre langues et terre*” 137). Though Lambert’s book is still infused with the ideological perspectives of his age regarding the position of Kanak societies on the “ladder of civilisations”,²⁸⁴ which have the potential to project negative images of Kanak culture and society and to have a negative impact on processes of social identification, as Bogliolo observes, Père Lambert was acutely aware of

²⁸³ [But in drawing the portrait of this great chief at the beginning of this study in ethnology and sociology, I have introduced my readers to the Caledonian of noble character, of far from ordinary intelligence, of a perfect straightforwardness, who became, once converted, my first and principal guide through the labyrinth of pagan theories and practices of his own kind. Meeting him was for me a good stroke of luck, because the natives of our islands guard, with a constant and ever-present reserve, the secret of their beliefs and superstitious ceremonies. If one does not make them the subject of special study, one could live fifty years amongst them without grasping the key to them].

²⁸⁴ See section 3.2 of the present chapter discussing Lambert’s contribution to *Les Missions Catholiques...*

the injustices suffered by Kanak, and of the need to defend their value and their right to a place in the world,

[l]e discours du P. Lambert, dans l'introduction, ses conclusions, ses Annexes, défend la France (éternelle et idéale) mais se montre réservé à l'égard de la politique (spoliations foncières) ou de l'administration, principalement la pénitentiaire ("Entre langues et terre" 297).²⁸⁵

It is his assertion of the story's literary status and of the existence and value of Kanak oral traditions, through his (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* in *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, that has the potential to make a positive contribution to processes of Kanak identity construction.

TEXT 7: Père Pierre Lambert. *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. Re-edition. SEHNC. Noumea: Imprimeries Réunies de Nouméa, 1976.

TEXT 8: Père Pierre Lambert. *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. Re-edition. SEHNC. Noumea: Imprimeries Réunies de Nouméa, 1985.

TEXT 9: Père Pierre Lambert. *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. Re-edition. SEHNC. Noumea: Imprimeries Réunies de Nouméa, 1999.

“LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (PP. 311–19) AND “ANLA TOUO” (PP. 319–25).

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* produced by Père Lambert moves along three further pathways within New Caledonian written tradition in French and Nyelâyu, when Lambert's *Mœurs et superstitions...* (1900), which features “Le chef de Touo” and “Anla Touo”, is reprinted in 1976, 1985 and 1999 by the *Société d'Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (SEHNC).

²⁸⁵ [P. Lambert's discourse in the introduction, his conclusions, his Appendices, defends France (eternal and ideal) but shows reserve with respect to the policies (land confiscations) or the Administration, principally the Penitentiary.]

According to its homepage,²⁸⁶ since its inception in 1969 in New Caledonia, the SEHNC has published 172 quarterly editions of the *Bulletin de la Société d'Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (totalling more than 1360 articles on New Caledonia and the Pacific) as well as 69 books including monographs, theses, translations and literature with historic, ethnological and linguistic interest. The works of well-known New Caledonian authors, missionaries and historians are amongst the list of publications. The president of the SEHNC, Gabriel Valet, writes that these publications constitute “une œuvre culturelle considérable qui n'est pas toujours bien connue mais qui concerne le patrimoine calédonien dont nous sommes tous dépositaires”.²⁸⁷

On the list of publications on the SEHNC website, “14 – Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens” is described as follows: “conçu en 1860, imprimé en 1900 puis récemment, c'est le grand classique de l'ethnologie calédonienne. Il fait toujours autorité. La SEH y a ajouté la reproduction en couleurs du seul portrait connu de l'auteur”.²⁸⁸

In the three SEHNC re-editions, Lambert's 1900 work is photographically reproduced in its entirety, without alteration to the body of the text. All three re-editions feature the introduction written in 1976 by the then president of the SEHNC, Bernard Brou, a short biography of Lambert²⁸⁹ accompanied by a photo and a short text on Pierre Bournigal,²⁹⁰ the convict artist whose illustrations feature in Lambert's original edition of *Mœurs et superstitions*.... In the 1976 edition an introduction by Bernard Brou was added, the opening line of which begins with the assertion in bold capitals that *Mœurs et superstitions*... is, in the categorical opinion of Père Patrick O'Reilly²⁹¹ “**LE DOCUMENT ESSENTIEL SUR LA CALÉDONIE ANCIENNE**”.²⁹² He provides a brief account of the previous publication of Lambert's material in *Les Missions Catholiques*..., introduces the illustrator Pierre Bournigal, and assures that, aside from the notes on the author and illustrator, the book is an exact

²⁸⁶ www.seh-nc.com accessed 17 July 2012.

²⁸⁷ [a considerable cultural *oeuvre* that is not always well known but is concerned with the Caledonian heritage of which we are all guardians]

²⁸⁸ [Conceived in 1860, printed in 1900, then recently, it is the great classic of Caledonian ethnology. It remains authoritative. The SEH has added the colour reproduction of the only known portrait of the author].

²⁸⁹ Drawn from Patrick O'Reilly's *Calédoniens : Répertoire bio-bibliographique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1953).

²⁹⁰ Lambert met Bournigal while he was the chaplain at the prison at *Île Nou* from 1869-1876.

²⁹¹ A founding member of the *Société des Océanistes*, and prolific contributor to the field of Pacific History.

²⁹² Emphasis in the original text.

reproduction of the original. The 1985 re-edition is an exact duplicate of the 1976 edition, and the 1999 re-edition includes an additional note in the introduction, signed “*La S.E.H.*”,²⁹³ explaining that it is an exact reproduction of the original 1900 text and the 1976 edition, with the sole difference, justified “*par souci de modernité*”,²⁹⁴ consisting of the change in cover illustration. It is also noted that even the errors in spelling from the original are retained, these are attributed by the writer (s) to Lambert’s Gascon origins “*la prononciation de l’auteur étant sous [sic] doute plus gasconne qu’académique*”.²⁹⁵ Whether the new cover illustrations, which date from the same period as the original cover design, are more “modern” is questionable, although this is possibly a matter of the aesthetics of cover design.

This transformation of the cover page is interesting in that the original cover image, signed by Pierre Bournigal (see Fig. 12), which features elements of material culture, plants and animals, a small image of a village in the background and a small male figure, possibly a child in the centre, and which seems to be an attempt to represent the important elements of a Kanak “universe” in which Nature appears dominant, is retained for the 1976 and 1985 re-editions, but is changed in the 1999 re-edition.

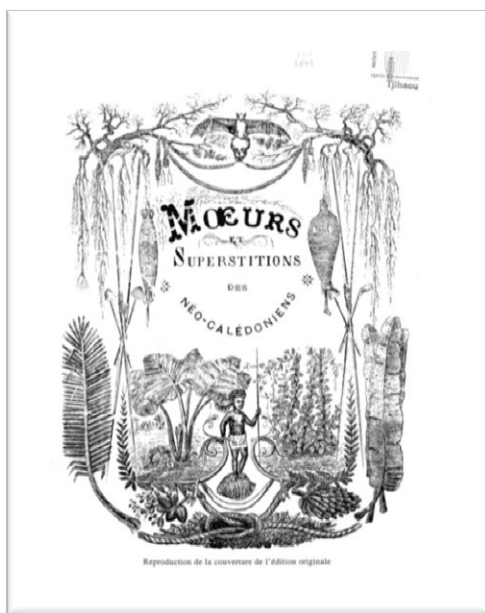


Figure 12 - Cover Image of *Mœurs et superstitions...*, 1900, 1976 and 1985 editions²⁹⁶

²⁹³ *Société d’Études Historiques (de la Nouvelle-Calédonie)*

²⁹⁴ [out of a concern to be modern]

²⁹⁵ [the author’s prononciation being under [sic] doubt more Gascon than academic]

²⁹⁶ An enlarged image of this cover is reproduced in Appendix IV, p. 410.

In the 1999 SEHNC re-edition, the original cover image is moved to the inside front page, and is replaced by a quite different image taken from the inside of the book (see Fig. 13 below),²⁹⁷ that of a young Kanak man seated on a rock, his face in profile as he appears to look into the distance with a neutral expression, against a background of coconut and banana trees. In this picture, the individual is the focus, rather than Nature, and the carefully tended yam garden, the houses of the village and the material objects showing the artisanal skills of the people are removed.

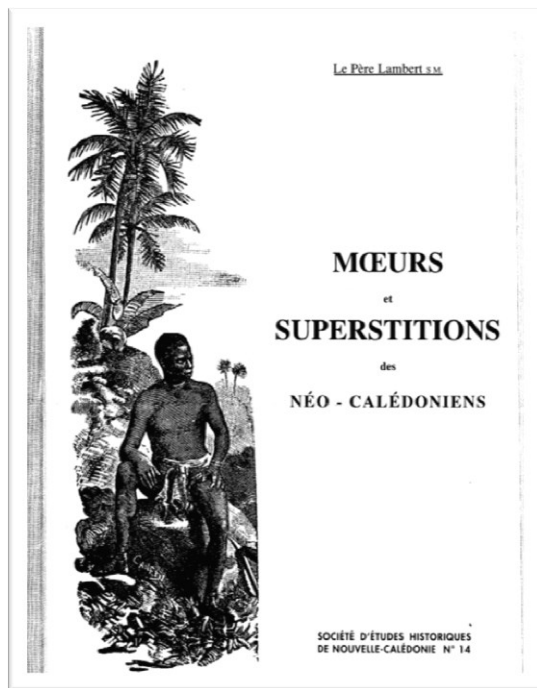


Figure 13 - Cover Image of *Mœurs et superstitions...* 1999 edition²⁹⁸

The back cover of the 1999 edition has also been altered. In the 1976 and 1985 SEHNC re-editions it featured a list of the *Société*'s other publications, in 1999 it features another enlarged image taken from the inside of the book,²⁹⁹ this time of a Kanak woman carrying a basket of food, standing looking into the distance with what appears to be a slight frown on

²⁹⁷ It features inside the book as "Fig. 16" (no caption) on the first page of "*Chapitre XIII, Sens moral du Calédonien*" (pp. 69-78), and it is enlarged to approximately 24cm x 7cm from its original dimensions of approximately 14cm x 4cm. The image is signed "Canedi", a different artist.

²⁹⁸ An enlarged image of this cover is reproduced in Appendix V, p. 411.

²⁹⁹ This image, entitled "*Fig.31 Femme calédonienne*" is taken from the first page of "*Chapitre XXI, Vêtement*" (pp. 140-148), and it is enlarged to 23cm x 9cm from its original dimensions of approximately 18cm x 7cm. The image is signed "Gerlier".

her face. Next to the image is an excerpt from the *Introduction*, signed “Bernard Brou”, which begins in bold type with O’Reilly’s “categorical opinion” that *Mœurs et superstitions...* is “**LE DOCUMENT ESSENTIEL SUR LA NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE ANCIENNE**”. The excerpt goes on to speak of *Mœurs et Superstitions...* as a precursor of ethnology, arising from Lambert’s years spent as a missionary in Belep, and to insist also on the significance of the drawings of the “scrupulous and faithful Pierre Bournigal” which remain today a “unique and irreplaceable documentation”.

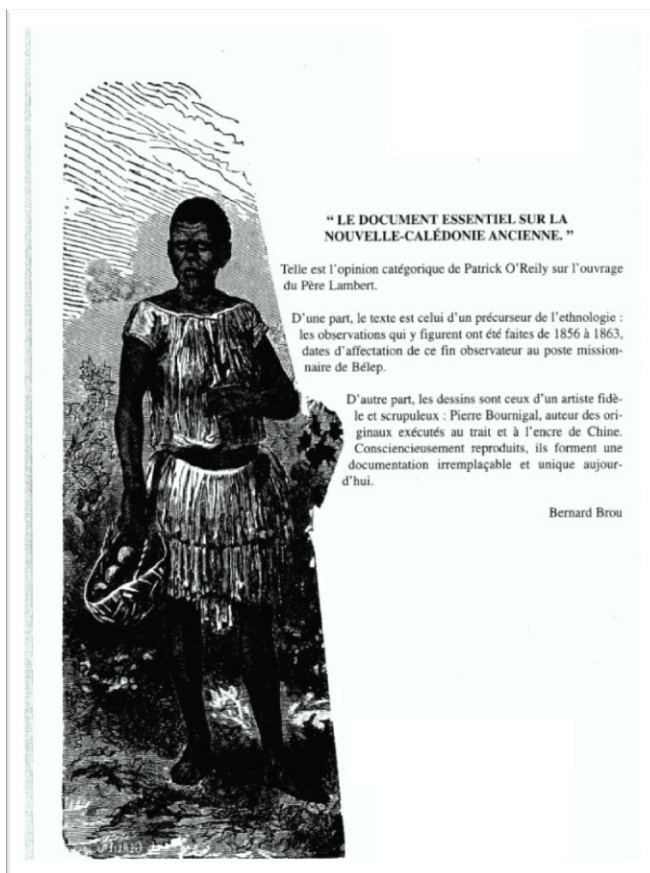


Figure 14 - Back Cover of *Mœurs et superstitions...* 1999 re-edition³⁰⁰

The question arises, given the importance attributed to Bournigal’s artwork in the SEHNC re-editions, as to why his design, which was chosen by Lambert for the cover of the original

³⁰⁰ An enlarged image of this cover is reproduced in Appendix VI, p. 411.

book, should be consigned to the inside cover page while the works of two different artists, Canedi and Gerlier, grace the front and back covers of the 1999 edition. Also of interest is the decision to change the cover image in 1999 ostensibly “*par souci de modernité*”.³⁰¹ It would appear that the replacement of the original illustration, which attempts to render a representation of the Kanak person situated in his/her universe, by images of the male and female figures, presented as individuals without a great deal of cultural context, creates a somewhat anachronistic impression that conforms more to the exoticising gaze of the nineteenth century than the concerns of modernity at the end of the twentieth century.³⁰²

An interesting pattern develops when the timing of the reprints of *Mœurs et superstitions...* by the SEHNC is considered in the wider context of events taking place in New Caledonia. 76 years after Lambert’s book was first published, and seven years after the establishment of the SEHNC, the first reprint of *Mœurs and superstitions...*(1900) was produced. This was the year following the *Mélanésia 2000* festival, the explosion of Kanak culture into the public domain in 1975, and the same year as the book accompanying the festival, *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* by Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Philippe Missotte, was published. *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* was a ground-breaking publication as it was a book that attempted to explain the essential aspects of the Kanak world view to a non-Kanak readership from a Kanak perspective. It highlighted the issues faced by Kanak as they reconciled their world view with the pressures of capitalism and modernity, in the particular context of the nickel boom of the early 1970s.

Other publications by the SEHNC that also appear to have been published in response to newly asserted Kanak voices include *Mélanésiens d’aujourd’hui : la Société Mélanésienne dans le monde moderne* (1976). This book, attributed to a “*groupe d’Autochtones calédoniens*” who would meet regularly to discuss matters of concern to their people but, according to the book, who also wished to remain anonymous, is claimed, on the list of publications on the SEHNC website, as “*le premier écrit 100% mélanésien*”.³⁰³ This is a contestable claim, not least because each of the chapters, covering subjects such as land,

³⁰¹ [out of a concern for modernity]

³⁰² Further information regarding the editorial choices made in the 1999 re-edition is needed in order to come to an understanding of the logic behind the change of cover images.

³⁰³ [the first 100% Melanesian writing]

family, sexuality, and Christianity, is introduced and explained by a non-Kanak expert from the SEHNC. It is unclear whether the “100% mélanésien” was a reference to Tjibaou’s book, which he co-wrote with the Frenchman, Philippe Missotte. Another text contributing to commentary on Kanak culture and society was also produced by the SEHNC in 1977, when Bernard Brou’s doctoral thesis “Préhistoire et société traditionnelle de Nouvelle-Calédonie”,³⁰⁴ which had originally been published by the SEHNC in 1970, was reprinted in 1977 and 1987.

On the inside cover of *Mélanésiens d’aujourd’hui...* is a passage elaborating on the desire for anonymity of the Kanak “authors” of the book. Questions as to the reasons for the need for anonymity, and the degree of editorial licence taken by the SEHNC arise inevitably from such an explanation, as the information is not verifiable,

*Les Auteurs du présent document ont voulu garder l’anonymat. La Société d’Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie n’a pas réussi, malgré ses efforts, à connaître les noms de ceux qui se sont réunis, à plusieurs reprises, et ont échangé leurs idées pour produire cette synthèse d’un groupe de travail au sein duquel jeunes et anciens communiaient de la même foi. Elle n’en connaît que deux : celui qui, après bien des hésitations, a confié son document à notre vice-président, et le porte-parole qui a bien voulu, après plusieurs sollicitations et délais, venir commenter le chapitre “la terre” aux membres réunis en assemblée mensuelle. Les autres sont restés dans l’ombre et le désir formel du groupe doit être respecté.*³⁰⁵

The somewhat patronising imagery employed in reference to the Kanak authors in the above passage reinforces colonial stereotypes about Kanak. The text implies that the person who entrusted the document to the SEHNC did so after a great deal of hesitation, handing it over

³⁰⁴ In which he argues that the Kanak peoples present in New Caledonia today are not the first inhabitants, but rather the descendants of people who arrived in a series of waves of relatively recent migration and who displaced an earlier, original New Caledonian people. This story has parallels with claims circulating in the same period that the Moriori were the first inhabitants of New Zealand, displaced by the later arrival of Māori, with remnants of the original Moriori population remaining only in the Chatham Islands. These hypotheses have in common that they were formulated to undermine claims to indigenous status by the peoples inhabiting the islands of New Caledonia and of New Zealand at the time of arrival of European colonists.

³⁰⁵ [The Authors of the present text wished to remain anonymous. Despite its efforts, the *Société d’Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* has been unable to find out the names of those who met on several occasions and exchanged their ideas to produce this synthesis by a working-group in which young and old came together with a shared faith. Only two are known: he who, after a great deal of hesitation, entrusted his text to our vice-president, and the spokesman who agreed, after several invitations and delays, to give a commentary on the chapter “the land” to our members gathered for the monthly assembly. The others have remained in the shadows and the formal wishes of the group must be respected].

to the authority figure of the vice-president of the SEHNC, an association that will speak on behalf of the group, which appears not to feel it has the authority to speak for itself. Negative stereotypical notions of a lack of respect or consciousness on the part of Kanak for punctuality and time are hinted at in the mention of the need for several invitations and the need to wait for the spokesperson to finally come and address the monthly meeting of the SEHNC – this could also be read as hesitation or lack of confidence on the part of the spokesman in standing before the members of the society to present his address. The desire of the rest of the group to remain anonymous, “in the shadows” or behind the scenes, also implies a continuing necessity for someone to speak for Kanak who remain too shy and lacking in confidence to emerge onto the scene and speak openly for themselves.

This need for external expertise to speak for and about Kanak pervades the (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions produced by the SEHNC, and perhaps underpins the seemingly reactive publication strategies of the *Société* in response to the appearance of Kanak-authored texts from 1975 onwards; voices that do not appeal to the authority of non-Kanak to speak for them.

The second reprint of *Mœurs et superstitions...* was produced in 1985, in the middle of the “*Événements*” that rocked the territory in the 1980s, and in the year following the publication of Apollinaire Anova’s *D’Ataï à l’Indépendance* in 1984. Apollinaire Anova was a Kanak priest, originally from Gouaro (Bourail), who wrote a *mémoire* entitled “*Histoire et psychologie des Mélanésiens*”³⁰⁶ for the second year of an undergraduate degree that he completed in Social Sciences and Economics at the *Faculté catholique de Paris*. The thesis was to be published, and the Kanak *député* Rock Pidjot wrote a preface, but Anova died of cancer in 1966 at the age of 37, and while two extracts of his thesis were published in 1969 by the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, it wasn’t until 1984 that it was published in its entirety by Marc Coulon, Ismet Kurtovitch and François Burck (who wrote the preface) of the *Association pour la création d’un Institut Kanak d’histoire moderne*, under the new and provocative title *D’Ataï à l’Indépendance*.

³⁰⁶ [History and Psychology of the Melanesians]

The third reprint of *Mœurs et superstitions...*, with new cover images, was published in 1999, the year after the signing of the Noumea Agreement in 1998, and the year after the inauguration of the Centre Culturel Tjibaou, which saw the publication of a number of texts by the ADCK related to the Centre and to explanations of Kanak culture: 1998 saw the publication of the first volume of the Kanak cultural review *Mwà Véeé*, guidebooks to the Centre Culturel Tjibaou (*Guide des plantes du chemin kanak*, *Le chemin kanak*, *Ngan Jila*, *Centre Culturel Tjibaou : le souvenir, la parole, le rêve*). In 1999, *Chroniques du pays kanak* was published, a rich and wide-ranging four-volume encyclopedia of Kanak culture and history with contributions from the foremost experts, researchers, artists, and writers whose work concerns the Kanak world.

While the 1976, 1985 and 1999 (re)writings of “Le Chef de Touho” from Lambert’s 1900 *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* do not see any alteration in the text of the story, transformations take place through the addition of introductory material (in 1976 and 1999), the alteration in the cover and back cover imagery and text in 1999, and the change in socio-historical context in which the story was received. The timing of each re-edition, which was ostensibly produced because the book was out of print, in each case, happened the year after critical texts asserting Kanak positions were published and major events occurred in which Kanak culture and voices were heard.³⁰⁷

Considering the historical and literary contexts of each of the three re-editions of *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, it could be argued that their timing appears to be in response to hitherto unheard Kanak voices explaining Kanak cultures and expressing Kanak perspectives in New Caledonian written tradition. Writings on Kanak cultures had previously been the domain of non-Kanak, of historians, authors and anthropologists, and the new Kanak voices that began to speak through the medium of the written word appear to have stimulated those who had spoken for them in the past to reassert their own narratives.

³⁰⁷ Such as the 1975 Mélanésie 2000 festival, the *Événements* of the early 1980s, and the signing of the Noumea Agreement. This publication pattern is not only applicable to re-editions of *Mœurs et superstitions...* but also to Brou’s *Préhistoire et société traditionnelle de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1970, 1977, 1987), and may have contributed to the decision to publish the collection *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1980), reprinted in 1986 and 2008 (see discussion of this collection in Chapter 5, section 5.4).

With respect to the decisions to produce the re-editions, the question arises as to why a work from the turn of the twentieth century, based on field notes taken by a missionary in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and considered widely to be the precursor of the ethnographic text in New Caledonia, should need to be made to appear “modern”. One possible reading is that modernising the appearance of the book might have an effect on the perception of the information contained within, possibly working subtly to validate the perspectives expressed in Lambert’s writing in a contemporary context by investing them too with a degree of modernity. As a result, the SEHNC’s re-editions of *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* can be seen as simultaneously conveying positive and negative representations of Kanak identity, with the potential to have both positive and negative influences on processes of identity construction. The positive aspect can be seen in Lambert’s defence of Kanak culture as important and valid, and with respect to his (re)writings “Le chef de Touho” and “Anla Touo”, is evident in the way that he remained as close to the oral performances he had experienced as possible in both the French and Nyelâyu versions.

Though Père Lambert’s book was a work that anticipated elements of modern ethnography, it was still a document of its time, and reflected the ethnocentric and Social Darwinist perspectives prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century. It can be argued that there is potential for negative influence on processes of Kanak identity construction to result from the subtle conferring of authority upon Lambert’s book at important moments in recent New Caledonian history that coincide with each of the re-editions, without acknowledgement of the ethnocentric and paternalistic dimensions of Lambert’s work.

3.4³⁰⁸ TEXT 10: Maurice Leenhardt. *Documents néo-calédoniens*. IX - Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'ethnologie. Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1932.

“LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (PP. 60–65).

The next pathway taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends within New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story moves out from Père Lambert’s *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900) and into Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*,³⁰⁹ a collection of elements of Kanak oral tradition, published in 1932 by the *Institut d’ethnologie*³¹⁰ in Paris as the ninth volume of its series of *Mémoires et Travaux*. A classic text of New Caledonian written tradition, it is the central work in a trilogy produced by Leenhardt and published by the *Institut d’Ethnologie*, the other books being *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (1930) and *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou* (1935).³¹¹

Documents néo-calédoniens is a collection of 65 vernacular texts,³¹² of which all but one³¹³ are provided by seventeen Kanak *transcripteurs*:³¹⁴ Boésouu Erijisi, Varho, Sené, Sisil

³⁰⁸ Elements of this analysis, and that of section 4.3 of Chapter 4 “Pathways originating in Ajië oral tradition”, are derived from my Masters thesis, “Translation as Rewriting: Representations of Kanak Oral Traditions”, in the section entitled “The Creative Interpenetration of Cultures : Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932)”, which examines Leenhardt’s translation approaches and strategies for the production of this book.

³⁰⁹ There are in fact three (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, the version discussed here, which originates in Nyelâyu oral tradition, arrives in Leenhardt’s book via Lambert’s *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*. The two other versions derive from Ajië oral tradition and will be discussed in Chapter 4 – “Pathways from Ajië oral tradition”, section 4.3. Because of the significance of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, a classic text of New Caledonian written tradition, and the fact that the pathway of “Le chef de Touho” treated in this chapter is so different from that of the other two versions of the story discussed in chapter 4, *Documents néo-calédoniens* will be discussed in both chapters, unlike other cases in this study where a work participates in more than one pathway network, and is discussed fully in just one of the relevant chapters, to avoid repetition.

³¹⁰ Established in 1925, the *Institut d’ethnologie* was the hub of French professional anthropological activity at the time of *Documents néo-calédoniens*’ publication.

³¹¹ *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne* was intended by Leenhardt to provide information on the cultural context and setting of the vernacular texts translated in *Documents néo-calédoniens* and *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou* was intended as a source of linguistic insight into the Kanak culture and societies portrayed in these texts. James Clifford notes that the three volumes together provide “twelve hundred densely packed pages of data along with the means for their translation” (Clifford, *Person and Myth*: 139).

³¹² The texts of *Documents néo-calédoniens* derive from Ajië oral tradition, with the exception of “La mort du chef” which comes from Paicî oral tradition, and “Le Chef de Touho” which is part of Nyelâyu oral tradition.

³¹³ The version of Père Lambert’s “Le Chef de Touho”.

(épouse Varho), Poindi Goa, Mindia Néja, Péoroi Rhai, Alfred Ni, François de Monéo, Elia Manarheu, Sétei, Dukler, Tooua Monéosée, Tnéa, Manda Wi, Line, Kamoyami. A, and a single *appendice* contains sample melodies and notes on songs. The texts are organised into two sections, the first five forming “*Le Cycle du lézard*” and the remaining texts grouped under the heading “*Légendes diverses, discours et chants*”. The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* moves out from Lambert’s *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* and into *Documents néo-calédoniens* in the form of “Le chef de Touho”, the last of the five texts of “*Le Cycle du lézard*” that occupies the first 65 pages of the book.

Maurice Leenhardt (1878-1954) and his wife Jeanne arrived in Nouméa from France in 1902, Leenhardt had been sent by the Protestant *Société des Missions évangéliques de Paris* to establish a mission in the Houaïlou region³¹⁵ at a time when the Kanak peoples were suffering the consequences of increased European presence; military conquest, the *Indigénat*, land confiscations, disease, demographic decline and alcoholism.³¹⁶ The Leenhardts set up the mission, Do Neva, in the Houaïlou region, on the central east coast of the Grande Terre and began training and supervising the *natas* (indigenous pastors). During the first period of Leenhardt’s time in New Caledonia, from 1902 to 1926, his role was evangelical; after his return to France he entered the academic world, as the first president of the *Société des Océanistes*, head of the Pacific section at the *Musée de l’Homme* and holder of a chair in ethnology at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*. Leenhardt combined the two roles of missionary and anthropologist, and throughout his career he sought to understand the dynamic cultures of the Melanesian peoples he encountered, especially in terms of the process of conversion.

The commission of *Documents néo-calédoniens* was influenced by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Marcel Mauss, two of the founders of the *Institut d’Ethnologie*. As there were relatively few examples of fieldwork of a sufficient standard to be published by the newly created *Institut*

³¹⁴ The names of the individual *transcripteurs* are listed alongside the stories they recorded in the *Table des Matières* (pp.511-12) at the end of the book.

³¹⁵ This was in response to pleas from *natas* from the Loyalty Islands, who had been successfully evangelizing in the Grande Terre since the 1890s and who needed the protection of a European missionary as they were encountering great hostility from white colonists.

³¹⁶ The attitude prevalent in the European population is illustrated by the comment of the Mayor of Nouméa, who greeted the Leenhardts when they first arrived in the colonial outpost, asking: “So what have you come here for? In ten years there won’t be any *Canaques* left!” (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 29).

d'Ethnologie, Lévy-Bruhl and Mauss encouraged Leenhardt to publish the results of his empirical research undertaken in the field in New Caledonia from 1902 to 1926 upon his return to France, and the trilogy of *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (1930), *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932) and *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou* (1935) were the result of this commission.

The *Institut d'Ethnologie*'s commission influenced the form of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, which is an academic work presenting “empirical evidence” (transcriptions and translations) collected in the course of anthropological fieldwork, complete with explanatory apparatus (extensive footnotes). This “scientific” presentation of *Documents néo-calédoniens* also reflects Leenhardt's ideological framework, influenced early in his life by his father Franz, the eminent geologist and pastor, who inculcated in his son the belief that “facts [...] are a word of God” and that theological speculation should always be grounded in experimental evidence (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 15).

The (re)writing of Père Lambert's “Le Chef de Touho” is the exception to the rule as far as the process used to create the texts in *Documents néo-calédoniens* is concerned, as it was reproduced from a work that had already been published; also, it had been collected by a Catholic priest in the north of the Grande Terre rather than by one of the Protestant Kanak *transcripteurs* who recorded the remainder of the texts in the collection at Leenhardt's request. The latter texts were then translated in a collaborative undertaking, with the original language, word-for-word translation and literary translation all featuring in the final publication, in addition to explanatory footnotes of a linguistic or anthropological nature.³¹⁷ In a note that appears just before the presentation of Lambert's text “Le Chef de Touho” Leenhardt states that the it has been included as a point of comparison with the other texts of “*le cycle du lézard*” (60). Only the French version is presented – Lambert's transcription of the Nyelâyu version of the story “Anla Touo”, which also features in *Mœurs et superstitions...* is omitted from Leenhardt's book.

The reasons for the exclusion of the Lambert's source text are unclear. Perhaps, in accordance with scientific methodology, Leenhardt did not wish to include any “raw data”

³¹⁷ For a discussion of the other (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, see Chapter 4 – “Pathways from Ajië oral tradition”, section 4. 3.

whose origins he could not verify. Another possible explanation is that the text was in the language of the Belep region, not the Houaïlou (Ajië) region with which Leenhardt was familiar and thus he did not wish to include it on the grounds that he could not verify the translation. In the “*Observations sur le texte*” that follow “Anla Touo”, Lambert writes at length of the difficulty of transcribing the nuances of Belep pronunciation, explaining his choice not to use the spelling system advised by missionaries, but rather to simply present the words in a manner that approximates French pronunciation as closely as possible, as it was his belief that this language, along with the other New Caledonian languages, was destined to die out (*Mœurs* 325). Leenhardt may have chosen not to include this “approximation” of the source text as it was not the work of Kanak *transcripteurs*, and did not utilise the same transcription system as the other texts in *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

In his (re)writing of Lambert’s 1900 “Le Chef de Touho”, Leenhardt does not include the “*Observation*” placed by Lambert at the end of the story, in which the performative context is evoked, the historical context of the story at the time it was recorded (somewhere around the 1850s) is explained, and the reception enjoyed by his written version of the story *en langue* when it was recounted to groups *en tribu* is described. Rather, Leenhardt adds his own “*Note*” in which he refers to Lambert’s assertion that the allegory was a *chant de guerre* intended to incite revolt against the Whites, pointing out that Lambert presents no proof of the role of the Whites, but that the story certainly did involve the people of Touho and Tendo and is assuredly intended to excite the people against the people of Tendo. Leenhardt explains the enmity between the *chef de Touho* and the *chef de Tendo* in the story as the consequence in reality of their membership of different alliances, and points out that the story of “Le Chef de Touho” was later played out in history in the insurrection of 1917 (in which the *chef de Hienghène*, *le chef de Tendo* and the French were all protagonists). His “*Note*” concludes with a remark that highlights the dynamic possibilities and multiple layers of meaning of these texts of oral tradition,

Il est curieux de voir tout à la fois la légende totémique du lézard devenir par allégorie un récit de guerre, et l'histoire contemporaine venir confirmer de façon étonnante la signification de ce folklore obscur (65).³¹⁸

Leenhardt's (re)writing of Lambert's "Le chef de Touho" adds to the authority of the text, by virtue of considering it worth reproducing and by bringing it to a wider audience. He transports the story from Lambert's book into the anthropological mainstream of the time, as it were, by including it in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, published by the newly-established *Institut d'ethnologie* in Paris. The inclusion of "Le chef de Touho" in the "*Cycle du Lézard*" can be seen as part of Leenhardt's attempt to create a wider picture of Kanak oral traditions, showing their diversity and dynamic nature, and how they are adapted over time to address different historical contexts. The (re)writing is part of a positive representation of the vitality and continued relevance of the tradition from which the story comes, and consequently, projects a positive image of Kanak culture.³¹⁹

3.5 TEXT 11: K. J. (Jim) Hollyman. "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 71.3 (1962): 310–27.

"LE CHEF DE TOUHO" (P. 310).³²⁰

This (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* results from the convergence of two pathways leading from New Caledonian written tradition in French and Nyelâyu to written tradition in English.³²¹ The story moves along separate pathways from Lambert's *Mœurs et superstitions*

³¹⁸ [It is interesting to see the totemic legend of the lizard turn, by way of allegory, into a war story, and at the same time contemporary history confirm the meaning of this obscure folklore in a surprising manner]

³¹⁹ See Chapter 4, section 4.3 for a further discussion of *Documents néo-calédoniens* that completes and complements the analysis of representations that is presented in this section.

³²⁰ Hollyman's article represents a point of convergence of pathways of two different (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, and each of them derives from a different oral tradition and pathway network, and thus the article belongs in both Chapters 3 and 4. In order to avoid repetition, the full discussion of his article (and both of the (re)writings it contains) appears here in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, which treats stories whose origins can be traced back to Ajië oral tradition, only the bibliographic data and information relating to the pathway taken by the story from Ajië oral tradition is presented – the reader is then referred back to the present chapter for the more detailed discussion.

³²¹ Rather than enter into the complex and, with respect to this study, somewhat peripheral debate of how to define which written tradition/s in English a (re)writing such as this academic article belongs to, published as it is by the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, read by English-speakers throughout the Pacific (and further afield), written by a New Zealand linguist and scholar of French, and focused on the indigenous languages and oral

des Néo-Calédoniens (1900) and from Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), coming together in K. J. Hollyman's 1962 article, "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" published in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*.

Jim Hollyman was a linguist and scholar of French whose research areas included medieval French, French language in the Pacific, and languages in the Pacific in general. He founded the *Observatoire du Français dans le Pacifique* at the University of Auckland in 1979, and he worked in collaboration with A. G. Haudricourt, the French linguist of the CNRS on the Kanak languages of northern New Caledonia, also producing a Fagauvea-French dictionary in collaboration with Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre.

The article, read as a 1962 Winter Lecture at the University of Auckland, is divided into five sections, and the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* constitutes the major part of section I, which serves as an introduction.³²² Hollyman begins by mentioning "one of the best-documented legends of the Melanesian people of New Caledonia" which has been preserved in a number of versions which make up the "Cycle of the Lizard" of Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens*. He summarises the version of "Le Maître de Koné" in *Documents néo-calédoniens* in one sentence,

[i]n its oldest form, the lizard is a totem figure, angered by the intrusion of a stranger who has come into its domain seeking game, and he is propitiated by ritual magic (310).

Hollyman then introduces Père Lambert's "Le Chef de Touho" from *Mœurs et superstitions...* (1900) as an adaptation of the story used "to portray the fight against the white stranger who has intruded into the ancestral domain of the Melanesians", and gives a 500-word summary of this version "as interpreted by Lambert and Leenhardt" (310-11).

traditions of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, the passage of (re)writings into the English language will be described in this study as having entered "written tradition in English", without specifying which one or ones (it is also possible to argue that within the New Caledonian literary polysystem, in certain circumstances, a New Caledonian written tradition in English could be included under the umbrella of "New Caledonian written tradition").

³²² Section II considers the "external history" of languages affected by European contact, section III looks at the influence of language contact on vocabulary, section IV discusses phonemic adaptation of borrowed vocabulary and section V is a summary.

The paragraph that follows the summary outlines the historical context of the story with respect to the enmity between the *tribus* of Tendo and Touho, and the chief of Touho's strategy to encourage the chief of Tendo to attack the white invaders. Then, in the final paragraph of section I, Hollyman proposes a new interpretation of the story, in which the lizard-chief (the chief of Tendo) represents the traditional structure of Melanesian society and the axe that destroys him at the end of the story symbolises the European stranger. He states that the purpose of his presentation is "to see how one of the most important features of the traditional societies, language – the lizard's tongue if you will – has survived the possible European axe" (310).

In this way, Hollyman (re)writes Lambert's "Le Chef de Touho" into his discussion of the situation and survival of Kanak languages post-contact. He writes at a time where attitudes within the administration of education systems of populations in which Europeans (or those of European origin) are a majority tend towards "a lack of concern over the fate of these [indigenous] languages" and where there is "a tacit assumption that they are all doomed" (Hollyman 314). He argues that in contexts where bilingualism exists, what is needed is "tuition in and education through both languages, to the mutual advantage of each" rather than "[a]ssimilation without respect for cultural individuality" (315).

Two major transformations in this (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* take place when the story is summarised and translated into English. There has also been a change in genre, where Lambert's "Le Chef de Touho" (1900) and Leenhardt's "Le Maître de Koné" (1932) were components of anthropological studies, this (re)writing sees the story adapted to illustrate the writer's discussion in a linguistics article that features in an academic journal.

With respect to the content of the story, evidently the single-sentence (re)writing of "Le Maître de Koné" involves a radical transformation; however the skeleton of the story remains intact. In the case of "Le Chef de Touho", summarising the story has resulted in the omission of the details of the gardening, hunting and cooking activities and the dialogue of the characters, and in the passage describing the *chef de Touho*'s finery, the list ends with "etc.". During the *chef de Touho*'s flight, only one encounter with another chief is recounted, the others being subsumed into the sentence "Chief after chief is visited in this way, always with the same result" (311). The passage in which eight different species of birds, summoned by the *chef de Tendo*, drink the seawater in the Lambert and Leenhardt versions, becomes "herons, curlews, gulls and so on" (311). Hollyman inserts explanatory text into the *précis*,

offering his own explanation of the nature of the *chef de Touho* caught in the snare, “This chief is, of course, an ordinary mortal like the chief of Tuo, but in the story he has all the supernatural attributes of the lizard totem he is replacing” (310). He also draws a comparison within the text of the précis with other versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* writing that “[f]ollowing the pattern of the older versions, the lizard-chief settles himself on the shoulders of the hunter” (310). Hollyman translates the *génie* or *divinité* of Lambert’s version as “the lizard-chief”, though in Lambert’s version, there is no mention of a lizard.³²³ The lizard does, however, feature frequently in Leenhardt’s “Le Maître de Koné”, thus it appears that here Hollyman is conflating the two versions, and understandably so, because of the great similarity between the two stories, and because the association of the lizard with the terrible shape-shifting force of nature that figures in “Le chef de Touho” is entirely consistent with the idea of the ability, and propensity of “totems” to change their form.

Jim Hollyman undertook linguistic research in New Caledonia for over thirty years, beginning in the 1960s, collaborating with French linguists with a longstanding relationship to New Caledonia. His linguistic and cultural knowledge of New Caledonia came from his time working on the variety of French spoken in New Caledonia, as well as on Fagauvea and the languages of the northeast of New Caledonia, and as a linguist, the verification of information by native speaker informants was part of his methodological toolbox. In his (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* using Lambert’s “Le Chef de Touho” and Leenhardt’s “Le Maître de Koné”, Hollyman acknowledges the works he is transforming, and clearly indicates that he is summarising them. He gives information about the extra-linguistic context in the introductory paragraph of the article, explains the historical background to the allegory, and acknowledges the dynamic nature of oral traditions by signalling the existence of versions and the use of adaptation. Indeed, in addition to recognising the continual reformulation that is an essential part of oral tradition, Hollyman’s (re)writing can be seen as participating in this on-going dynamic by adapting the story to illustrate his own arguments in the article. Thus this encounter between Jim Hollyman and *Le Chef et le lézard* gives rise to a representation of the story that is respectful, in the sense that he acknowledges the origins of the story, which is used as part of an on-going discussion about language interactions in New

³²³ Lambert uses “*le génie*”, “*la divinité*” and “*le chef de Tendo*” when referring to the supernatural being pursuing the chief.

Caledonia, demonstrating the relevance of the story to contemporary thought, and thus engaging in “genuine communication” through the implicit assertion of the equal value of the element of Kanak oral tradition. Such a (re)writing has significant potential for positive influence in processes of Kanak identity construction.

3.6 TEXT 12: Patrick Pillon. “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” in *Ethnologies comparées* 7, (2004): 1–21.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (P. 11)³²⁴

The next text containing (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* sees the story take different pathways, all of which begin and end in New Caledonian written tradition in French. It moves out from “Le Chef de Touho” (*Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, 1900), “Le Maître de Koné” (*Documents néo-calédoniens* 1932), “Bodanu Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier” and “Le Lézard et le bénitier”, (both in *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* 1979), and “Pasikan et le lézard” (*Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna*, 1979). These five pathways³²⁵ converge in “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, an article, written by the French anthropologist Patrick Pillon, that appeared in *Ethnologies comparées* N° 7, “Figures Sahariennes”, in 2004.

Pillon’s main research interest is social organisation prior to colonisation in the centre and south-east of the Grande Terre. The commission of the article can be said to derive from his status as a professional researcher and his target readership is other anthropologists, his academic peers, and most likely those with specialist interest in New Caledonia. The (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are used to support Pillon’s hypothesis that there were two

³²⁴ Pillon’s article represents, in fact, a point of convergence of five different (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, each of which derives from a particular oral tradition and belongs to a particular pathway/pathway network. In order to avoid repetition, the full discussion of the article (and all of the (re)writings it contains) appears here in Chapter 3. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 (which treat the pathways and pathway networks to which the other four (re)writings belong), only the bibliographic data and information relating to the relevant pathway trajectories are listed – the reader is then referred back to the present chapter for the more detailed discussion.

³²⁵ Respectively originating in Nyelâyu (see this chapter), Ajië (see Chapter 4), Nixumwak and Bwatoö (see Chapter 5), and Nemi (see Chapter 6) oral traditions.

great socio-cultural entities on the Grande Terre, one in the north, the other in the south, that he refers to respectively as the “*Complexe sociologique du Nord*” and the “*Complexe sociologique du Sud*” (17).

Pillon puts forward the hypothesis that “Le Chef de Touho” (1900), and “Le Maître de Koné” (1932) are “*réécits du lézard*”³²⁶ that belong to the *Complexe sociologique du Sud*, and that “Bodanu Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier” and “Le Lézard et le bénitier” (1979), and “Pasikan et le lézard” (1979) are “*réécits du lézard*” that belong to the *Complexe sociologique du Nord*. His (re)writing (found on page 11 of the article) consists of distilling the three “northern” stories and the two “southern” stories into their essential components, and then through a comparison between the stories of the two “*complexes*”, building a synthetic picture of “northern” and “southern” stories, showing how their common points and differences work to support his hypothesis that there were two separate sociological networks on the Grande Terre in pre-colonial times.³²⁷ So, while Pillon’s two (re)writings do contain the structural elements of “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption”, these are not presented in strict order in his comparison.

First, elements of the “southern” stories that do not appear in the “northern” stories are outlined: the story is localised, in the sense that the territorial connections of the protagonists are described, as is the voyage of the central character carrying the lizard, which is a kind of permanent progression that can be marked on a map. Then, Pillon evokes the elements of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption in a single sentence describing the story as consisting of “*un chef qui pose ses lacets, et qui fait à son tour l’objet d’une chasse, suivi d’un épilogue heureux où ce chef est débarrassé de son importun poursuivant*”³²⁸ (11).

³²⁶ [stories of the lizard]

³²⁷ It would be interesting to know on what grounds other versions of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, have been omitted from Pillon’s analysis, especially the following, which were published prior to the publication of his article. These versions include: “Diakamala et le lézard” in Jean Guiart’s *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* (1957); “Le Maître de Koné” in Alban Bensa’s and Jean-Claude Rivierre’s *Les Filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî* (1994); “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè xajie / Le chef de Koné et le lézard de Houailou” in André Nguyen Ba Duong’s and Kamilio Ipere’s *Contes et légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)* (2001); and “Lé lézard de Bwéxawé et le chef de Koné” in the *annexes* of Michel Naepels’ doctoral dissertation “*Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la région de Houailou, Nouvelle-Calédonie*” (1996).

³²⁸ [a chief who sets his traps, and who is then himself hunted, followed by a happy epilogue where the chief is rid of his troublesome pursuer].

Next, elements of the “northern” story, that do not appear in the “southern” version are presented: there can be one or several central heroes, one man, several men or a man and a woman; the woman can be pursued by the lizard; the hunted party may or may not be aware that they are being pursued; the story is set in a domestic or local sphere, where the solution to the problem of the lizard is found within the kinship group (there is no flight around the Grande Terre seeking refuge in a succession of locations); and while the lizard is neutralised (just as in the “southern” version), the ending is not happy for the person pursued by the lizard (the contrary being the case for the “southern” version) (11).

In terms of transformations undergone by the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* drawn on by Pillon in his (re)writing, there has been a change in genre for the five bilingual texts that were produced through recordings made by anthropologists in name, or in method (Lambert, Leenhardt) or linguists (Coyaud, Ozanne-Rivierre). Rather than texts that constitute “raw data” produced “in the field”, they have become source material integrated into an academic argument. Other significant transformations relate to the form of the (re)writings (the synthesis and great reduction in length of the stories), and to their languages of presentation (they are transformed from bilingual texts to monolingual French ones).

Patrick Pillon’s level of linguistic and cultural competence with respect to matters of Kanak oral tradition would appear to be significant; he has undertaken fieldwork throughout the Ajië-Arhö customary area, is a speaker of Ajië, and has written specifically on aspects of Ajië oral tradition and social organisation.³²⁹ He has also participated in the collection, recording and transcription of elements of oral tradition in the Ajië-Arhö customary area, a number of which form part of the collection “Collecte du Patrimoine Oral” co-ordinated by the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK, based at the Centre Culturel Tjibaou.

Evidently, collaboration and consultation is an essential part of this kind of research work. However, his article “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande

³²⁹ These include “Listes déclamatoires (“viva”) et principes d’organisation sociale dans la vallée de Kouaoua (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” (1992) [Declamatory lists (“viva”) and principles of social organisation in the Kouaoua Valley (New Caledonia)]; “Les ancrages symboliques et sociaux de l’occupation de l’espace et de l’organisation territoriale en pays Mèa (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” [The symbolic and social roots of spatial occupation and territorial organisation in Mèa country (New Caledonia)](1998); “En pays Mèa (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : Approches ethnologiques des années 1980 et 1990. Lignages et récits lignagers” [In Mèa country (New Caledonia): Ethnological approaches from the 1980s and 1990s. Lineages and lineage stories] (2001).

Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, which features the (re)writings of different versions of *Le Chef et le lézard*, relies on existing texts that have been previously published, therefore there appears to have been no collaboration in the production of this article in relation to the (re)writings.³³⁰ The versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* have been stripped back to their essential components in order for him to undertake the comparison described earlier in this section. For this reason, the performative context and the aesthetic dimensions of the texts have also been omitted; there is no reference to the narrators involved, or the context in which the stories were collected, other than to mention their location (and thus their membership of the northern or southern *complexe sociologique*).

With respect to the images of Kanak oral literature projected in this (re)writing, this example of text-based academic analysis, an attempt to elaborate a structure for the social organisation of the central north of the Grande Terre, treats these elements of Kanak oral literature as information, field data to be collected, and assembled to make an argument. There are two effects of this approach. The first is to validate the elements of Kanak oral traditions used in support of his argument, affirming their worth as history in a sense, through their use to shed light on questions of social organisation in the past. This affirmation works to project positive images of the traditions and cultures featured.

The second effect is mixed in terms of the image projected, since the genre of the (re)writing, (an academic article within the discipline of anthropology), and the complexity of the material contained in the article (related to clan and kinship systems, local geography and previous research), conspire to create the impression that there is a complex culture requiring expert interpretation, and that the expert is, in a sense, “peering down the microscope” in order to classify a society, the voices of whose members are not directly heard or acknowledged in the article, and as they are spoken *for*, there is potential for an impression to be created of passivity on the part of the people “studied”.

³³⁰ This does not mean that there was not a degree of collaboration and consultation involved in the production of the article as a whole, given the nature of this research and the need for the researcher to gather information from Kanak experts, necessarily consulting with them. It is unlikely that he would be able to undertake research throughout the region over a considerable period of time (at least a decade at the time of the article’s writing), attending and observing cultural events, or that his research would be included in the work of the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK if his research practices were not respectful of Kanak practices and expertise.

Of course, this is not necessarily a fair representation of the perspective or the methods of Patrick Pillon – as described above, he has worked closely with communities within the Ajië-Arhö customary area for a considerable time, and his work has featured in the project of collection of *patrimoine immatériel* by the ADCK. The information included in his article, what is left out, and its publication in a specialist anthropological journal clearly point to the fact that his intended readership is assumed to have a significant amount of knowledge of the societies involved, and the previous research referred to. Thus, for a reader familiar with the background to the article and the (re)writer’s research methods, the first effect, that of affirming the elements of oral traditions used as evidence to support Pillon’s hypothesis of the existence of two *complexes sociologiques* on the Grande Terre prior to colonisation, would predominate. For a reader unfamiliar with the field of research, the cultures and people involved, however, it is quite possible that the second effect would be felt, simply as a result of what is not said in the article, and this could work to create the image of Kanak societies as complex, difficult to understand, only to be decoded by experts. This creates a distance between the reader and Kanak culture that does not contribute in a positive way to increasing mutual understanding, or advance the project of the Noumea Agreement in terms of identity construction purposes.

In summary then, it can be stated that Pillon’s (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* contains a mixture of images of Kanak oral literature and cultures, which have the potential to exert influence on identity construction processes both positively and negatively, depending on the understandings that the reader brings to his or her engagement with the text.

3.7 TEXT 13: François Garnung. *Contes et coutumes canaques au XIX^e siècle*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003.

“LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (PP. 66–72).

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* travels down two pathways within New Caledonian written tradition in French that converge in the book *Contes et coutumes canaques au XIX^e siècle* by Francis Garnung, published by L’Harmattan, Paris, in 2003. The first pathway sees the story

travel out from Père Lambert's *Mœurs et superstitions Néo-Calédoniennes*³³¹ (1900) and the second pathway leads from Maurice Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), both converging in the twenty-first century in Garnung's book.

Contes et coutumes canaques au XIXe siècle is an anthology of Kanak *contes* in French, containing a selection of those written down by Louise Michel in the latter part of the nineteenth century, "augmented by other contes collected at the beginning of the twentieth century".³³² The stories are woven together by Garnung's commentary on different aspects of the "culture primitive" that shed light on the meaning of the contes.³³³ The book is divided into seven sections, "*La Parole, la Nature et le Temps*", "*Le Ko et le Totem*", "*L'Art Canaque*", "*Les Rites*", "*La Vie Quotidienne*", "*La Guerre et les Poursuites*" and "*La Colonisation*". The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is found in the chapter "*La Guerre et les Poursuites*", under the title "Le Chef de Touho" (66-72).

Francis Garnung (born in 1925 in France) is a playwright, novelist and author of children's books. He was also a copperplate engraver and founder of *Les Impénitents*, a society of bibliophiles that published editions illustrated by young engravers annually from 1955 to 1985.³³⁴ His most successful novel, *La Pomme rouge*, was first published in 1956. After retiring from a post in the *Éducation nationale*, he produced *Contes et coutumes canaques...* in 2003, followed by the collections of *contes* for children, *La Clé des champs et autres récits imaginaires* (2004), and *Tonton Marcel sous l'Occupation* (2005), both published by Jeunesse l'Harmattan, Paris. A *conte* taken from *Contes et coutumes canaques...* was re-published as "Le Chef de Pouapanou" in "Tour du monde en 44 contes", volume 28 of the journal *La grande oreille – la revue des arts de la parole*, (2006).

Contes et coutumes canaques au XIXe siècle is part of the L'Harmattan series "*La Légende des mondes*", a collection of *contes* that come "mainly, but not exclusively, from oral

³³¹ It is possible that Garnung also read Lambert's contribution to *Les Missions Catholiques...*, I have used the spelling of the name of the chief in the title of the story as a means of identifying the most likely version used by Garnung. Lambert's 1880 (re)writing was entitled "Le Chef de Touo", while the 1900 (re)writing was entitled "Le Chef de Touho", as is Garnung's (re)writing.

³³² See comment from publisher on back cover of *Contes et coutumes canaques du XIXe siècle*.

³³³ [the different aspects of this primitive culture that illuminates them [the contes]] Quote taken from publisher's text on back cover of *Contes et coutumes canaques au XIXe siècle*.

³³⁴ The first honorary president of *Les Impénitents* was Jean Cocteau.

literatures of the African continent.”³³⁵ The reason L’Harmattan commissioned Garnung to produce the New Caledonian contribution to the series “*La Légende des mondes*” is unclear; however, his literary reputation must have had some bearing on the decision, along with his interest in the genre of the *conte*.³³⁶ Eight authors and their works are listed in the *bibliographie* at the end of the book, of which Louise Michel’s *Légendes et chants de gestes Canaques*, Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and Georges Baudoux’ *Légendes Canaques* are the sources of *contes* presented in the book. The other works in the list are predominantly anthropological, comprising Leenhardt’s *Arts de l’Océanie*, *Do Kamo* and *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne*, Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Mœurs et coutumes des Mélanésiens*, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s *La Mythologie primitive*, Éric Rau’s *Institutions et coutumes Canaques*, Paul Rivet’s *Les Océaniens* and G. Bureau’s *Masques*. Below the list, the word “*et :*” introduces a further list of names as follows:

R. P. O’Reilly, de Rochas, Sarasin, H. Rivière, A. Bernard, Codrington, Margot-Duclos et Vernant, Dr M. Vincent, J. Bernier, G. H. Luquet, E. Bourgey, P. Cordeil, Viellard et Desplanches, Le Chartier, R. P. Lambert, Ch. Brainne, J. Garnier, Glaumont.

The specific works of the writers listed above are not mentioned but all of the explorers, navigators, anthropologists, *fonctionnaires*, linguists, and missionaries who feature in the list produced texts in the late nineteenth century or in the first half of the twentieth century. Given the orientation of the book towards an explanation of “*coutumes canaques*” it is interesting that *Contes et coutumes canaques au XIX^e siècle*, written in 2003, post Matignon and Noumea Agreements, contains no reference to anthropological or indeed any other writing on New Caledonia undertaken later than the 1950s. One explanation for this might be that the intention is to interpret Kanak culture and oral literature purely through nineteenth- and early twentieth century frames. However, this does not seem to be indicated anywhere in the book, and furthermore, there are references to contemporary times to be found dispersed through the text, such as the passage below which appears at the end of the story of “Le Chef de Touho”, and clearly refers to the era following the Matignon and Noumea agreements,

³³⁵ The collection currently comprises 244 works. www.editions-harmattan.fr accessed 17 June 2012.

³³⁶ Garnung produced two subsequent collections of *contes* for L’Harmattan in 2004 and 2005.

*Y a-t-il une prémonition dans ce conte ? Est-ce une jeune génération qui réussira à rendre à la Nouvelle-Calédonie son indépendance ? Seul l'avenir infirmera ou confirmera... (72).*³³⁷

The final section of the *Préface* places the writings of Louise Michel at the centre of the book and claims to situate them in their cultural context but there is no mention of limiting contextual information to a particular period of time,

*C'est dans cette île colonisée, au milieu de ces autochtones méprisés, que furent déportés, en 1871 et jusqu'en 1880, date de l'amnistie, des milliers d'hommes et de femmes "communards". Parmi eux se trouvait Louise Michel, figure légendaire de la Commune. C'est elle qui la première s'intéressa aux Canaques et à leur culture. Elle recueillit auprès d'eux certaines des "légendes et chants de gestes canaques" qui suivent, et que nous replacerons dans le contexte de leurs coutumes et croyances. Ces contes témoignent de la culture de ces "sauvages", réputés anthropophages, avant leur colonisation et leur conversion au christianisme. C'est donc à la fin du XIX^e siècle que nous allons nous reporter (10).*³³⁸

Contes et coutumes canaques... is an interesting text from the point of view of (re)writing, which takes place on several levels. The first type of (re)writing is found in the commentary, which weaves together quotations from the early texts and Garnung's reflections. Each of the chapters contains alternating passages in regular and italicised fonts, and while it appears that the passages and comments in italics are those of the author, this is not always clear, as the sources of cited passages are not signalled. The bibliography contains the only reference to sources, and the reader would need to be familiar with all of the works in order to know from which books the different passages are taken, as no indication is given in the text. This (re)writing strategy leads to a blurring of the borders between the texts used in the book.

³³⁷ [Is there a premonition in this *conte*? Will the younger generation manage to give New Caledonia back its independence? Only the future will confirm or deny...]

³³⁸ [It is to this colonised island, in the middle of these despised natives, that from 1871 until 1880, the date of the amnesty, thousands of "Communard" men and women were deported. Among them was found Louise Michel, legendary figure of the Commune. She was the first to interest herself in the Canaques and their culture. She collected from them certain of the "Kanak legends and *chants de gestes*" that follow, and that we are placing back into the context of their customs and beliefs. These *contes* bear witness to the culture of these "savages", reputed to be cannibals, before their colonisation and conversion to Christianity. So it is to the end of the 19th century that we are going to transport ourselves].

The assertion, made in the passage from the *Préface* cited above, that Louise Michel was the first “to take an interest in Kanak and their culture” can be read as slightly misleading,³³⁹ and to some extent can be taken as a rewriting of history. Michel arrived in New Caledonia in 1873 and her first texts were published anonymously as “*Légendes et chants de gestes canaques – Aux amis d’Europe*”, appearing in instalments in the first civilian newspaper in Noumea, *Petites Affiches de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* from 1875.³⁴⁰ While she first published four years before the first of Père Lambert’s texts were seen in *Les Missions Catholiques...* in 1879, Lambert had already been in New Caledonia for nearly 20 years when Michel arrived there, and was clearly interested in Kanak and their culture during that period, as his notes taken while living in Belep between 1856 and 1863 attest. This fact would have been known to Garnung, who lists Lambert (without specifying which work/s) in the bibliography but curiously, in naming Michel as the first to be interested in the Kanak world, ignores the priest who spent five decades living in close proximity to Kanak in both the far north and extreme south of the island group, and who developed a rich understanding and respect for these peoples.

Details of the provenance of the story, “Le chef de Touho” are not provided by Garnung. However, on comparing this (re)writing with the version in Père Lambert’s *Mœurs et Superstition des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900),³⁴¹ (also reproduced as part of the “*Cycle du Lézard*” of Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*, which features in Garnung’s bibliography), the overwhelming similarity makes it clear that it is Lambert’s text that Garnung is (re)writing. Close comparison of the two texts shows that he has transformed Lambert’s version of the story in his treatment of repetition, and through the addition, substitution and omission of material.

Garnung retains the repetition in the passage describing the *génie* climbing up the coconut tree to get himself a coconut to drink, most likely because the repetition is stylistically acceptable as it serves to reinforce the idea of the action of climbing,

³³⁹ Unless he means that Michel was the first of the *déportés* of the *Commune* to take an interest in Kanak culture, the passage is ambiguous.

³⁴⁰ After her return to France, a revised and extended *Légendes et chants de gestes canaques – Aux amis d’Europe*, with Michel credited this time as the author, was published by her Parisian editors at Kéva in 1885 as *Légendes et chants de gestes canaques*.

³⁴¹ De Rochas uses “Touo” in *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants...*, Lambert uses “Touo” in *Les Missions Catholiques...*

*Le génie voulant étancher sa soif monte sur le cocotier, monte, monte, monte, s'arrête pour reprendre haleine, monte, monte encore, le voilà à la cime (68).*³⁴²

However in other instances, repetition is not retained, and this can be taken as further evidence of the (re)writer conforming to target culture poetics. In the Lambert version, the description of the birds drinking the sea water and gradually exposing the undersea house follows the structure below:

[A] bird species drinks, [B] drinks, drinks, drinks, [C] and uncovers a part of the house.

For example, “[A] *Les hérons (ardea) commencent aussitôt à boire ; [B] ils boivent, boivent, boivent...*, [C] *et font descendre l'eau à marée basse. [A] Les courlieux (numenius) viennent à leur tour, [B] ils boivent, boivent, boivent, [C] et mettent à découvert les coraux*” (Mœurs 317). This A-B-C structure is repeated eight times in total in Lambert, the first three times the species of bird that is drinking is named, the last five times “une autre espèce d'oiseau” is used. Garnung relates seven rather than eight of the stages involved in the exposure of the undersea house, but after the first four times changes the A-B-C structure, and uses a compressed A-C structure as below for the final three repetitions,

*[A] Puis une autre espèce, [C] et l'herbe de la toiture est à découvert. [A] Puis une autre, [C] et les côtes de la case paraissent. [A] Puis une autre, [C] et enfin tout est à sec (71).*³⁴³

Garnung also transforms Lambert's version of the story through the addition of material, influenced by target readership considerations. The first instance of the addition of new text comes in the passage that relates the *chef de Touho* hiding in the coconut tree when the thirsty *génie*, searching for a coconut to drink from, locates him. In the Lambert version, “*Il veut se tourner et aperçoit le chef de Touho qui se cache*”³⁴⁴ (Mœurs 313). Garnung has added more descriptive imagery, replacing Lambert's prosaic formulation with “*mais le chef de Touho tremble de tous ses membres, et le cocotier tremble avec lui. Alors le génie l'aperçoit*”

³⁴² [Wanting to quench its thirst, the *génie* climbs the coconut tree, climbs, climbs, climbs, stops to catch its breath, climbs, climbs again, there it is at the top.]

³⁴³ [Then another species, and the straw of the roof is uncovered. Then another, and the sides of the hut appear. Then another, and finally everything is dry.]

³⁴⁴ [It wants to turn around, and sees the *chef de Touho* who is hiding]

(68).³⁴⁵ This change takes account of the target readership expectation of more descriptive language around the actions, whereas it is likely that this descriptive function in Lambert's version would have been fulfilled in the performance, by the gestures, voice and expression of the orator whose version Lambert follows closely in his (re)writing.

The second example of the addition of material by Garnung relates to the humiliation suffered by the *chef de Touho* when the *génie* sits on his head eating its evening meal, and its saliva pours down over his head. In the Lambert version, the *chef de Touho* suffers this same humiliation twice, the first night when he returns to his village carrying the *génie*, and the second night after the *génie* has recaptured him in the coconut tree. Garnung follows Lambert for the first night, but for the second night replaces the humiliation of the saliva pouring over the *chef de Touho*'s head, with a (re)writing of the following passage taken from "Le Maître de Koné" in Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens*,

Celui-ci remplissait toutes ses fonctions, fiente et urine se répandaient et adhéraient au cou de l'homme (Leenhardt, *Documents* 12).³⁴⁶

Et il mange, il mange, et il urine et il défèque sur le chef de Touho indigné (Garnung 68).³⁴⁷

This use of *mots crus* or "earthiness" that often figures in stories of the different Kanak oral traditions has been added to the story by Garnung, perhaps as a way of intensifying the horror of the *génie*'s presence on the *chef*'s head, and perhaps as an attempt to emphasise the otherness of Kanak.

Garnung's (re)writing also omits some of the explanatory information found in Lambert, relating to geography, Nyelâyu language and the names of the bird species. In Garnung's text, the *chef de Touho* has fled from place to place until he finally reaches the end of the land "[...] *jusqu'à ce qu'enfin il arriva à Maalamoua, la fin du pays*" (70). After this phrase in Lambert's (re)writing, explanatory information regarding the location is added in parentheses "*(extrémité Sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie)*" (*Mœurs* 317), and this is omitted in Garnung.

³⁴⁵ [But the *chef de Touho* trembles all over, and the coconut trees trembles with him. So the *génie* catches sight of him.]

³⁴⁶ [It performed all of its functions, droppings and urine poured down and stuck to the man's neck.]

³⁴⁷ [And it ate and ate, and urinated and defecated on the outraged chef de Touho.]

When the *génie* sends the signal to gather the birds together, in Lambert it appears as “*le mouaran (signal de convocation)*”, whereas in Garnung’s version, the Kanak term “*mouaran*” is removed and simply replaced with “*signal de convocation*”. The same applies to Lambert’s insertion of the Latin names in parentheses next to each of the bird species that drinks the water, whereas Garnung simply uses the common name of the birds. These omissions would seem to confirm that Garnung does not share Lambert’s aim to educate his Europe-based target readership about these unfamiliar elements of the land, language and environment of New Caledonia, hence the removal of the extra detail perceived as superfluous.

Transformation of the story at the level of vocabulary is seen in the replacement of “*roussette*” (the local term for the New Caledonian fruit bat) with the more generic “*chauve-souris*” (bat), presumably to make it more comprehensible to a readership not familiar with local usage. The replacement of the familiar term “*maison*”³⁴⁸ in Lambert’s version with the more exotic-sounding “*case*”³⁴⁹ serves to make the dwelling seem more distant for a European readership. Also, in Lambert’s text, there are several instances in which the *chef de Touho* uses the more respectful, or plural *vous* rather than the more familiar *tu* verbal forms when addressing his mother. This would seem to reflect the usage in Nyelâyu, and may be related to a respect relationship or to the use of dual pronouns in the language.³⁵⁰ Garnung’s text removes these instances of *vouvoiement*, and with them elements of the sociocultural context, replacing them with the *tu* form. This would again seem to relate to target readership expectations, in which the use of the familiar *tu* form would be expected between adult family members, and the mother’s use of *tutoiement* while her son, the *chef de Touho*, uses the *vous* form would seem unusual.

Another example of transformation at the level of vocabulary can be seen when comparing Garnung’s (re)writing with Lambert’s 1900 “Le Chef de Touho”. Lambert uses the terms “*une divinité*”, “*le chef de Tendo*”, and “*le génie*” to refer to the supernatural being that is pursuing the *chef de Touho*. Garnung has retained “*le génie*” and added “*un diable*” but does

³⁴⁸ [house]

³⁴⁹ [hut]

³⁵⁰ See Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre’s “L’expression de la personne : quelques exemples océaniens” in *Faits de langues*, 3 (1994) for an explanation of dual terms (p. 217) and *vouvoiement* for dual terms (p. 219).

not use the terms “*la divinité*” or “*le chef de Tendo*”. This has the effect, whether intended or not, of removing some of the specificity of the story, in terms of the location in which it is set (linked inextricably to the name *le chef de Tendo*). The removal of the *chef de Tendo* enables Garnung to provide a simplified interpretation of the meaning behind the allegory in the introductory paragraph. Ignoring both Lambert’s and Leenhardt’s notes regarding the situation of rivalry between the *chef de Touho* and the *chef de Tendo*, Garnung chooses to privilege only the relationship between coloniser and colonised,

Le conte du chef de Touho relate une poursuite mouvementée et tragique. Le chef de Touho ne peut arriver à se défaire d’un être qui s’accroche à son cou comme une sangsue. Cet être qui ne veut pas le lâcher, il semble bien que ce soit le Blanc... (66).³⁵¹

Using only “*le génie*” and “*le diable*” has an effect of removing information that points to Nyelâyu conceptions of the nature of this supernatural being which moves between the known and unknown worlds, from human to non-human forms in Lambert’s version. Removing the word “*la divinité*”, which is not compatible with the notion of “*primitive*” that seems to permeate Garnung’s work (it is explicitly mentioned on the book’s back cover), also works to transform the story, drawing connections between “*Le chef de Touho*” and other “*exotic*” works such as the Arabian Nights, rather than focusing on the specificity of the Nyelâyu version.

A final transformation of the story that takes place involves the treatment of traces of orality that remained in Lambert’s text as a result of his efforts to reproduce as closely as possible the oral performance events that he witnessed. Garnung’s strategy is illustrated by his treatment of the interruption of the narrative near the beginning of the story, in which there is an exchange between the orator and a member of the audience who interjects in order to establish the intended subject of the story. This interjection is a trace of the orality of the Nyelâyu oral performance event and is not included in Garnung’s (re)writing. He simply omits the exchange and continues the story from the point where the narrative in the third person recommences.

³⁵¹ [The tale of the *chef de Touho* tells of an eventful and tragic pursuit. The *chef de Touho* is unable to free himself from a creature that clings to his neck like a leech. It would appear that this creature who does not want to release him is the White man...]

Francis Garnung's literary career was made in France, and there is no evidence of his having knowledge or experience of Kanak languages or culture, or collaborating with experts in these areas during the production of *Contes et coutumes canaques*.... The title page states that the *Contes et coutumes canaques au XIX^e siècle* within the book are “*présentés par Francis Garnung*”³⁵² and it appears that this presentation is purely derived from consultation of the texts mentioned in the bibliography. It is interesting to note that a number of the source texts from which the *contes* and commentaries in the book derive, and which were published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, acknowledge the contribution of Kanak to the material in their books, to different degrees, (see for example: Daoumi, Louise Michel's friend and guide in matters Kanak; the *transcripteurs* whose writings feature in Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens*; the anonymous young interpreter who assisted de Rochas; the chief Ouaoulo Amabili, Père Lambert's guide in matters of Kanak beliefs), whereas in *Contes et coutumes au XIX^e siècle*, these contributions are effaced completely by the lack of referencing, and the text appears to reinforce the Orientalist stereotypes found in the earlier texts, through its elisions and emphases on the exotic.³⁵³

Garnung's “Le Chef de Touho” has been reduced by the omission of traces of formal elements of the original oral performance, and simultaneously augmented through the insertion of elements that emphasise the “foreignness” of the text, however the changes have not been signalled in the text. Thus the reader coming to this story for the first time would gain a markedly different impression of the story and its culture of origin than, for example, a reader of Lambert's (re)writing. The encounter between Francis Garnung and *Le Chef et le lézard* has resulted in a significantly modified (re)writing of “Le Chef de Touho”, embedded in a larger work that reiterates ethnocentric and orientalist ideas prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without offering critical perspective, and as a result contributes

³⁵² [presented by Francis Garnung]

³⁵³ The introduction to the section on cannibalism, “L'Anthropophagie”, illustrates this tendency through its present tense conflation of past and present, “*Un tel goût pour la chair humaine peut s'expliquer par l'absence de tout gros gibier sur l'île avant l'arrivée des Blancs. On ne connaissait donc le goût de la graisse et de la chair que dans le dépeçage des corps humains. Or la graisse est pour le Canaque une véritable gourmandise.*” [Such a taste for human flesh can be explained by the absence of all large game on the island before the coming of the Whites. The taste of fat and flesh was thus known only through carving up of human bodies. So fat is a real culinary delight for the Canaque]. In addition to perpetuating orientalist discourses, this explanation is clearly wrong, since “fat and flesh” are to be found in food sources such as the endemic flying foxes (*rousettes*), the native wood pigeons, or the dugongs that form an integral part of the diet of peoples in different parts of the islands.

to the perpetuation of these ideas, making the contribution of this (re)writing to processes of Kanak identity construction potentially negative.

3.8 TEXT 14: Lorna Miskelly. “La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français.” MA thesis. Department of French, School of European Languages and Literatures, University of Auckland, 2006.

“LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (PP. 84–88).³⁵⁴

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story moves out from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900) by Père Lambert and into “La Transformation du Maître de Koné” (2006), a Masters thesis written in French by Lorna Miskelly, a student in the Department of French at the University of Auckland. The (re)writing that is part of the network of pathways that began in Nyelâyu oral tradition is a re-typed version of the source text, “Le Chef de Touho” from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, placed at the end of “Chapter 2 – Le Chef de Touho” of the thesis.

Miskelly’s study consists of a comparative analysis of different translations of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*. She examines and contextualises the decisions made, strategies employed and translations produced using the notions of postcolonialism, hybridity and intercultural translation, and especially the concepts of domestication and foreignisation advanced by the translation scholar, Lawrence Venuti. In addition to the single-paragraph distillation of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* down to its essential elements,³⁵⁵ each chapter of the thesis

³⁵⁴ As with the article by Patrick Pillon discussed in section 3.6 of this chapter, Miskelly’s thesis represents a point of convergence of different (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that belong to particular pathways/pathway networks, with origins that can be traced back to different oral traditions. In order to avoid the repetition that would be generated by examining each of the five (re)writings in Miskelly’s study in the chapter that deals with the pathway/pathway network to which it belongs, the full discussion of Miskelly’s thesis appears here in Chapter 3, with just the bibliographic information and details of the pathways of the other four (re)writings listed in the chapters treating the relevant pathways/pathway networks.

³⁵⁵ “Un homme (ou des jeunes hommes) entre dans un endroit tabou et y dépose des pièges. Un lézard est pris dans un des lacets et demande à l’homme (ou aux jeunes hommes) de le libérer. L’homme obéit et par la suite le lézard s’installe sur la tête de ce chasseur pour punir l’infraction commise. L’homme essaie de fuir le lézard et le chasseur est donc chassé. Les deux traversent la Nouvelle-Calédonie ainsi, jusqu’à la fin du récit où l’homme est enfin délivré par un autre” (8). [A man (or some young men) go into a sacred place and lay some traps there.

examines a different translation or translations, with a (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* found at the end of the chapter in which it is discussed. In each case, the (re)writing consists of a reproduction of the source text without alteration, either in the form of a photocopy or a re-typed text. In addition to the skeleton of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, there are five other (re)writings found in the thesis:³⁵⁶ “Le Chef de Touho”, from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900); “Le Maître de Koné”, from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932); “Thu, le lézard et le coq” and “Le Lézard et le bénitier”, both taken from *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1980); and “Diakamala et le lézard”, from *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* (1957).³⁵⁷

Miskelly’s choice of thesis topic – translations of elements of Kanak oral traditions – in itself valorises those traditions from the point of view that they are considered worthy of academic study. At the time the thesis was written, studies pertaining to Kanak oral traditions were rare enough in the New Caledonian, let alone the Francophone university context, and thus a study undertaken by a student at an Anglophone university in the Pacific can be viewed as further affirmation of the value of elements of Kanak oral tradition, in this case, by considering them worthy of academic inquiry.

In “La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français”, Miskelly highlights the dynamic nature of Kanak oral traditions, and writes from the inherently egalitarian perspective that Translation Studies shares with Linguistics – just as one language is considered to be as valuable as another, (no more, no less), so the source traditions from which the translations derive are considered to be as important as the target traditions into which they are transported via the translation process. Thus the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that it contains can be seen to arise out of a context of genuine communication in which the value of the oral traditions from which the different versions

A lizard is caught in one of the snares and asks the man (or the young men) to free it. The man obeys and next thing, the lizard attaches itself to the hunter’s head as punishment for the offence committed. The man tries to flee the lizard and the hunter becomes the hunted. They both travel across New Caledonia thus, until the end of the story where the man is finally saved by another.]

³⁵⁶ A sixth version of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “Le maître de Koné”, from *Les Filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî* (1994) by Alban Bensa and Jean-Claude Rivierre, is analysed in one of Miskelly’s chapters: however, no (re)writing has been reproduced in the body of the thesis, only discussion of aspects of the translation strategy, therefore it has not been possible to include it as a (re)writing for the purposes of this study.

³⁵⁷ Respectively originating in Nyelâyu (see this chapter), Ajië (see Chapter 4), Drehu and Bwato (see Chapter 5), and Yuanga (see Chapter 6) oral traditions.

derive is affirmed, and positive images are created for potential use in processes of identity construction.

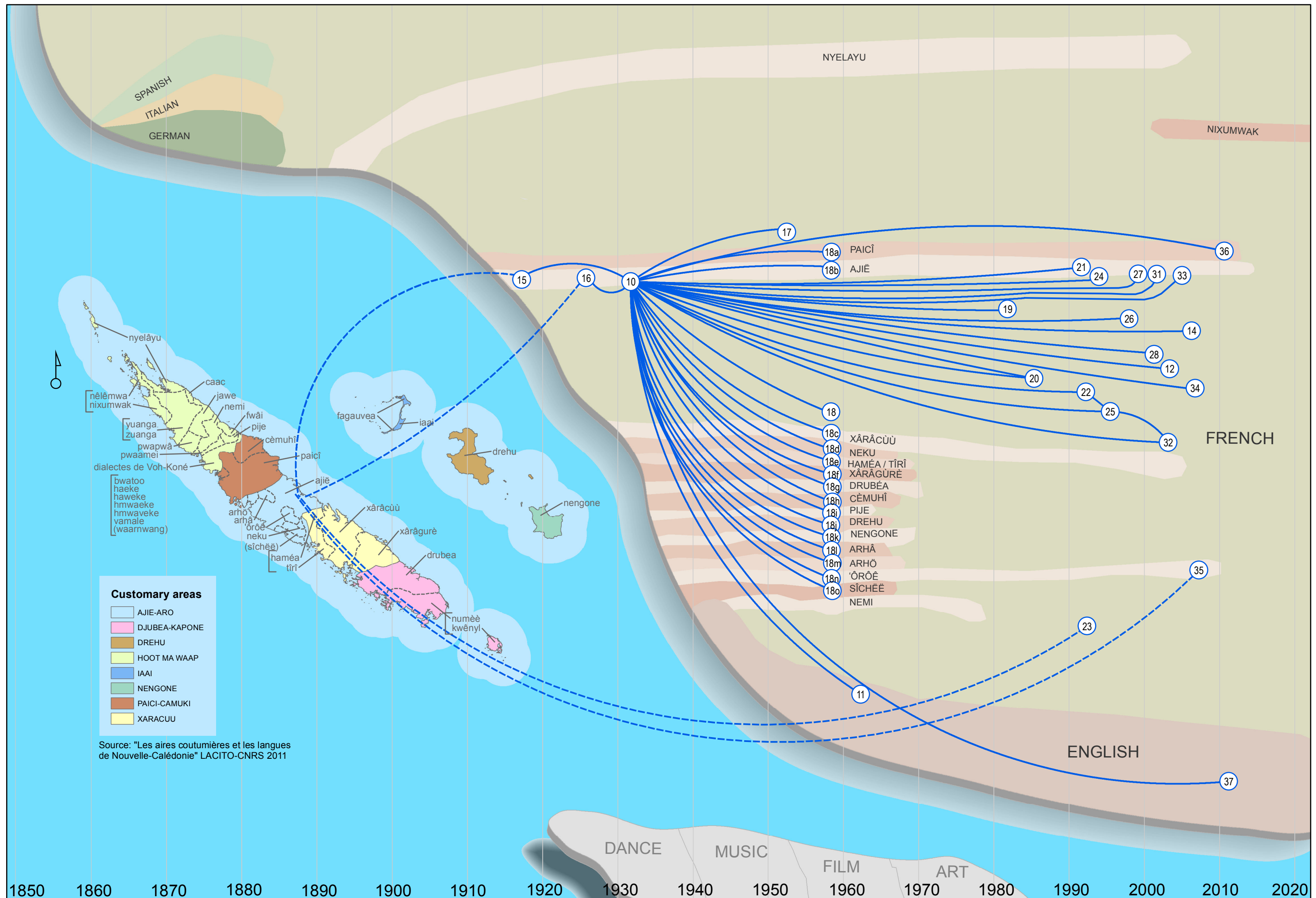
CHAPTER 4. Pathways originating in Ajië Oral Tradition

This section examines (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, originating in Ajië oral tradition, that constitute a network spanning almost 100 years and dating back to the early twentieth century. Below is a list of the 25 texts of the network that feature on the map on the following page.

Text ID	Section	Publication details	Page
15	4.1	B. Eñijji. <i>Cahier</i> 8. Unpublished, ~1919.	188
16	4.2	Sisille. <i>Cahier</i> . Unpublished, ~1925.	192
10	4.3	M. Leenhardt. <i>Documents néo-calédoniens</i> . 1932.	197
17	4.4	A. Barrès. <i>Le Maître de Koné</i> . 1954.	205
18 18a-18c	4.5	Various. Documents from Linguistic Survey. <i>Carton 12J-55 Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958</i> in the <i>Fonds Leenhardt</i> of the Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.	208
11	4.6	K. J. Hollyman. "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" in <i>JPS</i> , 1962.	210
19	4.7	J. Guiart. "Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale" in <i>Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances</i> . Paris: Éditions ORSTOM, 1981.	211
20	4.8	J. Guiart. "La Vallée de Houailou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée" in <i>JSO</i> , 1987.	213
21	4.9	S. Aramiou & J. Euritein. <i>Gô Vãřã Mërê A'jië</i> . 1992.	220
22	4.10	L.-J. Barbançon. <i>Bourail : entre mer et montagne. Capitale rurale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1992.	223
25	4.11	L.-J. Barbançon. <i>La Terre du Lézard</i> . 1995.	227
32	4.12	C. Jacques. <i>L'Homme-lézard. Roman</i> . 2002.	230
23	4.13	M. Naepels. "Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la region de Houailou, Nouvelle-Caledonie." 1996.	241

24	4.14	F. Bogliolo. <i>Paroles et Écritures. Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne</i> . 1994.	244
26	4.15	J. Guiart. <i>Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque</i> . 1998.	246
27	4.16	Collectif. <i>Chroniques du pays kanak. Tome 3</i> . 1999.	250
28	4.17	C. Salomon. <i>Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanak</i> . 2000.	254
31	4.18	B. Eñijiyi. <i>Pèci i bwêyöuu êñijiyi : pèci ka baayê 1915-1920 / Cahiers de Boesou Eñijiyi : première série 1915-1920</i> . 2002.	257
12	4.19	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> . 2004.	261
33	4.20	B. Eñijiyi "Vi rhenô né ka tö Koné. Le Maître de Koné" in <i>Mwà Véé</i> 44. 2004.	262
14	4.21	L. Miskelly. "La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	267
34	4.22	S. Camille. <i>Le Livre des timbres 2006. Nouvelle-Calédonie: Des timbres à l'image d'un pays</i> . 2007.	267
35	4.23	R. Aiï. "Wörênô ê a tö Kooné / Histoire du Lézard de Koné" in <i>Rapport 2007. Collecte du Patrimoine immatériel de l'aire A'jië-Aro</i> . 2007.	269
36	4.24	I. Péarou & S. Goromido. "Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü" in <i>Rapport 2007. Collecte des traditions orales de l'aire Paicî-Câmükî</i> . 2007.	272
37	4.25	R. Ramsay. <i>Nights of Storytelling</i> . 2011.	274

Figure 15 - Pathways Originating in Ajië Oral Tradition



4.1 TEXT 15: Bwêÿöuu Eÿijiyi. *Cahier 8. Unpublished, ~1919.*

“VIRHENŌ NE KA TO KONÉ”.

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from oral tradition to written tradition. The story moves out from Ajië oral tradition and into New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië in the form of a handwritten *cahier*,³⁵⁸ known as *Cahier 8*, which was written by Bwêÿöuu Eÿijiyi, longtime informant and educator of Maurice Leenhardt in matters relating to Ajië language and culture.

This handwritten *cahier*, the original of which has been lost, contained a (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled “Virhenö ne ka to Kone”. Bwêÿöuu³⁵⁹ Eÿijiyi was a member of an influential lineage and a sculptor and organiser of *pilous*.³⁶⁰ He was also in the first class of *natas* or pastors to be ordained by Leenhardt at Do Neva (he studied at the mission’s *école biblique* from 1903 to 1906). The primary informant of Leenhardt, Bwêÿöuu collaborated with him in his Bible translation work, as well as teaching him Ajië. Leenhardt held Bwêÿöuu in high esteem and as Bernard Gasser points out in his forthcoming book, *Mon école du silence*,³⁶¹ referred to Bwêÿöuu constantly in his university lectures, writing that there would have been nothing without Bwêÿöuu, and that he had been the student before Bwêÿöuu, the master (Leenhardt, *La Grande Terre* 111, qtd. in Gasser, “Mon école du silence” n.p.).

Students at Do Neva were taught to read and write using the system of transcription of the Ajië language that Leenhardt had developed. In order to gather information about Kanak culture and language, he encouraged the *pasteurs* to record any stories or legends that they

³⁵⁸ [Notebook]

³⁵⁹ Bwêÿöuu means “the naked surface of a rock in a waterfall” and Eÿijiyi means “born of the carp *jÿi*” (Gasser, “Mon école du silence” n. p.).

³⁶⁰ *Pilous*: important ceremonies featuring oratory, dances, distribution of food and gifts which served to consecrate alliances between clans (Clifford, Person and Myth 41).

³⁶¹ Gasser’s *Mon école du silence* is a rich, comprehensive literary and historical resource that presents and contextualises the literary output of several generations of Kanak writers dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing particularly on the writings of Waya Gorodë, Philippe Gorodë and Eleisha Nabaye, respectively the father, paternal grandfather and maternal grandfather of Déwé Gorodë, Kanak author, independence activist, and member of the New Caledonian government since 2001, where she is currently in charge of the dossiers of Citizenship, Culture and Women’s Affairs.

considered important, and Bwêyöou's series of *cahiers* written between 1915 and 1925 were the result of this commission. According to Jean Guiart, Leenhardt had wanted to leave information for his successors that they could use, and in 1918 launched a questionnaire in Ajië³⁶² on the organisation and origins of the clans,³⁶³ in order to gather more information on Ajië society in a systematic manner. Guiart writes that the questionnaire evoked two types of response – firstly, direct answers to the questions posed, and secondly, spontaneous writing in *cahiers*, encouraged by Leenhardt and enthusiastically taken up by those who had mastered the new technology of literacy, and who produced writings reflecting on subjects such as colonisation, the organisation of the church, biographies as well as mythic texts (“Les Conditions d’une enquête” 111).

It is not possible to examine the lost *cahier*, or to verify at this point how it was recorded, however, the other *cahiers* produced by Bwêyöou Efiiji were consisted of handwritten text and illustrations, along with notes in the margins in Leenhardt's handwriting, regarding points that he had clarified following discussions with Efiiji. The process of production of the *cahier* would have likely been Efiiji working alone. Given that the stories were part of oral tradition, he may have spoken them aloud in order to recall them (as if he were going to tell them to someone) and then transcribed them, or he may have proceeded directly to writing without recreating the oral dimension.

Assuming that Bwêyöou's version of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in the lost *cahier* is exactly reproduced in Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens*,³⁶⁴ then it would appear to follow the transgression–punishment–flight–redemption structure, and contains details of the process of trap-making, place names, descriptions of the prowess and the appearance of the different *chefs* encountered by the *maître de Koné* during his flight around the Grande Terre. The *maître de Koné* finally arrives at the lizard's totemic home, and it is the *maître du lieu* of this place who is able to save him by using ritual incantation and plants, explaining the origins of the lizard, brought with the stones of two sisters who married into the area. The lizard is thus

³⁶² An approach that was almost unheard of at the time.

³⁶³ Ērēwaa cēki mā a pāgūfū mwāāfō [Questionnaire pour la connaissance des clans]

³⁶⁴ See section 4.3 for further discussion of the Ajië text provided by Bwêyöou Efiiji.

sent back to its home forest, the *chef de Koné* recuperates, then returns home, and sends a messenger with *âdi*, Kanak ceremonial “*trésor*” as a symbol of alliance with the chief who saved him.

The provenance of the story is the Ajië oral tradition. It was not Bwêyöuu’s story to tell (as it did not belong to his family),³⁶⁵ however, he chose to write it down despite the restrictions that would normally prevent him from doing so. His reasons for this are also the subject of conjecture, but there are several plausible explanations. The first is that he knew that the story would be of interest to Leenhardt and he wished to assist him, and recorded the story as part of his role teaching Leenhardt about matters linguistic and cultural in Ajië society. The second is that his adoption of the Christian faith (he had become a pastor) meant that he felt able to tell a story that normally he would not be authorised to recount (as it did not belong to him) without fearing the consequences of breaking the rules (and of offending the ancestors). The third possibility relates to the colonial context in which he was writing. Here was an experienced member of an influential lineage, watching the social and cultural destruction being wrought by large scale land spoliation, the diseases that were decimating local populations, and if *Cahier* #8 was written in 1917 or later (this is possible), the added reason of having seen the 1917 Kanak uprising against the colonial forces brutally put down. Recording his knowledge for future generations must have seemed an urgent task, and he would have known that the written word offered the possibility of preserving what was being lost at such a rapid rate.

There are two notable areas of transformation of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*. The first of the transformations undergone by the story is the passage from oral to written, with all the attendant loss of performative context implied by Foley’s metaphor of the cenotaph. If we assume (in the absence of the original cahier) that the Ajië transcription was essentially the same as the version which survives today in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, it can be said that it bears the hallmarks of orality (for example, responses of the audience such as “*ei ei*” have been included) and does not seem to have been abridged, since the elements of repetition have been retained.

³⁶⁵ Interview with Emmanuel Kasarhérou, (16 March 2011).

The second transformation relates to the genre of the story. “*Virhenö*” has variously been translated as “legend”, “(hi)story” and “myth”, it would appear that this may be a case in which the degree of detail of the information included in the story determines the genre or “performance mode”. Leenhardt translated it as a “legend”, the toponyms are larger villages rather than more specific locations. Though Eŕijiyi’s title, “*Virhenö ne ka to Kone*” implies that the genre remains a *virhenö*, the loss of the performative context means that it has been transformed, since genre is here determined by context such as the participation and composition of the audience, and without these, it is no longer the same.

The target readership of the story was firstly, Leenhardt, who had requested Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi and the other *natas* write down elements of their oral traditions. The second possible intended readership was future generations of the people of the Ajië region, as Eŕijiyi undoubtedly realised the power of the written word, more especially, having witnessed the power and permanence of the written word of the Bible.

In terms of the criteria laid out for the encounter between oral and written tradition, in this transcription of “*Virhenö ne ka to Kone*”, the cultural and linguistic competence of the (re)writer was evidently beyond compare, as a sculptor, a *vieux*, and member of an influential lineage, Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi was eminently suited to the task of “respectfully” rendering elements of his own culture in written form. The criteria for consultation and collaboration with Kanak language speaker experts were, for the same reason, more than fulfilled.

In the version of *Le Chef et le lézard* presented in *Cahier #8*, the source language is acknowledged as it constitutes the entire (re)writing. There is no description of the performative context, perhaps as Eŕijiyi would have seen no need for this; Leenhardt was already familiar with it, and Eŕijiyi may have assumed (or hoped) that future generations would be too. Another explanation might be that Eŕijiyi saw no need to repeat the descriptions of performative contexts for public oratory he had produced in other writings undertaken for Leenhardt.

“*Virhenö ne ka to Kone*”, and the other texts that Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi created, represent a rich resource, and whether it was his intention or not, have turned out to be an extremely valuable source of reference for the recovery of Kanak identity in contemporary Kanaky/Nouvelle-

Calédonie.³⁶⁶ In terms of the texts of this corpus, his version of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* has arguably had the widest influence, having been (re)written multiple times, appearing in various languages, across different genres, and inspiring other art forms – including sculpture, dance, painting and theatre.

It is an example of a “respectful” encounter between Ajië oral and written tradition, both in terms of the process of its production, and of the image of the Ajië and, by extension, Kanak society and oral tradition that it projects: It is a powerful example of Kanak agency, in which the potential of writing to serve the purpose of education, recognition, and cultural preservation has been seized by an erudite and experienced Kanak cultural practitioner in an extremely difficult historical context.

4.2 TEXT 16: Sisille. *Cahier. Unpublished. Carton Number 12J-35 – “Elia et Sindai Manarhë”*. Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, ~1925.

“LE LÉZARD DE OUROURO”.

A second pathway out of Ajië oral tradition into New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië leads to the *cahier*, dated to approximately 1925 (Gasser, “Mon école du silence” n.p.), and written by Sisille,³⁶⁷ the wife of Varho,³⁶⁸ a pastor trained at Do Neva and a contemporary of Bwêëyöou Efijiyi. This very early piece of writing by a Kanak woman, a number of whose writings were included in *Documents calédoniens*, merits further investigation, as does the constitution of a more detailed biography than is possible at this point.

The *cahier* contains three stories written by Sisille in fountain pen in a regular and tidy hand. The version of *Le Chef et le lézard* is entitled “Le Lézard de Ourouro”, and it is written in the

³⁶⁶ His writings, which formed the basis of the chapter “Totems” in *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne*, were also the basis of the first act of the play *Kanaké, jeu scénique en trois tableaux* that was performed at the festival *Mélanésia 2000* in 1975 (see section 4.1 for more information on Bwêëyöou Efijiyi’s writings).

³⁶⁷ The cover page of the *cahier* features two spellings of the writer’s name, at the bottom of the cover page is a signature “Sisille”, and at the top, in what appears to be different handwriting (possibly Maurice Leenhardt’s), the name is spelled “Sisil”, this second spelling is also the one that appears in the table of contents of Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*. For the purposes of this discussion, I have used the spelling as it appears in her signature on both the front cover and the last page of her (re)writing of the story.

³⁶⁸ Varho is the name of an ancestor of the Bemaron clan of Kouaoua, in the *tribu* of Amon-Kasiori, on the east coast of the Grande Terre in the Xârâcùù customary area (Boai).

Ajië language. There are notes in red in the margins of the *cahier* which appear to be those of Leenhardt, clarifying certain points as was his method, possibly after discussion with Sisille.

The *cahier* has the same front cover image as those of Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi and other *cahiers* in the Leenhardt collection, and this fact, in conjunction with her relationship to Varho, and the inclusion of the text in *Documents néo-calédoniens* makes it likely that she undertook the writing for similar reasons to Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi, that is, having been encouraged to do so by Maurice Leenhardt.

As a non-Ajië speaker it is not possible for me to access the story directly via Sisille's text, but if one assumes that the story is the same as the version translated in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, it follows the transgression–punishment–flight–redemption pattern. The story tells of two brothers who set a line of traps together, each laying a line in a different direction. The younger brother's line ends in Ourouro. When he clears his traps the next day, he discovers the lizard caught in his trap demanding to be released. He frees it and the lizard immediately jumps onto his neck, and when he returns home, no matter what happens, it refuses to get off. The lizard loosens its grip at night time while it is sleeping, and the younger brother takes his opportunity and flees, crossing the river by asking trees from either side to bend over and create a bridge for him.

He seeks refuge with a *chef* from the other side, who promises to protect him, but the lizard awakes and pursues its prey, crossing the river in the same way as the man had, arriving to find him seated with his host. The lizard jumps back onto the younger brother's neck, and the *chef* says nothing, he is so afraid of the lizard. The lizard and the younger brother return home. The lizard again refuses to let him go, and only when it falls asleep does it release him.

This time, the young man flees towards the sea, following the coastline until he reaches a mountain where the “children of Népoéawé” live. It is impossible to climb the face of the mountain alone, and the children lower a rope down to the younger brother. He explains his predicament to them, and they tell him to remain behind while they go and deal with the lizard. The lizard arrives at the foot of the mountain having tracked the younger brother there, and the children lower the rope down again. The moment the lizard reaches the top and opens its mouth to explain the situation, the youngest of the children kills it by stabbing a burning hot iron into its throat. The younger brother returns home, and they all remain in their homes from that day.

Sisille, referred to as “Sisil, épouse de Varho” (the customary address for married women), in the Table of Contents of *Documents néo-calédoniens*.... was the only woman to have writings included in the collection, and the question of why this might have been the case arises. Her husband, the pastor Varho,³⁶⁹ was one of the *natas* who came through the Do Neva training with Leenhardt, and thus it is likely that his wife learned to read and write while on the Mission station. Sisille contributed eight texts to *Documents néo-calédoniens*³⁷⁰ while her husband Varho contributed only one³⁷¹ raising a further question of why this should be the case. It is possible that she was simply a prolific writer, and that for some reason a number of her texts were selected by Leenhardt for inclusion in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, for the quality, or their choice of subject matter.

Another avenue of enquiry into why Sisille contributed more texts than Varho could possibly be opened up by a footnote made in an article, entitled “A propos du totémisme autour de la Mer de Corail / Concerning Totemism Around Coral Sea [sic]” written in 1975 by Leenhardt’s daughter, Roselène Dousset-Leenhardt. The footnote relates to a paragraph describing the relationship between people and totems as represented in oral tradition, and refers the reader to another example from oral tradition, taken from *Documents néo-calédoniens*,

(5) Cf. M. LEENHARDT, *transcrivant Varho : Virhenô ne neduaêri xe Nevu (Récit du Grand-père et du petit fils de Nêvu)*, dans *Documents Néo-Calédoniens*, [sic] Paris, Institut d’Ethnologie, 1932, pp. 35-45 (Dousset-Leenhardt 111).

This footnote is of interest because of the use of the word “*transcrivant*” [transcribing] in [Cf. M. Leenhardt transcribing Varho : *Virhenô ne neduaêri xe Nevu* (Story of the Grandfather and Grandson of Nêvu), in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, Paris, Institut d’Ethnologie, 1932, pp. 35-45], which implies that Leenhardt transcribed the *virhenô* as dictated to him by Varho, rather than that Varho wrote it down himself. This runs counter to the method of production of the other texts of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, in which Leenhardt and the *transcripteurs* are, to use James Clifford’s words, “co-authors of the ethnographic text” (138).

³⁶⁹ Who was originally from Aumu (Amon-Kasiori at Kouaoua) (Guiart, 1987: 173)

³⁷⁰ These were “*Le Léopard de Ourouro*”, “*Le Chef de Soouma*”, “*Le Chef de Naou*”, “*Les Deux Vièrges de Wéji*”, “*Le Cadet de Méjéno*”, “*L’Aïeul et le Petit-Fils de Moaé*”, “*La Poule de Oro*”, and “*Les Gardiens de Bétail*”.

³⁷¹ Entitled “*L’Aïeul de Nêvou*”.

Documents néo-caledoniennes [sic] is a group enterprise. Its table of contents gives the names of fifteen different “transcripteurs”. What makes these texts different from most vernacular documents is that here the ethnographer was not present and actively involved in the primary moment of transcription – that process in which the transition from an oral to a literate mode is most abrupt and thus where the risk of distortion is great. Leenhardt’s texts were not, as were Malinowski’s, for example, spelled out in the presence of the inquisitive ethnographer. Instead, they were composed in private by informants using a native tongue they had recently learned to read and write (Clifford Personne and Myth 139-40).

There are two ways to read Dousset-Leenhardt’s use of the verb “transcrire”³⁷² in the footnote. The first is to read it as meaning that while the transcribing was actually undertaken by Varho, it was part of Leenhardt’s book, and could thus be attributed to him according to the rules of academic referencing.

The second reading is that Leenhardt actually did transcribe the version of the *virhenô* as dictated to him by Varho. If for some reason this second reading were true, and Varho, unlike the other *transcripteurs*, did not actually write the *virhenô* down himself, the question of why arises. As a *nata* trained at Do Neva, he would have learned to read and write in Ajië, and six letters from “Varho Méwiméae”, dating from 1920-1928 and held in Box Number 12J-37 at the *Service des Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, would seem to attest to Varho’s literacy. If for some reason he were unwilling or unable to write, this fact may explain why Leenhardt would have transcribed his story, and perhaps also why Sisille wrote. Sisille may have been recording her own stories, she may also have been transcribing for her husband, and if the latter were the case, the question arises as to why Varho was not writing for himself – the context in which both Sisille and Varho produced their texts is a subject for future inquiry.

As was typical of Leenhardt’s translation method, Sisille’s cahier features notes in red pen in the margins and text, in the handwriting of Maurice Leenhardt, clarifying spelling. For example, where she uses the letters “ou” he corrects with “ù”, or occasionally Leenhardt adds a translation into French of an Ajië word, possibly to clarify meaning after discussion with Sisille or another Ajië speaker. The (re)writing process would have most likely been the same as that which produced Bwêëyöou Efiñiyi’s *cahiers* and the neat, regular handwriting would

³⁷² [to transcribe]

seem to suggest that it was a solitary work involving a high level of concentration, rather than a case of transcribing and taking notes as she was speaking aloud. This cannot be confirmed without more information, such as whether there was a draft copy produced before the story was written down in the *cahier* – further research is required to shed more light on precise modalities of the (re)writing process.

The transformations involved in producing this (re)writing are, once again, the movement from oral to written tradition, and the process of textualisation and its attendant loss of elements of the performative context. There is no mention of the genre in the title as was the case with “Virhenō ne ka to Kone”, and in fact, no title is given in the *cahier*; “Le lézard de Ourouro” is the name given later to the story when it appears in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and there Leenhardt describes it as a modern replica of the legend of “Le maître de Koné”. Whatever the name for the story in Ajië, it has necessarily been transformed by virtue of the fact that it has changed from an oral performance event to a written text, and the elements of performative context that shape the genre are no longer the same. At the level of content, it is not possible to tell whether the content is different from that of the original oral story, as no recording of the oral version exists, nor is it possible in this study to make any comment on the content of the story, as it is entirely written in Ajië.

Just as for the (re)writing made by Bwêëyōuu Efijiyi, for Sisille’s (re)writing “Le Lézard de Ourouro” the cultural and linguistic competence of the (re)writer is evidently beyond question, as she was a speaker of the language and member of the culture from whose oral tradition the story derives. Equally, the criteria for consultation and collaboration with Kanak language speaker experts was fulfilled, in the sense that Sisille was both the (re)writer and the Ajië-speaking expert. The source language is acknowledged as it constitutes the entire (re)writing, and again, there is no description of the performative context, as this would have been seen as self-evident.

The images projected are also positive in their portrayal of Kanak agency, just as with Bwêëyōuu Efijiyi’s writings, with the added dimension of the gender of the writer. This is a very rare text, in that it is written by a woman, and as such represents a positive image of female agency in the Kanak world, presenting an interesting avenue for future research.

4.3³⁷³ TEXT 10: Maurice Leenhardt. *Documents néo-calédoniens*. Paris: Institut d’Ethnologie, 1932.

“VIRHENŌ NE KA TO KONÉ” – BWÊÊYŌUU EŔIJIYI (PP. 3–34) AND “LE LÉZARD DE OUROURO” – SISIL, ÉPOUSE DE VARHO (PP. 54–59).

Two (re)writings of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* travel down separate pathways from New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië and converge in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, a bilingual text that is part of both New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië and in French. “Virhenō ne ka to Koné” by Bwêêyōuu Eŕijiyi and “Le Lézard de Ourouro” by Sisille move out from their respective *cahiers*³⁷⁴ and into Leenhardt’s book, where, along with the (re)writing of Lambert’s “Le Chef de Touho”³⁷⁵ and two other stories that contain lizard protagonists,³⁷⁶ they form the “Cycle du Lézard” that occupies the first 65 pages of the book.

On a typical page of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, the source text and its interlinear translation take up approximately half to two-thirds of the page, while the literary French translation and footnotes take up between a third and a half of the page. This is the case for “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” (3-34) and “Le Lézard de Ourouro” (54-59). It could be said that this foregrounding of the source text in the Kanak language reflects Leenhardt’s view that the vernacular text represented the “truest available source of Melanesian expression” (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 139) and was thus empirical data central to the scientific description of Kanak culture through oral literature. The presentation of the interlinear translation, in which French syntax is transformed to mirror the structure of the Kanak language, reflects Leenhardt’s approach to translation as a kind of cultural interpenetration, where the Francophone reader of the interlinear translation participates in the “inverse acculturation” in which the European learns from the Melanesian (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 82).

³⁷³ Material in this chapter is drawn from the case-study “The Creative Interpenetration of Cultures: Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932)” that features in my Masters thesis “Translation as Rewriting: Representations of Kanak Oral Literature”.

³⁷⁴ discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the present chapter.

³⁷⁵ See section 3.4 for more details.

³⁷⁶ These are “L’Aïeul de Névou” (pp. 35-45) by Varho, and “Le lézard de Windo” (pp. 46-53) by Sené.

The publication of the collection of vernacular texts can be seen as part of Leenhardt's project of preserving an "endangered expressivity" as a resource for the dynamic process of change in Kanak societies (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 86). Effectively commissioned by the *Institut d'ethnologie* in Paris,³⁷⁷ the book is the result of the collaborative enterprise between the missionary-ethnographer, Maurice Leenhardt, and Kanak pastors (*natas*) who trained at Do Neva, the mission he established at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Ajië-speaking Houaïlou region of the central east coast of the Grande Terre. Leenhardt encouraged the *natas* and also others who had acquired literacy, to transcribe elements of oral tradition that they considered significant, and the writings of fifteen of these *transcripteurs* form the basis of *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

Examination of the (re)writing process highlights the difference between written and oral codes. The texts were transcribed in private (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 140), by individual *transcripteurs* and most likely while they were alone.³⁷⁸ The importance of the audience in oral tradition, coupled with the fact that the *natas* (particularly Bwêÿöuu Eñijiyi) were engaged in ongoing discussions with Leenhardt about Christianity and about their Custom, language and traditions, make it highly likely that they wrote with Leenhardt, and perhaps other European readers, in mind, with an aim to educate them about Ajië culture. If so, the choice of what to include or exclude from their writing would have been influenced by an imagined audience quite different from the usual one, in terms of both cultural competence and of degree of participation in the story's telling.

Traces of the collaborative effort involved in translating the *cahiers* can be seen in those written between 1912 and 1925 by Bwêÿöuu Eñijiyi, where Leenhardt's questions and notes in the margins beside elements of the text that required clarification remain.³⁷⁹ The dialectical process of translation consisted of numerous, lengthy discussions between Leenhardt and the

³⁷⁷ Details in section 3.4.

³⁷⁸ Grounded as they were in oral tradition, it is quite possible that the *transcripteurs* spoke aloud before transcribing, rather than writing in silence, and it is not impossible that they wrote in the presence of others. There would have still been, however, a significant transformation of the performative context in comparison to that of "traditional" oratory.

³⁷⁹ A number of which are held at the *Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* in Noumea, in the *Fonds Leenhardt*.

transcripteurs in order to arrive at a satisfactory understanding and rendering of their meaning in French (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 142).

The passage of the texts from *cahiers* to the published ethnographic work involves a change in genre from private writings in notebooks to a published anthropological text, and a transformation from monolingual texts in Ajië to bilingual presentations of the stories in Ajië and French. There are two French versions: the interlinear, word-for-word translation of the Ajië texts, and Leenhardt's fluent French translations, which use the full range of narrative tenses, conform to good models of French writing, and in this way communicate the aesthetic value of the stories, unconstrained by the need to produce a more literal translation that would strip away the aesthetic dimension. He was able to provide a glimpse of both the both the beauty and the content of the stories by presenting the interlinear translation as well, meaning that the degree of adherence to the source Ajië text can always be verified.

In his (re)writings of both Bwêÿöou Efiÿiyi's and Sisille's versions of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, Leenhardt modified elements of the oral source text such as repetition in order to conform to the poetics of the target culture. A typical example of this can be found at the beginning of "Le Maître de Koné", in the passage that recounts the locations in which the *chef de Koné* placed his traps, the interlinear translation suggests that the French versions should read: "*il en pose jusqu'à Pouembout, il en pose jusqu'aux Gaiacs, il en pose jusqu'à Népoui, il en pose jusqu'à Poya*".³⁸⁰ However, Leenhardt reduces these repeated phrases from the source text in his literary translation, where they become: "*il en pose jusqu'à Pouembout, jusqu'aux Gaiacs, jusqu'à Népoui, jusqu'à Poya*".³⁸¹

Another example of Leenhardt's treatment of repetition, in the production of his fluent French (re)writing of Sisille's story, occurs after the passage that relates the repeated pleas of the younger of the two brothers of Goéwéou for the lizard to come down from his head, to no avail. After the lizard falls asleep and relaxes its grip on the younger brother, he flees and commands the trees on either side of the river to bend down and make a bridge for him to cross so that he can seek shelter with the *chef de Mévégon*. The lizard awakes, and gives

³⁸⁰ [he places them up to Pouembout, he places them up to the Gaiacs, he places them up to Népoui, he places them up to Poya]

³⁸¹ [he places them up to Pouembout, up to the Gaiacs, up to Népoui, up to Poya]

chase, commanding the trees to bend for him too, and he recaptures the younger brother, returning home with him. Again the younger brother makes repeated pleas for the lizard to release him, but Leenhardt translates only the first,

– *Vous, les chefs, dit le cadet, descendez un peu pour que j’aie vous chercher de la nourriture, etc., etc.*³⁸².....³⁸²

Here, rather than repeat the six requests made by the younger brother for the lizard to climb down, Leenhardt uses “*etc., etc.....*” and a footnote which reads “*7. Le même récit recommence, nous le reprenons au moment de la deuxième fuite qui sera dans la direction opposée à la précédente.*”³⁸³ The story begins again at the moment the lizard falls asleep, and the younger brother flees again. In both of the above examples, the notion of repetition is retained, to different degrees, but the texts are modified to a shortened form that is more acceptable in terms of target culture poetics.

Another example of Leenhardt’s transformation of the (re)writings relates to the earthier dimensions or “*mots crus*” found in the stories. Contrary to the poetic conventions of his time, and especially those of missionary texts, the earthier dimensions of the stories are reproduced rather than suppressed, though euphemistic phrases are used from time to time when the source text uses more graphic terminology. An illustration of Leenhardt’s treatment of “*mots crus*” can be seen in the following extract taken from “*Le Maître de Koné*”, where the lizard refuses to get down from the *maître de Koné*’s head to eat its meal,

- *Bah! répondit l’autre, je ne descendrai pas de sa tête, mais je mangerai posé sur elle. Éleve-moi ma nourriture ! Je mangerai assis sur toi.*

*L’homme éleva la nourriture au-dessus de sa tête, et le lézard mangea. Celui-ci remplissait toutes ses fonctions, fiente et urine se répandaient et adhéraient au cou de l’homme (12).*³⁸⁴

³⁸² [Chief, says the younger brother, come down for a little while so that I might find you some food etc., etc.....]

³⁸³ [7. The same story begins again, we will rejoin it at the moment of the second flight will be in the opposite direction to the preceding one.]

³⁸⁴ [–Bah! replied the other, I will not come down from your head, rather, I will eat perched upon it. Pass me up my food! I will eat seated upon you.” The man passed the food up above his head and the lizard ate. It did its business; excrement and urine poured down, sticking to the man’s neck.]

A possible explanation for Leenhardt's use in this passage of the euphemistic expression “*remplissait toutes ses fonctions*”³⁸⁵ instead of “*déféquer*” and “*uriner*”,³⁸⁶ both of which feature in the interlinear translation, may be that he considered the nouns “*fiente et urine*”³⁸⁷ that directly follow the verbs as sufficient to communicate the sense. By choosing to translate the nouns describing the somewhat “earthy” elements literally but the verbs euphemistically, Leenhardt avoided emphasising these elements to a degree that would have perhaps offended early twentieth-century French sensibilities.

Leenhardt fought constantly against the injustices and excesses perpetrated by colonists and the colonial administration, but he did not believe that the colonial project was an evil in itself and in fact felt that the French presence in New Caledonia was potentially beneficial to the indigenous people. Clifford describes Leenhardt's view of the “true and noble goal of colonization, which was the free extension of culture, the establishment of reciprocities leading to progress, democracy, citizenship, and Christianization” and his belief in the “civilizing value of the French presence in the Pacific” (*Person and Myth* 196).

Though Leenhardt believed that Kanak culture had an important role to play in the life of Kanak Christians, and attempted to validate and preserve elements of it through translation,³⁸⁸ his views of Kanak culture were, nevertheless, couched in evolutionary terms. He saw Kanak cultures as occupying a position below French culture on the evolutionary ladder and Leenhardt's certainty of the need for Kanak to undergo the process of conversion, of individuation, in order to survive in the new world they found themselves faced with, brings to mind the evolutionary notion of the survival of the fittest which had come to the fore in the European scientific world.³⁸⁹ This is evident in the following passage from his 1953 article on “*Littérature mélanésienne*”:

³⁸⁵ [performed all of its functions] although [did its business] possibly captures the sense better.

³⁸⁶ [defecate] and [urinate]

³⁸⁷ [droppings and urine]

³⁸⁸ Leenhardt saw the role of Protestantism as the preservation of “at least a few of the island's major languages in written form” (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 65).

³⁸⁹ While in New Caledonia Leenhardt kept abreast of the latest intellectual developments by way of letters from his father, an eminent geologist and pastor (Clifford, *Person and Myth* 92).

Et cependant leur culture néolithique est si archaïque [...] qu'ils présentent l'intérêt de fossiles vivants, et que leur littérature orale du coup prend l'intérêt unique d'un document de vieille humanité (qtd in Bogliolo, "De la littérature orale kanak" 149).³⁹⁰

The ideological framework within which Maurice Leenhardt operated, (his belief in the role of colonialism, his strong patriotism, his patriarchal and Social Darwinist view of Kanak culture), belonged to his time but also transcended it. Though he believed Kanak culture to be "primitive" in comparison to French culture, he was also a cultural relativist in a time and place where this was virtually unknown, believing in the equal value and importance of Kanak culture both for Kanak and for Europeans. This belief is illustrated by his grouping of the first five texts of *Documents néo-calédoniens* under the heading "Le Cycle du lézard". The five texts of the Cycle were described by Leenhardt as marking periods of evolution of the lizard totem³⁹¹ (*Documents 2*) and his use of the literary term "cycle" to describe the texts can also be seen as an attempt to endow Kanak oral tradition with the same status as early European oral traditions, bringing to mind as it does other literary cycles, such as the Scandinavian, Arthurian or Charlemagne cycles of European literatures. This works to valorise Kanak oral traditions, which are viewed as possessing an equally important literary heritage. This idea of equal value is reinforced in the polyphonic *Documents néo-calédoniens*, by the presence of both source and target culture voices, and by the fact that it can be argued that the position of the Kanak texts at the top of the page gives them a degree of prominence, and hence importance, hitherto unseen.³⁹²

Documents néo-calédoniens is overlaid with the authoritative presence of the writer's voice. Though much of the information contained in the footnotes, especially the notes and observations on Kanak culture and the information cross referenced in the companion volumes,³⁹³ comes directly from material provided by Kanak experts, and though the

³⁹⁰ [And yet their Neolithic culture is so archaic [...] that they are of interest as living fossils, and thus their oral literature is of unique interest as a document of ancient humanity.]

³⁹¹ In his introduction to the section, Leenhardt notes that the text *Le Lézard de Ourouro* is a modern replica of *Le Maître de Koné*, with changes in the toponyms of the earlier version reflecting the changes in land usage. He cites the use of the name of the mission Do Neva, which had been in existence for less than 30 years, in this version of the story (Leenhardt, *Documents 1*).

³⁹² Other than the occasional text in translation such as those found in Père Lambert's *Moeurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens. 1900. Nouméa*, there was virtually no published Kanak oral literature in existence at the time of *Documents néo-calédoniens*' publication.

³⁹³ Large passages of Bwêÿÿuu Efijiyi's writings were reproduced in their entirety in Leenhardt's *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* and *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou* without explicit

translations are also the result of a collaborative process, the contributions of Leenhardt's collaborators are not directly acknowledged. The *transcripteurs* are acknowledged briefly by name in the table of contents at the end of the book, but no more detail of their contribution is noted. Thus to the non-Ajië speaking reader's experience of the Ajië oral literature and culture presented in *Documents néo-calédoniens* is entirely mediated by Leenhardt's knowledge.

In this sense, *Documents néo-calédoniens* conforms to stereotypical models of ethnography in which the ethnographer speaks as the expert on the culture studied and for the "subject" of ethnographic study. The voices of the "subjects" of study (the *transcripteurs*) are limited to providing the "raw data" (the transcriptions) and although in practice they collaborated to a great degree in the production of the translations, this is not explicitly acknowledged in the text and their names are simply listed in the table of contents at the end of the book next to the stories they transcribed.

The representation of elements of Kanak oral tradition in *Documents néo-calédoniens* could be said to support Richard Jacquemond's hypothesis that translations from a dominated culture into a dominant culture tend to be seen as difficult and inscrutable with the need for specialist interpretation, accomplished by means of extensive critical apparatus (Robinson, *Translation and Empire* 31). The framework in which the texts are presented, with Leenhardt's voice woven through the work, in the fluent French translations, footnotes, introductions and explanatory titles, means that the reader's experience of the oral literature in *Documents néo-calédoniens* is mediated by the "expert" voice of Leenhardt. The notion that the "subjects" need someone to speak for them, that their culture is mysterious and far-removed from that of Europeans, reinforces the "otherness" of Kanak, and in a colonial context, this can contribute to the maintenance of distance between European and Kanak, a distance that may facilitate the perpetuation of injustices.

Documents néo-calédoniens is marked not only by the influences of the dominant European ideology and poetics of the era; evangelism, science and colonialism, but also by Leenhardt's own translation strategies, which anticipated modern socio-cultural approaches to translation

acknowledgement in the text (Aramiou & Euritén 11), though as Gasser (2012) argues, Leenhardt constantly acknowledged the fact that there would have been "nothing without Bwêÿöuu Eÿijiyi".

by more than half a century. Although the authoritative voice of the French missionary-ethnographer is present throughout the book, interpreting and speaking for the Kanak “Other”, this aspect is outweighed by Leenhardt’s creation of a work open to reexamination and reinterpretation in the future. The openness of *Documents néo-calédoniens* derives from the inclusion of source, interlinear and target texts with comprehensive notes, which can be attributed to Leenhardt’s scientific approach, and the importance assigned to the original Kanak texts (the influence of Protestantism can also be detected here).

Leenhardt’s collaborative translation strategy led to the production of rewritings that have been rewritten and reproduced by both non-Kanak and Kanak writers, and to a work that has withstood examination by contemporary Kanak experts. In the issue of the cultural *revue Mwà Vée* dedicated to the centenary of Maurice Leenhardt’s arrival in New Caledonia, Jean Euritén, a specialist in the Ajië language and member of the Bâ *tribu* of the Houaïlou region, gave the following evaluation of Leenhardt’s translations:

Maurice Leenhardt a su traduire non seulement les mots, mais encore l’esprit de la culture en langue et ce travail reste exceptionnel (“Maurice Leenhardt” 37).³⁹⁴

Leenhardt continues to be held in high regard by many in the Kanak world and he is remembered as an advocate and protector of Kanak peoples in extremely difficult times, as well as one of the first Europeans to acknowledge the existence and bear witness to the richness of Kanak culture.³⁹⁵

The representations of Kanak oral traditions and culture in “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné”, “Le Léopard de Ourouro” and *Documents néo-calédoniens* contain a mixture of images, one can detect in them traces of Kanak agency, positive representations of Kanak culture, as well as colonial and ethnographic power relations. However, the impact of the authoritative voice of the missionary-ethnographer is outweighed by Leenhardt’s creation of a work open to reexamination and reinterpretation in the future. *Documents néo-calédoniens* is a work that was exceptional in its time and it is still considered exemplary. It works to valorise Kanak culture and heritage through its transparency and its respect, thus it has the

³⁹⁴ [Maurice Leenhardt knew how to translate not just the words, but also the spirit of the culture in the language and this work remains exceptional.]

³⁹⁵ See also the commentaries of Kavivioro and Gorodé (2002), Houmbouy (2002) and Naepels (2002).

potential to have a positive influence on Kanak identity construction processes. The book also provides the possibility for non-Kanak to encounter and engage with elements of Kanak oral tradition and culture, contributing to the development of understanding between communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie that are necessary if the creation of a sense of collective identity embodied by the notion of the *destin commun* is to take place. This is especially evident in the fact that the texts of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” and “Le Léopard de Ourouro” taken from *Documents néo-calédoniens* can also be read as concrete examples of relationships of mutual respect between communities upon which the idea of the *destin commun* is based, that takes the form of a collaborative enterprise of writing and translation undertaken by Eñijisi, Sisille and Leenhardt approximately 70 years before the signing of the Noumea Agreement.

4.4 TEXT 17: André Barrès. *Le Maître de Koné*. Petite collection mélanésienne. Nouméa: Éditions des Études Mélanésiennes-Commission du Pacifique Sud, 1954.

“LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 1–20).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le léopard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition, the story travels from Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* and into *Le Maître de Koné* by André Barrès, illustrated by Jacques Barrau.³⁹⁶ The book is part of the *Petite collection mélanésienne* published by *Éditions des Études Mélanésiennes* in conjunction with the *Commission du Pacifique Sud* (CPS).

This (re)writing of *Le Maître de Koné* appeared in 1954, the year of Maurice Leenhardt’s death and was produced under the auspices of the *Société d’Études Mélanésiennes* that Leenhardt helped to establish in 1938. The (re)writer, André Barrès, was Inspector of Primary Education at the time of the book’s preparation, and in a review of *Le Maître de Koné*, Patrick O’Reilly writes that Barrès was behind a great number of positive initiatives, and that he should be congratulated for producing *Le Maître de Koné*, in an effort to give “*enfants indigènes*” access to texts concerning the “*folklore*” of their country (O’Reilly, “Compte

³⁹⁶ Also a well-known *ethno-écologiste* who worked with the CPS at the time of the book’s publication.

rendu” 204). The book would have been destined for Kanak primary school students, educated separately from European students at that time.³⁹⁷

The version of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in Barrès’s *Le Maître de Koné* is the text in fluent French of the story “Virhenō ne ka to Koné/Le Maître de Koné” taken from Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*. The French text is reproduced in its entirety, with the only modifications being at the level of organisation, dictated by the change in genre from ethnographic text destined for adult readership to pedagogical text destined for primary school children.

Le Maître de Koné is organised into three sections, and Barrau’s hand-drawn illustrations are scattered throughout the pages. A list of reading comprehension questions and exercises is placed at the end of each section. The exercises involve marking the locations and trajectories that feature in the story onto a map of New Caledonia that is also drawn by the students, as well as drawing characters and items that figure in the story, for example, “2. Dessinez le Maître de Koné tendant une piège”³⁹⁸ and “3. Dessinez une flèche faitière de grande case avec des conques (coquillages) sur la pointe”.³⁹⁹

The language of the French version from *Documents néo-calédoniens* is not changed, hence the use of footnotes explaining more sophisticated or archaic items of vocabulary and expressions, as well as technical terms, such as those related to the traps. The final writing activity (p. 20) invites the student to write down a legend about the Lizard, if they know one. It could be said that this question is evidence that the intended readership for the story is Kanak, since no other option is given for instances where a story about the Lizard is not known. This indicates that the expectation of Barrès is that all students will know a story, more likely the case for Kanak than European students.

The (re)writing *Le Maître de Koné*, is drawn from the Eŕijiyi/Leenhardt (re)writing “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and it benefits from the high degree of linguistic and cultural competence as well as collaboration that went into

³⁹⁷ With the abolition of the *Indigénat* in 1946 came the funding of public schools in the *tribus*, which numbered 55 in 1952; there were approximately double that number of mission schools.

³⁹⁸ [Draw the *Maître de Koné* laying a trap]

³⁹⁹ [Draw a roof-top spire of a great house with conches (shells) on the tip]

creating that particular (re)writing. The cover page of *Le Maître de Koné* features an *Avertissement* that acknowledges first “*le vieux sculpteur de masque Boesoou Eurijisi*”⁴⁰⁰ as the originator of the version of the story, and second, Maurice Leenhardt’s collection, translation and publication of the story in *Documents néo-calédoniens*. Thus from the outset, the origins of the story are recognised, and this respectful encounter between oral and written tradition extends to the presentation and content of the book, which exemplifies the notion of “genuine communication” between equals. This is seen in the map-drawing exercises that feature at the end of each of the three sections, that can be considered as a nod to one of the educational functions of the story in oral tradition, which is to teach these geographical locations.

Unusual for its time,⁴⁰¹ this book effectively places the Kanak story on an equal footing with other French texts through the use of a standard pedagogical format, and through the vivid illustrations (several of which are in colour) by Jacques Barrau that do not present the story as “exotic”, and bear no resemblance to stereotypical imagery of Kanak drawn from nineteenth-century fascination with cannibalism and the noble/ignoble savage. *Le Maître de Koné* is treated as any other story used to develop a pedagogical resource would be, and there is an overriding absence of emphasis on “otherness” (evident in the lack of special explanatory apparatus, or differentiation between culturally-specific and more general notes or questions). All of these factors work to create a positive portrayal of this element of Kanak oral tradition as a valid educational resource.

⁴⁰⁰ [the elder and sculptor of masks, Boesoou Eurijisi]

⁴⁰¹ Compared for example with Baudoux’s presentation of elements of Kanak oral literature in his 1952 publications *Légendes Canaques 1, Les Vieux savaient tout* and *Légendes Canaques 2, Ils avaient vu les hommes blancs*.

4.5 TEXTS 18, 18a-o: Collectif. Documents from Linguistic Survey. Carton 12J-55 “Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958”. Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1958.

INITIAL PARAGRAPH FROM “VIRHENŌ NE KA TO KONE/LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” TRANSLATED INTO 16 KANAK LANGUAGES.

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* takes sixteen separate pathways from New Caledonian written tradition in French and Ajië into New Caledonian written tradition in sixteen different Kanak languages. The story “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” travels out from *Documents néo-calédoniens* and into a collection of papers found in carton 12J-55 *Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958*, which is held at the New Caledonian Territorial Archives in Noumea.

The (re)writings were generated as part of a linguistic survey undertaken by Raymond Leenhardt while he was on a research trip to New Caledonia in 1958 under the auspices of the French national research institution known today as INALCO (*Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales*).⁴⁰² After the death in 1954 of his father Maurice Leenhardt, Raymond Leenhardt, also a *pasteur*, took on the post of lecturer in Houailou (Ajië) at INALCO, and as part of the 1958 mission, recordings, transcriptions and translations were produced in different Kanak languages.

A carton containing documents from this trip, labelled 12J-55 *Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958*, and held at the *Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, contains copies of transcriptions and translations of Chapter II verses 2-5 of the Gospel according to Matthew in sixteen Kanak languages.⁴⁰³ The same carton also contains (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that derive from an initial paragraph of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” given in both French (18) and Ajië (18b) and were translated into each of the following languages; Neku (18d), Mea (18e), Tîrî (18e), Xârâcùù (18c), Xârâgùrè (18f), Drubéa (18g), Paicî (18a), Cèmuhi (18h), Pije (18i), Drehu (18j), Nengone (18k), Arhâ (18l),

⁴⁰² Formerly known as the *École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes*.

⁴⁰³ These are listed in the database of the *Service des Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* as: *nemi, wamoang, moanenbeng, yalasu, Belep, nenema, langue Koumac, langue Bondé, langue Poameï, thuanga (Gomen), Naaka langue proche de Poameï, moaveke, moaké, aveka, aeké, boeto*.

Arhō (18m), ‘Ôrôê (18n), and Sîchëë (18o).⁴⁰⁴ The (re)writings consist of loose-leaf sheets that record the names of the transcribers/translators and the place that the transcription/translation was undertaken. There are also copies of the source text paragraph in French and Ajië. It is not clear whether the same source language text was used in each of the transcriptions and translations, but it is entirely feasible that some of the (re)writers worked from the French extract while others with a level of fluency in Ajië (as a result of its role as a language of evangelisation, or because of connections with the peoples of the Ajië region) may have been more comfortable working from an Ajië source text.

More research into the linguistic survey is needed in order to establish how complete the box’s contents are and whether there are other transcriptions to be found. It may also be possible to uncover the reasons for an apparent division of the 32 languages and dialects mentioned in carton 12J-55 into two sections; half of the texts found are translations of a Bible extract into 16 Kanak languages, while the remaining texts derive from a short extract from “Virhenō no ka to Koné/Le Maître de Koné” and are translated into the remaining 16 Kanak languages. It would also be interesting to establish the reason an extract from “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” was chosen and whether the passage was selected from the beginning of the story for reasons of convenience or because the text contained particular elements of interest.

Further investigation into the conditions under which the linguistic survey took place, and the sequence of events leading to the production of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* would potentially bring to light information such as whether the recordings were made before or after the texts were produced, and whether the source texts (in French and Ajië) were distributed before Raymond Leenhardt travelled to the areas in which the recordings were made. The identities of those involved in producing the (re)writings are recorded, along with their place of residence; however, details of the process involved in the production of the texts remain unclear.

⁴⁰⁴ The names of the languages listed here follow the spellings set out in the Lacito-CNRS map “*Aires Coutumières et Langues de Nouvelle-Calédonie*” (2011) see Appendix II (p. 390). The spellings used in the documents found in *Carton 12J-55 Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958* in the Territorial Archives are as follows: neku, ciri, anesu, araguré, dubéa, paicî, camuki, pije, mea, de’u, langue Maré, ajié, arha, aro, boewe, sirhè.

Raymond Leenhardt spoke Ajië fluently, had a longstanding relationship with the country of his birth, and was included in his late father's network of relationships in the Kanak world, in particular with the Kanak experts who worked with him as *informateurs*. For these reasons, it is likely that the (re)writing process echoed that of Maurice Leenhardt's with respect to the collaborative approach to translation, and to the notion of consultation with Kanak experts. A name that appears on more than one of the (re)writings is that of Auguste Wabéalo, an eminent *pasteur* and collaborator with Maurice Leenhardt and later Jean Guiart,⁴⁰⁵ and this would seem to support the notion that Raymond Leenhardt worked in a collaborative fashion following his father's example. The degree of transformation undergone by the Eñijiyi/Leenhardt version in each of the 16 different (re)writings is beyond the scope of this study, and falls within the domain of expertise of those with significant competence in French, Ajië and the other languages involved.

The encounter between oral and written traditions that produced the sixteen (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* sees the original text acknowledged in the transcriptions. The only information pertaining to the performative context is the date and location of the recordings and/or (re)writings, and the name of the person speaking. These (re)writings serve to emphasise the linguistic diversity present in New Caledonia, and by using a text of Kanak origin for an empirical linguistic study, portrays this element of Kanak oral tradition in a positive light, in the sense that it treated as a reliable source of information and a resource for scientific enquiry.

4.6 TEXT 11: K. J. (Jim) Hollyman. “The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia” in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 71.3 (1962): 310–27.

“LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” AND “LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (P. 310).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* sees the story move out from two different (re)writings, from New Caledonian written tradition in French, Ajië and Nyelâyû into written tradition in

⁴⁰⁵ Auguste Wabéalo also assisted Jean Guiart in the production of the French text of the (re)writing of “*Téâ Kanaké*” that appeared in *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* (1957) and in his doctoral thesis published as *Structure de la Chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud* (1963).

English. The two different versions of the story are “Le chef de Touho” found in Lambert’s *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900) and “Le Maître de Koné” from Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932). They are both (re)written into K. J. Hollyman’s 1962 article, “The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia” published in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*.

Participating as it does in two of the pathway networks that are part of the corpus assembled in this study, Hollyman’s article figures in both this chapter (which examines the pathway network originating in Ajië oral tradition) and in Chapter 3 (which examines the pathway network originating in Nyelâyu oral tradition). The full discussion of the (re)writing process, product and results, as well as the images projected by the article, is found in Chapter 3, section 3.5.

4.7 TEXT 19: Jean Guiart. “Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale” in *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances*. Paris: Éditions ORSTOM, 1981.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ”

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* appears to begin and end within New Caledonian written tradition in French. There is a reference in Louis-José Barbançon’s *La Terre du Lézard*⁴⁰⁶ to a brief précis of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* that can be found in the French anthropologist Jean Guiart’s contribution to the 1981 ORSTOM *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances*. The Atlas was commissioned by ORSTOM,⁴⁰⁷ an organisation responsible for “scientific research in the service of development” as stated in the first line of the *Préface*,⁴⁰⁸ and it consists of a series of 53 maps accompanied by detailed

⁴⁰⁶ see section 4.11 of this chapter for discussion of Barbançon’s book.

⁴⁰⁷ *Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-mer* [Overseas Office of Scientific and Technical Research]

⁴⁰⁸ The *Préface* cites the support of the “highest political and administrative authorities in the Territory” and in particular “the *Vice-Recteur* of the *Académie de Nouméa*, the Director of the Mines and Geological Service, The Heads of the Topographic Service, and of the Statistics Service, the Surgeon-General, the Director of the Health and Public Hygiene Service, the President and General Secretary of the Noumea Chamber of Commerce, the

commentaries from experts covering such diverse areas as geography, geology, flora, population origins, settlement, linguistic situation, rural settlement patterns and land usage, economy, infrastructure, social services and urbanisation.

The (re)writing of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* appears at the end of section “B – Types de réseaux”⁴⁰⁹ of part “II – La dynamique des réseaux d’alliances, fondement de la maîtrise de l’espace”⁴¹⁰ of “Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale”,⁴¹¹ Guiart’s commentary, written during his tenure at the *Musée de l’Homme*, was written to accompany map 18 (*Planche 18*). The single-sentence (re)writing is used to illustrate the existence of a “*Cidopwaan*” social network covering the Grande Terre, in addition to the *Xetriwaan* network based in Lifou, and in opposition to another network, extending from the south to the centre-north of the Grande Terre, of clans who identify with the thunder,

*Le récit, rapporté par Leenhardt, du “maître de Koné” qui est un Cidopwaan, faisant le tour de l’île pour trouver un protecteur efficace contre un lézard vindicatif pris dans un piège qu’il avait posé entre Bourail et Houaïlou, et ne rencontrant en fin de compte que le chef Venarui maître de l’entrée du pays sous-marin des morts à la Roche-Percée (Bourail), pour le tirer de là, est une tentative de description globale de la société mélanésienne de la Grande-Terre (n.p.).*⁴¹²

The linguistic and cultural competence of Guiart as (re)writer of Maurice Leenhardt’s version of *Le Chef et le lézard* in the ORSTOM *Atlas...* is significant given his long presence in New Caledonia, having arrived to undertake his first research there in 1948. Guiart describes his contribution to *Planche 18* of the *Atlas...* as “representing the synthesis of thirty-five years of work in the field in New Caledonia” (“Jean Guiart - Bibliographie” 42). At the time of the text’s writing in 1981, Guiart had been living and working in New Caledonia as an anthropologist for almost 40 years, had traversed the country many times in the course of his

Director of Civil Aviation, the Director of the Buildings and Loans Society (*Société Immobilière et de Crédit*) of New Caledonia, and the Head of the Legislation and Studies Service”.

⁴⁰⁹ [“Network types”]

⁴¹⁰ [“The dynamics of the networks of alliances, basis for the control of space”]

⁴¹¹ [“Indigenous clans : the pre-colonial situation”]

⁴¹² [The story, reported by Leenhardt, of the “*maître de Koné*” going around the island in search of an able protector to protect him from a vindictive lizard caught in a trap that he had laid between Bourail and Houaïlou, and in the end only meeting as his rescuer the chief Venarui, *maître* of the entrance to the undersea land of the dead at La Roche-Percée (Bourail), is an attempt at a global description of the Melanesian society of the Grande Terre].

research, and had been introduced into the network of Kanak experts established by Maurice Leenhardt, as well as forging his own connections.

In his (re)writing, the story of “Le Maître de Koné” has been significantly transformed. It has been abridged, removed from its context as part of a collection of Kanak oral literature, the *narrateur* has been omitted from the discussion, and the original bilingual presentation of the story has been reduced to a monolingual précis. Guiart’s (re)writing of the story appears to serve a similar purpose to the précis of “Le Maître de Koné” that features in the 1987 article discussed in the next section (4.8) of this chapter. It has been gathered as evidence to support Guiart’s analysis of a dimension of Kanak social organisation. Guiart’s treatment of the element of oral tradition as valid data to be used for his analysis, thus conferring it with authority as a kind of truth, contributes to the creation of a positive image of the tradition from which the story derives. This positive portrayal is, however, counterbalanced by the less than positive image of the culture from which the story derives. Depicted as highly complex,⁴¹³ and, in the words of the scholar of postcolonial translation, Douglas Robinson, “rebarbatively difficult” and requiring an outside “expert” to interpret it (31), the source culture is thus maintained at an orientalisating distance.

4.8 TEXT 20: Jean Guiart. “La Vallée de Houaïlou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée” in *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 85.2 (1987): 157–79.

“TEXTE 4 – LE LÉZARD DE OUROURO” – SISILLE (P. 165) AND “TEXTE 22 – LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” – BWÊËYÖUU EËIJIYI (PP. 174–75).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* originates in New Caledonian written tradition, in Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932). Two versions of the story, BwêËyöuu EËijiyi’s “Virhenō ne ka to Koné” and Sisille’s “Le Lézard de Ourouro” move out from Leenhardt’s book, and into Jean Guiart’s 1987 article, “*La Vallée de Houaïlou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée*”, published in the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*.

⁴¹³ For example, in section “II – La dynamique des réseaux d’alliance, fondement de la maîtrise de l’espace” of his commentary, the first heading is “A – Une société cohérente au décryptage difficile” [A – A coherent society, difficult to decode]

In his article, Guiart revisits and extends Leenhardt's analysis of the social organisation of the Houaïlou Valley, citing the appearance of new documents⁴¹⁴ as the reason, and twenty-two texts of Ajië oral tradition translated into French underpin Guiart's revised analysis. The commission of this article and the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that it contains relate to Guiart's role as an anthropologist, and is a continuation of his earlier work concerning the networks underpinning social organisation throughout the Grande Terre and the islands of New Caledonia.

Another potential factor that may have come into play in Guiart's choice to revisit both Leenhardt's analysis of the social organisation of the Houaïlou Valley and his own work on the subject, particularly that of his 1962 *Structure de la Chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud*, relates to a series of exchanges in academic journals between Guiart and the linguist-anthropologist team of Jean-Claude Rivierre and Alban Bensa. These exchanges may or may not have worked to stimulate Guiart's production on the subject following his contribution to the 1981 *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances* published by ORSTOM, Paris. One of Guiart's texts on social organisation in New Caledonia, entitled "Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale", outlined different itineraries followed by various Kanak clans before the establishment of the French colony. Guiart invited his fellow anthropologist and former student, Alban Bensa, to contribute a map and commentary for the Wélèt, Gara Atü and Goyèta itineraries featured in the publication, and the bibliography acknowledged the work in press that Bensa and Jean-Claude Rivierre, linguist and member of the CNRS, would publish under the title, *Les Chemins de l'alliance. L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (Région de Touho – aire linguistique cèmuhi)* two years later, in 1983.

Les Chemins de l'alliance... is a work in which analyses of social organisation are presented alongside elements of Cèmuhi oral tradition and connections drawn between the analyses and the Cèmuhi stories that appear to support them. Jean Guiart's extremely critical review⁴¹⁵ of the methods utilised by Bensa and Rivierre in the highly respected French anthropological

⁴¹⁴ He writes that in addition to *Documents néo-calédoniens*, (based upon *cahiers* belonging to Leenhardt's *collaborateurs*, most of whom were Melanesian *natas* that had trained with Leenhardt), and the *cahiers* of Boesoou Eurijisi (a significant number of which had been used in the writing of *Notes d'ethnologie*), different documents and texts written by other Melanesians and obtained by either Guiart or from the linguist Jacqueline de La Fontinelle make up the additional material.

⁴¹⁵ Entitled "Ethnologie mélanésienne : questions de méthode" in *L'Homme*, 1984, vol. 24, No 1, pp. 91-99.

journal, *L'Homme* of 1984, along with the Bensa's and Rivierre's response⁴¹⁶ in the same issue of *L'Homme*, appear to mark the beginning of a period of increased production by Guiart of material relating to social organisation, (his academic output in the decade prior to 1984 having been predominantly concerned with questions of ethnographic method, Oceanian art, and diverse topics relating to Vanuatu, where he had undertaken fieldwork since the late 1940s).⁴¹⁷

Guiart subsequently published two articles in the 1984 issue of the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* on the subject of social organisation: “La société traditionnelle des vallées de Bourail, côte ouest de la Nouvelle-Calédonie” (50-61), and “Données ethnologiques comparées, région de Touho, Nouvelle-Calédonie” (81-101), the latter directly comparing his field data with that of Rivierre and Bensa.⁴¹⁸ Then follows the 1987 article in which the two (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* discussed in this section appear, “La Vallée de Houaïlou : une analyse renouvelée”, and in 1992 Guiart published a significantly revised second edition of his 1963 work, *Structure de la Chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud*.

A third contextual element that may or may not have influenced Guiart's decision to write about social organisation, (in particular with respect to the relationships between names, toponyms, clans and lineages), during the period of the 1980s is that this was the highly-charged period of the *Événements*, and establishing the links between people and precise points on the landscape in an authoritative, textual form would have provided a potent tool for Kanak land claims. Guiart's position as an advocate of Kanak rights,⁴¹⁹ along with the activity of his son René Guiart, who was the secretary of the *Comité de revendications des terres de la côte ouest*⁴²⁰ that organised a number of land occupations during the 1980s in the Koné region (Trépiéd, “Politique et relations” 73), make it plausible to suggest this historical context may also have contributed to his decision to write the article.

⁴¹⁶ Entitled “Jean Guiart et l'ethnologie” in *L'Homme*, 1984, vol. 24, No 1, pp. 101-105.

⁴¹⁷ See the “Jean Guiart – Bibliographie” document (p. available on Guiart's website, www.jeanguiard.org, consulted 15 May, 2012).

⁴¹⁸ In the “Jean Guiart – Bibliographie” page of his website, www.jeanguiard.org, he uses the adjective “exhaustive” when describing his presentation of data, while he refers to the presentation of data by Bensa and Rivierre in *Les chemins de l'alliance...* as “more or less complete, depending on the location”.

⁴¹⁹ For which he has written of receiving death threats, and having his house in Noumea burned down.

⁴²⁰ [West Coast Land Claims Committee].

The first (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* to appear in the 1987 “La vallée de Houaïlou...” is Sisille’s version, which features on page 165 under the heading “Texte 4 – Le Lézard de Ourouro” and which Guiart introduces as “*donné par Sisil, épouse du Pasteur Varho.*”⁴²¹ The complete entry for this text is only two paragraphs long. It consists of a short, single-paragraph précis of the story, in which Guiart writes that Sisille’s text gives an account of a Gwêwèu man, a Nejë settled today at Neweo, who finds himself the victim of a lizard he has trapped, as in the more well-known story “Le Maître de Koné”. In revenge, the lizard clings to the shoulder of the man, and he is only able to rid himself of it with the help of a Napweawe from Poro.

The second paragraph of Guiart’s text consists of a description of the geographical location of “Ururo”, (which Guiart states is located half-way between Gwêrû and Neawowa, on the left bank of the river and in the former “*domaine Moisson*”) and a comment that the Napweawe of the story, no longer present locally, probably refers to a group in Poindimié, surmising that these may have been the maternal uncles of the Gwêwèu, but that the story finishes without resolving this point.

Guiart’s (re)writing of “Le Lézard de Ourouro” is focused on the names that relate to people, places, lineages and clans, since these serve as data for his analysis of the social organisation of the region, and he has transformed the story by distilling it down to its essential elements and retaining the names and toponyms involved. He acknowledges the source text with a footnote giving the page reference for its location in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and adds another footnote for the cited version of “Le Maître de Koné” that derives from the same source.

The second (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* to appear in the article is Bwêêyöuu Eñijiyi’s version, and it is the last Kanak text presented in the article, featuring on page 174. Guiart introduces the text as “*Récit de Bwesou Eurijisi*”⁴²² and only the French title is given – “Texte 22 – Le Maître de Koné”, Eñijiyi’s “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” is not mentioned. Guiart’s analysis of “Le Maître de Koné” is longer than that of Sisille’s text, covering a full page. A

⁴²¹ [given by Sisil, wife of Pastor Varho].

⁴²² [Bwêêyöuu Eñijiyi’s story]

footnote gives the page reference of the source text from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and he describes it as being the first text presented by Leenhardt in the “*Cycle du lézard*” as well as the version that Leenhardt considered to be the oldest of the cycle.

Guiart then provides a précis of the story – the *maître de Koné* lays his traps moving in a southerly direction and captures the lizard that belongs at Bweghawe at the last trap. The lizard demands to be released, then leaps onto the man’s shoulder when freed from the trap, refusing to get down until night time when it falls asleep, allowing *le maître de Koné* to escape. He flees but cannot find refuge at Voh, Goa neva, Oubatche, Wayèm, Hienghène, Touho, Amoa, Tchamba, Ponérihouen, Moneo, Kouaoua, Canala, Thio, Boulouparis, La Foa or Moindou. When he finally reaches Pucangge, the chief Venarui, designated by Guiart as the *maître du lieu* of the place where the dead used to pass through to reach their undersea home, explains to the *maître de Koné* the origins of the lizard. At this point, Guiart quotes, directly from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (28-29), the passage explaining the arrival of the lizard at Bweghawe with one of the two sisters of Rhëmëu who brought with them the lizard-stones that were also yam-stones. The final line of Guiart’s summary is “*Et le Venarui crachotte les herbes adéquates en direction du lézard qui s’efface et disparaît.*”⁴²³

The story of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* is transformed in several ways. The most obvious transformation is Guiart’s summary of the story, reducing it to one page of text, when it occupies approximately one quarter of the 31 pages of Leenhardt’s French-language version.⁴²⁴ In the process of summarising, Guiart has distilled the story down to its essence, retaining the underlying elements of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption, with an emphasis on flight-redemption stages, whose place names are of central importance to his analysis. Regarding these place names, Guiart modifies Leenhardt’s spelling for a number of words; where Leenhardt wrote “Boéxawé”, “Warama”, “Rhéméou”, “Ouaïème”, “Monéo”, “Bouloupari”, “Lafoa” and “Pousangué”, Guiart has used “Bweghawe”, “Warawa”, “Rhëmëu”, “Wayèm”, “Moneo”, “Boulouparis”, “La Foa” and “Pucangge”. In a footnote on the first page of the article, Guiart writes that he has conserved

⁴²³ [And the Venarui spits the necessary herbs in the direction of the lizard, who fades and disappears]

⁴²⁴ Which equates to approximately eight full pages of text, given the page layout in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, which features Ajië text, interlinear translation and French text, each occupying approximately one-third of the page.

Leenhardt's spelling in citations (such as in the titles of the texts quoted). He adds that the e with the diacritic "–" above it has been replaced by "ö [sic]" because of software constraints preventing other options, and that he has replaced the "x" with "gh", a transliteration "more generally understood, in order to avoid confusion for the French reader" (157). However, the direct quotation from Leenhardt's text taken from pp. 28-29, beginning "*Le lézard qui t'a frappé est d'ici...*" also includes spelling modifications, in the words "Rhëmëu", "Bweghawe" and "Bwëara".

Another transformation results from explanatory material added by Guiart that was not present in the original French text of *Documents néo-calédoniens*. Where the *maître de Koné* simply arrives at "*la tête du pays*"⁴²⁵ in Leenhardt's text, in Guiart's text, he reaches "*Goa néva (la tête du pays = Boat Pass, aujourd'hui, à la pointe de la presqu'île de Poum et d'Arama)*".⁴²⁶ He also introduces into the story the name of the *chef* who frees the *maître de Koné* from the lizard, Venarui. In Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi's version, the *chef* is referred to as "*le maître de Pousangué*", "*le Pousangué*", the more specific name of Venarui is not employed. Guiart provides more ethnographic detail regarding "*Pucangge*", noting that Venarui is the *maître du lieu* of this place from which the dead set off to reach their underground resting place.

The two stories have been transformed from (re)writings included in a collection of transcribed and translated anthropological "documents", to elements integrated into an academic article in a French anthropological journal and used to support the arguments proposed. The literary dimension of the stories is almost completely ignored, they are described as "*textes*" and no mention is made of their genres (and no mention is made of the term "*virhenō*" which is the first word in Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi's title).

As discussed in the previous section, the linguistic and cultural competence of Guiart as (re)writer of Sisille's and Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi's versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* in this article is significant. It is highly unlikely that Guiart engaged in consultation or collaboration with Kanak experts in order to summarise Sisille's and Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi's versions of *Le Chef et*

⁴²⁵ [the head of the land]

⁴²⁶ [Goa néva (the head of the land = Boat Pass today, at the tip of the Poum and Arama peninsula)]

le lézard, most likely because the method used to produce the original texts would have been considered sufficient in terms of the degree of consultation and collaboration that produced them. It is also possible that Guiart would have seen his interpretation in the article of the “raw data” (the stories) as moving it beyond its original context and into a new domain, that of anthropological analysis, hence the absence of a need for collaboration or verification.

The source texts are clearly and respectfully acknowledged, as well as those who provided them. However, the literary and aesthetic dimensions of the stories are not mentioned in this (re)writing, and this is a function of their role in the article, which is to support the analysis of the social organisation of the Houaïlou Valley advanced by Guiart. The genre of the text, an academic article in an anthropological journal, and the writer’s perspective as an anthropological researcher, have a bearing on the portrayal of the role of Kanak in the (re)writing process. They become background figures whose contribution is limited to that of providers of the raw data, whereas Leenhardt, Guiart and to a lesser extent, Jacqueline de La Fontinelle, are presented as the interpreters of the information contained within the texts. This article can be seen to perpetuate the notion that there is a need for an expert (the anthropologist) to interpret a highly complex and complicated situation regarding the interrelationships between the clans of the Houaïlou Valley for his readership, and thus there is a sort of hierarchy set up between Guiart, and those whose culture he is studying.

The (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in Guiart’s “La Vallée de Houaïlou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée” can be said to project both positive and negative images that might be taken up in processes of identity construction for Kanak. From one point of view, by writing about the social organisation of the peoples of the Houaïlou Valley and acknowledging those who have provided the texts, as well as the importance of the texts as authoritative, in the sense that they are field data on which analyses can be based, Guiart is making a positive contribution to images of Kanak oral traditions and culture. From another perspective, the article appears to be overlaid with a sense of the need for outside experts (or at least, analytical tools with origins external to the cultures from which the stories derive) to interpret and analyse the relationships between the clans of the valley. Though Guiart’s personal position is without doubt one of respect towards the people whose culture he studies, it is possible for a readership unaware of this fact to see in this article only the portrayal of Kanak as participating as informants rather than experts, hence the article can be interpreted as projecting mixed images of Kanak oral traditions, culture and agency.

4.9 TEXT 21: Sylvain Aramiou & Jean Euritein. *Gô vââ mêtê a'jië. Mêtêa' i Dô Kâmô 5, Section des Langues Vernaculaires, Collection Bwêyê (Allée Centrale). Noumea: Fédération de l'Enseignement Libre Protestant, 1992.*

“32 – RHAI XÈ BWÉXAAWÉ” (PP. 117–19).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië. The story travels from *Documents neo-caledoniens*, where it features in Bwêyöuu Eñijiyi's “Virhenō ne ka to Kone”, into “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé”, one of a collection of texts derived from Ajië oral tradition published in *Gô vââ mêtê a'jië*,⁴²⁷ produced by the *Fédération de l'Enseignement Libre Protestant* (FELP) in 1992. There is no French text in the book, which is written entirely in the Ajië language.

Gô vââ mêtê a'jië consists of 51 stories and the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled, “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé”, is number 32 in the collection and three pages long. It was commissioned by the *Section des langues vernaculaires* of the FELP, and Sylvain Aramiou and Jean Euritein are both respected educators and experts in the Ajië language – they developed a writing system for Ajië as well as publishing the first *Dictionnaire ajië-français* in 2001. *Gô vââ mêtê a'jië* is a monolingual anthology of texts in Ajië designed for use in the classroom. It was published in 1992, the same year that Ajië was decreed a *baccalaureat* subject (along with Drehu, Nengone and Paicî), and clearly the book would have been commissioned as a teaching resource for the Ajië language.

The source text from which the (re)writing is derived was the bilingual Ajië-French “Virhenō na ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” produced by Bwêyöuu Eñijiyi and Maurice Leenhardt, which also featured an interlinear Ajië to French translation. In *Gô vââ mêtê a'jië*, the French translation and the interlinear translation have been stripped away, leaving just the Ajië text. In essence, “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé” is a (re)writing of Bwêyöuu's story, without any of Leenhardt's contribution. For this reason, it is curious that in the note at the end of the

⁴²⁷ [I'm reading Ajië].

(re)writing “*Na tö pèci i Maurice Leenhardt ‘Documents Néo-Calédoniens ’*” (119) that refers to Leenhardt's book as the source of the story, Bwêâyöuu Efiijiyi's name is not mentioned. This may well be because it is a widely known text and that it was thought to be common knowledge that it was first written down by Bwêâyöuu Efiijiyi. Euritein and Aramiou were certainly aware of the importance of Efiijiyi's writings – they published the first series of his *Cahiers* in 2002.⁴²⁸

The first transformation of the source text from *Documents néo-calédoniens* involves the title of the (re)writing. In brackets under the new title, “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé”, is Bwêâyöuu's original title, “Virhenō ne ka to Koné”. The use of the title “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé”, which can be translated as “the lizard of Bwéxaawé” can be seen as a change in the emphasis of the story – where “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé” focuses on the lizard and where it is from, as well as the home of the *chef* who frees the *maître de Koné*, Bwêâyöuu's title focuses on the transgressor, “Le Maître de Koné”.⁴²⁹ This shift in emphasis to the lizard is echoed in the illustration that accompanies the text: in the foreground of the pen and ink drawing is a large lizard, which closely resembles a Komodo dragon, and in the distance is the image of the *maître de Koné* seen from behind as he flees from the lizard – the caption reads “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé” [the lizard of Bwéxaawé].

The content of Bwêâyöuu Efiijiyi's “Virhenō ne ka to Koné” as it appears in *Documents néo-calédoniens* has also been modified significantly in this (re)writing. The first paragraph of “Rhai xè Bwéxaawé” appears to consist of a précis in Ajië of the story, up until the point where the *maître de Koné* arrives at the Bay of Puyâgé, the bay of Bwéxaawé, which is the place where he meets the *maître du lieu* capable of calling off the lizard. Thus, the rather longer version in *Documents néo-calédoniens* has been considerably abridged. The story picks up from page 28 of the “Virhenō ne ka to Koné” version, and continues until the end.

Another area in which transformation has occurred is the use of spelling conventions for Ajië. The FELP have developed an alternative system of notation to that of Leenhardt, and this has

⁴²⁸ See section 4.18 of the present chapter for discussion of this book.

⁴²⁹ “*Virhenō ne ka to Koné*” [Story of he who resides at Koné].

been employed in the (re)writing. Despite the different notation, it is still possible to see the correspondences between the two texts, and while a close comparison of the Ajië texts is beyond the scope of this study, two interesting points of difference can be found between the *Documents néo-calédoniens* version and the FELP (re)writing. The first is that “*Ei*”,⁴³⁰ an interjection from the audience in support of the orator, has been included in Bwêÿöuu’s text (Leenhardt 28), perhaps indicating that during the transcription process he spoke aloud, or wished to evoke this element of the performative context. In the FELP version, this interjection has been removed. A second element included in the *Documents néo-calédoniens* version but missing from the FELP (re)writing is found in the final line of the story. In the 1932 text, the sentence reads, “*Boro curu re vuru tai xina ree*” and there is a footnote (34) explaining that “*vuru tai*” appears to be an archaic expression preserved in the legend. The corresponding sentence in the FELP (re)writing reads, “*Cuûu böfi wê tö-i xina réé*”, and it appears that the “*vuru*” has been omitted. This may have been an editorial decision as part of the presentation of a modern version of the text, both in its spelling and perhaps also content. The target readership of the book is high school students, and a wish to make the text more easily accessible may have influenced the decision not to reproduce the archaism.

The linguistic and cultural competence of Aramiou and Euritein is evident; they are native speakers and educators in their own language, steeped in their own culture, and possess the expertise to (re)write Bwêÿöuu Eñijiyi’s “*Virhenō ne ka to Koné*” in a respectful manner. The existence of the source text is acknowledged (although as discussed, Bwêÿöuu Eñijiyi’s name is not mentioned), and in the book it is clear that the stories all derive from oral tradition. The performative context does not appear to have been evoked, perhaps this is due to the fact that those who are capable of reading the stories will also be aware of the context of their production in oral tradition.

The images of Kanak identity projected by this book, and by the collection as a whole, are positive: the collection is a source of affirmation of the range and diversity of Ajië oral tradition, inasmuch as students are able to see there are 51 texts present in the collection. The fact that the story has been abridged suggests to first time readers of the story that there is

⁴³⁰ [thank you]

more to be discovered. Overall there is a positive presentation - there is no French translation or commentary; the Ajië texts are portrayed as having value in their own right, worth publishing, and not needing to be explained or complemented by French text. As one of the rare Kanak language only books at the time, *Gô vââ mêrê a'jië* affirms the value and the relevance of the elements of Ajië oral tradition that it contains.

4.10 TEXT 22: Louis-José Barbançon. *Bourail : entre mer et montagne. Capitale rurale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Canada: Mairie de Bourail-Offset 5 Édition, 1992.*

(RE)WRITING OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (P. 16).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* is located in New Caledonian written tradition. The story moves out from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932) in the form of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” and into the 1992 promotional brochure *Bourail. Entre Mer et Montagne. Capitale rurale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, published by the Mairie de Bourail,⁴³¹ with a foreword written by the Mayor of Bourail, Taieb (Jean-Paul) Aïfa. The 16-page large format (40cm) brochure describing the commune of Bourail, which is situated within the Ajië-Arô linguistic zone in the centre of the Grande Terre, contains 13 photos and an accompanying text written by Louis-José Barbançon, the New Caledonian historian, author and educator, who was also a politician during the turbulent period of the 1980s.⁴³² The publication uses imagery from past and present to highlight and explain the past as it contributes to the present identity of Bourail and of the activities of the commune. In his introductory text, Aïfa expresses his wish for the readership, “*Puissent-ils retrouver dans ces photos et textes, l’héritage du passé et les valeurs auxquelles nous nous sommes nous-mêmes référés pour accomplir, tous ensemble, notre travail*” (1).⁴³³

⁴³¹ As a guide, this is approximately equivalent to the “Bourail District Council” in terms of New Zealand local government organisation.

⁴³² Barbançon belonged to the autonomist and centrist *Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne* (FNSC) that sought to open the way for a new dialogue between Kanak and New Caledonians of European origin (Bihan, n. p.), and participated in the *Conseil du gouvernement* from 1979 to 1984.

⁴³³ [May they find in these photos and words the heritage of the past and the values to which we ourselves referred in order to accomplish together our task]

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is found on the very last page of the brochure, under the heading "*La Symbolique de la Roche-Percée*".⁴³⁴ Barbançon sets the context for the location of the final part of the story and provides a résumé of "Le Maître de Koné" in a few lines,

On raconte que les chefs, une fois morts, se rendent au sommet de la falaise et se jettent dans le vide, pour pénétrer dans le paradis kanak. C'est également ici que se termine l'un des mythes de genèse les plus importants de la tradition kanake, celui du lézard de Bwexawe encore appelé: mythe du chef de Koné. Ce dernier a capturé dans ses filets, à Bwexawé, un homme-lézard qui depuis le poursuit tout autour de la Grande Terre. Personne n'ose lui donner refuge, seul Venarui, le chef de la Roche-Percée le recueille et renvoie le lézard : "Ne poursuis pas cet homme, " lui dit-il, "parce que je l'aime." Épuisé par cette chasse, l'homme de Koné reprend vie à Puyagé, la baie où il cesse d'être ; "une chose morte, dans la gueule du lézard" (16).⁴³⁵

Although there is no direct acknowledgement of the source of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* as being Leenhardt's text, Barbançon's use of the expression "*une chose morte, dans la gueule du lézard*" (which strongly echoes Leenhardt's text in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, "*une matière morte dans la bouche du lézard de Bwéxawé*" (33)),⁴³⁶ along with the fact that in his 1995 work, *La Terre du lézard*, Barbançon acknowledges and again provides a résumé of the text, "Le Maître de Koné", makes it clear that the source text came from *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

In addition to the obvious transformation involved in reducing the Bwêëyöou Efïjiyi/Maurice Leenhardt version of *Le Chef et le lézard* from a bilingual text covering 31 pages to a single paragraph, several other changes have been wrought by Barbançon. As with Jean Guiart's article, "La Vallée de Houaïlou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée", discussed in section 4.8 of the present chapter, Barbançon has added the name of Venarui, whereas in

⁴³⁴ [The symbolism of *La Roche Percée*]

⁴³⁵ [It is said that the chiefs, once they were dead, took themselves to the top of the cliff and threw themselves into the void, in order to enter Kanak paradise. It is also here that the ending takes place of one of the most important origin myths of Kanak tradition, that of the lizard of Bwexawe, also called: the myth of the *Chef de Koné*. The latter has captured in his nets, at Bwexawé, a lizard-man who then chases him all around the Grande Terre. No-one dares give him refuge, only Venarui, the *chef de la Roche-Percée*, takes him in and sends the lizard away : "*Do not pursue this man,*" he says to it, "*because I care for him.*" Exhausted by the hunt, the man from Koné comes back to life at Puyagé, the bay where he ceases to be ; "*a dead thing, in the mouth of the lizard*"]

⁴³⁶ [dead matter in the mouth of the lizard of Boéxawé]

Documents néo-calédoniens, the *chef* was referred to only as “*le maître de Pousangué*”, or “*le Pousangué*”. There is also an evident change in genre from *virhenô* recorded as an anthropological document as part of a collection of elements of oral tradition predominantly from the Ajië-speaking region, to a paragraph in a commentary that is part of a promotional/information brochure about the commune of Bourail, published by a local government organisation.

Perhaps the most interesting transformation of the story can be seen in the analogy Barbançon draws in the final paragraph of his commentary, directly after his précis of “Le Maître de Koné”, between the story of the *maître de Kone* and the history of New Caledonia. For Barbançon, the *chef de Koné* committed a crime, a transgression, just as the convicts who were sent to the penal colony had done. He compares the lizard that crouches on the man's shoulders and takes over his personality and thoughts, changing his appearance, with the Prison Administration, which shaved the heads and beards of the prisoners, gave them uniforms, straw hats and numbers, and forbade them to think. Using the image employed by Bwêÿouu Efijiyi in the word “*ébolu*”⁴³⁷ and translated as “*matière morte*”⁴³⁸ in the mouth of the lizard, Barbançon extends the identity of the lizard to that of the “Lizard-Administration”, “Lizard-Society”, “Lizard-Contempt”, that pursued the convicts. For them, just as for the *chef de Koné*, life began again after they were released by the Lizard, and he ends his commentary by asking whether it is appreciated how much the Bourail of today owes to those who began their lives again anew there after their time had been served (16).⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ Leenhardt, in footnote 42, discusses the meaning of the term “*ébolu*” as an object revealed by the olfactory sense and then destroyed, by being consumed. He also notes that the term is not in everyday usage, and is rarely encountered, except in legends. (Leenhardt, *Documents*, 25).

⁴³⁸ [dead thing]

⁴³⁹ “*Quel rapprochement fascinant entre le mythe Kanak et l'Histoire! Le chef de Koné n'a-t-il pas lui aussi, en chassant sur des terres situées au-delà de son aire coutumière, commis un acte hors la loi? Et le lézard en s'accrochant sur ses épaules ne veut-il pas, s'introduire dans l'Homme, prendre sa personnalité, ses pensées, lui faire une nouvelle peau? N'étaient ce pas les mêmes motivations qui faisaient agir l'Administration Pénitentiaire quand elle rasait les crânes et les barbes, faisait revêtir des uniformes, des chapeaux de paille, attribuait des matricules, interdisait de penser. Qu'étaient-ils, tous ces exclus, sinon des “choses mortes” dans la gueule du Lézard Administration, Lézard Société, Lézard Mépris : pour eux aussi, c'est ici que tout a recommencé. Et combien, dont la France s'est débarrassée dans les vallées de Nessadiou, de Guaro, de Boghen ; combien dont la vie devait se terminer à Bourail et qui ont pu créer une vie nouvelle ? Savons nous vraiment ce que Bourail d'aujourd'hui doit à ces lieux privilégiés de la tradition kanake ?*”

In this analogy, Barbançon draws attention to what is for him a “*rapprochement fascinant*”, a fascinating connection between “*le mythe Kanak*” and “*Histoire*”,⁴⁴⁰ between the history of the convicts and the Kanak history of the region as contained within oral tradition, and also to the connections of both groups to the same land and to Bourail. Here he prefigures his later transformation of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* in *La Terre du lézard* (1995),⁴⁴¹ in which he uses the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* as a way of legitimising the connection of the convicts, who were “*victimes de l’Histoire*”, to the land of the Kanak people.

Barbançon makes no claim to mastering a Kanak language: he works from French texts and his knowledge of Kanak culture is gained through the French language, *lingua franca* of the islands. His cultural competence, in terms of his awareness of and familiarity with elements of Kanak culture and traditions has been acquired over the course of his life in New Caledonia. Barbançon was born and raised there and thus has had a lifelong contact with Kanak people and culture through his youth at school and in his neighbourhood, or later as a high school history teacher, and through his participation in the government of which Jean-Marie Tjibaou was elected vice-president during the 1980s.

Barbançon links the convicts (and ex-convicts) to the landscape through his use of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, and this serves to legitimise their connection to the land, through links made between the Kanak map and that drawn by History. His use of *Le Chef et le lézard* is a sign that he respects the legitimacy of Kanak oral tradition and acknowledges the deep connection between Kanak and the places mentioned in the story. His (re)writing does not involve collaboration or consultation with Kanak experts, nor is the performative context evoked, rather, he acknowledges that the story belongs to Kanak oral tradition when he introduces his précis, and then focuses on his interpretation of the story as it applies to the convict forebears who helped build Bourail.

By intertwining the stories and histories of the two communities, Barbançon creates the possibility of imagining a shared history that reflects both Kanak and non-Kanak experiences, through their common sense of connection to the same land. In this sense, his (re)writing is an example of genuine communication that does not seek to deny the Kanak point of view,

⁴⁴⁰ [Kanak myth] and [History]

⁴⁴¹ See section 4.11 for a more detailed discussion of this transformation.

but rather advocates for the inclusion of what he might refer to as the Caledonian point of view. By using the Kanak analogy to describe the experience of the victims of history in New Caledonia, he is claiming for it a value, and providing a space in which a *destin commun* identity might be imagined, and thus projecting a positive representation of this element of Kanak history.

4.11 TEXT 25: Louis-José Barbançon. *La Terre du lézard*. Libres Écrits. Noumea: Éditions Île de Lumière, 1995.

(RE)WRITINGS OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 8–10) AND “LE CHEF DE TOUHO” (P.11).

Three pathways of *Le Chef et le lézard*, all located within New Caledonian written tradition in French, lead to the next (re)writing. The first pathway leads from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932) in the form of the “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” as transcribed by Bwêÿyōuu Efiiji and translated by Maurice Leenhardt, the second pathway leads from Père Lambert’s *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900) which contains “Le Chef de Touho” and the third pathway leads from Jean Guiart’s “Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale” in the ORSTOM *Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances* (1981). All three pathways converge in pages 8–12 of *La Terre du lézard*, an essay-memoir published in 1995 by the Caledonian⁴⁴² author, historian, teacher and one-time politician,⁴⁴³ Louis-José Barbançon.

The second of two books⁴⁴⁴ written by Barbançon in the period following the signing of the Matignon Agreements, when the future direction of the country was yet to be mapped out by

⁴⁴² Barbançon, who traces his ancestry back to both free and convict settlers in New Caledonia, refers to himself as a “Calédonien” and an “Oceanian of European descent”, rather than using the term “Caldoche”, which is often employed to refer to New Caledonians of European descent with a family presence in New Caledonia dating back several generations (Bihan n.p.).

⁴⁴³ He was a centrist, anti-independence, pro-autonomy moderate closely involved with the events of the period of the 1980s, and these events, in particular the deaths of Eloi Machoro and Marcel Nonnaro at the hands of the French Special Services in 1985, form a central thread in the book.

⁴⁴⁴ In 1992, Barbançon’s *Le Pays du non-dit*, in which Barbançon published the notes he had taken during the turbulent decade of the 1980s.

the Noumea Accord, *La Terre du lézard*⁴⁴⁵ consists of a series of essays that weave together a commentary on the political and societal difficulties and turbulent events of recent New Caledonian history with a poetic homage to the land and landscape.⁴⁴⁶ The (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that are found in the book are located in the first part of the initial chapter, which begins with echoes of the opening verses of both the book of Genesis and the Gospel according to John, “*Au commencement, il y avait le mythe.*”⁴⁴⁷

The transformations undergone by the story are various. There is a marked change in the presentation between both the text from *Documents néo-calédoniens* and the text from *Mœurs et superstitions...*, as these are both abridged considerably in Barbançon's (re)writing – “Le Maître de Koné” is summarised over three pages (8–10), and the summary of “Le Chef de Touho” consists of one paragraph (11). In the case of Jean Guiart's (re)writing of Leenhardt's “Le Maître de Koné” (11–12), it has been reproduced almost entirely, with the omission of the description of the *maître de Koné* - “*qui est un Cidopwaan*” – being the only alteration in the text's content.⁴⁴⁸

For two of the source texts used for Barbançon's (re)writings, (those of Leenhardt and Lambert), the original language text is presented along with the French translation, while the original Guiart text is French only. Barbançon's (re)writings consist of three separate passages written only in French, and these are woven into the narrative of the first chapter, which ranges from the political to the personal, from commentary to anecdote. Both of the versions of “Le Maître de Koné”, as well as “Le Chef de Touho” are transformed in genre from ethnographic texts to elements of Barbançon's commentary.

The first chapter of Barbançon's book serves to anchor the text firmly in Kanak land – he begins with a description of the history and landscape of Bourail and the surrounding landscape as explained to him by the Kanak elder and his source of information about Kanak oral tradition, whom he refers to as “Le Vieux”. Leenhardt's “Le Maître de Koné” is then introduced as the most famous version of the story of “Le Lézard de Bwéxawé”, and

⁴⁴⁵ [The Lizard's Land].

⁴⁴⁶ In his 1996 review of the book in the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, Jean Guiart describes *La Terre du lézard* as an “*inclassable cri d'amour pour la terre calédonienne*” [unclassifiable cry of love for the Caledonian land] (“Barbançon” 119).

⁴⁴⁷ [In the beginning, there was the myth].

⁴⁴⁸ [who is a Cidopwaan].

presented in a summarised form.⁴⁴⁹ This (re)writing follows the same structure of transgression-punishment-flight-redemption as the Leenhardt text, with several quotations taken directly from his version. Barbançon notes that the flight of the *maître de Koné* around the Grande Terre, which affirmed the identity of the members of alliances between different linguistic areas and preserved geographic knowledge, also recalls the odyssey of Ulysses, pursued by the anger of Poseidon around the Greek area of influence. This works to valorise the element of Ajië oral tradition through its comparison with the classic of Greek tradition.

Lambert's "Le Chef de Touho" is then presented in a single paragraph, with the interpretation of the story as a call for resistance against the new civilisation, religion and morality that arrived with the whites. This is followed by the single-paragraph précis of the story as presented by Jean Guiart in the 1981 ORSTOM *Atlas*⁴⁵⁰ along with Guiart's interpretation of the story as being an attempt to provide a global description of the Melanesian society of the Grande Terre.

Following on from these explanations offered by "*des savants et des ethnologues*",⁴⁵¹ Barbançon presents his poetic vision of the points on the landscape that are recounted in the story, a vision that expresses the depth of the relationship he has with the land, and that is articulated in the following quote taken from the back cover of *La Terre du Lézard*,

*Dans les livres d'école, on continuera d'enseigner aux élèves qu'un contre-amiral a pris possession de cette terre au nom de la France. Auprès du Vieux, sans qu'il ait eu besoin de livres, j'ai appris que c'est cette terre qui a pris possession de moi.*⁴⁵²

Barbançon goes on to apply the story of the flight of the *maître de Koné* to the non-Kanak, Caledonian population, drawing an analogy between the chief's flight around the Grande Terre, chased by the terrifying lizard-man, and the Caledonians running from pillar to post, searching for outside assistance, mainly from Metropolitan France, to resolve the issues connected to who has a legitimate right to be in New Caledonia. For Barbançon, the answer

⁴⁴⁹ The name Venarui is used in the story, Barbançon explains that the name of the *chef de la Roche-Perçée* is mentioned in another of the *Documents néo-caledoniens*, "La Vierge de Nekliaï" (Barbançon 8).

⁴⁵⁰ See section 4.7 of the present chapter for discussion of Guiart's précis.

⁴⁵¹ [learned people and ethnologists]

⁴⁵² [In the schoolbooks, students are still taught that a rear-admiral took possession of this land in the name of France. With the Elder, and without the need for books, I learned that it is this land that has taken possession of me.]

lies with the land, not outside it, and he sees the failure of the Caledonians to engage in meaningful dialogue with Kanak as the reason they are still lost in the wilderness.

This act of appropriation is undertaken by Barbançon in a respectful manner, evident in his positive portrayals of Kanak characters, the acknowledgement of the sources of the stories, and his placement of the (re)writings at the beginning of the book, where they form a kind of founding narrative, with the authority and significance that this implies. The fact that he considered the story important enough to use it to support his argument, and affirms the primacy of Kanak claims to the land of New Caledonia, makes Louis-José Barbançon's (re)writings of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* an example of genuine communication. This is clear in an interview with Hamid Mokaddem in which he explained his point of view,

Without place we are nothing. The unspoken is what comes on top of that. It's firstly the word 'country' and the word 'land' which are important. And that is very Kanak. What I mean is that I have been influenced by my impressions of the Kanak world. You can't spend your time listening to people and then think that there's nothing you can learn from them (Mokaddem, "Words" 45).

The (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are integral to a work that contributes not only a positive portrayal of Kanak identity, society and culture, it also projects, three years before the notion of *destin commun* had been officially articulated in the Noumea Agreement of 1998, a powerful image of how the new community of the *destin commun* might be constituted through dialogue, mutual respect and by drawing on the deep roots of Kanak culture embedded in the landscape.

4.12 TEXT 32: Claudine Jacques. *L'Homme-lézard*. Roman. Nîmes: HB Éditions, 2002.

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* takes two pathways, both of which begin and end in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The first pathway leads from the French text of the bilingual "Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné" in *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), and the second pathway leads from Louis-José Barbançon's *La Terre du lézard* (1995), which

itself contains (re)writings of “Le Maître de Koné” and “Le Chef de Touho”.⁴⁵³ Both pathways converge in *L’Homme-lézard. Roman.*, a novel published in 2002 by the New Caledonian author, Claudine Jacques.⁴⁵⁴

Jacques transposes the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* into a modern context, weaving it into the story of Enok, the talented young sculptor who has travelled to Noumea from his home in the north of the Grande Terre in order to continue his artistic development, only to fall into life on the streets of the city and abandon his art, replacing it with alcohol, drugs and violence. Set in the “squats” or shanty-towns of contemporary Noumea (the events in St Louis place the story in the 1990s), *L’Homme-lézard* traces the story of Enok, his younger sister Mandela, and other marginalized characters from different communities (Kanak, Wallisian, Tahitian, ni-Vanuatu, Caldoche), as the drama surrounding the murder of the abusive father of the teenage girl Nassirah, unfolds.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is identifiable in the quotations from the two (re)writings that lead to Jacques’ book – *Documents néo-calédoniens* and *La Terre du lézard*. These feature at various points in the book, and in the trajectory of Enok, the central character. Fragments of *Le Chef et le lézard* can also be found in the stories of other key characters, in particular, Lewis-Siwel-Tash, the young drug-dealer of mixed Caldoche-ni-Vanuatu heritage, and Nassirah, the young Caledonian girl whose abusive father, Léon Bellimage, has been murdered.

For (re)writings such as Jacques’ novel, and Louis-José Barbançon’s *essai-mémoire*, neither of which arise from an institutional (for example, academic) or external commission, but are the fruit of an individual author’s artistic expression, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of “motivation” than commission when describing the circumstances leading to the (re)writing’s creation. In terms of the model of the (re)writing process that I have developed, the impetus for the production of such books can be said to arise from an interplay between patronage (internally expressed as motivation) and ideological influences.

⁴⁵³ See section 4.11 of this chapter for a discussion of *La Terre du Lézard*.

⁴⁵⁴ Born in France, Jacques has lived in New Caledonia since she was a young teenager, and has “made the land her own through her writing” (Ramsay, *Nights of Storytelling* 324).

Jacques' novel, her second,⁴⁵⁵ is part of a body of work that explores the relationships between different communities in New Caledonia. Raylene Ramsay has described Jacques' stories as "sociological portraits that demonstrate the mixed biological origins of the New Caledonian population"⁴⁵⁶ and has also observed that Jacques' work reflects not only a mixed Noumea, but also a "brousse"⁴⁵⁷ that is already more mixed than it thinks, sharing common dreams and problems, Kanak and "*broussard*" living in close proximity. In particular, her texts explore the possibilities of biological mixing (*métissage*) or cultural mixing (hybridity) as a future for both parts of the country (Ramsay, *Nights of Storytelling* 324).

An insight into Claudine Jacques' motivation for writing *L'Homme-lézard* can be gained from an article entitled "L'Homme-lézard, l'univers des squats"⁴⁵⁸ that appeared in the New Caledonian daily newspaper, *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, on Saturday, 17 August, 2002,

Je me suis servie de tout ce que je vis et j'observe dans les réunions politiques ou au sein des associations de femmes. C'est ma contribution au pays : dire des choses qui nous aident à réfléchir... " précise Claudine Jacques (56).⁴⁵⁹

In addition to a motivation to write that is rooted in a desire to contribute in a positive way to the construction of New Caledonian society, there is also an arguably stronger creative and artistic inspiration to take into account when considering the motivation for writing *L'Homme-lézard*. An obvious influence on the novel is the famous sculpture *L'Homme-lézard* by the renowned sculptor Dick Bone from Lifou and from which the novel takes its title. The sculpture was exhibited in 1994 at the *Première Biennale d'art contemporain* held in Noumea, and was later part of a long-standing exhibition at the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou. The sculptor's vision of the half-man, half-lizard (see Fig. 16 below) has clearly played a role in inspiring Jacques' writing, embodying as it does the terrifying and powerful being that figures throughout her novel. The most direct reference to Bone's work of art

⁴⁵⁵ Her other novels include *Les Cœurs barbelés* (1998), *L'Âge du perroquet-banane* (2003), *Nouméa Mangrove* (2009) and she is also the author of the collections of short stories *Nos silences sont si fragiles* (1996) and *Ce n'est pas la faute de la lune* (1997).

⁴⁵⁶ Raylene Ramsay, "Personal communication" 18 November, 2010.

⁴⁵⁷ [bush], the term *La Brousse* is used to refer to rural New Caledonia.

⁴⁵⁸ [The Lizard-Man, the world of the shantytowns]

⁴⁵⁹ ["I have made use of everything that I experience and observe in the political meetings or within the women's associations. It's my contribution to the country : saying things that help us to reflect..." states Claudine Jacques]

comes in the passage where Mandela's first view of the *homme-lézard* sculpture created by her brother, Enok is described in vivid detail,

Mandela, médusée puis affolée, ne put réprimer un mouvement de peur en découvrant l'homme-lézard. Il semblait vivant, la dévisageait de ses yeux fous, moitié déchirée à figure humaine, l'autre mangée par l'animal. Quelque chose qui tenait au bon sens aurait dû l'empêcher de regarder, et pourtant, son attention, captive, glissa sur la peau glabre de l'homme, courut tout au long des veines apparentes sous les écailles, se fixa sur le dos encore droit de l'homme, l'échine courbée de la bête, de la tête dévoreuse à la queue enroulée autour des jambs nues, puis remonta jusqu'au sexe dressé, tumescent, aux mains griffues de l'homme crispées autour du même cou jusqu'à l'étranglement (96).⁴⁶⁰



Figure 16 - *L'homme-lézard* by Dick Bone, Lifou. Image from *Guide Mwakaa : Les sentiers de la coutume* (2000).

⁴⁶⁰ [Mandela, dumbfounded then thrown into a panic, could not suppress a wave of fear when she discovered the Lizard-Man. He seemed to be alive, staring at her with his mad eyes, one torn half human, the other consumed by the animal. Something that verged on common sense, that spoke of danger and taboo, of invisible forces, should have prevented her from looking, and yet, her attention, captivated, slid over the smooth skin of the man, ran all along the veins visible beneath the scales, fastened itself on the still straight back of the man, the bowed spine of the beast, from the devouring head to the tail wrapped around the naked legs, then moved back up to the tumescent, aroused genitals, to the clawed hands of the man, clenched around that same neck to the point of strangulation.]

L'Homme-lézard can also be interpreted as being the author's response to the message of the title given by Bone to the sculpture "*Isa trotrohnine ju*", a title open to multiple readings, which has been translated into French as "*À chacun de me comprendre*".⁴⁶¹

As well as the striking sculpture in wood, Jacques has woven written versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* into the text of her novel. On the page following the dedication, there are two quotes from well-known (re)writings of the story with the bibliographic information recorded beneath them. The first quote is taken from the beginning of Louis-José Barbançon's *La Terre du lézard*,

*Non, finalement, à tout bien réfléchir au commencement de ce livre, il y a bien le mythe, le Lézard. Louis-José Barbançon, La terre du lézard, Île de Lumière 1995 (9).*⁴⁶²

The second quote is taken from the French text of the bilingual (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, "Le Maître de Koné",

*Mais le chef de Koné dit au lézard : "Messires les Chefs, il serait bon que vous descendiez un instant de ma tête afin que vous puissiez manger, et vous remonterez à votre place quand vous aurez achevé votre repas. – Bah, répondit l'autre, je ne descendrai pas de ta tête, mais je mangerai posé sur elle. Éleve-moi ma nourriture! je mangerai assis sur toi." L'homme éleva sa nourriture au-dessus de sa tête, et le lézard mangea. Celui-ci remplissait toutes ses fonctions, fiente et urine se répandaient et adhéraient au cou de l'homme. Légende Documents néo-calédoniens Maurice Leenhardt, 1932 (9).*⁴⁶³

These intertextual references to other (re)writings of the story, along with the transposition of the structure of "transgression–punishment–flight–redemption" onto the main character, Enok, constitute the main elements of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that feature in Jacques's (re)writing.

Important transformations of the story take place at the level of genre and content. The genre changes from the element of an anthropological collection, an Ajië *virhenô* translated into a

⁴⁶¹ [For each to understand me] is a literal translation of this into English.

⁴⁶² [No, in the end, when all is considered at the beginning of this book, there really is the myth, the Lizard.]

⁴⁶³ [But the *maître de Koné* says to the lizard : it would be well for you to come down for a moment from my head so that you might eat, and climb back up to your place when you have finished your meal. –Bah! replied the other, I will not come down from your head, rather, I will eat perched upon it. Pass me up my food! I will eat seated upon you." The man passed the food up above his head and the lizard ate. It did its business; excrement and urine poured down, sticking to the man's neck.]

bilingual text in one case, and from an *essai-mémoire* in the other, to the genre of the contemporary novel. *Le Chef et le lézard* has been transformed on various levels with respect to the content of the story. At the level of the central characters, the transgressor of territorial boundaries, variously portrayed in the texts of this corpus as a *chef* or *maître du lieu*, a brother or brothers, and best-known as the *maître de Koné*, becomes Enok, the young and talented Kanak sculptor, who has left his *tribu* to pursue his art in the city, in Noumea.

The poem at the beginning of the book, a *calligramme* in the shape of a lizard, draws together images of the totem, connecting it with the origins of the world and the struggles of mankind. The lizard also takes on a different form,⁴⁶⁴ or forms in the novel. Unlike the stories from oral tradition that feature in the corpus, in *L'Homme-lézard*, the lizard is invisible in Jacques' (re)writing, except for the terrifying sculpture that Enok has sculpted from his dreams. The port-wine stain birthmark on the face of Lewis-Siwel-Tash can be read as a sign of the lizard's possession of the young drug dealer. Lewis is the young man's most human incarnation, he becomes Siwel (Lewis reversed in street slang) when he is the calculating dealer, and Tash when he is the violent and terrifying streetgang leader (his name is also a homonym of the French word "*tache*", meaning "stain" that describes his birthmark). The latter of the three personalities of Lewis-Siwel-Tash is the one that recalls the lizard, in the sense that the birthmark resembles the ulcerated skin attributed to diseases relating to the lizard (see section 4.17 of this chapter), and also his disfigured face recalls the face of Dick Bone's statue, half man, half lizard.

As well as its visible manifestations, the sculpture and Tash's birthmark, the lizard is also a malevolent yet strangely comforting presence felt by Enok, who feels possessed by it, inhabited by it. The presence of the lizard is hinted at in the image of a weight bearing down on his neck as the story begins and he awakes from a drunken slumber outside in a field by the motorway, dusty, dry-mouthed and feeling the ill-effects of the previous night and tries to stand up, "*Se lever! malgré le poids qu'il sentait peser sur sa nuque, il devait se lever*" (11).⁴⁶⁵ Two pages later, it is hinted at again. When Enok collapses completely on the ground, he has a vision of one of his maternal uncles, who sings him a lullaby, awakening in him "*ce*

⁴⁶⁴ Which fits with his identification as a "totem" (though this word is inadequate to fully describe both the powerful life force and the relationship between it and the humans who are connected to it.)

⁴⁶⁵ [Get up! despite the weight that he felt pushing down on the back of his neck, he had to get up].

qu'il y reste du reptile, qui provoque l'instinct et cheville l'âme au corps"⁴⁶⁶ breathing into his nostrils the scent of the forests of his home. Overcome by suffering, he cries out, a cry "*doublé d'une soudaine sibilance*"⁴⁶⁷ (that recalls the lizard) then faints.

This possession by the lizard corresponds to the "punishment" phase of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, in which the chief suffers for the transgression committed when he lays his traps where he has no right to and captures the lizard. The reader first encounters Enok in the "punishment" stage of the story. There is a suggestion at the beginning of the novel that the "transgression" committed by Enok might be the murder of Léon Bellimage (something that Enok himself is unsure about, having completely blacked out on the night in question). However, another transgression is intimated by the writer, and appears to be the true transgression on the part of Enok – the neglect of his art, having fallen victim to the vices of life on the street. Later, in a description of Enok's journey to Noumea from his home (15-16), a further hint of the lizard's presence comes in the form of the expression "*Bah!*", which was the reply of the lizard in Leenhardt's "*Le Maître de Koné*" to the chief's request for it to climb down from his head. Other readings of the punishment meted out to Enok might include the shooting at St Louis which paralysed him and killed his younger sister Mandela, or the prison sentence that he had to serve for murder, thinking that he had committed the crime in a moment of alcohol-fuelled amnesia.

The "flight" stage of the story can be read as Enok's use of alcohol as a form of escape, in which he no longer knew what he was doing, "*Alibi ou oubli, l'alcool était devenu son maître*" (14).⁴⁶⁸ It is also possible that Jacques is making reference to the evil represented by alcohol, which has wreaked havoc on society. The pathway taken by the chief in his flight from the lizard is alluded to when Enok asks himself "*Combien de temps allait-il continuer cette course insensée vers rien et subir ces lendemains sans gloire?*"⁴⁶⁹ his daily round of recovery from the previous night's drinking, search for money, more alcohol, parties and antisocial activities was taking him nowhere.

⁴⁶⁶ [what remains there of the reptile, who arouses instincts and pins the soul to the body].

⁴⁶⁷ [doubled by a sudden hissing]

⁴⁶⁸ [Alibi or oblivion, alcohol had become his master]

⁴⁶⁹ [How many times was he going to carry on on this insane race towards nothing and suffer these mornings after without glory?]

The redemption stage of Enok's story comes about ironically, by way of his prison sentence for a crime he believed he had committed (the murder of Nassirah's father), but in fact was the work of Lewis-Siwel-Tash. Confined to a wheelchair and imprisoned, Enok re-discovers his art, and finds redemption in the form of his work in prison art programmes and workshops, the birth of his daughter Nassidéla conceived just before he was shot, and the big break in Paris offered to him by a French art dealer.

In terms of the criteria of linguistic and cultural competence, Claudine Jacques makes no claim to mastering a Kanak language, and in her (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, she works from existing French texts. Her knowledge of Kanak culture stems from growing up in New Caledonia, and from her openness and interest in learning about the people living around her. The degree of collaboration and consultation with Kanak experts is not made clear in this book, however, given that she has used the story of "Le Maître de Koné" in the novel, a story that emerged from a collaborative work of translation between Bwêyöou Eñijiyi and Maurice Leenhardt, and that the novel is clearly a work of imaginative fiction, and does not make any claim to represent the Kanak story, it would seem that she has written in a manner that is respectful. This is also confirmed by her inclusion of a reference to *Documents néo-calédoniens* and "Le Maître de Koné", which figures as a quote⁴⁷⁰ on the page preceding Chapter I, partially repeated at the beginning of Chapter XXIX⁴⁷¹ (in which Lewis-Siwel-Tash confronts Enok in his hospital bed after the funeral of Mandela). Thus the source of the story is acknowledged, and the element of Ajië oral tradition made visible in the book.

With respect to the images projected of Kanak identity, while Jacques portrays the ugly realities of life lived by many Kanak (along with members of other ethnicities) on the streets and on the margins of Noumea, she counterbalances it with descriptions of the positive dimensions of life *en tribu*, and of Kanak cultural values. This is done through the character of the symbolically named Mandela, Enok's younger sister, and by highlighting the women's associations throughout the country that Mandela is drawn to join, and that seek to effect positive change in their own communities. The integrity and strength of Kanak women faced with difficult circumstances is also illustrated by Lusia, abandoned with her children when

⁴⁷⁰ Described earlier in this section, it begins "*Mais le chef de Koné dit au lézard...*".

⁴⁷¹ "*Messires les chefs, il serait bon que vous descendiez un instant de ma tête*"

her partner, a French gendarme, returns to France. She also plays an important role in the redemption of Enok, and bears his child Nassidéla. The rich artistic and spiritual heritage of Kanak cultures is embodied in Jacques' central character, Enok, whose visions of a *vieux* and the land of his *tribu* enable him to cling on to life at the beginning of the book, and whose spiritual connection to the land and culture is expressed through his artistic talent, recognised not only in his own country, but also in Paris.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, through its setting in contemporary Noumea, and its focus of the struggles of the different communities living on the margins of the city, both in physical and socio-economic terms, creates images of the potential for a shared future, in that the communities represented in the book, Kanak, Wallisian, Tahitian, ni-Vanuatu, Caldoche, are all subject to pressures and the struggle to survive, and this is projected as a unifying force. The different communities co-exist in the *squats*, characters in the story have mixed heritage, relationships between people of different communities are explored, as are the conflicts between them. The problems between Kanak and Wallisian communities in St Louis form part of the historical backdrop to the story, and are the site of the killing of Mandela. There is a bitter discussion between Lusia and Lewis-Siwel-Tash about politics, the Noumea Agreement and the future of the islands following Mandela's death. The struggles of the Caldoche community *en brousse* are also evoked as they try to eke out an existence on the land in the character of the farmer, Narcisse, and indirectly, the *Événements* are recalled in the name Nassirah. Nassirah was the station where Marc Le Goupils's two brothers died around the turn of the twentieth century; he dedicated his book *Comment on cesse d'être colon* (1910) to them. Nassirah was also the family farm where the 17-year-old high school student of Caldoche origin, Yves Tual, was killed during the *Événements*, hence its symbolic significance. In the end, the universal struggles of human beings are emphasised in the book, as well as the specific challenges faced by different groups.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* in Claudine Jacques' *L'Homme-lézard* valorises the experiences of all of the New Caledonian communities through its insights into particular challenges faced by members of each group. It also works to valorise the story of Kanak oral tradition, along with other New Caledonian voices, by placing them on an equal footing not only with each other, but with classic works of English and Italian literature. This is achieved by the use, and sometimes juxtaposition, of quotations at the beginning of many of the 31

chapters of the book taken from diverse sources, both in terms of genre and of cultural provenance.

Thus a quotation from Louis-José Barbançon's *La Terre du lézard* is presented alongside one from Maurice Leenhardt *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and two interviews about the homeless situation in New Caledonia from the daily newspaper *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, with a homeless person and social worker who works with homeless people, feature on different pages. Works by New Caledonian writers of different communities, such as Déwé Görödé (*Par les temps qui courent*), Paule Paladini (*Réveil*), Jean-Claude Bourdais (*L'Arbre à souvenir*), Pierre Gope (*S'ouvrir*), Jean-Noël Chrisment (*Extrémités*), and Jacqueline Sénès (commenting on the role of Art) are cited. Comment on the symbolism of the mask from Yvonne de Sike (archaeologist, art historian, anthropologist and expert in European masks, rites and symbols), is placed alongside a comment by Éric Fougère, a writer with strong New Caledonian connections. Finally, a connection is drawn between the writings of New Caledonia and those of Europe by the inclusion of a passage from Dante's *Inferno*⁴⁷² and from Kipling's *If*...⁴⁷³

The voice of artists are also heard in these quotations, when Paula Boi, Kanak artist says, "So I began to draw my dreams..." (177),⁴⁷⁴ and when a quote from a Kanak sculptor, Yann Conny, describing how his friends had been forced to stop practising their art in order to feed their children, is juxtaposed with a quote from the renowned French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Rodin too describes suffering from the problems associated with poverty until the age of 50 (49). This latter juxtaposition works to emphasise the struggle shared by all artists, portraying the two men quoted as equals in this respect.

⁴⁷² "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita/mi ritrovai per una selva oscura/che la diritta via era smarrita./Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura/esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte/che nel pensior rinova e la paura!" (Jacques 165). Translation: Midway on our life's journey, I found myself/In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell/About those woods is hard – so tangled and rough/And savage that thinking of it now, I feel/The old fear stirring! (*The Inferno of Dante* 3)

⁴⁷³ "Si tu peux être amant/sans être fou d'amour/Si tu peux être fort/sans cesser d'être tendre" (Jacques 183). [If you can be a lover/without being crazed with love/If you can be strong/without ceasing to be tender]. Note that the translation of Kipling's poem into French by André Maurois, quoted by Jacques, sees parts of the original English text translated, while other parts, such as the extract above, have been freely rendered in order to convey the spirit of the poem.

⁴⁷⁴ "J'ai donc commencé à dessiner mes rêves" from *Chroniques du pays kanak, Tome 3*, (223).

A further example of Jacques' emphasis on the equal importance of different groups, which feeds positive images into the processes of identity construction involved in the creation of the identity of the *destin commun*, appears on the back cover of the book, in the publisher's introduction,

*Claudine Jacques nous donne ici un « roman noir » dont l'action se joue dans les « squats » (bidonvilles) de Nouméa, quelque part entre traditions océaniques – kanak, wallisiennes, tahitiennes ou vanuataises – et « modernité » – celle de la ville blanche. Ses personnages aux multiples appartenances sont des êtres à la fois fragiles et riches de contradictions, entraînés par leurs passions dans un drame qui les met à nu, nous les révélant tels qu'au-delà de tout cliché exotique ils aiment, souffrent, meurent, tels les héros des tragédies antiques : humains, trop humains.*⁴⁷⁵

Dominique Jouve has noted that rather than describing the state of society, Jacques is setting her preoccupations in a modern context,

*Mais il s'agit moins de délivrer une leçon sur l'état de la société que d'inscrire dans le contemporain les obsessions personnelles de la romancière, une vision tragique de l'existence humaine, marquée par la faute, par la violence, la déchéance, et par la recherche d'une rédemption par le sacrifice (Jouve 101).*⁴⁷⁶

L'Homme-lézard projects a vision of New Caledonian society that is far from idyllic, but not without hope, and her text ascribes dignity to all of the communities involved. Her (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* thus constitutes a space of respectful encounter between traditions and communities and it projects images with the potential for positive influence on processes of identity construction, both of Kanak identity, and of the inclusive New Caledonian identity of the *destin commun*.

⁴⁷⁵ [Here Claudine Jacques delivers us a “thriller” whose action plays out in the “squats” (shanty towns) of Noumea, somewhere between Oceanian traditions – Kanak, Wallisian, Tahitian or ni-Vanuatu – and “modernity” – that of the white city. Her characters, members of multiple groups, are beings at once fragile and full of contradictions, dragged by their passions into a drama that strips them bare, revealing them as, beyond all the exotic clichés, they love, suffer, die, just like the heroes of classical tragedy: human, all too human.]

⁴⁷⁶ [But it is less a case of delivering a lesson on the state of society than of inscribing in the present the personal obsessions of the novelist, a tragic vision of human existence, marked by error, by violence, by failure, and by the search for redemption through sacrifice].

4.13 TEXT 23: Michel Naepels. "Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la region de Houailou, Nouvelle-Caledonie." PhD thesis. EHESS, 1996.

“LE LÉZARD DE BWÉXAWÉ ET LE CHEF DE KONÉ” – GAYO GOWÉ.

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from Ajië oral tradition to New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story of “Le Lézard de Bwéxawé et le chef de Koné” was related by Gayo Gowé and recorded in 1993 at Houailou by the French anthropologist Michel Naepels,⁴⁷⁷ whose research in New Caledonia dates back to the beginning of the 1990s. The (re)writing features in the *annexes* of Naepels' 1996 doctoral thesis, entitled “Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la region de Houailou, Nouvelle-Caledonie”⁴⁷⁸ in which he describes the contemporary social situation in the Houailou rural region, contextualising the land conflicts that have arisen there using an interdisciplinary approach combining anthropology with history.⁴⁷⁹ The French-language text of “Le Lézard de Bwéxawé et le chef de Koné” from the doctoral thesis is discussed in this section.⁴⁸⁰

The commission for this (re)writing originated in Naepels' research in the Houailou region, his target readership is both his academic peers and the members of the Kanak community with whom he worked. The (re)writing process involved Gayo Gowé reciting the story in Ajië, which was recorded by Naepels, transcribed and translated in 1993, during a research trip to New Caledonia.⁴⁸¹

The transformations undergone by the story are textualisation and the change in genre of the story from a *virhenō* to an ethnographic document used in support of an academic argument in a doctoral thesis. The audience has also changed as, generally speaking, doctoral theses are

⁴⁷⁷ Michel Naepels is a *chargé de recherche* at the CNRS, working within the *Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux (CNRS-INSERM-EHESS-UP13)*. His first research trip to New Caledonia dates back to 1991. Since 2004, he has directed the research group “*Nouvelle-Calédonie : Enjeux Sociaux Contemporains*” (GDR 2835, CNRS) (www.recherches-nouvelle-caledonie.org consulted 12 June 2012).

⁴⁷⁸ [Land Conflicts and Social Relations in the region of Houailou, New Caledonia]

⁴⁷⁹ His thesis was later published as *Histoires de terres kanakes: Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la region de Houailou (Nouvelle-Caledonie)*, Paris, Belin, 1998. However, Gayo Gowé's story was not included in the book.

⁴⁸⁰ It was emailed to me by Michel Naepels, 20 October, 2010.

⁴⁸¹ In a 1998 article in *L'Homme*, Naepels lists his three field trips to New Caledonia. The first was 15 months long, undertaken in 1991-1992, the second (during the course of which he recorded Gayo Gowé's story) of three months' duration in the summer of 1993, and the third in the summer of 1996.

read by fellow academics or researchers. The thesis may also have been read by the people amongst whom he did his research, but the readership of this (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* would have changed from the audience involved in the recording process (which for practical reasons, tends to be of limited size). It is likely that Gowé had both Naepels and his own community in mind when telling the story, however, further investigation into his motivation for recounting it would be necessary to discover whether he was interested in reaching a wider readership.

The content of the story follows the same core pattern of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption as the other versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* from the Ajië region. Some of the locations described appear to be specific to Gowé’s version, which is to be expected, given the important role the identity of the orator and the composition of the audience play in determining the content of each oral performance. Thus, in addition to the familiar locations of Koné, Bwéxawé, Hienghène, Poindimié, Kouaoua and Canala, there is mention of Kurhia and Gwârö, the latter described by Gowé as being the place from which the lizard originates, having been brought there by a woman, and where those with the powers of the lizard resided.

The oral dimension is retained in this (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, which bears the hallmarks of a transcription of a spoken story. The performative context is recalled by the prevalence of dialogue in the text, the inclusion of interjections recalling orality such as “*Ah!*” and “*Heh!*”, the use of the closing formula “*C’est fini*”⁴⁸² and the retention of repetition, such as “*Il le poursuit, descend, arrive à Kurhia, repart et arrive à Néarâ, puis arrive à Koné, dépasse Koné s’en va et arrive à Koumac*”⁴⁸³ or “*Alors il repart, il va, il va.*”⁴⁸⁴ Finally, the performative context is evoked when Gowé recounts, “*Mais au matin, le lézard de Bwéxawé arrive en haut, il arrive par là*”.⁴⁸⁵ The use of the deictics⁴⁸⁶ “*en haut*” and “*par là*” makes sense when one considers that the orator would likely be gesturing towards a specific location in the landscape, either directly visible to the audience, or perhaps

⁴⁸² [It’s finished]

⁴⁸³ Bold emphasis added by the writer. [He chases him, goes down, **arrives at** Kurhia, sets off again and **arrives at** Néarâ, then **arrives at** Koné, goes beyond Koné and **arrives at** Koumac].

⁴⁸⁴ Bold emphasis added by the writer. [So he sets off again, he **goes on**, he **goes on**].

⁴⁸⁵ [But in the morning, the lizard of Bwéxawé arrives high up, he arrives this way].

⁴⁸⁶ Which specify location in space or time from the perspective of the speaker or the hearer.

outside the place where the story is being told, yet still a familiar location that the audience would be able to visualise.

In a 1998 article examining some of the challenges he encountered during field work in New Caledonia, Naepels writes that he spent 15 months in New Caledonia on his first research trip, of which five months were spent living in the Houaïlou Valley (Naepels, “Une étrange étrangeté” 186). While further enquiry is necessary to ascertain the level of linguistic competence Naepels acquired in Ajië, Alban Bensa remarked in a 1999 article that Naepels had mastered the language and used it for research in the Leenhardt archives at Aix-en-Provence – implying at the least a competence in the written language by 1999 (“Michel Naepels” 156). Naepels also writes that his entrée into Houaïlou society came about thanks to guides, who became friends, and who were able to help him to navigate through the social network. His level of cultural competence would have increased as a result of the time spent in the field, in the Ajië cultural milieu, and consultation and collaboration with Kanak experts was an integral part of his method. The source of the story, Goya Gowé, is acknowledged in the title. Without access to the original copy of the *annexe* document, it has not been possible to verify for the purposes of this study whether the transcription was included in the thesis *annexes*, this would be a useful point to clarify. As discussed earlier, the performative context has also been acknowledged in this (re)writing through the retention of elements of orality, such as repetition and closing formula.

This (re)writing projects the image of “Le Lézard de Bwéxawé et le chef de Koné” as constituting a valid document supporting Naepels’s academic research, conferring upon it a certain authority. Indeed, in his review of the book that came from Naepels’s doctoral thesis, Alban Bensa writes that the elements of oral tradition that feature in this book play a decisive role in Naepels’s research, and that he does not treat the documents derived from oral tradition as simple illustrations of different points of view, but as legitimate ways to access an understanding of past and present (Bensa “Michel Naepels” 156).

The communication situation in which this text is produced is genuine, in that the person who recounted the story was aware of the use that it was to be put to. Naepels has written of the challenges of being a researcher, of gaining trust, as an outsider, and of the need to justify his research in order that people might agree to speak to him. When one reads his writings about his research experience, it is evident that he writes from a position of respect. The (re)writing also has a positive impact in the sense that it is part of a work that attempts to provide context

and trace the history of present-day land disputes in the Houaïlou area, thus contributing to efforts to resolve disputes in which land and identity are inextricably entwined.

4.14 TEXT 24: François Bogliolo. *Paroles et Écritures. Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne*. Noumea: Les Éditions du Cagou, 1994.

“LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” – BWÊËYÖUU EËJIYI /MAURICE LEENHARDT (PP. 30–32).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story journeys from Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens* into *Paroles et Écritures. Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne*. *Paroles et Écritures* is a groundbreaking work by the French scholar of Comparative Literature, François Bogliolo, former *Professeur* at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, whose book is the first to present a comprehensive overview of the New Caledonian literary polysystem. He achieves this through the inclusion of more than 160 extracts taken from New Caledonian literature across time, genre and mode of communication, organised into five main sections: “*Oralité*”, “*Écritures et Mythes européens*”, “*Écritures classiques (1853-1953)*”, “*Expressions des Nouvelles oralités calédoniennes*”, and “*Nouvelles Écritures (1953-1993)*.” The first section of this book, “*Oralité*”, under the subheading “*Genres littéraires des traditions orales – Légendes*”, features an extract of “*Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné*” taken from *Documents néo-calédoniens* that begins at the point in the story where the *chef de Koné* reaches the bay of Pousangué.

The French text is featured prominently over the three pages of the extract, and the Ajië text is reproduced in a smaller font at the margins of each page. A photo of the first *pasteurs* trained at Do Neva (with a caption identifying Bwêëyöuu Eëjiiyi) appears at the beginning of the text, and an inset text consisting of an extract from M. and G. Lobsiger-Dellenbach’s article, “*Dix bambous gravés néo-calédoniens*” from the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 1967 features in the lower half of the first page. The extract discusses the resemblance between an episode of “*Le Maître de Koné*” and the well-known “*Sinbad the Sailor*” tale from the 307th night of the *1001 Nights*.

Although this (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is a reproduction of both the French and Ajië texts of “Le Maître de Koné” and “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, transformations have been undergone by the texts with respect to their layout, the inclusion of footnotes and the context in which they are reproduced. The first change relates to the positioning of the texts on the page, and the prominence of the Ajië version relative to the French version. In *Documents néo-calédoniens* it is Ajië text that is most prominent, appearing at the top of each page, with the French translation placed at the bottom of the page. In Bogliolo’s anthology, the French text occupies the most prominent position, it is formatted in the same way as the French language texts in the other sections of the anthology, and the font is almost double the size of that of the Ajië text, which is reproduced in the margins, resembling notes rather than main text. It would appear that the function of Bogliolo’s anthology is the reason for this shift in emphasis. Whereas the Leenhardt collection was concerned with the linguistic expression as much as the content of the story, Bogliolo has included this text in the anthology to show its place as part of New Caledonian literature as a whole, and hence the focus on the French-language version, French being the *lingua franca* of the islands.

The second transformation relates to the reproduction of the footnotes from the Leenhardt text. Bogliolo has chosen to include five of the twelve footnotes that relate to the extract he has taken from “Le Maître de Koné”. These footnotes have in common that they add information regarding the meaning of certain expressions in the text, rather than being concerned with strictly linguistic or geographical information, as are the footnotes that have been omitted.

The third transformation of the story relates to the context in which it is reproduced. The extract from “Le Maître de Koné” shifts in genre from an anthropological document in a collection of predominantly Ajië elements of oral tradition, to a French language text placed in an anthology that also serves as a kind of literary history of New Caledonia, featuring alongside texts written by nineteenth-century explorers, early New Caledonian writers in French, and contemporary New Caledonian writers.

Bogliolo’s addition of the extract from the Lobsiger-Dellenbach article, highlighting commonalities between the element of Kanak oral tradition and a classic text of *1001 Nights*, makes an argument for Kanak stories to take their place in the pantheon of world literatures. He acknowledges the source of “Le Maître de Koné”, and includes both Ajië and French

versions, and places oral and written forms of creative expression on an equal footing in the anthology, from its title *Paroles et Écritures*⁴⁸⁷ to the sections devoted not only to Kanak orality, but to New Caledonian orality. *Paroles et Écritures* works to valorise the image of elements of Kanak oral tradition, and literature and contributes to the foundations of a *destin commun* identity, through its presentation of the diversity of literature produced by the different communities of New Caledonia, and through its demonstration of the interconnections between the different writings produced, that together, through their shared sense of connection to the land, create the New Caledonian literary polysystem. Bogliolo's work is an example of genuine communication, through his treatment of all contributions as equal in value, whether written or oral, and his efforts to increase mutual understanding amongst the New Caledonian communities, by drawing together their shared literary productions in one book, and showing the connections between them. In this way, Bogliolo's (re)writing makes a positive contribution to the construction of both Kanak and *destin commun* identities.

4.15 TEXT 26: Jean Guiart. *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*. Noumea: Éditions Rocher-à-la-voile, 1998.

(RE)WRITING OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 145–46).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story of “Le Maître de Koné”, the “*texte classique*” (Guiart, *Bwesou* 145) published by Maurice Leenhardt moves out from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and into *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*, published by Jean Guiart in 1998. Following the first section of the book, which consists of an *Introduction*, a biography of Efiijiyi and an explanation of his title as the “first Kanak writer”, comes the main body of the work, which treats Efiijiyi's writings in two sections. The first is entitled “*Les Étapes de la vie selon Bwésou Eurijisi*” and the second “*Mythes et rites*”. At the end of the final section “*Conclusion*” is the (re)writing of “Le Maître de Koné”.

⁴⁸⁷ [Words and Writings]

As Guiart presents and discusses Eŕijiyi's writings, he provides additional information and elaborates on certain anthropological questions raised by Bwêÿöuu's work, particularly those relating to the organisation and inter-relationships between different clans and lineages that constitute one of the defining research interests of Guiart's career. There are photographs throughout the text of people and places mentioned, commentary on the contexts in which each of Eŕijiyi's texts were written, and Guiart reproduces extracts of texts in Ajië as well as their French translations. There are photographs of the actual texts and *cahiers*, drawings and maps produced by Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi, and the book highlights his literary output (in the page devoted to the book on his website,⁴⁸⁸ Guiart notes that Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi wrote slowly, but continually, producing 24 *cahiers*. No other writer, according to Guiart, has described in such detail, or so faithfully, his own culture).

The (re)writing of "Le Maître de Koné" is found at the very end of Guiart's conclusion. He introduces it in support of his final comment that, in addition to the "local, current and potential aspect" (144) of Bwêÿöuu's work, there is another wider vision of the Kanak world of the Grande Terre to be found in his writings, and the essence of this vision is expressed in "Le Maître de Koné". Guiart then presents a fourteen-line resumé of the story, in French, into which are inserted explanatory notes elaborating on the lizard's origins (taken from Guiart's 1992 revised version of *Structure de la Chefferie*). Guiart then comments on the significance of the locations passed through by the *maître de Koné* during his flight, and emphasises the point that there is also a great deal of meaning to be found in the names that were not mentioned. He observes that it is up to the reader to decode what is written. Guiart concludes with the comment that Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi was a true author, and always the master of his subject.

Clues as to the possible reason for the commission of the book are found in Guiart's introduction. In the fifth paragraph, he criticises the Swiss musicologist, Raymond Ammann, for having asserted that Leenhardt's analysis of the *pilou* in *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* was an "interpretation" of events. Guiart begs to differ, stating that this

⁴⁸⁸ www.jeanguiard.org

assertion is an “error based in ignorance”,⁴⁸⁹ for rather than Leenhardt’s interpretation, the relevant text, described by Guiart as one of the richest and most coherent passages written by Leenhardt, was entirely the work of Bwêÿöuu, his words and phrases translated from the *cahiers* by Leenhardt (10). Guiart goes on to decry the lack of action “*chez certains*”⁴⁹⁰ in not making public the rich information about Eñijiyi, the first Kanak writer,

Ils avaient tout en mains pour assurer la présentation publique du dossier si riche du premier écrivain canaque. Ils ne l’ont pas fait (12).⁴⁹¹

He criticises these same unnamed people for their belief that the *Mélanésia 2000* festival was the beginning of “*la révolution culturelle canaque*”, making the claim that rather than a beginning, the festival was in fact the culmination of an intellectual movement that had begun in 1908⁴⁹² with the first writings in Kanak languages and had touched almost every part of the Grande Terre (12). Guiart claims that this “*mouvement intellectuel*” continued into the 1960s, but had since been adversely affected by the methods of linguists who preferred to record stories rather than to arrange for them to be written by Kanak at their own pace. He also accuses “*certaines*” of wanting to return to obscurity those Kanak personalities whose capacity for analysis had been made accessible in French by Maurice Leenhardt, because a century later, they felt overshadowed by them (13). The lack of precision regarding the identities, (apart from Ammann), of those he criticises in the alleged conspiracy against the recognition of Kanak writers makes it impossible to tell whether Guiart’s claims can be substantiated or not. Nevertheless, in relation to the production of *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*, there is a strong sense that it was written as a reaction against a perceived reluctance to recognise Eñijiyi – the question of why Guiart decided to write the book in 1998 then arises.

It seems likely that at the significant moment in New Caledonian history, (this was when the Noumea Agreement was signed and the Centre Culturel Tjibaou inaugurated), Guiart felt that

⁴⁸⁹ Guiart states that the quotation marks throughout the chapter concerned with the *pilou* in *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne* clearly indicated the contributions taken directly from Eñijiyi’s *cahier*, and that there was no doubt that Leenhardt was directly quoting him.

⁴⁹⁰ [of certain people]

⁴⁹¹ [They had everything needed to introduce the public to the rich file of the first Kanak writer. They did not do it.]

⁴⁹² When the first *pasteurs* at Do Neva had begun to write.

it was vital for the importance of Bwêêyöuu's work to be recognised and that this was what set in motion the production of *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque* in 1998. It is also possible that the literary context of the time influenced his decision to write the book. Three years prior, in 1995, the twentieth anniversary of the Mélanésia 2000 festival had been celebrated with special issues of the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* and the ADCK's cultural *revue Mwà Vée*. These publications presented a diversity of viewpoints and experiences of the event, and a strong sense of the significance of Mélanésia 2000 as the resurgence of Kanak culture in the public domain was conveyed. The appearance in 1997 of Raymond Ammann's book *Danses et musiques kanak : une présentation des danses et des musiques mélanésiennes de Nouvelle-Calédonie, dans les cérémonies et la vie quotidienne du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, which was published by the ADCK, and which features in Guiart's bibliography, may also have contributed to Guiart's decision to write the book. 1997 was also the year in which Guiart established his own publishing house, *Le Rocher-à-la-voile*. One certainly gets the impression that Ammann's "error" regarding the source of the information on the *pilou* in Leenhardt's 1930 *Notes d'ethnologie* may have been the straw that broke the camel's back for Guiart, so to speak.

Guiart's (re)writing of the Eŕijiyi/Leenhardt text of "Le Maître de Koné" retains the fundamental transgression–punishment–flight–redemption structure. The first transformation consists of the reduction of the multiple-page, bilingual source text into a single paragraph text in French. The second transformation involves a change in genre, from a document rich in anthropological detail and analysis published in an academic work to a précis of the story that is woven into a commentary in an homage to the writer Bwêêyöuu Eŕijiyi.

At the time of publication of *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*, Jean Guiart had acquired linguistic and cultural competence in matters of Ajië oral tradition over the five decades of research presence in New Caledonia following his arrival in 1948.⁴⁹³ As with his 1987 article on the Houailou Valley (discussed in section 4.8 above), collaboration and consultation with Kanak was not required for the production of this particular rewriting of *Le*

⁴⁹³ See sections 4.7 and 4.8 of the present chapter for further details of Guiart's career as a researcher in New Caledonia.

Chef et le lézard, as he had drawn upon the expert version already provided by Eŕijiyi and Leenhardt, and was summarising rather than altering its content.

There is a strong notion of Kanak agency pervading Guiart's writing, and a great deal of respect for Eŕijiyi's expertise and vision when it came to discussing his own culture, evident through Guiart's inclusion of Leenhardt's recognition of his debt to Eŕijiyi in *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne*, his final comment that Eŕijiyi was a true writer and always the master of his field and his claim that Eŕijiyi's knowledge and mastery of questions relating to his own culture far exceed those of modern researchers. Guiart represents the writings of Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi as a source of expertise, thus acknowledging his work and conferring it with authority.

Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque projects a positive image of Kanak culture and tradition through its recognition of Bwêÿöuu Eŕijiyi's work, and its emphasis on Kanak agency makes it potentially a source of positive influence on processes of Kanak identity construction. Interestingly, Guiart's contention that Eŕijiyi's work had both local and more global aspects, the latter involving a vision of the totality of Kanak societies on the Grande Terre, could be seen as demonstrating the longstanding potential within Kanak culture to look further than its own boundaries, displaying the necessary outward focus that would enable the construction of the identity of the *destin commun*.

4.16 TEXT 27: Collectif. *Chroniques du pays kanak*. Ed. Orso Filippi and Gilbert Bladinières. Tome 3. Nouméa: Éditions Planète Mémo, 1999.

“VIRHENÔ NE KA TO KONE / LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 123–129).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French and Ajië. It moves out from *Documents néo-calédoniens* in the form of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone / Le Maître de Koné” and into the third volume of *Chroniques du pays kanak* published in 1999. *Chroniques...* is a series of four, large-format encyclopaedic volumes, filled with high quality imagery, photographs, and articles, and comprising a comprehensive exposition and analysis of Kanak culture, creative arts, history, literature, architecture, music,

and dance. Contributions to the series are made by leading experts, both Kanak and non-Kanak, in different domains.

“Arts et lettres”, the third volume of the series, is divided into six main sections: “Architecture kanak”, “Langues et lettres”, “Les bambous gravés”, “Art kanak contemporain”, “La musique et la danse” and “La spiritualité”, and the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* appears in the section “Langues et lettres” as part of the contribution “La littérature traditionnelle” by Léonard Drilë Sam, a leading Kanak educator, linguist and editor of a series of contemporary collections of contes.⁴⁹⁴ The story “Virhenô ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” appears on pages 123–128 of “La littérature traditionnelle” as part of a selection of stories illustrating a variety of genres and the “type I” and “type II” classifications discussed by Sam.⁴⁹⁵

In addition to Léonard Drilë Sam, who was responsible for the commentary and the other texts surrounding “Virhenô ne ka to Koné/Le Maître de Koné”. Gilbert Bladinières (editor of the publication) and Orso Filippi (editor of the collection) were also involved in the (re)writing process. The Ajië and French texts of “Virhenô ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” in *Documents néo-calédoniens* are transposed into *Chroniques du pays kanak* without any alteration to the content of the story. Additional material has, however, been added in the form of a subtitle stating the genre of the story as a “Vinimô (II) / virhenô”,⁴⁹⁶ and an inset text at the end of the story that situates it in its literary context, noting the existence of two other versions. Two striking images of the man and the lizard, created by the Kanak artist Paula Boi, also feature on the pages of the (re)writing.

⁴⁹⁴ He headed the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires* in the mid-1980s (see section 5.4 for more information on the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires*), published a language acquisition textbook for Drehu (the language of Lifou), obtained a doctorate in Linguistics in 2007 from the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (where he was *Maître de conférences* in the *Langues et cultures régionales* department) and is currently a member of the New Caledonian congress.

⁴⁹⁵ See discussion in Chapter 1 of the question of genres in Kanak oral tradition (pp. 47–51).

⁴⁹⁶ The question of the genre is complex here, since on one hand, there is a distinction made by Sam in “Littérature orale kanak” between *vinimo* and *virhenô*, with the latter recounting histories of gods but also the origins and history of clans, explaining current social structures, and often being translated as “myth” (134). *Vinimo* can be either type I (bearing a resemblance to the genre of nursery rhyme), or type II, which are anchored in reality, with clearly identified characters and the story localised in a specific area (107) and more political than the type I stories, they are directed towards adolescents inasmuch as they explain and justify social organisation and relationships between clans. It is this second type of *vinimo* that Sam has identified as the genre of “Le Maître de Koné”. Here also, the fluidity of genre types is evident – and the explanation given by Sam of the possibility of a story beginning as myth and ending as history applies (136), with “Le Maître de Koné” possessing characteristics of both genres.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* also involves a transformation at the level of genre, as it changes from a text in an anthropological anthology that seeks to present “data” in the form of “documents” generated mainly in the Ajië language, to a small-scale anthology within a larger, encyclopaedic work that does not seek to analyse from an academic perspective, so much as present and explain elements of Kanak culture to the target readership.

Another transformation relates to the layout of the (re)writing on the page. It is set out in a bilingual format, with Bwêëyöuu Efijiyi’s Ajië text presented in a column on the left side of the page, and Leenhardt’s French translation presented on the right. The formatting of the story is thus different from that found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, a subtle change, where rather than having the Kanak version at the top of the page with the interlinear translation into French in the middle of the page and the French literary translation produced by Leenhardt at the bottom of the page, in *Chroniques...* the interlinear translation is dispensed with completely and the Kanak and French language versions are placed side by side, in parallel columns on the same page. This presentation format is found frequently in this volume of the *Chroniques du pays kanak* series, and helps to create an impression of equality between the two texts, and by extension the two languages, with respect to their intrinsic value. Two pen and ink illustrations by the Kanak artist, Paula Boi, also feature in the (re)writing, a full-page drawing of the enormous Lizard leaning over the terrified *maître de Koné* takes up the entire page 125. On the bottom half of page 127 is an image depicting the *maître de Pousangué* standing outside the entrance to his house, which the lizard, seeking the *maître de Koné*, is halfway inside. The *maître de Pousangué* is holding the sacred plants that he will use in the ritual incantation to rid the *maître de Koné* of his terrifying pursuer. These illustrations help to bring to life the story, adding a vivid dimension to the text.

The source text from which the (re)writing of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” is derived is acknowledged at the end of the story as an “Extrait de Leenhardt, *Documents néo-calédoniens*,”⁴⁹⁷ but no mention is made of Bwêëyöuu Efijiyi. A possible explanation for this strategy can be found in Sam’s assertion in the commentary that in oral tradition there is no such thing as an author, in the sense that there is with written tradition. He states that in

⁴⁹⁷ [Extract from Leenhardt, *Documents néo-calédoniens*]

treating oral literature that has been recorded in written form, “*Il faut parler d’auteur de l’ouvrage (celui qui a recueilli) mais pas des récits. Les personnes en question n’ont fait que retranscrire ceux-ci et les traduire*” (107).⁴⁹⁸ Indeed, in the selection of texts featured in the section “*La littérature orale kanak*” of *Chroniques du pays kanak, Tome 3*, no credit is given to the individuals who provided the stories, and only the texts from which they come are acknowledged, with the exception of two texts, “*Les Gardiens de bétail*” (taken from *Documents néo-calédoniens*) and “*Téâ Kanaké*” (taken from *Structure de la Chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud*).⁴⁹⁹ In the case of both of these texts, the name of the person who recounted the story is given, (respectively named as Sisil and Pierre PwêRêpwea), though the reason for these exceptions is not clear.

When it comes to the encounter between the (re)writer and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, it is clear that Léonard Drilë Sam, a native-speaker of Drehu, an accomplished *conteur* in his own right, and a linguist and educator by training, has the requisite linguistic and cultural competence to produce a respectful (re)writing of this element of Ajië oral tradition. As far as the criteria of collaboration with Kanak experts is concerned, this series of four volumes contains possibly the highest concentration⁵⁰⁰ of Kanak expertise ever published in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. There is an acknowledgement of the original version presented by Maurice Leenhardt in *Documents neo-caledoniens*, however, as has already been mentioned, Bwêÿöuu Efijiyi’s name does not appear anywhere. With respect to the criterion of acknowledgement of the oral dimension, a comprehensive description of the performative context is provided in Sam’s introduction to “*La Littérature traditionnelle*”, and elsewhere throughout the volumes of the series.

The series *Chroniques du pays kanak* was released in the year following the signing of the Noumea Agreement, and the timing of the publication of this first comprehensive study of Kanak culture, society and creative expression would seem to coincide with the new phase of recognition of Kanak identity in wider New Caledonian society, described in the Noumea

⁴⁹⁸ [One must speak of the author of the work (the one who has collected), but not of the stories. The people in question have only retranscribed them and translated them].

⁴⁹⁹ Jean Guiart’s work on Kanak social organisation published in 1963.

⁵⁰⁰ The cultural *revue Mwà Vée* is evidently another rich source of Kanak expertise in writing, in magazine form and published over a longer period (quarterly since 1993), hence the claim for the higher concentration for *Chroniques du pays kanak*.

Agreement as a necessary step on the path to the mutual respect between the communities that would lead to the creation of the inclusive community embodied by the notion of the *destin commun*. The target readership is New Caledonian and Francophone, Kanak and non-Kanak. The volumes of *Chroniques du pays kanak* are a potential source of pride for Kanak readers, both because of the sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing way that they represent specific and collective Kanak cultural heritage, and because of the extremely high standard of presentation of the books. With their varied and extremely attractive imagery, professional layout and diverse content presented by leading experts in different fields, the four volumes of *Chroniques du pays kanak* constitute a highly accomplished work.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* “Virhenô ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” is part of a larger work that projects positive images of Kanak oral tradition and culture, celebrating Kanak creativity in all realms, and the choice of encyclopedic rather than an academic genre plays an important role in this. Rather than relying on anthropological studies that either project an image of an inscrutable culture in need of expert interpretation or are weighed down by a critical apparatus that detracts and distracts from the aesthetic aspects of the stories, the encyclopedic genre makes the texts more accessible. Presenting the expressions of Kanak culture as any European cultural production might typically be presented goes a long way towards creating a sense of equal value for Kanak culture. In this sense, *Chroniques du pays kanak* represents a true example of genuine communication founded on mutual respect.

4.17 TEXT 28: Christine Salomon. *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks*. Collection Ethnologies. Paris: PUF, 2000.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (P.56).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The French-language version of the story of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* travels into *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks*, by Christine Salomon, a French anthropologist (and also psychotherapist) who has been studying questions relating to illness, and social gender relations since the early 1990s. *Savoirs et*

pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks was published by the *Presses universitaires françaises* in 2000, with the support of *Inserm (Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale)*⁵⁰¹ and in the introduction to the book, Salomon thanks the ADCK and the Province Nord, who contributed in 1991 to the funding of her research, which examines the perceptions and explanations of illness, along with methods for treatment, of the peoples of the borders between the Ajië- and Paicî-speaking areas of the central northern region of the Grande Terre.

The book is organised into three parts: “*L’Histoire des commencements*”, in which she outlines conceptions of the origins of illness, and of the peoples of the regions she is working in, “*Représentations de la maladie*”, in which she explains the notion of sickness as imbalance, and provides a typology of the different kinds of illness, and in the final part “*Les Thérapeutes et leurs traitements*”, she outlines the different ways of identifying and treating illnesses. The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is found in the second section, “*Représentations de la maladie*”, under the subheading, “4. *La maladie : un état intermédiaire entre la vie et la mort*”, where Salomon explains that an illness places the sick person in a situation apart, transitory between the world of the living and the dead, and that illness is represented as a strange entity that has entered the body of the person and attacked them. If not dealt with through the use of powerful treatment, this entity will take possession of the sick person and kill them (56).

Oral literature illustrates this idea abundantly according to Salomon. She uses the story of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* as an example, in which social conflict about hunting areas sets off an attack of an illness, which involves the lizard, totemic animal of the person offended, attaching itself to the neck of the transgressor, the man from Koné, and remaining there, spreading excrement and urine on his neck, the image of the symptom of ulceration. In the final sentence of this short (re)writing of the story, Salomon relates the flight of the man throughout the land trying to escape his persecutor until he finds his protector and the person who can treat him, “*le propriétaire du lézard*” (56).⁵⁰²

⁵⁰¹ [National Institute of Health and Medical Research]

⁵⁰² [The owner of the lizard]

This paragraph-long summary of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* is clearly the work of Salomon herself, and the story has been significantly reduced from the original version, in length, and through the reduction of the multiple page bilingual source document to a monolingual paragraph in French. There has been a change in genre, the *virhenô* transcribed and presented as an anthropological document in *Documents néo-calédoniens* has become a story used in support of an academic exposition of Kanak medical knowledge and treatments.

The structure of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption has been retained, which could be read as a medical analogy where the transgression is punished by the illness, the flight is the state of being unwell, and the redemption is the cure. The main focus of Salomon’s (re)writing is the lizard jumping onto the neck of the man as punishment for his transgression of territorial boundaries, and the part of the story when the lizard defecates and urinates on the chef’s head, explained as a representation of a skin disease characterised by ulceration.

Christine Salomon published *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks* nine years after beginning her research. Two years prior to this, she had come to New Caledonia and set about learning Ajië and some Paicî, so that she might conduct her research without the need for interpreters (11). The long period of research, her level of competence in these languages, and the subject area of her research, which is intimately linked to the cultural foundations of the people she was working with, mean that Salomon has significant linguistic and cultural competence to draw upon in her (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, using Maurice Leenhardt’s French translation of the story as its source.

Evidence of her consultation and collaboration with Kanak experts can be seen in the introduction to *Savoirs et pouvoirs...*, where Salomon outlines the way she conducted the research, guided by those who collaborated in the research project, particularly Sylvain Aramiu, Gabriel Mwâtéapöö, Antoine Görömwêédö, Suzanne and Monique Thiijin. The source of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that she has used is also clearly acknowledged by Salomon, who introduces her (re)writing as coming from the story of “Le Maître de Koné” as transcribed by Bwêëyöuu Eñijiyi and translated by Maurice Leenhardt in *Documents néo-calédoniens*; the page reference is also given.

The (re)writing of “Le Maître de Koné” in *Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanaks* is used as evidence to support Salomon’s explanation of the conception of illness in Ajië and Paicî

cultures. In the introduction to the book, she states her position vis-à-vis alternative conceptions of sickness and healing, highlighting the refusal that she observed, on the part of the medical establishment, to accept any vision other than that of Western medicine, a refusal that she considered to be still very much in evidence at the time of writing (10–11). Salomon distances herself from such a limited viewpoint, and presents the information she has gathered as evidence of a coherent system and does not make value judgements. For this reason, her (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* can be said to participate in a larger work that projects positive images of Kanak culture and identity, as part of an exercise in genuine communication.

4.18 TEXT 31: Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi. Pèci i bwêëyöuu ërîijiyi : pèci ka baayê 1915-1920. / Cahiers de Boesou Eurijisi : première série 1915–1920. Transcription by Sylvain Aramiou & Jean Euritén. Houaïlou: FELP–ADCK, 2002.

“ÔÔ NÉ KA TÛ KONÉ” (PP.117–29)

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins in New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in both Ajië and French. The Ajië text of “Virhenô ne ka to Kone” moves out from *Documents néo-calédoniens* and into *Pèci i bwêëyöuu ërîijiyi : pèci ka baayê 1915-1920. / Cahiers de Boesou Eurijisi : première série 1915-1920* where it is transformed into “Vi rhenô né ka tÛ Koné”, a text in Ajië followed by a short résumé of the story in French.

Pèci i bwêëyöuu ërîijiyi... is a collection of the writings in Ajië of Bwêëyöuu Efiijiyi, published by the *Section des langues vernaculaires*, of the *Fédération de l’Enseignement Libre Protestant* (FELP)⁵⁰³ in 2002, with the support of the ADCK. The book consists of retranscriptions and translations of eleven of the *cahiers* written by Efiijiyi from 1915 to 1920,

⁵⁰³ The FELP runs three non-state *collèges*, one in each of the three Customary Areas of the Province Nord.

undertaken by Sylvain Aramiou and Jean Euritéin,⁵⁰⁴ educators and Ajië experts, using the modern Ajië writing system they have elaborated. Some of Eñijiyi's numerous sketches have also been reproduced in the book, including on the front cover. The book is divided into eleven sections, one for each *cahier*, and at the end of the texts feature glossaries of archaic or rarely-used words, added to assist with the comprehension of the text.

Emmanuel Kasarhérou, *Directeur culturel* of the ADCK, writes, in the *Préface*, that for a long time the original *cahiers* were inaccessible, and that the photocopies of the *cahiers* which were used to produce *Pèci i bwêeyöuu ëñijiyi...* were given to him at the end of the 1980s by Jean Guiart, who had made copies before the originals were deposited by Raymond Leenhardt at the *Archives Nationales section Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence.

He notes that he then passed on the copies to Jean Euritéin and the *Comité de la langue a'jië de Houaïlou*. However, *Cahiers* 8–11 were not among the copies he received from Guiart, and the originals are currently untraceable. He also explains that this is the reason that the Ajië texts sourced from the *Cahiers* 8–11 and published in Leenhardt's book, *Documents néo-calédoniens*, have been used for the retranscription in *Pèci i bwêeyöuu ëñijiyi...* of the missing material.

Emmanuel Kasarhérou observes that *Pèci i bwêeyöuu ëñijiyi...* represents an opportunity to widen the circle of readers of Bwêeyöuu Eñijiyi's work, ideally by providing a complete, annotated French translation, which would include the notes written by Leenhardt in the margins of the *cahiers* in the course of his discussions with Eñijiyi, but also critical notes. At the time of writing, it has not yet been possible to complete this considerable task. The publication of what Kasarhérou describes as a “major work for Kanak culture” and the result of the efforts of two generations of Kanak, “separated by almost a century” is something that the ADCK supports, “so that *la Parole* of our ancestors might live on for generations to come”.

⁵⁰⁴ See section 4.9 for discussion of another Ajië-language publication produced by Aramiou and Euritéin under the auspices of FELP, *Gô vârà méré a'jie*, published in 1992.

In the *Avant-Propos*, Euritéin writes that the hope is for readers, especially young college and high school students, to overcome the challenges of the book, which may appear difficult at first, and “resolutely plunge in to discover this unprecedented text”. He expresses the wish that “together we might succeed in unlocking its secrets amid calls of “Oia!” while making the *rhia* ring out as in Bwêeyöuu’s time!”⁵⁰⁵

At the beginning of *Pèci i bwêeyöuu ëřijiyi...* a short, one-page biography of Bwêeyöuu Eřijiyi, (1866-1947), presented in Ajië and French on facing pages, describes where he was from (the *tribu* of Nessakoéa in the Houailou Valley, a member of a lineage of the Mèeyükwëö clan), his baptism amongst the first 150 Caledonian Protestants in 1897, how he came to Do Neva and worked with Leenhardt, his involvement in 1914 in the translation of the New Testament into Ajië, and how in 1915 he began to write his first cahier, which was to be the beginning of an significant body of work produced up until 1925.⁵⁰⁶ It is also noted that his cahiers contained sketches, speeches, legends, customs, everything that related to the ancient customs of the Ajië land, and the quality of his work as well as their relationship made him Maurice Leenhardt’s principal informant.

The retranscription of all of the *cahiers* belonging to Bwêeyöuu Eřijiyi was undertaken by Sylvain Aramiou and Jean Euritéin over the period 1992-1993, and in the *Avant-Propos*, Euritéin gives credit to Sylvain Aramiou for his patience in undertaking this “painstaking task of deciphering” the handwriting of Eřijiyi, written in pen and ink using the old writing system. He also thanks the *vieux du pays a’jië* for their help in re-reading and understanding certain difficult passages.

In the *Avant-Propos*, Jean Euritéin also writes that no exact dates have been given for the *cahiers*’ production, only *Cahier 7* contains a date, October 27, 1919, placing its production

⁵⁰⁵ In *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou*, Leenhardt gives the definition of *rhia* as the man charged with the *rhia* during festive gatherings, but also the action of calling out certain cries to stimulate and animate the crowd, attracting the crowd’s attention before a speech (264).

⁵⁰⁶ The biography, on page 11, also refers the reader to Raymond Leenhardt’s 1976 homage to Eřijiyi, *Un sociologue canaque. Le pasteur Boesoou Erijisi (1866-1947)*.

near the end of the first series written between 1915 and 1920.⁵⁰⁷ Assuming that the numbering system 1–11 corresponds to the order in which the *cahiers* were produced, it might be assumed that *Cahier 8*, which contains the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “Virhenō ne ka to Kone”, was written around the end of 1919 or in 1920. “Vi rhenō né ka tö Koné” features in the section “Huitième Cahier”, beginning with the Ajië text (117), followed by a short résumé in French on the final page (129).

The first transformation undergone by the Ajië text from *Documents néo-calédoniens* relates to genre. In *Documents néo-calédoniens*, “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” was a bilingual text, with an interlinear translation, that was part of a collection of texts from different Kanak authors, included in an anthropological work, and intended as “data” for use in understanding the culture of the people who produced the texts. In *Pèci i bwêyöuu ërîjîyi...*, “Vi rhenō né ka tö Koné” is also a bilingual text but is no longer set in a scholarly work, in the sense of academic inquiry. Rather, there is a shift in emphasis and the (re)writing makes it part of a collection of writings by a single author designed to make his works available to a wider reading public, especially the Ajië-speaking public, and particularly high school students.

At the level of the text itself, a comparison between the titles, “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” (1932) and “Vi rhenō né ka tö Koné” (2002), highlights the differences between the methods of writing the Ajië language, both at the level of morphology (compare *Virhenō* with *Vi rhenō* for example) and the use of diacritics, differences that are found throughout the texts.

The linguistic and cultural competence of those involved in the (re)writing process that resulted in *Pèci i bwêyöuu ërîjîyi...* is evidently considerable, from Bwêyöuu Ërîjîyi, to the *vieux* of the region who assisted with the transcription and translation, to Aramiou and Euritéin, respected educators and specialists in the Ajië language, from the linguistic perspective as well as that of native-speakers. Consultation and collaboration were cornerstones of the (re)writing’s production, in particular this is evident in the treatment of

⁵⁰⁷ A second book, *Pèci i Bwêyöuu Ërîjîyi : Cahiers de Boesou Eurijisi : péci pè kaarû 1918-1921 : seconde série 1918-1921*, by S. Aramiou and J. Euritéin was published by the FELP and ADCK in 2003. This book presents 11 *cahiers* containing Ërîjîyi’s responses to the 1918 questionnaire on the organisation and origins of the clans, *Ërêwaa cèki mâ a pâgûrû mwâârô* [Questionnaire pour la connaissance des clans].

archaic expressions and vocabulary. The original text of *Cahier 8* is acknowledged in the introduction to the book, and the (re)writing of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” is recognised as having been taken from Bwêeyōuu’s Ajië text in *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

The images of Ajië, and by extension, Kanak identity projected by *Pèci i bwêeyōuu ërîjiji...* are a rich and valuable cultural heritage that, despite its complexity, is worth examining and publishing. The complexity, in fact, adds to the impression of its value and sophistication, and is far removed from the impression given by earlier collections of elements of Kanak oral tradition that seem to condescend or apologise for the “simplicity” of the stories. Thus, “Virhenō né ka tö Koné”, as part of *Pèci i bwêeyōuu ërîjiji...*, presents a very positive portrayal of Kanak oral tradition, and a sense of the richness and continuing relevance of this important cultural resource in ongoing processes of Kanak identity construction, as illustrated in the following quote taken from Jean Euritén’s *Avant-Propos*,

Lire les textes de Bwêeyōuu nous incite à revenir à la source des valeurs de notre culture pour mieux l’asseoir dans le présent et nous aider à envisager son devenir (4).⁵⁰⁸

4.19 TEXT 12: Patrick Pillon. “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” in *Ethnologies comparées* 7, (2004): 1–21.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (P. 11).

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* takes five different pathways that converge in “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, an article written by the French anthropologist Patrick Pillon that appeared in *Ethnologies comparées* N° 7, “Figures sahariennes” in 2004. The pathway that is relevant to the network discussed in this chapter is the one originating in New Caledonian written tradition in French and Ajië, the French text of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” in *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932).

⁵⁰⁸ [Reading Bwêeyōuu’s writings encourages us to return to the source of the values of our culture, in order to better ground it in the present, and help us to imagine its future].

The other four pathways that converge in Pillon's article begin in the following texts found in New Caledonian written tradition: "Le Chef de Touho" from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900), "Le Lézard et le bénitier" and "Bodanu Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier", both of which figure in *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie*, and "Pasikan et le lézard" from *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna*.

Since it participates in each of the pathway networks examined this study, Pillon's article figures in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. In order to avoid repetition of material, the full discussion of the context in which the (re)writing process takes place, as well as the images projected by the article is found in the first chapter in which it appears: Chapter 3, section 3.6.

4.20 TEXT 33: Bwêyöuu Efijiyi . "Vi rhenô né ka tö Koné. Le Maître de Koné" in *Mwà Vée* 44. Cahiers de la littérature orale 2 (2004): 29–36.

"VI RHENÔ NÉ KA TÖ KONÉ. LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ" (PP. 29–36).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in both the French and Ajië languages. The story moves out from "Virhenô ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné" in *Documents néo-calédoniens* and into "Vi rhenô né ka tö Koné. Le Maître de Koné" in the second issue of the special publication *Cahiers de la littérature orale*, inserted into volume 44 of the cultural *revue*, *Mwà Vée*. *Mwà Vée* has been published quarterly by the ADCK/Centre Culturel Tjibaou since 1993, with the participation of the Ministry of Culture of the French *Ministère d'Outre-Mer*, and the three New Caledonian provinces of the Îles Loyauté, Province Nord et Province Sud.

The *Cahier* comprises seven pages that include a short introductory text and a short concluding comment from the *Mwà Vée* editors, both of these texts are set off from the main body of the (re)writing. The main text begins with the heading "Vi rhenô né ka to Koné" as the story was written by Bwêyöuu Efijiyi and published in *Documents néo-calédoniens* in 1932. It is followed by the French translation written by Maurice Leenhardt that appears in *Documents...* this time, however, it is placed under the heading "*Traduction.*" Prominently featured throughout the *Cahier* are photographs of different aspects of Dick Bone's sculpture *L'Homme-lézard*, the picture of the whole sculpture has the caption "*Dick Bone, Isa Trotro*

Hnine Ju À chacun de me comprendre, 1992. Bois de chêne rouge. Fonds d'art contemporain kanak et océanien – Centre culturel Tjibaou.” On the cover of the *Cahier* the face of *L'Homme-lézard* is set against a green background, and each of the double internal pages features a different image of the entire sculpture.

The reasons for the commission of this special publication can be found both in following information in the presentation of *Mwà Vée* found on the ADCK website.⁵⁰⁹ As part of the ADCK/*Centre Culturel Tjibaou* policy of cultural development, the stated aim of the *Mwà Vée* is to reflect both contemporary and traditional dimensions of Kanak culture. The publication acts as an interface between oral culture and its transmission by the written word, communicating information on ancient knowledge and know-how, custom, traditional rituals, genealogies, mythic stories, *contes*, *légendes*, Kanak history and heritage. It also highlights contemporary Kanak expression in all domains: fine arts (sculpture, painting, photography, artistic performances), performance arts (dance, theatre, music), reflection (debates, writing, poetry). A third objective of the publication is to propose areas for reflection on Kanak society of yesterday and today, such as the fundamental values of Kanak society (social organisation, custom), relationships with the outside world (contact with Europeans, colonisation, the *Indigénat*,⁵¹⁰ decolonisation, the struggle for recognition of the Kanak people, the current era), and adaptation to modern society (daily life, training for young people, work, the economy, *la tribu*, the city...). The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* that features in the *Cahier* fulfils the first objective by communicating this elements of oral tradition, as is explicitly expressed in the introductory text of the *Cahier*, which specifies why this particular version of *Le Chef et le lézard* has been chosen,

*Avec Les Cahiers de Mwà Vée, nous poursuivons notre effort de publication de textes de littérature orale kanak. Nous avons choisi de publier des textes tantôt inédits, et récemment collectés lors des opérations de collecte du patrimoine immatériel que l'ADCK-centre Tjibaou mène en partenariat avec les conseils coutumiers concernés, tantôt déjà publiés mais trop difficilement accessibles.*⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ www.adck.nc/patrimoine/mwa-vee/presentation

⁵¹⁰ The “Native Code” used by the French colonial administration to control Kanak from 1887 to 1946.

⁵¹¹ [With the *Cahiers de Mwà Vée*, we are continuing in our effort to publish texts of Kanak oral literature. We have chosen to publish texts that are either unpublished, and recently collected in the collection of intangible

The publication of Bwêyöuu Eñijiyi's text and Leenhardt's translation would seem to fall into this second category, of texts that are difficult to gain access to, since in the case of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, the barriers to access relate to the limited number of copies of the book in circulation, and the fact that it is out of print.

The (re)writing process involves the editorial committee of *Mwà Véeé*, who have taken the bilingual text "Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné" from *Documents néo-calédoniens* and transformed it, mainly through changes to its genre and presentation. The change in genre sees the story that was part of a collection of texts presented as part of an ethnographic series comprising *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (1930) and *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houiïlou* (1935), become a text in a special edition of a publication that promotes Kanak culture, past, present and future. This genre change has involved stripping away the critical apparatus⁵¹² that overlays the 1932 version "Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné", allowing the story to stand on its own merits and foregrounding its literary, cultural and aesthetic qualities. This brings about a subtle change in the reception of the story, since it is now presented in terms of cultural heritage rather than as field data for anthropological research.

Obvious differences between the 1932 and 2004 (re)writings also occur at the level of page layout. In *Documents néo-calédoniens*, there were three texts presented on each page - Eñijiyi's Ajië text at the top, with an interlinear Ajië-French translation in the middle, and Leenhardt's translation into literary French on the bottom third of the page. In the *Cahier*, Eñijiyi's text is presented first, in its entirety, following the title page of "*Vi rhenō né ka tō Koné*",⁵¹³ with the subtitle "*Le Maître de Koné*", and under the heading "*Texte en langue a'jië*".⁵¹⁴ After just over three full pages of Ajië text, comes Leenhardt's French text, which

heritage programmes that the ADCK-Centre *Tjibaou* are undertaking in partnership with the Customary Councils concerned, or already published, but too difficult to access.]

⁵¹² mainly consisting of footnotes, interlinear translations and introductions.

⁵¹³ There has also been a change in the spelling, reflecting modern Ajië writing and spelling conventions, thus the 1932 "Virhenō ne ka to Kone" becomes "Vi rhenō né ka tō Koné" in the 2004 version.

⁵¹⁴ [Text in the Ajië language]

has been placed in an arguably subordinate position, appearing after the complete Ajië text, and under the simple title of “*Traduction*”.⁵¹⁵

This is not to say that Leenhardt is not given credit for his translation: he is acknowledged in the introduction as having published the story in *Documents néo-calédoniens*. In the editorial note at the end of the *Cahier*, the bibliographic details of Leenhardt’s book are given under the heading “*Traduction de Maurice Leenhardt*”.⁵¹⁶ Reference is made to the numerous footnotes to the original translation,⁵¹⁷ of which only two, deemed essential for the understanding of the text, have been retained in the *Cahier*. There is also a comment supporting Leenhardt’s translation choices, in which the editors note that the archaism of certain turns of phrase in the translation may surprise the reader, but these turns of phrase are the most correct reproductions of certain archaic forms found in the original Ajië text. This fact, and the fact that the only two changes to Leenhardt’s translation are very minor,⁵¹⁸ can be read as acknowledgement of the quality of Leenhardt’s translation.

This (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, appearing as it does in a significant cultural publication produced by the ADCK and the *Centre Culturel Tjibaou*, is evidently the work of (re)writers with significant linguistic and cultural competence in the domain of Kanak culture in general and Ajië culture in particular.⁵¹⁹ It is an example of a (re)writing process that involves consultation and collaboration with Kanak experts.

⁵¹⁵ [Translation]

⁵¹⁶ [Translation by Maurice Leenhardt]

⁵¹⁷ Of which there were 59 in Leenhardt’s original translation. The two footnotes that are retained relate to the names of two extinct birds, and explain the location of the two mountains, Warama and Rhéméou, that are connected to the women who brought the lizards and stones with them when they were married.

⁵¹⁸ The translation by Leenhardt of “*jusqu’aux Gaiacs*” for one of the locations in which the *chef* lays his traps at the beginning of the story, has been changed in the *Cahier* to “*jusqu’à la Plaine des Gaiacs*” and appears to provide more precision regarding the location for the contemporary reader. The second change involves the question posed by the *chef de Koné*’s wife to the lizard, sitting perched upon her husband. In Leenhardt’s original translation, she asks, “*Pourquoi fais-tu ainsi à notre père ?*” [Why are you doing this to our father?], in the *Cahier*, the question becomes, “*Pourquoi agis-tu ainsi envers notre père ?*” [Why are you acting in this way towards our father?]. The reason for the change in verb is unclear, perhaps it represents a more sophisticated utterance on the part of the woman, or perhaps the editors felt that *agir* is a better translation than *faire* of the Ajië *wa* of Bwêÿöuu’s original text (the question in Ajië is “*Gè wa unu re xiye ye pēva xeve ?*” with a word-for-word gloss given underneath as “*Tu fais comme cela pourquoi à père de nous ?*”). In either case, this represents a very minor adjustment to Leenhardt’s original translation, which is otherwise reproduced exactly as it was published in 1932.

⁵¹⁹ Not only is it the practice of the publication to utilise expertise from different linguistic and customary areas, but the director of the Centre Culturel Tjibaou and member of the editorial panel of *Mwà Vée* at the time of the

With respect to the visibility of the source text, this (re)writing clearly acknowledges *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932) as the source of the version of *Le Chef et le lézard* presented in the 2004 *Cahier*, and also the two people involved in the production of the original bilingual text – Bwêâyöuu Eñijiyi and Maurice Leenhardt. The performative context in which the story originated in oral tradition is not explicitly evoked in the text. However, its appearance in one of *Mwà Vée’s Cahiers de la littérature orale*⁵²⁰ clearly signals the origins of the story in oral tradition.

This (re)writing strips back the academic/analytical framework of the source text and allows the voice of Bwêâyöuu Eñijiyi to be heard above that of Leenhardt. This foregrounding of the Kanak voice, in conjunction with the juxtaposition of the text with images of Dick Bone’s powerful sculpture, and the presentation of the (re)writing in a large format, special edition, with a striking cover page (the close-up of the face of Bone’s *L’Homme-lézard*), works to create a very positive image of Kanak oral literature, creativity and agency, from the early twentieth century when the story was written down, to the late twentieth–early twenty-first century, when the sculpture and *revue* were produced. And thus, the encounter between the (re)writers and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* can be said to be an example of genuine communication that respects and portrays in a very positive way the creative and aesthetic dimensions of this element of Ajië oral literature, valorising and validating it. The decision to produce this (re)writing can also be said to potentially increase the cultural “overlap” between reader and Ajië oral tradition, and thus to contribute to the increase in mutual respect and understanding that is necessary for the creation of the community of the *destin commun*. The choice of the text “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” for (re)writing in *Cahier de la littérature orale 2* is a reminder of an important collaborative relationship of mutual respect (between Eñijiyi and Leenhardt) that can be said to prefigure the sense of community implied in the notion of the *destin commun* put forward in the Noumea Agreement.

publication of this edition of the *revue*, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, has family origins in the Ajië-speaking linguistic and customary area of the Grande Terre (see also his writing of the *Préface* to the re-edition of Bwêâyöuu’s *cahiers* in section 4.18 of this chapter).

⁵²⁰ [The Oral Literature Notebooks]

4.21 TEXT 14: Lorna Miskelly. “La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français.” MA thesis. Department of French, School of European Languages and Literatures, University of Auckland, 2006.

“LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 36–67).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins in New Caledonian written tradition in French and Ajië, and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story moves out from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932) by Maurice Leenhardt, in the form of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” and into “La Transformation du Maître de Koné”, a Masters thesis written in French by Lorna Miskelly, a student in the Department of French at the University of Auckland. The (re)writing consists of a photocopy of the source text from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (pp. 3–34) placed at the end of Chapter 1 of her study, entitled “Le Maître de Koné”. For a discussion of the commission, (re)writing process, the encounter between the elements of oral tradition and the (re)writer, and the image projected of Kanak oral traditions and culture by this and the four other (re)writings that figure in the thesis, see section 3.8 of Chapter 3.

4.22 TEXT 34: Stéphane Camille. *Le Livre des timbres 2006. Nouvelle-Calédonie: Des timbres à l'image d'un pays*. Ed. Jean-Yves Ollivaud. Noumea: Office des Postes et Télécommunications de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2007.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (P. 48).

The version of *Le Chef et le lézard* that features in the 2007 OPT *Livre des timbres 2006* is a (re)writing of “Le Maître de Koné” from Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and an example of a pathway taken by the story that begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French.

The OPT *Livre des timbres* has been published annually since 1999⁵²¹ and is intended as a mini encyclopedia of New Caledonia through the medium of its stamps, as the following quote from the back cover of *Le Livre des timbres 2006* states,

*Abondamment illustrée et documentée, cette petite encyclopédie vous propose, chaque année, de timbre en timbre, une découverte ludique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.*⁵²²

The (re)writing appears on the third of a four-page section entitled “L’Homme-lézard”. The section features stamps depicting two different sculptures of *l’homme-lézard*. The sculptures are “L’Homme-lézard” by Dick Bone, from Lifou, and “L’Homme-lézard, le clan du lézard” by Joseph Poukiou, from Houaïlou, and they are part of the FACKO (*Fonds d’art contemporain kanak et océanien*) collection. Several inset texts provide information about Poukiou’s vocation as sculptor, the arrival of the first of 70 species of lizard found in New Caledonia, the FACKO, and the exhibition Ko Névâ (*Esprit du pays*),⁵²³ organised annually by the Centre Culturel Tjibaou. The (re)writing figures on page 48, and consists of a single page résumé (around 350 words) of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, accompanied by a cartoon-like illustration of a lizard-man. A caption introducing the résumé states that “*Le Maître de Koné*” is the most famous Kanak story linked with the lizard, that the version in *Documents néo-calédoniens* has the same base structure as several other “Caledonian legends” and that the “*homme-lézard*” is also said to feature widely in Kanak *contes* and myths inspiring numerous authors and artists.

The motif of the lizard in “L’Homme lézard” is used to demonstrate a link between peoples and the land of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. The lizard’s connection to the land is established at the beginning of the text with the comparison between the outline of the *Grande Terre* and the shape of a lizard stretched out with its head pointing south and tail pointing to the north. The juxtaposition of text and images relating to oral tradition, contemporary sculpture, art collection and exhibition and the New Caledonian works to create the impression of the symbolic role of the lizard in Kanak cultures on the *Grande*

⁵²¹ The year following the signing of the Noumea Agreement, in which it was decided that the *Office de Postes et Télécommunication de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (created in 1958) would be transferred from the French State to the territory of New Caledonia, a transfer accomplished in 2003.

⁵²² [Abundantly illustrated and researched, each year, this little encyclopedia offers you a fun way to discover New Caledonia]

⁵²³ [Spirit of the Land]

Terre, in both Kanak oral traditions and contemporary Kanak artistic expression. The description of the arrival of endemic lizard species as a kind of colonisation, “*Avec les insectes, les oiseaux et les serpents, les lézards furent parmi les premiers animaux à coloniser les îles calédoniennes* (47),⁵²⁴ is also a way of indirectly evoking the non-indigenous communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, and along with the anecdote of a huge construction site brought to a halt by a mining company following the discovery of a tiny and very rare lizard, could be read as an assertion of these animal species as the first inhabitants of the land, that is, the first colonisers of the land.

This (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* in the OPT annual of 2006 provides a positive portrayal of Kanak identity, through its drawing of connections between myth in oral tradition, and contemporary art, showing the dynamism and influence of Kanak cultural production. As well as a symbol of Kanak culture, the (re)writing’s presentation of connections of other communities to the lizard, through the ecological focus on the lizard as an endemic species, works to create a rallying point for all of the communities in New Caledonia, the community of the *destin commun* through presenting their shared interest in preserving this symbol of the land in which they all reside.

4.23 TEXT 35: Raymond Aï. “Wörénô ê a tö Kooné/Histoire du Lézard de Koné.” *Rapport 2007. Collecte du Patrimoine immatériel de l’aire A’jië-Aro. Noumea: ADCK-Conseil Coutumier A’jië-Aro, December 2007.*

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië to New Caledonian written tradition in ‘Ôrôê. The story moves out from the Ajië text “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” written by Bwêëyōuu Efijiyi and into “Wörénô ê a tö Kooné/Histoire du lézard de Koné”, a text in the ‘Ôrôê language by Raymond Aï, a researcher for the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche*⁵²⁵ of the ADCK. The (re)writing features in the section “Wöréno, Récits ou histoires de la région Kôrôê” in the *Rapport 2007*.

⁵²⁴ [With the insects, the birds and the snakes, the lizards were amongst the first animales to colonise the New Caledonian islands]

⁵²⁵ [Heritage and Research Department]

Collecte du Patrimoine immatériel de l'aire A'jië-Aro produced in Noumea, December 2007, as a joint report by the ADCK and the *Conseil Coutumier A'jië-Aro*.⁵²⁶

The report on the activity of collection of elements of oral tradition in the eight Customary Areas of New Caledonia, is produced as part of the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche*'s remit. According to the “*Patrimoine et Recherche*” page of the ADCK website, the main missions of the department are: developing collection and research projects, in particular those in the domain of intangible Kanak heritage;⁵²⁷ participating in the publication, discussion, development and valorisation of this heritage, notably through means of dissemination such as publications, radio programmes in Kanak languages, audio CDs of traditional Kanak songs; assisting, when requested, researchers working on the Kanak world; and promoting international exchanges.

The information panel at the top of the report's text “Wörénô ê a tö Kooné/Histoire du Léopard de Koné”, lists its genre as “*Histoire clanique*”,⁵²⁸ its date of recording as November 12, 2007, the “*interprète*”⁵²⁹ is named as Maurice Leenhardt, the researcher and the transcriber as Raymond Aï and the level of authorisation for the consultation of the document as level 4, (open to consultation).⁵³⁰

Produced by Raymond Aï, one of the researcher-collectors working with the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche*, this (re)writing arises from a slightly atypical process, in that he worked from a source text, rather than recording an oral performance by a source person. Aï has translated the Ajië text “Virhenō ne ka to Kone” provided by Bwêëyōuu Efiijiyi and

⁵²⁶ [Ajië-Aro Customary Council]

⁵²⁷ “*patrimoine kanak immatériel*” – here the term “*immatériel*” translates as “intangible”, as it figures in the definition on the Intangible Cultural Heritage section of the UNESCO website: “Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.”

⁵²⁸ which can be translated in English as either “clan story” or “clan history”, or both, as in “clan (hi)story”.

⁵²⁹ [performer]

⁵³⁰ Different levels of consultation exist, the most restricted level authorises consultation of the document only a designated number of years after the death of the person providing the story, the next restricting access (at the archives) to those designated by the person providing the story, and the next requiring the permission of the relevant customary authorities. This system of different levels of access to stories reflects the same practice in oral traditions, where differential access to stories exists depending on such variables as gender, age, family, lineage or clan.

published as “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” by Maurice Leenhardt in *Documents néo-calédoniens*. Given that the “*interprète*” label is given to the source of the story, this appears to explain why Maurice Leenhardt is named, rather than Bwêyōuu Efiiji, as the source text *Documents néo-calédoniens* is attributed to the missionary-ethnographer. Interestingly, in the *Résumé* at the beginning of the text, which names the source text used to produce the (re)writing, titles in French other than the one given by Leenhardt are mentioned. Thus rather than “Le Maître de Koné”, the story is referred to as “Le Lézard de Bwéxawé” or “Le Lézard de Koné”. It appears that this shift in emphasis from the man to the lizard appears to better reflect the content of the Ajië story, and this change in point of view may have been considered more appropriate by Aï. A bilingual Ajië/French speaking researcher would be well placed to follow up on this interesting question.

According to the *Résumé* the (re)writing was produced in order to provide future speakers of ‘Ôrôê with the opportunity to read this famous story in their own language, “*pour permettre aux générations locutrices de cette langue de pouvoir lire cette histoire très connue dans la région de Bourail et Houaïlou.*”⁵³¹

Discussion of the transformations undergone by the Ajië text in the translation process is evidently beyond the scope of this thesis; the length of the translated text appears to be similar to that of the original in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, but the degree of departure or closeness of the translation to the source text will hopefully be the subject of analysis by future bilingual Ajië/’Ôrôê researchers. A non-linguistic addition to the original text is Paula Boi’s striking image of the huge lizard standing over the cowering man, originally published alongside the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in Tome 3 of *Chroniques du pays kanak* (125).⁵³²

It is evident that with respect to the (re)writer, Raymond Aï, questions of linguistic and cultural competence, and of collaboration with Kanak experts have already been addressed as a function of his selection as researcher-collector of elements of oral tradition for the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK. Also, the recognition of the source of

⁵³¹ [to allow generations of speakers of this language to be able to read this story that is very well-known in the region of Bourail and Houaïlou]

⁵³² See section 4.16 for discussion of this (re)writing of “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné”.

the (re)writing and the fact that this (re)writing is part of a body of work created by those responsible for the *Collecte du Patrimoine immatériel de l'aire A'jië-Aro* clearly indicate that this text derives from oral tradition.

“Wörénô ê a tö Kooné / Histoire du Léopard de Koné” presents a positive image of Kanak oral tradition. It is an example of the value placed on an existing (re)writing derived from Ajië oral tradition, with status conferred on it by virtue of the fact that it is deemed worthy of translation and inclusion in the archives by those responsible for the project of preservation of the *Patrimoine immatériel* of the Ajië-Arhö customary area. The fact that the ADCK has commissioned this report affirms the status and the importance of Kanak languages from an institutional point of view, as does the collaboration with the *Conseil Coutumier A'jië-Aro*. This (re)writing is an integral part of a rich resource for present and future generations and an ongoing project underpinned by Kanak agency, and in this sense it contributes in a positive way to processes of identity construction for Kanak, contributing to the recognition of Kanak identity that the Noumea Agreement outlines as a prerequisite to the creation of the community of the *destin commun*.

4.24 TEXT 36: Ignace Péarou & Samuel Goromido. “Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü.” *Rapport 2007. Collecte des traditions orales de l'aire Paicî-Câmùkî*. Noumea: ADCK-Conseil Coutumier Paicî-Cèmuhî, 2007.

This pathway of *Le Chef et le léopard* leads from Paicî oral tradition to New Caledonian written tradition in Paicî. The story moves out from Paicî oral tradition by way of Ignace Péarou, and into “Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü”, a text in the Paicî language produced by Samuel Goromido, a researcher-collector for the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK. The (re)writing features in the *Rapport 2007. Collecte des traditions orales de l'aire Paicî-Câmùkî* produced as a joint report by the ADCK and the *Conseil Coutumier Paicî-Cèmuhî*, and was commissioned as part of the ADCK's ongoing project of collection and preservation of elements of Kanak “*Patrimoine immatériel*”.⁵³³

⁵³³ See the preceding section (4.23) for more detail of the missions of the ADCK's *Département Patrimoine et Recherche*.

The information panel that heads the (re)writing “Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü” lists the genre as “Jèèmâ”, the identity of the person recounting the story as Ignace Péarou, aged 69 years, who was born 3 May, 1938 at Âtéü. The researcher is listed as Samuel Goromido, and the date of recording, 24 January, 2007 at Péaru ätéü. The authorisation for consultation is 5 (open consultation, copiable). The *Résumé* gives the full title as “Jèèmâ go pwi Bwiirü pwi a tââ Büräi” and states that Ignace Péarou is reciting another version of the story of “Le maître de Koné” collected by Leenhardt in *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

The (re)writing consists of just over one page of Paicî (approximately 30 lines of text) in the form of a recorded then transcribed interview between Samuel Goromido and Ignace Péarou. While no specific reference is made to the identity of the transcriber, it is likely that this would have been part of Goromido’s role as researcher-collector. Punctuation seems to indicate that questions are posed by Goromido, who contributes a total of 12 words, Ignace Péarou’s contributions comprising the majority of the text. Though the title has not been translated into French, there are three footnotes, regarding a locality (*Bwiiru* is described as located near Bourail), the meaning of a term, *nâpwé* (defined as a creek, river, torrent or stream, as well as the name of a clan in the commune of Poindimié – then a reference to a “*dictionnaire Paicî-français p. 159*” is given), the third footnote gives the identity of Tikakara (thunder, lightning, storm – again a reference to the dictionary is provided “*ref: dictionnaire Paicî-français p. 232*”).

The transformations undergone by the story are those that arise from the process of textualisation, with the main changes due to the removal of elements of the performative context, such as gestures, intonation and other non-verbal elements. There is a change in genre, from a *jèèmâ* in Paicî oral tradition, to an archival text, a transcribed interview, containing the words of a *jèèmâ*, and forming part of an annual report by institutions charged with the conservation of Kanak *Patrimoine immatériel*.

The researcher-collectors who work with the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* have been selected and trained by the ADCK, and the texts that are produced are viewed and authorised by the ADCK and the relevant *Conseil Coutumier*, thus questions of linguistic and cultural competence and the degree of collaboration between Kanak experts and the (re)writer are addressed by the process employed. There is full acknowledgement of the origin of the story, with biographical information about Ignace Péarou included as well as details of the circumstances of the (re)writing’s production. For the same reasons as the (re)writing

produced by the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* that figures in the previous section of this chapter, “Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü” portrays this element of Paicî oral tradition, and by extension, Kanak oral traditions, in a positive light, affirming its value and contributing to the recognition of Kanak identity that constitutes an essential building block for the construction of the collective identity of the *destin commun*.

4.25 TEXT 37: Raylene Ramsay (ed). *Nights of Storytelling. A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011.

“THE MASTER OF KONÉ” (PP. 43–46).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* sees the story move from New Caledonian written tradition in Ajië and French into New Caledonian written tradition in English.⁵³⁴ The French-language translation produced by Maurice Leenhardt and found in “Virhenō ne ka to Kone / Le Maitre de Koné” in *Documents néo-calédoniens* is (re)written as “The Master of Koné” in *Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia* edited by Raylene Ramsay and published in 2011 by the University of Hawai’i Press.

Nights of Storytelling presents the founding texts of New Caledonian written tradition and through them “introduces the multiple voices of a diverse culture” by taking extracts from literary, ethnographic and historical writings, translating them into English and weaving them together with a commentary that provides historical context and investigates the cultural encounters that give rise to each text. The book is organised into four parts: “Part 1 – Kanak (Hi)stories” presents widely-circulating texts from Kanak oral traditions and traces the ways in which they are being “revived, given value, and reinvented to constitute a modern Kanak literature” (6);⁵³⁵ “Part 2 – Exploration and First Contact” presents eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts of first encounters and observations by European explorers and observers; “Part 3 – Early Texts: Missionaries, Settlers, Convicts and Kanak” is a study of the

⁵³⁴ This text can be seen as belonging simultaneously to the polysystem of New Caledonian written tradition (in the English-language sub-system) and to the Aotearoa/New Zealand polysystem (in the sub-system of academic writing, specifically literary criticism).

⁵³⁵ As part of the research team for the book, I authored the commentary and contributed to the translations undertaken for this section.

texts of the colonial period up until 1946 (the end of the *Indigénat* and the accession of Kanak to citizenship); the final section, “Part 4 – The Modern Period: From Colonial New Caledonia to the Kanaky-New Caledonia of the Noumea Agreement (1998)”, investigates the diverse writings that have emerged since the late twentieth century from the different New Caledonian communities, the historical contexts from which they arise and the ways in which these writings interact with each other and engage with important cultural and political questions facing Kanaky-New Caledonia. The (re)writing of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* appears in “Part 1 - Kanak (Hi)stories” at the end of the Chapter 2 “Pathways and Interconnections”, where it figures on pages 43-46 as “The Master of Koné”.

The commission of this book can be traced back to its origins as part of a project headed by Professor Raylene Ramsay, from the Department of French in the School of European Languages and Literatures at the University of Auckland. The project, funded by a Marsden grant under the umbrella of the Royal Society of New Zealand, included the production of a cultural history of Kanaky/New Caledonia through the translation of significant texts into English. Raylene Ramsay, a literary scholar with long-standing connections to New Caledonia⁵³⁶ and whose research has focused on New Caledonian writing since the early 1990s, outlines the aim of *Nights of Storytelling...* in the book’s introduction:

the project of our cultural history of New Caledonia is to cross old imperial boundaries and open up an important location of decolonisation in the French Pacific to Anglophone readers by translating its relatively little-known literatures. Through a selection of founding texts presented for the first time in English, Nights of Storytelling seeks to bring the stories and histories of an unfamiliar group of French-speaking islands into the living rooms and libraries of the English-speaking world, close to their original, vibrant form (1).

The target readership of the book is an English-speaking readership with an interest (general or academic) in New Caledonian written tradition, and as very little critical writing on New Caledonian literature is available in English, *Nights of Storytelling...* also represents an attempt to convey key information to non-French-speaking scholars in the field of Pacific Literature.

⁵³⁶ In 1966, she taught as an English *assistante* for a year at the Do Neva Protestant mission school established by Maurice Leenhardt.

With respect to the (re)writing process, the extract was translated by Diane Walton, a member of the research team who also contributed to the commentary of Part 2 – Exploration and First Contact, and was edited by Deborah Walker-Morrison,⁵³⁷ who had overall responsibility for the translations that feature in the book. The “Translators’ Notes” section of the Introduction outlines the approach taken in the translation process, with the guiding principle laid out as “respect for our authors and for our readers”,

We have aimed to speak with rather than stand for the original voices of our texts, seeking to render their unique tone, register and cultural and historical specificity. We have sought to provide our readers with an experience of the texts and their contexts that puts them into the shoes of the original audience while also signalling essential elements of cultural difference (9).

“The Master of Koné”, the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, is the fruit of this approach. It comprises two parts: a short introductory paragraph that serves as a résumé of the story up until the point at which the chief reaches the bay of Pousangué, the home of the chief who will deliver him from the lizard; and the translation into English of Leenhardt’s French text from the final six pages of “Virhenō ne ka to Koné / Le Maître de Koné” in *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

The most obvious transformations undergone by the story occur at the level of genre. The source text was part of a collection of elements of oral tradition predominantly from the Ajië customary area, and was an academic, anthropological text that was part of a trilogy designed to explain Kanak culture to a Francophone readership that would have most likely been involved or interested in anthropological research. The (re)writing “The Master of Koné” is part of a cultural history that takes the form of an anthology of extracts of New Caledonian literature, and it is directed at both an academic and a general readership. The focus of *Nights of Storytelling...* is not the explanation of Kanak culture, but rather an investigation of the

⁵³⁷ Deborah Walker-Morrison lived and worked in New Caledonia for ten years prior to returning to New Zealand, where she is now a lecturer in the Department of French at the University of Auckland. Her areas of research interest include film, translation and subtitling, in particular with reference to indigenous works, and she also produced, in collaboration with Neil Morrison, the DVD *La Nuit des contes: Mise en image de textes calédoniens* that accompanies *Nights of Storytelling*. *La Nuit des contes* consists of approximately three hours of recordings of texts that feature in the book, both in French and in indigenous languages, with subtitles in either English or Māori, set against photography, artwork, and video footage taken in New Caledonia.

interactions between the different communities resident in Kanaky-New Caledonia, which includes but does not solely focus on the literature whose source lies in Kanak culture.

At the level of presentation, the (re)writing has transformed the bilingual, Ajië-French text (and its interlinear translation) that figured in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, reducing it to a monolingual extract in English. The extract is introduced by a single paragraph précis of the story up until the point at which the *maître de Koné* arrives at the Bay of Pousangué, where he is eventually freed from the lizard's grip by his host, the *maître de Pousangué*. In addition to the précis and extract, two additional elements are added to the story. An inset text at the base of page 44 contains a quote translated from the French of Alban Bensa's and Jean-Claude Rivierre's *Les Filles du rocher Até* (1994).⁵³⁸ In it, they explain that the theme of the lizard caught in the trap is frequently encountered in the oral literatures of the East Coast of the Grande Terre, and that the itinerary travelled by the *maître de Koné* traces out the alliances that he can draw upon. The facing page, (45), features the striking image of the *maître de Koné* cowering before the huge Lizard, created by Paula Boi, the Kanak artist, and published originally in *Tome 3 of Chroniques du pays kanak* (1999).⁵³⁹

The translation was initially undertaken by Diane Walton as part of the postgraduate seminar in Translation in the French Department of the University of Auckland in 2001-2,⁵⁴⁰ and then edited for *Nights of Storytelling* by Deborah Walker-Morrison. During the course of the translation seminar, whose participants included both English and French native speakers, numerous discussions took place centering on the challenges of translating certain cultural concepts, such as the Ajië *orokau* which is often translated as *maître du lieu* or *maître de la terre* in French, and for which “master of the place” or “master of the land” are translations that do not fully capture the meaning.⁵⁴¹ The translation strategy used in the (re)writing “The Master of Koné” was to retain the notion of “*maître*” or Master when the title, connected with a specific location was used, such as the master of Koné or the master of Pousangué, but when the generic “*maître du lieu*” was employed by Leenhardt in the French translation, the

⁵³⁸ See Chapter 6, section 6.5 for the discussion of the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* that features in this book.

⁵³⁹ See section 4.16 of this chapter for the discussion of the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* that features in this book.

⁵⁴⁰ See Chapter 1, p. 14.

⁵⁴¹ See discussion of this point in Chapter 1, p. 14.

explanatory locution “guardian of those parts” was used. When it comes to translating the expression “*monnaie calédonienne*” that features in Leenhardt’s text, and is discussed in detail by him in the *Notes d’ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (1930),⁵⁴² one of the two volumes that accompany *Documents néo-calédoniens*,⁵⁴³ the decision has been made to remain close to Leenhardt’s text, and so the translation “Caledonian money” has been used. Although this “money” is of symbolic rather than economic value, it has been judged unnecessary to explain this within the translation, as the context already makes it clear that the transaction has more to do with alliance than finance. The remainder of the translation stays very close to Leenhardt’s original text, in both form and register, reflecting the aim expressed in the Translators’ Notes section of the Introduction to “respect the integrity of the source text while providing our readers with an experience that is at once aesthetically satisfying and both semantically and culturally authentic” (10).

The team of (re)writers who produced “The Master of Koné” were translating from a French text into English, hence the linguistic competence that is of the highest significance for their work is competence in the French language.⁵⁴⁴ Diane Walton is a professional, accredited translator from French to English, Deborah Walker-Morrison, the translation editor, teaches translation papers in the Department of French at the University of Auckland, and is a published translator, having worked with Raylene Ramsay to produce the translated collection of Déwé Görödé’s poetry entitled *Sharing as Custom Provides* and the translation of Görödé’s first novel, *L’Épave* into English as *The Wreck*. In addition to the aforementioned translations, Raylene Ramsay has published extensively in French and in English and lived in France and New Caledonia. Hence the linguistic competence of the translation team with respect to moving between these two languages is significant.

In regard to cultural competence, the awareness of the (re)writers’ perspective as cultural outsiders can be seen in the different strategies used to try to address issues that arise when

⁵⁴² Which features large sections of text translated directly from Bwêyöuu Efijiyi’s writings.

⁵⁴³ The third volume in the trilogy being *Vocabulaire et Grammaire de la langue houailou* (1935).

⁵⁴⁴ None of the members of the (re)writing team that produced *Nights of Storytelling...* are speakers of a Kanak language, hence their understandings of the cultural elements contained within the (hi)stories translated derive from writings on the subject and from discussions, interviews and conversations while in Kanaky-New Caledonia. Effectively, the underlying aim of *Nights of Storytelling...* is to bring across to English the founding texts of the New Caledonian literary polysystem, which are in the main written in French or exist in bilingual versions (Kanak language-French).

speaking about culture and traditions of groups of which one is not a member. These strategies include: the construction of the commentary of “Part 1 - Kanak (Hi)stories” around quotes⁵⁴⁵ from numerous Kanak experts; the extensive use made in the commentary of the rich resource of *Chroniques du pays kanak* that presents the many facets of Kanak cultures; and a footnote acknowledging the four-volume series *Chroniques du pays kanak* as the main source of information relating to Kanak culture and history in the “Kanak (Hi)stories” section of the book, as the encyclopedic series contains “texts and images contributed by the foremost experts, researchers, artists, and writers whose work concerns the Kanak world” (32). In addition, the DVD that accompanies the book attempts to restore some of the living qualities of the texts, and especially those derived from oral tradition. These stories are performed by Kanak speakers, illustrated with the work of Kanak artists, and accompanied by photographs and video footage taken in the actual landscapes that feature in the stories. The production of the DVD – *La Nuit des contes* was undertaken by Deborah Walker-Morrison and Neil Morrison in close consultation with Kanak experts, in particular Déwé Görödé, in an attempt to create respectful representations of these stories.⁵⁴⁶ The framework within which the texts, including those derived from different Kanak oral traditions, are presented in the book is outlined in the (re)writers’ comments in the Introduction,

We have sought to allow the power of the individual stories to take centre stage – to provide the space for the texts to speak, as much as possible, in their own unique voice, bringing the drama and the colours of different histories of cultural encounter to complex life, in both antagonistic and complementary voices and for both a general and specialist readership. Our reflections and conclusions are informed by the most recent theoretical work on French Pacific and postcolonial Francophone literature, predominantly published in French, although explicit discussion of theory has been kept to a minimum (4).

The degree of success with respect to the expressed aim of foregrounding the power of the individual stories is evidently open to debate. This work is breaking new ground in the sense that it is the first such effort to bring across to Anglophone readers information and writings on and from Kanaky-New Caledonia circulating in French. Regarding translations of

⁵⁴⁵ Twenty-seven such quotes feature in the pages of Part 1 – Kanak (Hi)stories, from 12 different Kanak experts in a variety of domains. The commentary is woven around the essential points raised in these quotes.

⁵⁴⁶ For more detail on the process of production of the DVD, including the issues encountered and strategies employed, see Deborah Walker-Morrison’s article, “Voice, Image, Text: tensions, interactions and translation choices in a multi-language, multi-media presentation of Kanak literature” (2010).

elements of Kanak oral literatures, the inherent complexity involved in transporting stories from their tradition of origin to French and then from French to English means each translation is necessarily partial and potentially open to re-interpretation on more levels. This partiality is also acknowledged in the subtitle of the book, *...A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia*, the indefinite article signalling that this is but one of a potentially infinite number of cultural histories that could be written.

The passage of the text from French into English has meant that collaboration and consultation with Kanak experts has not been central to the production of the (re)writing, although informal conversations during time spent in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie on the part of the members of the (re)writing team, for example, in the course of research trips and attendance at conferences and the SILO⁵⁴⁷ book festivals, have led to a deepening of the understanding of the “nodes of difference” that exist between languages and cultures. Though it has not been included in the book, the source text from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné”, and its authors Bwêÿöuu Eñijiyi and Maurice Leenhardt are acknowledged at the end of the (re)writing, with the reference information given. With respect to the performative context, the (re)writing occurs in the first part of *Nights of Storytelling...*, “Kanak (Hi)stories”, in which key characteristics of Kanak oral traditions and literatures, and the differences between these and written traditions, are presented, thus highlighting the dimension of orality.

The images of Kanak oral literature presented in the (re)writing “The Master of Koné” and the book *Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia* are positive, and the encounter between (re)writers and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* can be classed as an example of genuine communication in that the presentation, the translation of the text, and the framing of the Introduction and commentary work together to create a respectful portrayal in which the source text is treated with respect, as is the target readership. The book also works to increase the “overlap” in communicative contexts, between the culture of the (re)writer and that of Ajië oral tradition, and between Ajië and Kanak cultures and those of the Anglophone readership. It also recognises the diversity of expression that exists within the Kanak community through the inclusion of representative extracts from most Kanak

⁵⁴⁷ *Salon International du Livre Océanien*.

writers, and these Kanak texts are presented alongside texts from writers from the other communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. This recognition of the equal value of Kanak writing, and of the central tenet of the Noumea Agreement regarding the acknowledgement of Kanak identity is made explicit in the Introduction,

This anthology of texts translated into English serves, then, as a mirror of multiple, sometimes antagonistic but inevitably interconnected histories from different periods and ethnic groups and from oral or written traditions. They are organised in four parts to showcase their distinctive character and relation to colonialism and its aftermath. A rediscovered and recentred indigenous (Kanak) culture is placed where, we believe, it truly belongs: at the beginning, and then again as a significant component of the final ‘contemporary’ section, despite the fact that the body of published Kanak texts remains quite small (2).

The (re)writing of “The Master of Koné” and the work in which it features both make a positive contribution that has the potential to increase mutual understanding⁵⁴⁸ and as such can be defined as creating a context of genuine communication, because of the presentation and contextualisation of different voices at different stages in history. *Nights of Storytelling...* weaves together New Caledonian texts from across time, and across communities,⁵⁴⁹ emphasising the diversity of voices and the interactions between them,

The collected histories/stories are both irrevocably mixed and irreducibly different. The notion of time, space, person and community that they carry, like the historical itineraries of the different cultures represented, are interconnected, often syncretic, and yet also distinctly different and making different political claims (3–4).

In this way, and through the use of the term “Kanak-New Caledonia”, the book creates a textual space in which a community of the *destin commun* might be imagined that allows different voices to be heard, and thus it has the potential to contribute positively to processes

⁵⁴⁸ Though the presentation of the information about Kanak oral literatures and cultures in *Nights of Storytelling* in the form of translations of translations inevitably makes the information exchange a further degree away from the source text, and from “the very gaps and silences that also constitute its meanings” (Ramsay, Personal communication, 20 December 2012).

⁵⁴⁹ Ramsay writes the following of the criteria for inclusion of texts in the Introduction, “The texts selected are inclusive to the extent that we have tried to represent most of the communities in place in New Caledonia who have given an archaeological and human depth to the political present by writing their stories and recounting their genealogies. Preference has been given to texts that have circulated and been re-inscribed or contested in others’ stories or in political texts, such as the 1998 decolonizing Nouméa Agreement” (5).

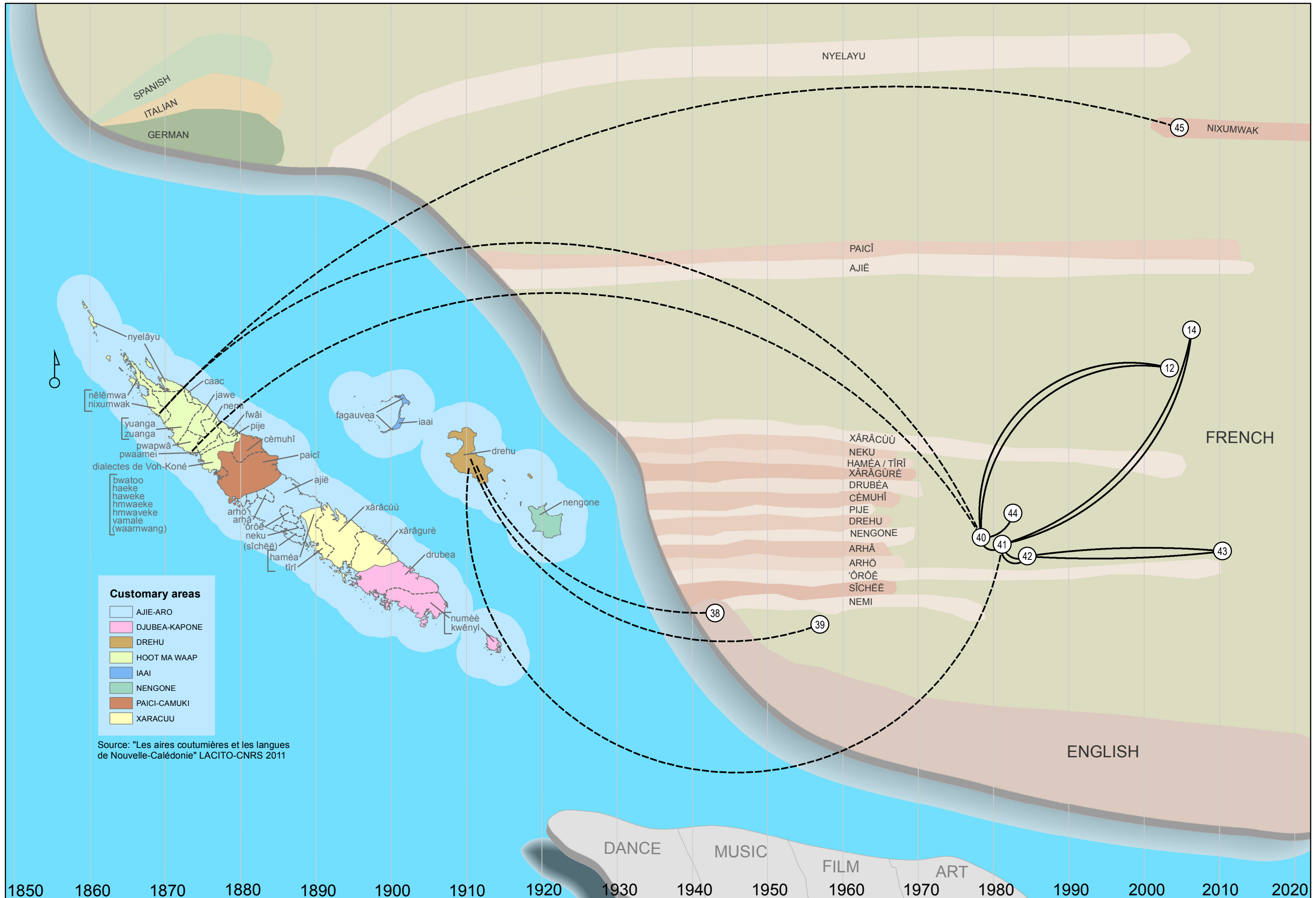
of identity construction, not only for Kanak identity, but also for the New Caledonian identity that includes all of the communities that make their home in the islands.

CHAPTER 5. Pathways originating in Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak Oral Traditions

This section examines (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* produced over a sixty-year period from 1944 to 2004, and derived from elements of Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak oral traditions. Below is a list of the 10 texts of the network that feature on the map on the following page.

Corpus Text ID	Section	Publication details	Page
38	5.1	J. Laville and Captain J. Berkowitz. <i>Pacific Island Legends. Life and Legends in the South Pacific Islands</i> . 1944.	285
39	5.2	J. Laville. "Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le lézard" in <i>Études Mélanésiennes</i> , 1956-57.	297
40	5.3	M. Coyaud & D. Bernot. <i>Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1979.	303
41	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1980.	310
42	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC.1986.	322
43	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC.2008.	322
44	5.5	M. Coyaud. <i>Contes chinois et kanak</i> . 1982.	323
45	5.6	M. Coyaud. <i>Textes kanak</i> . 2004.	325
12	5.7	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	328
14	5.8	L. Miskelly. "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	329

Figure 17 - Pathways Originating in Bwato, Drehu and Nixumwak Oral Traditions



5.1 TEXT 38: Jean Laville and Captain Joseph Berkowitz. *Pacific Island Legends. Life and Legends in the South Pacific Islands*. Noumea: Librairie Pentecost, 1944.

“CHAPTER 12 – THE LIZARD AND THE COCKS” (PP. 46–51)

A version of *Le Chef et le lézard* follows a pathway from the Drehu oral tradition of the island of Lifou and moves into written tradition in the English language by way of *Pacific Island Legends. Life and Legends in the South Pacific Islands*, by Jean Laville and Captain Joseph Berkowitz, published in 1944 by the Librairie Pentecost, Noumea.⁵⁵⁰ *Pacific Island Legends...* is a collection of stories from the oral traditions of Lifou and from what was then known as the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), alongside anecdotes and observations on the “life and customs” of the peoples of these islands.

Pacific Island Legends... is a 167-page volume, consisting of thirty-four short chapters and fifty-three illustrations, maps and photographs. The chapters include versions of stories from Lifou oral tradition, (“The Rat and the Octopus”, “The Strongest Man in Lifou”, “The Turtle and the Snail”, and “The White-Necked Pigeon and the Turtledove”) and from “New Hebridean” oral tradition (“The Aboriginal Sin”); anecdotes and observations of daily life (“Telephones are installed”, “All God’s Chilluns”); descriptions of cultural practices (“*Pilou-Pilou*”, “The Coconut Tree”, “Fishing à l’Indigène”, “Physician, Heal Thyself”); and observations on language (“*Bichelamar*”, “*Nascentur Poetae, Fiunt Oratores*”). The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is found in Chapter 12, on pages 46–51, and is entitled “The Lizard and the Cocks”.

The content of “The Lizard and the Cocks” follows the general scheme of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption found in the other versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* that figure in this study. In this (re)writing, High Chief Oukeneso, who is “spending a few days vacationing in the country” (46), decides that he wants to eat some meat, specifically rat, and

⁵⁵⁰ While the publisher, Librairie Pentecost, is based in Noumea, the notice on the inside cover of the book reads: “This book printed in the United States of America and manufactured under wartime conditions in conformity with all government regulations controlling the use of paper and other materials” – this was likely due to the US military presence in New Caledonia at that time, and the nationality of one of the authors who was an officer in the US Army Medical Corps.

sends his “manservant”, Sinelapa, to set some traps. Sinelapa duly goes out to search for materials, and after “three hours of arduous labour” he completes five traps, which he then baits. That evening, the Chief sends Sinelapa to check the traps, but they are empty. He checks them again and again with no luck, until his final trip, when he finds a “large green lizard with long nails, reddish-brown eyes and a double tail... half dead from strangulation” (46). He brings the animal back and places it beside the fire for his “master” to eat later.

The warmth of the fire revives the lizard, which then hides itself in the rafters. The Chief and Sinelapa search for it to no avail at dinner time, and have to eat only yams before they retire for the night. At midnight, the Chief awakens, terrified, as the lizard has clamped itself onto his back, digging in its claws and “striking him in the legs with its forked tail” (47). Sinelapa is unable to prise the lizard from the Chief’s back, so the Chief must sit up by the fire and endure the lizard’s presence for the rest of the night. At dawn, he is just dozing off when the lizard leaps down and disappears. This awakens the Chief, who decides to return home to Nathalo immediately.

That night, home again, Chief Oukeneso is afraid that the lizard might return, so he sets “a double guard of men armed with clubs and axes”, and goes to bed, with “faithful Sinelapa stretched out beside him”. Again, at midnight, the lizard returns, clamps itself onto Oukeneso’s back, and he must spend the night seated by the fire. The next morning the guards are questioned and they swear that they were awake all night and saw nothing enter or leave the hut.

A terrified Oukeneso secretly prepares to leave for the village of We with Sinelapa. They take long detours to try and hide their tracks. Arriving at the home of the Chief of We, Oukeneso explains his plight, and the Chief of We offers him shelter and protection. He builds a large fire in front of the hut and stand guard with his two sons while Oukeneso sleeps. Reassured, the High Chief retires for the night, but at midnight he again feels the lizard climb onto his shoulders and must spend the night by the fire until the lizard disappears at the break of day. As soon as the lizard releases him, Oukeneso runs all morning until he reaches the home of his cousin, Boula, in the village of Mou.

Boula asks him why he is running, Oukeneso relates the whole story, and Boula offers to shelter him and protect him, with every man in the tribe standing guard and Boula himself sleeping inside the hut too. The four hundred armed men standing guard reassure the High

Chief Oukeneso, who goes to bed exhausted by his ordeal. Once more, at midnight, the lizard returns and only leaves at dawn. As soon as he is free, Oukeneso farewells his cousin and runs to the beach where they find a *pirogue* – he and Sinelapa paddle out in it until they reach the island of Ouo.

There they are met by an old woman who asks them why they have come. Oukeneso relates his sorry tale, and the old woman tells him to go into her hut and rest, she will save him from “this devil”. She calls together her hens and two cocks and explains the situation to them, places the two cocks on guard in front of the hut and waits for the lizard to arrive. When it appears at midnight, the cocks set upon the lizard, tearing it to pieces and devouring it. The story ends with the statement that,

Ever since that time all lizards flee at the sight of fowl, and the descendants of those two brave cocks are born with a large spine on their legs to help them fight their enemies. To this day the natives believe that the Lord sent the cocks to kill the devil which was hiding in the lizard (51).

In the *Acknowledgements*, Joseph Berkowitz, a medical officer in the United States Medical Corps posted to Lifou during World War II, outlines the project of *Pacific Island Legends...* and thanks his co-author Jean Laville⁵⁵¹ in such a way as to suggest that Berkowitz is the primary author of the book,

This book was begun in an attempt to keep my mind occupied and thus alleviate the pain of being separated from a certain someone far away in Brockton, Massachusetts. [...] I am everlastingly grateful to Jean Laville for the pleasant relaxation he has afforded me and the opportunity to reacquaint myself with the language and the customs of the French people. His many kindnesses, his thoughtfulness, and his willingness always to be of assistance have resulted in a lasting friendship between us (ix).

However, Jean Laville is listed before Captain Berkowitz as an author, and it is perhaps the fact that Berkowitz writes the *Foreword* as the English native-speaker of the duo that creates the impression that he is the main author. The use of “we” rather than “I” marks the

⁵⁵¹ Born in France, Laville (1908-1955) was a businessman who had worked in the coffee plantations of Guatemala, and came to New Caledonia in 1935 where he worked for the *Société Havraise Calédonienne*, eventually becoming its director. He was the first treasurer of the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes*, a role that he fulfilled for 10 years before his death at the age of 47 – according to the “*Notice nécrologique*” published in *Études Mélanésiennes*, N° 9, December 1955, he was a greatly respected and well-liked man (3-4). Jean Laville would have been 36 years old at the time *Pacific Island Legends* was published.

Acknowledgements section, while the *Foreword* is predominantly in Berkowitz' voice, which reappears in different stories of the book. Laville's presence is not directly evident, perhaps as a consequence of his role as facilitator and Francophone rather than as a reflection of his actual contribution to the book. While his hospitality and friendship are directly acknowledged by Berkowitz, the role played by Jean Laville in the production of the book is not made explicit. It would seem logical that his "willingness always to be of assistance" refers to help in interpreting or translating from French, and perhaps in introducing Berkowitz to key people. Further investigation into the (re)writing process for *Pacific Island Legends...* is needed to establish precisely what role he took.

The first chapter of *Pacific Island Legends...*, "Jack, the Half-Caste", is devoted to perhaps the most important contact that Berkowitz made. In it, he tells Jack's family history (he was the son of "Jack",⁵⁵² a marooned French sailor who had come to Lifou on a sandalwood expedition, and Odupa, the daughter of a chief) as he had heard it "from an old native of Lifou, changing only the broken language of the *interlocuteur* in order to make the story more easily understood" (3). He also recounts his first meeting with Jack, who would become his friend, interpreter, and guide in matters cultural,

The following day I became better acquainted with Jack and sealed our friendship by offering him a cigarette. He was amiable and cheerful, as were all his fellow natives and, when he noticed that we were of the same age and that I had no hatred or disdain for the natives, we became the best of friends. It was because of his efforts and indulgence that I learned so much of interest and so many of the legends of his people (5).

Jack is a key figure who features in a number of the chapters, whether interpreting, recounting or explaining stories and customs to Berkowitz.

Berkowitz clearly sets out the conditions of the commission of *Pacific Island Legends...* in the first sentence of the *Acknowledgements* when he writes of beginning the book as a means of keeping himself occupied and diverting him from the pain of being far away from a "certain someone" in Massachusetts, posted as he was in New Caledonia as a consequence of the second world war which had not ended in the Pacific at the time of the book's

⁵⁵² More likely "Jacques", given that he was "born in a little seacoast town in the north of France" (Laville and Berkowitz 4).

publication. Berkowitz writes for a general audience, most likely in America, where the book was printed, and as can be seen by the title *Pacific Island Legends. Life and Legends in the South Pacific Islands*, and by the following passage, it is written with an intention to inform the reader,

Without any pretension to scientific or literary greatness and through the simplest of language and dialogue, an attempt has been made in this book to reproduce as closely as possible the manner of speech, the life, the customs, and the beliefs of the natives of the South Pacific Islands (ix).

Berkowitz also lays out the criteria for selection of the stories in the *Foreword*, and though it is not specified, it is likely that the decision on which material to include lay with one or both of the authors – “only those [legends] are included in this book which best reflect their customs and their mentality” (xi).

With respect to the provenance of the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, Berkowitz acknowledges in the *Foreword* the two main sources of the legends that feature in the book,

In the preparation of this book, we owe much to the Kanakas of the South Pacific Islands for their confidence in us and for their patience in relating many of the legends. We are deeply grateful to those Whites of New Caledonia, some of whom have been early colonists and traders, for their share in contributing tales about the New Hebrides (vii).

He also gives an idea of how the stories were recorded, “[t]he legends have been written in most cases exactly as they were related by the natives themselves, [...]” (vii). The existence of a French-language version entitled “Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le lézard”,⁵⁵³ attributed to Laville,⁵⁵⁴ is clearly the same story, and this would seem to suggest Laville’s version is the text from which Berkowitz’ English (re)writing is derived.

Guiart writes of Laville,

Esprit curieux et lettré, Jean Laville était connu du public par un recueil de contes, publié en anglais au cours de la dernière guerre par les soins de la Librairie Pentecost :

⁵⁵³ see section 5.2 of the present chapter for discussion of this (re)writing.

⁵⁵⁴ It was published posthumously with an introduction written by Jean Guiart in the Décembre 1956-Décembre 1957 volume of *Études Mélanésiennes*, the journal published by the *Société d’Études Mélanésiennes*.

«*Pacific Island legends. [sic]*» *Nous avons voulu, en hommage à la mémoire de Jean Laville, présenter ici le texte original français d'une de ses légendes, telle qu'il l'a recueillit de la bouche d'un conteur loyaltien (7).*⁵⁵⁵

It appears from Guiart's statement above that an unnamed Kanak orator recounted the story in French to Laville, who wrote it down and probably then showed it to Berkowitz. It is also likely that the ensuing translation process from French to English involved some collaboration between the co-authors of *Pacific Island Legends...*, though it is difficult to know how much assistance each required from the other without learning more about their respective linguistic competence in French and English. A close reading of Laville's French version shows that the degree of similarity between the French and English texts is great enough in terms of syntax, vocabulary and narrative structure to make it almost certain that the translation was made from a written text rather than an oral performance.

If one assumes that the English text is a direct translation of Laville's French version, and that the French version reflects the story as it was told to Laville by the unnamed Kanak storyteller (possibly Jack?) from the Loyalty Islands (most likely from Lifou given that this is where the story is set), a comparison of the English and French (re)writings should bring to light some of the transformations wrought during the (re)writing process that produced the English text.

The first transformation that is of interest relates to the titles of the English and French versions, which are, respectively, "The Lizard and the Cocks" and "Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le lézard". The Laville & Berkowitz (re)writing's title places the emphasis on the encounter between the animals of the story, bringing with it echoes of Aesop's fables, and thus implicitly placing the story into the category of fable. Comparison with the Laville text reproduced in *Études Mélanésiennes*, more than ten years after *Pacific Island Legends...* was published, shows how the title has been transformed for the target readership. The Laville text has a title, presumably in

⁵⁵⁵ [An inquiring mind and man of letters, Jean Laville was known to the public through a collection of *contes* published in English during the last war by the Librairie Pentecost: "Pacific Island Legends." We wanted to present here, in homage to the memory of Jean Laville, the original French text of one of its legends, just as he collected it from the mouth of a Loyalty Island storyteller.]

Drehu,⁵⁵⁶ first, and in French second, which focuses more on the humans in the story. The Kanak-language portion of the title “Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou” would appear to translate as “Oukenesö, Sinelapa and the Lizard”, simply naming the protagonists, without making a comment on their respective roles or status. The French subtitle, “Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le lézard”⁵⁵⁷ adds information about the respective status of the human protagonists, and names only the High Chief, placing him at the centre of the story.

With respect to the treatment of repetition that is a feature of the story, the three citations below may be evidence that there has been some form of modification of repetition in order to conform to target readership expectations of good style. The story may or may not have been “abridged”, and the English text closely mirrors that of the French version – but if so, whether by the (re)writers or the orator is impossible to know,

After the whole sequence of events had been explained [...] (48)

The High Chief told his cousin everything that had taken place [...] (49)

Once more the Chief related how he was being persecuted by the lizard [...](49)

The (re)writing does, however, show some clear signs of transformation to suit target readership understandings, as illustrated in the following passage,

High Chief Oukeneso was spending a few days vacationing in the country at Naweda with his manservant Sinelapa, and one afternoon, while resting in the coolness of a cocoanut grove, he said to his man: “I want you to go out and make some traps, Sinelapa, and catch a few rats for me, I feel just like eating rats tonight.” [...] His servant went out at once in search of young supple branches of ivy [...] His man Friday did as he was commanded [...] (46).

The idea of the High Chief “vacationing in the country of Naweda with his manservant Sinelapa” brings to mind actions more familiar to the affluent classes in England or America – it is difficult to imagine the notion of “vacationing”, with its connotations of escaping to the country from the busy city, applying in the context of High Chief Oukeneso’s presence in Naweda, which may have been explained by reasons other than a desire to escape the hustle and bustle of the everyday world in order to relax... In Laville’s French text, the

⁵⁵⁶ This needs to be verified.

⁵⁵⁷ [The High Chief Oukenesö, his servant and the lizard].

corresponding sentence reads as follows: “*Le grand chef Oukenesö habitait à Nweda avec son domestique, ils étaient à la brousse*” (Laville 8). A literal translation of this, “The High Chief Oukenesö was living at Naweda with his servant, they were in the bush”, highlights the embellishment added by Berkowitz for the benefit of his target readership.

Later on the first page, Berkowitz’ text reads, “One afternoon, while resting in the coolness of a cocoanut grove, he said to his man: “I want you to go out and make some traps, Sinelapa, and catch a few rats for me. I feel just like eating rats tonight” (46). The corresponding extract from the French source text “*Un soir Oukenesö dit à Sinelapa : «Et toi, tu vas faire des pièges pour attraper des rats, j’ai envie d’en manger*” (Laville 8) literally translated, gives “And you, you are going to make some traps to catch some rats, I feel like eating some” – there is no mention of “resting in the coolness of a cocoanut grove”, this is another example of material added by the (re)writer, tailoring the text to target readership expectations.

Various designations used for Sinelapa also recall the difficulties involved in translation of cultural concepts⁵⁵⁸ – what has been translated into French in other texts as *serviteur* or *sujet*⁵⁵⁹ and into English in this text as “manservant” or “servant” conveys a relationship that has a different power dynamic to that which most probably exists between the High Chief Oukeneso and Sinelapa, for example. Sinelapa’s status is variously depicted as subordinate through the use of “his manservant”, “his man”, “his servant”, “his man Friday”, “faithful Sinelapa” and “faithful servant”. In the passage describing the Chief’s efforts to protect himself from the lizard the night of his return to Nathalo, the phrase “faithful Sinelapa stretched out beside him” (47) even recalls the image of a faithful dog. Without presuming to know the usual dynamics of a relationship between a High Chief and his close aide in Drehu society, it would seem unlikely that Sinelapa’s status was lowly in the way the English text implies, especially in light of the previously quoted statement made by a Kanak *chef* in Leenhardt’s *Gens de la Grande Terre*, “*Quand je parle dans ma langue à mes gens, je les appelle mes frères. Quand je parle en français, on me dit que je dois les appeler mes sujets*”

⁵⁵⁸ See the discussion of translation of the Ajië term *orokau* (Introduction, pp. 22-23).

⁵⁵⁹ [servant/subject]

(211)⁵⁶⁰ which calls into question the accuracy of the image projected by the various terms used by Berkowitz for a domestic servant.

Another likely transformation for the target readership is the use of the Western time-keeping system,⁵⁶¹ as the times of eight o'clock and midnight appear in the story. In the Western imaginary, midnight is often associated with magical or supernatural events,⁵⁶² and in "the Lizard and the Cocks", it is always at midnight that the lizard climbs onto the unfortunate High Chief's back, which serves to heighten the suspense (it would be arguably less dramatic for the Anglophone reader if the lizard appeared each night at 9pm). The question arises as to who (Laville, Berkowitz, the unnamed Kanak orator) inserted the different times into the story. Examination of Laville's text shows that in fact, there are more references to precise times of day in the French version than in the English one. For example, where the English text describes the passage of time when Sinelapa is making the traps at the beginning of the story as follows, "after three hours of arduous labour, he completed five traps..." (46), in the French text, the three-hour period of time is marked with more precision, "*Il était à peu près trois heures. A six heures il en avait fait cinq...*" (7).⁵⁶³ Also, where Sinelapa went to check his traps "again and again" until "at last, about to give up in despair, he made one final trip" (46) in the English text, the French (re)writing is more exact with regard to the timing, Sinelapa, having returned a first time with no game, "*Vers neuf heures il retourna, sans plus de succès. Enfin, à dix heures, il ressortit pour la troisième fois*" (7).⁵⁶⁴ The fact that the time references occur more frequently in the French version, make it likely that the unnamed Kanak orator included them in his original telling of the story to Laville. The question then

⁵⁶⁰ quoted in Chapter 2 of this study, [When I speak in my language to my people, I call them my brothers. When I speak in French, I am told that I should call them my subjects].

⁵⁶¹ See Jean-Marie Tjibaou's statement regarding Western notions of time, "Europeans have in some way removed time from nature; they have made it material. It enables them to gauge the duration of an operation and to go about doing it more quickly. They have turned it into a divided commodity, a tool with which to alter the rhythm of the world and of man. For the Kanaka, time is a sensory perception, of hot and cold, of alternating rainy weather or sunshine, of old age and youth, of ceremonies which give life to the community and revive the soul" (Tjibaou and Missotte, *Kanaké: The Melanesian Way* 62).

⁵⁶² See, for example, the story of Cinderella, which is also well-known on Lifou and has been incorporated into Drehu oral tradition, with the essential transformation of Cinderella's feet from tiny to large, since small feet are not generally considered to be attractive there (Léonard Sam, Masters seminar, 2010)

⁵⁶³ [It was around three o'clock. At six o'clock, he had made five of them...].

⁵⁶⁴ [Around nine o'clock, he went back, with no more success. Finally, at ten o'clock, he went out again for the third time.]

becomes whether he did so because time references were part of the story, or because he was tailoring it to his European audience, and therefore added Western measures of time.

Berkowitz' idealised, romantic vision of "South Pacific islands" would have provided a soothing escape from the complicated, wartime world inhabited by his readership,

Life in these islands constitutes a veritable rest-cure for those of us who are accustomed to the hustle and bustle and noises of large city streets. What is more relaxing than to rise with the sun and look out at the blue-green waters of the Pacific! (x)

Though a sense of affection and respect for the people and the place pervades the book, "Many were the happy hours I spent with the natives in their tribes, charmed by their chanting, thrilled by their dancing, and delighted by their legends of years gone by" (ix) and the Foreword concludes with a wish expressed that the reader will enjoy the stories and information "that we offer here with our gratitude and enduring admiration" (xi), Berkowitz' vision of Lifou (which can be seen as extending to other "South Pacific Islands") is underpinned by evolutionist models of the hierarchy of civilisations,

The doctors, priests, pastors, and administrators of France and England who first landed on these islands, found a people extremely backward from the standpoint of civilization. These primitives have been taught and nursed along patiently so that today in many ways they are following in the footsteps of the Whites (x).

His writing is filled with clichéd images that recall the notion of the "noble savage",

Then a day of simple conversation with smiling natives who are always so friendly and so humble. [...] The babbling and the giggling of the native girls, the native tunes at twilight around a flickering fire... all bring forth many pleasant memories never to be forgotten (x).

So often thought to be lazy, these people are actually wise, and we, too, if we were as wise as they, would don the primitive manou and spend the rest of our days midst groves of cocoanut, cooled by the freshness of the sea. How interesting are the legends of their past and how simple their manner of living! (xi)

There is also a paternalistic tone to the narrator's voice throughout the book, kindly and indulgent in the following commentary on the "advances" made by the "natives" under the tutelage of "the white man",

With the arrival of the white man, they have made such wonderful progress that many of them have become cabinet-makers, masons, and mechanics; and some can sail boats;

read maps and even understand the use of the compass. They know how to drive automobiles, they can send wireless messages, and they are invaluable assistants to the doctors resident on the islands because of the knowledge and skill they have acquired concerning the hypodermic and first-aid. The ease with which they are able to adapt themselves is admirable (x),

and somewhat disapproving in the chapter “Physician, Heal Thyself”, in which Doctor Berkowitz describes the practices of the “medicine men” of the tribe with a disdain barely veiled with humour, using language that calls to mind the snake-oil salesmen and charlatans of the American Wild West “cure of cures! Infallible remedy than which there is none better!” (102) and painting a rather negative picture of the “medicine men”,

The natives, however, place the utmost confidence in their medicine men who have neither the intelligence nor the modesty of their brother “physicians” [of whom Berkowitz is one] [...] Unlike the whites, the native does not divulge any of his secrets for fear that others might share the benefits with him (98-99).

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* in *Pacific Island Legends...* is the result of an encounter between Jean Laville and Captain Joseph Berkowitz and an element of Drehu oral tradition that they have (re)written as “The Lizard and the Cocks”. Though he appeared to have passable French, it is clear that Berkowitz’ linguistic and cultural competence in matters relating to the Drehu language and culture were limited (understandably so given that the American military presence in New Caledonia was so brief – 1943–45), and he suggests as much in the text,

I’m not sufficiently familiar with the language to give an opinion about their orations, but their eloquence and their manner of delivery is admirable. I have but one regret and that is not to understand their speeches sufficiently, even with Jack as an interpreter, for I must confess that I pay little attention to him... being too much fascinated by the speaker (72).

At this point insufficient information has been gathered on Jean Laville’s linguistic and cultural competence in Drehu – the fact that he contributed articles to the *Études Mélanésiennes* relating to Drehu society (and was a longstanding member of the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes*) would suggest that he had a strong interest in matters cultural, however, further information would need to be gathered in order to ascertain the depth of his knowledge. Further information would also need to be obtained to be able to comment on the question of consultation and collaboration with Kanak experts. However, again, it would appear that once the stories had been recounted, that was the limit of the involvement of the

Kanak storytellers in the production of the (re)writing.⁵⁶⁵ There is acknowledgement of the oral dimension and oral origins of the stories throughout the book, with observations on the performative context and the virtuosity of the orators in passages such as those below,

I don't know whether the old orators teach the young natives the art of oratory, but I can assure you that they speak very fluently. They rise sternly before an audience and speak with astonishing facility, adorning their words with the most natural of gestures, and in a complete gamut of tones which sometimes are scarcely a whisper and at other times are as penetrating and shattering as a clap of thunder. Their gestures, ordinarily moderated during familiar conversation, take on an extraordinary flourish when speaking before a large audience (71).

One evening Jack and I stopped in at a neighbor's hut where a meeting was in progress and came upon a large group of young men seated about the fire waiting patiently for an old man, obviously important, to relate one of the ancient legends of Lifou. Not only was the story interesting but his manner of telling it was so entertaining and his descriptions so vivid that I knew at once he had told the story many times before. The intonations of his voice and the movements of his hands and body were so impressive that not a sound could be heard from anyone in the audience. He began in a deep authoritative tone: "Once upon a time [...]" (157).

Berkowitz and Laville's "The Lizard and the Cocks" creates a representation of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that has been modified to suit target readership (Anglophone, mainly American) tastes and expectations at the time of writing in the mid-1940s. The book in which the (re)writing figures, *Pacific Island Legends*, while clearly written with a great deal of affection for the culture from which the story derives, perpetuates stereotypical views of the "noble savage", and of a somehow timeless, simpler society for which members of the Western societies to whom the book is addressed feel a certain nostalgia, in particular in the face of the turbulent and difficult years of the Second World War. The paternalistic, somewhat indulgent tone of the narrative, combined with an attitude of superior, scientific objectivity that becomes particularly apparent in the chapter relating to the medical practices of the islanders compared to those of the American doctor or the chapter describing the arrival of technology on Lifou, means that despite the best of intentions, *Pacific Island Legends* does not represent an example of genuine communication in the encounter between

⁵⁶⁵ This assumption is based on the fact that no mention is made of any Kanak assistance in the production of the book, however, native-speaker assistance in interpreting on the part of Jack is acknowledged.

(re)writers and the oral tradition from which “The Lizard and the Cocks” derives. Rather than being an exchange between equals, Berkowitz’ and Laville’s book works to create an image of Kanak culture and people as somewhat naïve and simple and perpetuates the orientalisng gaze for which the writings of James Michener on the Pacific are so strongly criticised.

In terms of contemporary Kanak identity construction, these images serve to reinforce old, and on balance, negative stereotypes that remain in circulation even today. With respect to the construction of the identity implicit in the expression *destin commun*, *Pacific Island Legends* does at the very least paint a picture in which respect is shown by non-Kanak to Kanak in certain ways, particularly in Berkowitz’s admiration of the orators’ virtuosity. Also, the description of the friendship between Berkowitz and Jack, when considered in the context of the attitudes that were still prevalent in New Caledonian society in the wartime period, a society which was still highly segregated, represents a shift, however small, towards the possibility of the creation of a society in which all communities are equal. In this way, the (re)writing of “The Lizard and the Cocks” can be seen to participate in a work that not only perpetuates stereotypes and attitudes from the historical and sociopolitical context in which it was written, but also offers the possibility of reading against this grain, and picking out a sincere desire on the part of the authors as cultural outsiders for communication with Kanak and a deepening of mutual understanding couched in terms of respect for the people and culture of the island of Lifou. Taken in this light, the (re)writing can also be said to have the potential to make a positive contribution, however small, to processes of identity construction in contemporary New Caledonian society.

5.2 TEXT 39: Jean Laville. “Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le lézard” in *Études Mélanésiennes*. 10–11 (1956-57):7–10.

“OUKENESÖ ME SINELAPA ME TSOU. LE GRAND CHEF OUKENESÖ, SON DOMESTIQUE ET LE LÉZARD” (PP. 7–10).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard*, as described in section 5.1 above, most likely leads from Drehu oral tradition to New Caledonian written tradition in French, as it was recounted to Jean Laville by an unnamed Kanak orator. The story is published posthumously (Laville died in 1955) as a tribute to the longstanding member of the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes* under the title, “Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö,

son domestique et le lézard” in the December 1956-December 1957 volume of the *Société*’s journal, *Études Mélanésiennes*,⁵⁶⁶ and it is presented with an introduction by Jean Guiart, in which he recalls Laville’s considerable personal qualities and his contributions to research, offering the publication of the story in his memory.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is the first text of the 1956-57 volume of the journal *Études Mélanésiennes*. The previous volume, published in the year Laville died, contained an obituary for the man who had been the treasurer of the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes*. The cover page of *Études Mélanésiennes* states that it is aimed at *Sociétés* and *Groupements* that are concerned with Oceanian studies, and at those Institutes, Museums, and persons who are interested in questions of ethnography and human geography in their largest sense. This means that the (re)writing occurs in a volume that contains articles relating to diverse subjects: the activities of ORSTOM, agricultural development in New Caledonia, proposals for transcription rules for Kanak place names, a story from an unspecified oral tradition in the north of the Grande Terre, accounts of exploration in the islands of the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), administrative organisation in New Caledonia and an article on the problems of alcohol in New Caledonia. The commission of the article can therefore be seen as deriving from two sources, the desire to add to information about oral traditions, as part of the project of the journal, and the desire to pay homage to a respected member of the *Société* by showcasing one of his contributions to the sharing of knowledge about “Mélanésien” society.

The passage of the story from oral to written mode⁵⁶⁷ would have involved the usual transformations associated with textualisation – the removal of elements of the performative context such as voice, gesture, movement, audience, and location. The exact circumstances in which Laville recorded the story are not known. He may have taken notes as the orator recounted the story and then reconstituted it later, he may have written it down as he was listening to it. It is not known whether Laville was the only member of the audience, or whether he heard the story in a group context. He may have heard the story in Drehu or in French, though Guiart’s comment in the introductory paragraph preceding the story, “*le texte*

⁵⁶⁶ See chapter 6, section 6.1 for more information about the institutional context in which *Études Mélanésiennes* was published.

⁵⁶⁷ Which, as described in the preceding paragraph, most likely took place when the story was recounted to Jean Laville, in French or in Drehu.

original français d'une de ses légendes, telle qu'il l'a recueilli de la bouche d'un conteur loyaltien"⁵⁶⁸ makes it seem most likely that he heard the story in French.

Covering four pages, the French text recounts the same story as "The Lizard and the Cocks" described in section 5.1, there are however two differences when compared to the English version. The first instance arises from either a translation error or an error in understanding of travel by *pirogue* on the part of Berkowitz. In the French text, the High Chief escapes from the lizard at Mou by canoe, as described in the following sentence, "*Il trouva là une pirogue sur la plage, il en saisit les pagaies et, avec Sinelapa, il se dirigea vers Ouo, île qui se trouve devant Mou*" (9).⁵⁶⁹ In the corresponding passage in the English text, "...where he found a *pirogue* on the beach, seizing the oars, he and Sinelapa rowed until they reached the island of Ouo" (49). Rather than oars, paddles are used in canoes, and rather than rowing, the appropriate term is paddling.

Several aspects of the story point to the likelihood of the (re)writing's closeness to versions found in oral tradition, and these are highlighted in the comparison with the English version. There is, for example, more detail given regarding toponyms and patronyms. When the High Chief secretly "prepares to leave for the village of We" in the English version, in Laville's French text, he "prepares to leave for We, the limit of his district".⁵⁷⁰ When "the High Chief told his cousin everything that had taken place" in the English version, in Laville's French text, "the High Chief of Wet recounted to the High Chief of Loessi his sad story".⁵⁷¹ Also in the examples given above relating to the flight of the High Chief and Sinelapa in the *pirogue* they found on the beach at Boula, more detail is given about the island of Ouo in the French text, which places it in front of Mou, than in the English version.

There is also a restricted use of descriptive language (adjectives, descriptive passages) in the French version when compared to the English, which may indicate that the French text is influenced by the poetics of Drehu, as the use of descriptive language more commonly a

⁵⁶⁸ [the original French text of one of its legends, just as he collected it from the mouth of a Loyalty Island storyteller].

⁵⁶⁹ [He found a canoe there on the beach, seized its paddles and, with Sinelapa, headed for Ouo, the island found in front of Mou].

⁵⁷⁰ "*Il prépare son départ pour Wé, limite de son district*" (8).

⁵⁷¹ "*Le grand chef de Wet raconta à celui de Loessi sa lamentable histoire*" (9).

feature of the two European languages than in Kanak languages.⁵⁷² There are numerous examples of this in the text, as seen below where the added descriptive elements are highlighted in bold below:

LAVILLE & BERKOWITZ (1944)

...after three hours of **arduous labour**, he completed five traps... (46).

LAVILLE (1957-8)

Il était à peu près trois heures. A six heures il en avait fait cinq... (7)⁵⁷³

The latter, noticing that the Chief was **out of breath and terribly excited**, shouted to him: “Oukeneso, what seems to be the trouble?” (48-9).

Celui-ci, en le voyant, lui dit : « Oukenesö ! Que t’arrive-t-il ? » (9).⁵⁷⁴

Much to his surprise and disappointment, he found not a rat, but a large green lizard with long nails, reddish-brown eyes and a double tail...half dead from strangulation (46).

Les quatre premiers pièges étaient vides ; le cinquième était détendu, il contenait un gros lézard à moitié étranglé. C’était une grande bête verte avec le dos jaune, de longues griffes, des yeux mordorés et une double queue (7).⁵⁷⁵

There they were met on the beach by an old woman who, **surprised at the sudden arrival of the Chief**, asked: “What are you doing here Oukenesö... (49).

Quand il aborda, une vieille femme vint au-devant de lui et lui dit : « Oukenesö, que viens-tu faire ici...» (9).⁵⁷⁶

The spare prose and the presence of fewer descriptive passages in Laville’s French language (re)writing seem to suggest that in the passage from oral to written traditions, there has been an attempt to remain close to the style of the source version.

Transformations of the ending of the story appear to reflect not only the ideological perspective of the (re)writer, but also the expectations of the target readership. Where in the English (re)writing, it is the birds alone who kill the lizard, and the old woman arrives to find

⁵⁷² As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, section 3.1, page 142.

⁵⁷³ [It was around three o’clock. At six o’clock he had made five of them.]

⁵⁷⁴ [The latter, upon seeing him, said to him: “Oukenesö! What’s happened to you?”]

⁵⁷⁵ [The first four traps were empty, the fifth was slackened, it contained a large, half-strangled lizard. It was a large green beast with a yellow back, long claws, bronze-coloured eyes and a double tail.]

⁵⁷⁶ [When he came ashore, an old woman came in front of him and said to him: “Oukenesö, what are you coming her for...].

only a formless mass being torn to shreds and devoured by the fowl. In the French text, when the cocks and the hens are attacking the lizard which is by now half-dead on the ground, the old woman intervenes, as described in the following quote, “*Quand la vieille femme arriva près du lézard, il n’en restait plus qu’une masse informe qu’elle écrasa à coup de hache.*” For some reason, the (re)writers who produced the English text have edited out the old woman’s contribution to the lizard’s end, perhaps as the idea of an elderly woman committing such an act of violence jars with the imagery of “South Seas Paradise” with its peaceful natives, and especially peaceful women?

The English (re)writing concludes with the following paragraph:

Ever since that time all lizards flee at the sight of fowl, and the descendants of these two brave cocks are born with a large spine on their legs to help them fight their enemies. To this day the natives believe that the Lord sent the cocks to kill the devil which was hiding in the lizard (51).

Laville’s French (re)writing differs in several ways from the above:

Depuis cette date les lézards fuient dès qu’ils voient une poule au loin, car Dieu avait envoyé les coqs pour chasser le démon qui se cachait dans ce lézard qui torturait le grand chef de Wet. Et maintenant les enfants de ces deux coqs portent à leur patte une grosse épine qui leur sert à combattre leurs ennemis. Quand les coqs se battent, ils semblent se regarder dans les yeux, ils lèvent en même temps la tête, et la baisse, ils lancent en avant leurs pattes pour frapper avec leurs ergots. S’ils font ainsi, ce n’est pas pour se faire du mal, mais pour ne pas oublier la tactique employée par leurs trisaïeux lors de leur combat historique contre le lézard à deux queues...(10).⁵⁷⁷

The English ending appears to be a considerably abridged compared with that of Laville’s French text. The details of the fighting tactics of the cockerels have been omitted, and there has been a change in order of the information presented. The French text explains that the reason for the lizard’s fear of the chicken today is that God had sent the birds to chase out the demon hiding in the lizard that was torturing the High Chief of Wet. Then it describes the

⁵⁷⁷ [Since that date, lizards flee whenever they see a chicken from afar, because God had sent the cocks to chase out the demon that was hiding inside that lizard who was torturing the High Chief of Wet. And now the children of these two cocks carry on their feet a large spine which they use to fight their enemies. When the cocks fight each other, they seem to look each other in the eye, at the same time, they raise their heads and lower them, they launch their feet before them in order to strike with their spurs. If they do this, it is not to harm themselves, but in order not to forget the tactic used by their great-great-grandfathers in their historic battle against the lizard with the two tails...]

physical characteristics (the spine on the birds' feet) that serve as a reminder of the events of the story. In the English version, the lizard's fear of the chicken is mentioned, followed by the description of the spine on the birds' feet, and the story finishes on a completely different note from the French-language version. Where Laville's French text ends with the explanation of the tactics of the fighting cockerels today as their way of remembering the historic battle of their great-great-grandfathers against the two-tailed lizard, the English text produced by Laville and Berkowitz concludes with the observation that "To this day the natives believe that the Lord sent the cocks to kill the devil which was hiding in the lizard", and thus projects an image of this belief as being naïve superstition.

In the absence of detailed information regarding Jean Laville's role in the (re)writing process, it is not possible to comment on the level of his linguistic and cultural competence in matters relating to Kanak oral literatures and cultures, other than to say that his membership of the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes*, his contributions to the journal published by the *Société*,⁵⁷⁸ imply some degree of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Again, it is not possible to comment on the degree of collaboration and consultation that took place in the production of the French text, since the circumstances of the (re)writing process and the identity of the Kanak *conteur* who recounted the story to Laville are unknown at this point. The source of the story in oral tradition is acknowledged in Guiart's introduction to the text, and the Drehu words in the title, and throughout the text, also serve to remind the reader of the origins of the story.

The encounter between Laville and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* has produced a document in French, that, by its use of the Drehu title first and French translation as subtitle, its apparent closeness to the Kanak language version, and the fact that it appears in *Études Mélanésiennes*⁵⁷⁹ as a tribute to Laville, but without any critical introduction or analysis, works to create a positive portrayal of the story. It is an example of genuine communication in the sense that the Kanak story stands alone, and is not interpreted for the reader, suggesting

⁵⁷⁸ Such as an article in *Études Mélanésiennes* in 1949 on social organisation entitled "Les trois districts d'Ouvéa".

⁵⁷⁹ A journal whose mission was described in the 1953 volume, published in the year of the centenary of French presence in the islands, was to contribute through scientific enquiry, to finding solutions for economic and social problems that preoccupy the two ethnic groups living alongside one another in the islands of New Caledonia (Tivollier 5).

an underlying respect and sense of the equal value of the story from oral tradition which appears alongside scholarly articles on diverse topics. The choice of the story as homage to a very well-liked and well-respected member of the *Société d'Études Mélanésiennes*, is a sign of respect to Laville, but also to the story that was seen as fitting for such an important gesture. The choice of the story also suggests that Laville must have placed a great deal of importance on stories of Kanak oral tradition, and in this way, as well as valorising Kanak oral tradition and culture, and thus potentially contributing in a positive way to processes of identity construction for Kanak, also highlights another example in which Kanak and non-Kanak formed positive relationships of mutual respect, and as such, has the potential to positively influence processes of identity construction for the *destin commun*.

5.3 TEXT 40: Maurice Coyaud & Denise Bernot. *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie*. LACITO Documents –Asie-Austronésie 2. Paris: SELAF, 1979.

“6. *BODANU, PWÊMANU, LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER (TEXTE NIGOUMAK)*” (PP. 37–39) AND “7. *LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER (TEXTE BWATO I)*” (PP. 41–45).

The 1979 publication, *Littérature orale : Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie*, second of the LACITO⁵⁸⁰ – *Documents* series on *Asie-Austronésie*, produced by Maurice Coyaud and Denise Bernot with the collaboration of Jin-Mieung Li, contains two versions of *Le Chef et le lézard*, one from the Nixumwak oral tradition,⁵⁸¹ recounted by Djak Pwêak Paetèn, and the second from Bwato oral tradition,⁵⁸² recounted by Diela Joseph Thi. Both of the stories were recorded by Coyaud, who at the time of publication of *Littérature orale : Birmanie...* was a linguist and *directeur de recherche* at LACITO,⁵⁸³ specialising in the Russian, Chinese, Mongolian, Burmese, Tagalog, Korean and Japanese languages.⁵⁸⁴ He undertook two research missions to New Caledonia, in August-September 1975 and July-

⁵⁸⁰ *Laboratoire Langues et civilisations à tradition orale* is a French research organisation that comes under the umbrella of the national network of researchers, the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS).

⁵⁸¹ From the west coast of the northern tip of the Hoot Ma Waap Customary Area of the Grande Terre.

⁵⁸² From the west coast of the southern part of the Hoot Ma Waap Customary Area.

⁵⁸³ To which he remains attached as a “*Retraité CNRS*” (See www.lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr Annuaire>Maurice Coyaud, accessed 24 May 2012).

⁵⁸⁴ Denise Bernot was Professor of Burmese at INALCO and Jin-Mieung Li, trained as a historian specialising in Japan and Korea, is currently Professor of Korean and Japanese Studies at the University of Lyon 3.

November 1977, where he collected 39 texts, mostly *contes*, in the languages of the North and Far North of New Caledonia, with one text in Ajië (Collectif 9).

Nine of these texts are published in the section “*Contes kanak*”,⁵⁸⁵ which comprises just over a third of the book. Four stories are described as having been recorded in the Yuanga language at Bondé, two in the Nigoumac language spoken near Koumac, one in the Nyelâyu language of the north of the Grande Terre, and two *contes* were recorded at Gatop, near Voh, by a speaker of Bwato, the language of the island of Konyèn, still spoken at Oundjo and Bako, near Koné (Coyaud et al, 9). The remainder of the book comprises three *contes coréens*, twenty *devinettes japonaises*, three *contes birmans* and three *contes mongols*.⁵⁸⁶ The two (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* are “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, Le lézard et le bénitier (texte nigoumak)” on pages 37-39, and “Le lézard et le bénitier. (texte bwato I)” on pages 41-45.

Information regarding the production of each text is provided in succinct notes, placed at the end of each story, that include the name and age of the narrator, the date and location of the recording and the identity of those involved in the process. For example for “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier”, the narrator was Djak Pwêak Paetèn, aged 70, who recounted the story on September 26, 1977 at Wanak near Koumak. The word-for-word translation was made with the help of Michel Gagne, a mason at Koumak who came originally from Arama and whose first language was Nyalayu, but who spoke Nixumwak well, as his wife was from Koumak (Coyaud et al 39).

For the second (re)writing, entitled “Le lézard et le bénitier”, the narrator was Diela Joseph Thi, aged 72, who recounted the story in the Bwaato language on the July 25, 1977 at Gatop. The word-for-word translation was made with the help of the narrator, and of Jean Poithily Cupila, the *chef* of the Gatop *tribu*, and Deputy Mayor of Voh. Poithily spoke the Xaveke language, which is close to Bwato, Coyaud writes. The story was listened to again on the 31st of July, on the taperecorder, by twelve men from the *tribu* gathered, as is usual, in the *chef's house* situated on a *tertre*. Coyaud goes on to describe the reaction of the twelve men to the recording of the story. The episodes describing the pus trickling over the face of the “Lizard-carrier”, and diving into the clam were greeted with laughter. He also points out that

⁵⁸⁵ Pages 10–54.

⁵⁸⁶ [Korean tales] [Japanese riddles] [Burmese tales] [Mongolian tales] found on pages 55–127.

listening to the recording was treated as a choice entertainment: a little authentic culture between two halves of football and *pétanque* on the lawn at Gatop (Coyaud et al 45).

Though the commission of *Littérature orale : Birmanie, ...* is not discussed in the book, it is clear that this text, as part of a series published by LACITO on *Asie-Austronésie*, was commissioned by this research organisation, to which Coyaud was attached. He does not outline his methods in this book, but Coyaud describes the (re)writing process in a later collection, entitled *La littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie*,⁵⁸⁷ in which one of the (re)writings, “Le lézard et le bénitier”, narrated by Diela Joseph Thi, was reproduced. Upon arriving in a location, he would ask to meet with elders able to tell stories from ancient times. He would then ask these elders to recount stories, preferably relating to animals, as he was interested in the structures of the imaginary rather than social structures. When the elders did not have stories relating to animals in mind, or did not wish to tell them, they would tell him stories that they wished to recount, Coyaud gives as examples of these historical stories (more or less fictionalised), myths, or stories concerning the arrival of missionaries.

Once a story had been recorded, generally Coyaud would work with a younger informant with a better command of French in order to produce a word-for-word translation, working phrase by phrase. He describes this as the longest and most difficult stage, in part as he was not able to find *informateurs* who could both analyse their own language and provide all of the information he required – he put this down to the fact that it was very rare to find “*Mélanésians du Nord de l’île*” who had their CEP⁵⁸⁸ (Collectif 9). Coyaud states that he was able to achieve “acceptable” results from the perspective of comprehension of the texts, notably through cross checking, but that the situation was very variable, as in some cases the text was analysed with the input of several informants, or it was analysed with the help of an “intuitive” informant. Coyaud declares himself most satisfied with the sentence by sentence translation, stating that the detailed analysis, word by word and morpheme by morpheme sometimes left a little to be desired (Collectif 10).

⁵⁸⁷ See discussion of this book in section 5.4 of the present chapter.

⁵⁸⁸ *Certificat d’études primaires* – obtained around the age of 11-12 years, it marks the finish of *l’enseignement primaire élémentaire*.

“Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier” follows the structure of “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” that characterises *Le Chef et le lézard*, with the difference from other versions of the story found in different oral traditions that the “victim” of the lizard, and one of the authors of the “transgression”, is a woman, Bodanu. The lizard also refers to Bodanu as its mother, and though it clamps itself onto the back of her neck initially, it does get down, sitting on the cooking pot, diving in the water, for example. A further difference is that the lizard does not eat while sitting upon Bodanu’s head.

While the couple, Bodanu and Pwêmanu, are laying some traps for birds at Kaala, a lizard that lives there becomes caught in one of their snares, begs to be freed, and when Bodanu climbs up and releases it, it jumps onto the back of her neck and refuses to get down. The couple return home to cook the birds for dinner, and they refuse to give any food to the lizard which says “Mother, I am not hungry anyway, I have already eaten”. They go to sleep, the lizard releases Bodanu and she and Pwêmanu flee, they hide in a sugarcane field, and when the lizard awakes the next morning it cries out for Bodanu “Mother, Mother! Where are you? Why have you abandoned me?” then it finds her in the sugarcane. The lizard follows the couple back to their home, where they prepare their dinner and refuse to share it with the lizard, who says it does not need anything to eat anyway.

When the creature falls asleep, Bodanu and her husband flee to the taro field to hide. The next morning the lizard awakes alone, cries out for its “mother” and finds her in the taro field. The couple return home, the lizard with them, once again they refuse to feed it and it insists it is not hungry. They all retire for the night and when the lizard falls asleep, Bodanu and Pwêmanu flee in their boat to a small island on the reef offshore from Koumak. The lizard awakes, calls out for its mother again and comes and finds Bodanu and Pwêmanu. Bodanu sends it down under the water to catch a giant clam. The clam closes on the lizard’s head, and Bodanu and Pwêmanu, thinking the lizard is finally dead, return to their home in Kagado. But the lizard manages to pull the clam out of the water, it is still closed over the lizard’s head and looks like a hat. The lizard climbs onto the island and goes to sleep until the clam opens, when the lizard escapes, and heads back to the couple’s home, crying “Mother! Mother! Why have you abandoned me?”. Bodanu hears it coming and says to her husband “how can this be?” Pwêmanu tells her to wait for it to come, they both wait with their clubs and as soon as the lizard puts its head through the door, they kill it with blows to the head and that is the end of the story.

“Le Lézard et le bénitier” also follows the structure of “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” that characterises the versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in the corpus. The transgression relates to sacred ground that belonged to some *vieux*,⁵⁸⁹ land where it was forbidden to trap or kill birds. All the birds and other animals congregated there. In the *tribu* of Pidjan, two men, an elder and a younger brother decided to hunt birds on that forbidden ground, so they made a net and set it in the valley of Cadana (the forbidden area). When they checked the net early the next morning, it was filled with *roussettes* and all sorts of birds. They filled their baskets with the birds and went back to the *tribu*, where they spent the day telling the tale of what they had done. The next morning they went up to their net early and it was full again, they filled their baskets and returned to the *tribu*, where they said that there were as many birds as the previous day.

The *vieux* could see what they were doing, and one of them, the leader of that place, named Fwadyay, saw what the two brothers had been doing, and was angry, he went to the net, where all the birds were hanging, strangled. Dawn arrived and the two brothers returned, they saw the net was filled with birds, and put them into their baskets. Then they noticed a different creature hanging in the net – it was Fwadyay, who had transformed himself into a lizard, and was hanging in the net. The two brothers were terrified at this sight, and went to run away, but the lizard demanded that they come and free him. The frightened elder brother untangled the net and the lizard fell onto his head, sat there and ordered them to return home. The elder brother asked the lizard to come down from his head, but the lizard refused and again ordered them to go home. Everyone in the *tribu* was surprised to see the lizard on the brother’s head, the *vieux* and the *chefs* talked about the situation, the *vieux* knew that the land belonged to the lizard, they deliberated until lunch time, then prepared food and asked the lizard to come down to eat its share. The lizard refused to budge, and ate sitting on the elder brother’s head.

The ancestors and the *chefs* made a fire in a place called Pwau, where the ancestors stayed in those days. It was a place forbidden to women, where the ancestors and the *chefs* would meet. The women emptied the contents of the cooking pots and brought the plates to Pwau and put

⁵⁸⁹ This term, which is a term of respect, can be translated as “ancestors”, “elders” or “old people”, in this example it appears that “ancestors” is possibly the most appropriate translation.

them there. Someone told the lizard to get down from the elder brother's head to eat, but the lizard insisted on eating where it was. The *vieux* set the fire in the brothers' house and told them to come and sleep there, the younger brother indicated a sleeping mat and pillow for the lizard, but it refused, staying where it was. They slept, and the younger brother saw drops of pus on the elder brother's head that trickled onto his face. He wiped it, rubbed it, looked and said "That stinks!". They went outside to warm up the leftovers from the previous night's meal, it was in those days the ends of coconut leaves. They asked the lizard to come down to eat, but it refused again, and ate where it was.

The eldest of the *vieux* said to the ancestors "I am going to hunt some game on the Pwanyit plateau", the ancestors thought this was a good idea. They took a *pirogue* and the net, and the two brothers went with them, the brother with the lizard on his head sat in the middle of the *pirogue* and they paddled from Pidyan to Pwanyit. As they were paddling, the eldest of the *vieux* saw giant clams in the water and asked how they could be caught. The lizard asked where they were, and said that it would go down and trap them. The lizard dived into the water, and when it went inside a giant clam, it closed in surprise. Those left in the boat looked each other in the eye and the one at the front said to turn around and go home. So they did, their journey took them to Pidyan where they rested at the *tribu* that evening, then they went up and slept at Pwau. They slept until morning, but the elder brother, who had had the lizard on his head, had slept his last. The news spread amongst the ancestors and the *chefs*, there where they live...

Evidently, these stories are significantly transformed by the process of textualisation, and the passage, from Nixumwak and Bwato languages into French. The layout of the nine *contes kanak* on the page reflects the unevenness of the process of textualisation. A résumé in French is provided for the first *conte* as a complete translation for the word-for-word text was not possible. The word-for-word translation is also presented. The second *conte* is presented with a word-for-word translation followed by a French translation, the third, fourth and fifth *contes* appear in French only, as do the seventh and eighth *contes*. The sixth *conte*, one of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled "Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier" is divided into five numbered sections which likely represent the divisions made in the word-for-word translation, although this is not certain as the word-for-word translation is not included. The seventh *conte*, another (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled "Le lézard et le bénitier" is presented in French only, with no indications of the word-for-word structure,

and the language is a smoother, more fluent French than the previous *conte*, which appears to be a more literal translation of the recording.

The transformation undergone by genre is less evident, as the genres of the stories in their original languages are not specified, although Coyaud does make mention of the broad categories of historical stories (more or less fictionalised), myths, or stories concerning the arrival of missionaries. Further investigation is necessary to ascertain the genres of these stories in the two oral traditions concerned, it can however be assumed that they have been transformed as they have been subsumed in the book into the category of *conte*.

Littérature orale: Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie is a work that is designed to demonstrate characteristics of the source literatures and languages included, thus the translations of “Bodanu et Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier” and “Le lézard et le bénitier” remain very close to the source recordings, with the maintenance of repetition and a limited use of synonyms (in contrast to “good” models of written French), as well as other elements that reinforce the impression of orality such as the frequent use of dialogue, the limited use of subordinating conjunctions, and the frequent use of deixis.

In terms of the cultural and linguistic competence of the (re)writer (s), Maurice Coyaud’s dependence on native-speaker experts for the transcription and translation processes serve to compensate for his relatively limited experience of the cultures and languages to which the stories he recorded belong. The (re)writing process is a collaborative one, with consultation with experts in the form of the elders who recounted the stories, and younger experts for assistance with the transcription/translation process. The acknowledgement of the oral dimension of the stories comes from the title of the book “*Littérature orale*”, to the notes on phonology that appear after several stories, the inclusion of the narrator’s introduction and final words in “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier”, and the description of the performative context in the form of the reaction of those who listened to “Le lézard et le bénitier” on the tapedeck on the lawn between halves of a football game, also helps to create texts that closely reflect the original oral performances from which they are derived.

The inclusion of the names and biographical information of the narrators and the others involved in the (re)writing process as well as the limited number of explanatory notes mean the texts stand alone and do not give the impression that they need to be “interpreted” by “experts”, thus presenting a situation in which “genuine communication” between parties

with overlapping understandings and equal status is able to take place. This, in conjunction with the visibility of the original stories (in textualised form) for several of the *contes*, the use of the value-conferring term “*Littérature...*” to describe the texts within the book, and the representation of Kanak texts as being on equal terms with others from the *Asie-Austronésie* region (Burmese, Korean, Japanese and Mongolian) serve to valorise these elements of Kanak literature and create a positive encounter between oral and written traditions that is respectful of the relational space between these traditions.

5.4 TEXT 41: Collectif. *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie*. N° 21. Noumea: Société d’Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1980.

“*LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER*” (PP. 152–56) AND “*THU, LE LÉZARD ET LE COQ*” (PP. 169–72).

Two separate pathways, one originating in Drehu oral tradition and the other in New Caledonian written tradition in French, lead to the collection of *contes* entitled *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* and published in 1980 by the *Société d’Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*. The collection comprises 60 stories “*selectionnés, présentés et commentés*” by the SEHNC, and these are organised into ten sections under the following headings: *Le commencement*, *Les origines*, *Légendes héroïques*, *Le pouvoir*, *Kawengwa*, *Lézards et serpents*, *Les masques*, *L’ordre*, *La morale*, and *La tradition moderne*.

The *contes* are preceded by a preface written by Bernard Brou, president of the SEHNC, and an introduction by Dominique Bourret, ethnobotanist and one of the five “*collecteurs de contes*” (along with Maurice Coyaud, Père Marie-Joseph Dubois, Loïc Mangematin, and Père Roland Tavernier) who contribute to the book. Following the 60 *contes* is an *Appendice* that contains an “attempt at a structuralist interpretation of New Caledonian and Loyalty Island mythology”⁵⁹⁰ by Paul Griscelli, a Caledonian literary critic and intellectual whose family had lived in New Caledonia for a number of generations, and who was a member of the panel

⁵⁹⁰ The title in French “*Une tentative d’interprétation structuraliste de la mythologie néo-calédonienne et loyaltienne*” (p. 241).

of readers for the book, and a member of the SEHNC. Griscelli's analysis is followed by a version of a "mythe" entitled "*Une g n se loyaltienne*" told by an unnamed "*femme de Fayaw *" and collected by Griscelli.

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le l zard* that comes from New Caledonian written tradition, by way of Maurice Coyaud's *Litt rature orale. Birmanie, Cor e, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Cal donie* (1979), is entitled "*Le l zard et le b nitier*", and features in section VI – *L zards et serpents*.⁵⁹¹ The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le l zard* that comes from Drehu oral tradition is presented by Lo c Mangematin in section VIII – *L'ordre*,⁵⁹² and is entitled "*Thu, le l zard et le coq*".

Insight into the commission of *Litt rature orale : 60 contes m lan siens de Nouvelle-Cal donie* can be gained by a close reading of Brou's preface, which begins with details of the date and the context of the book's commission, and also introduces "tradition" and "fidelity" as the key concepts underpinning the work,

*Tradition et fid lit , telles ont  t  les deux axes d termin es par la Soci t  d' tudes Historiques lorsque son conseil d'administration d cida, le 16 novembre 1978, de pr parer la publication d'un volume de contes et mythes m lan siens (5).*⁵⁹³

Towards the end of the preface, Brou provides further information relating to the commission of *Litt rature orale : 60 contes...*, stating that the collection is intended as a pedagogical tool for use by teachers and students of a "modern, pluriethnic New Caledonia" as well as a means of providing a glimpse into "Melanesian culture",

*Nous avons aussi pour but de mettre   la disposition des Enseignants et  l ves de la Nouvelle-Cal donie pluriethnique moderne, un ensemble de textes directement utilisables, mais capables de donner une mesure aussi exacte que possible de la culture m lan sienne, dont les qualit s intrins ques transpar tront ici (5).*⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ Pages 152–56.

⁵⁹² Pages 169–72.

⁵⁹³ [Tradition and fidelity, such were the two axes established by the *Soci t  d' tudes Historiques* when its board decided, on the 16th of November, 1978, to undertake the publication of a volume of Melanesian *contes* and myths].

⁵⁹⁴ [Our aim was also to make available to the Teachers and Pupils of modern, pluriethnic New Caledonia a group of texts that are immediately usable, but capable of giving as precise an idea as possible of Melanesian culture, of which the intrinsic qualities will become clear here].

The decision to assemble the collection was made at the end of 1978, which was the year of publication of the English translation of Jean-Marie Tjibaou's and Philippe Missotte's *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1976), a book that grew out of the *Mélanésia 2000* festival of 1975 and presented a Kanak world view in its relation to both "traditional" and "modern" society. There is a similarity in the syntax and wording of the titles of the two works which may or may not be accidental – *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* and *Kanaké : Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie* – and strangely the title of the SEHNC collection is not completely accurate, given that the first two *contes*, "Le soleil et la lune" and "Le jour et la nuit" were collected from Vanuatu by Père Tavernier – a more precise title would have been something along the lines of *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie et des Nouvelles-Hébrides*. At the time of publication there was a precedent for titles listing multiple locations, indeed, the contributions from the linguist Maurice Coyaud were taken from the LACITO publication *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Nevertheless, a more accurate title was not employed, and a possible explanation for the similarity between the titles of the SEHNC publication and the Tjibaou/Missotte work is that the former was seeking to provide an alternative voice to explain "Melanesian culture".

Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie was published in 1980, at a time when the political landscape of New Caledonia was dramatically changing, it was the year after the formation of the *Front Indépendantiste* from political parties including the *Union Calédonienne*, the *Parti de Libération Kanak*, and the *Front Uni de Libération Kanak* in 1979. 1979 was also the year of the establishment of the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires*, which was created to help fulfil a promise of more local content in the New Caledonian education system that was outlined in a plan for long-term economic development introduced in 1978 by the French Minister of Overseas Territories, Paul Dijoud (Pineau-Salaün 166). The *Bureau* was charged with the task of producing teaching materials in Kanak languages so that they could be taught in *collèges*⁵⁹⁵ (Moyse-Faurie 2003), and a number of collections of *contes* were produced by Kanak educators who were attached to the *Bureau*. Although it was established in 1979, the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires* was not legally able to publish documents in Kanak languages (neither was it possible to teach Kanak

⁵⁹⁵ The first four years of secondary school in the French education system.

languages in the New Caledonian education system) until earlier decrees dating back to the colonial administration⁵⁹⁶ were repealed in 1984,⁵⁹⁷ the date from which the first publications appear. This publishing activity was to be short-lived, as under the new conservative French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, the *Bureau* was instructed to cease its activities in 1987 (Pineau-Salaün 167).

The SEHNC was already involved in the production of teaching materials for the subject of History at the *collège* level for the *Centre Territorial de Recherche et de Documentation Pédagogiques* (CTRDP),⁵⁹⁸ and it is likely that in the commission of *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* there was an element of response to the mission set out for the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires* to prepare and publish resources in Kanak languages and French. In the *Préface* of *Littérature orale : 60 contes...*, Bernard Brou, discussing the methods of production and presentation adopted in the collection, stages a reasonably strong criticism of the use of “*une présentation apparemment scientifique des légendes recueillies, parfois données en trois textes successifs : en langue autochtone, puis en traduction “mot-à-mot”, puis en langue française reconstituée*”.⁵⁹⁹ This method had first been used in translations of Kanak texts by Maurice Leenhardt in *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), but also in LACITO collections of elements of oral tradition, such as the 1979 publication of two volumes of *Textes nemi* by Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Tein, and *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie*, by Maurice Coyaud and Denise Bernot. A bilingual presentation (without the *mot-à-mot*) was also adopted in a number of publications produced by the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires*.

Brou’s criticism of the presentation of both source and target texts as “*générateurs à coup sûr d’infidélités involontaires*”⁶⁰⁰ may have been directed at the 1979 publications, and may also have been part of the motivation behind the production of the monolingual SEHNC

⁵⁹⁶ Namely the 1863 “*décret Guillaïn*” which forbade the use of any language but French in the education system, and the 1921 “*arrêté*” which prohibited all publications in indigenous languages.

⁵⁹⁷ This initiative was a prerequisite to the extension of the 1951 *Loi Deixonne*, which authorises the teaching of regional languages in the public education system, to New Caledonia in 1992 (Pineau-Salaün 167).

⁵⁹⁸ A history textbook for secondary schools was developed by Bernard Brou, Raymond Blazy and Jack Mainguet and published in 1975. While it offered a New Caledonia-centred perspective rather than a Metropolitan French one, it “still portrayed Kanak as being ‘discovered and civilized’” (Pineau-Salaün 165).

⁵⁹⁹ [a seemingly scientific presentation of the collected legends, sometimes given in three successive texts: in the indigenous language, then in “word-for-word” translation, then reconstituted in the French language].

⁶⁰⁰ [certainly generators of unintentional infidelities]

collection. He makes a case for the method used to produce *Littérature orale : 60 contes...*, arguing that local languages have evolved to deal with modern demands, as have the *conteurs* who are able to express themselves in French that is sometimes less than perfect, but often more faithful to the ideas because it comes directly from the mind of the person telling the story. Brou is of the opinion that it is better to avoid rethinking concepts, and instead to sacrifice the “*pureté*” of the French language, leaving it to the *collecteurs* to finalise the versions for publication. He makes the connection between the use of numerous “*intermédiaires*” and the generation of unintentional errors or “*infidélités*”, and he claims that the approach used in *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* is the best way to show “*respect de la tradition et fidélité maximale*”⁶⁰¹ (5). While this is a debatable point, it would seem to fit with the hypothesis that the collection was commissioned in part as a reaction to existing texts, and that one of its aims is to provide a presentation suited to a “modern, pluri-ethnic New Caledonia” that provides an alternative to those that give prominence to the Kanak language versions alongside their translations into French.

Dominique Bourret’s *Introduction* briefly introduces the *collecteurs* and outlines their approaches to the collection of the *contes*, provides information on the organisation of the book, explaining the logic behind the section divisions, and makes the point that the purpose of *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* is “to illustrate a dimension of New Caledonian ethno-history that is often neglected”, the dimension in question being that of oral tradition. Following the *Introduction* are short presentations written by the other four *collecteurs* (the linguist, Maurice Coyaud, the priest and ethnographer Marie-Joseph Dubois, the “*collecteur d’un amateurisme éclairé*”⁶⁰² Loïc Mangematin, and the priest Roland Tavernier) in which they describe their methods and the context of the “*collecte des contes*” that they have contributed to the book.

The first (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* to appear in the collection is “*Le lézard et le bénitier*”, collected by Maurice Coyaud. It is the same story that Coyaud contributed to *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* of 1979, a fact that is confirmed by the information on the circumstances and method of the story’s recording

⁶⁰¹ [respect for tradition and maximum fidelity]

⁶⁰² [the well-informed amateur collector]

that features in *Littérature orale. Birmanie...* (as notes following the story) and in a slightly modified form in *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* (as an introductory paragraph).⁶⁰³

The story of “*Le lézard et le bénitier*” that appears in both *Littérature orale. Birmanie...* and *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* arises from the same (re)writing process (recording of Diela Joseph Thi’s narration, constitution of a word-for-word translation, then production of a freer, more fluent translation in French). The difference is that the fluent French version alone figures in Coyaud’s 1979 book, whereas the word-for-word translation, which remains syntactically closer to the source language recording, is the sole version featuring in *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* The word-for-word translation is chopped up into numbered phrases, and these numbers are retained in the text, as in the extract below,

*48. Les deux retournent là-haut, 49. et c’est pareil; ils restent là 50. les filets pleins d’oiseaux de toutes sortes. 51. Les deux ramassent tous les oiseaux (153).*⁶⁰⁴

This presentation is more difficult to read than that used for example, by Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre in *Textes nemi*, where the numbers are aligned to the left of the page and do not interrupt the flow of the text as much as the presentation shown in the example above.⁶⁰⁵ Using Ozanne-Rivierre’s format would have resulted in the following more reader-friendly presentation,

48. Les deux retournent là-haut,
49. et c’est pareil; ils restent là
50. les filets pleins d’oiseaux de toutes sortes.
51. Les deux ramassent tous les oiseaux.

⁶⁰³ Coyaud writes that the narrateur, Diela Joseph Thi, was 72 years old when he recounted the story in the bwato [Bwato] language at Gatop on the 25th of July, 1977. Jean Poithily, chef of the tribu of Gatop, deputy mayor of Voh and speaker of xaveg [Haveke], a dialect closely related to Bwato, contributed to the production of the word-for-word translation, aided by Diela Joseph Thi, who helped to clarify elements that were unclear to Poithily, whose first language was not Bwato.

⁶⁰⁴ [48. The pair go back up there, 49. and it is the same ; they stay there, 50. the nets filled with all sorts of birds. 51. The pair gather up all the birds.]

⁶⁰⁵ This left-aligned presentation of numbered segments is commonly used by linguists in collections derived from texts of Kanak oral tradition.

There is also a transformation of the genre from a text in an anthology of stories from different cultures⁶⁰⁶ that has a linguistic focus, and features source language, word-for-word and translated versions of stories alongside one another, to a monolingual collection of stories with two stated aims, to provide texts useful for teaching and to explain elements of Kanak culture.

At the level of the narrative, the story of “*Le lézard et le bénitier*” follows the same structure “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” as does the version in Coyaud’s *Littérature orale. Birmanie...*, and as it is a word-for-word translation, it is likely that the French text follows the Bwato version very closely. It does appear to retain elements of the original narration, as there is repetition present and pauses are marked in the narrative with “...”.

Though Coyaud had limited experience of New Caledonia, and was not a speaker of the languages he recorded, his lack of specific linguistic competence and experience were offset by the collaborative method he used. This (re)writing is the result of a collaboration between Coyaud, Diela Joseph Thi and Jean Poithily, the latter two having profound linguistic and cultural competence with respect to their respective oral traditions, and with Diela Joseph Thi the most knowledgeable regarding the story he told in his own language. The inclusion of the information about the collaborative process, and of the playing of the recording to a local audience and their reaction to it, as well as the use of the word-for-word translation, with phrase numbers interspersed with the text, acknowledges, and even emphasises the original story and the original language. It also brings attention to the performative dimension of the story. The impression produced is a positive recognition and respect for those involved and the tradition from which the story derives, thus this (re)writing has a potentially positive contribution to identity construction processes.

However, there is also a reading that can be seen as less than positive. Taken out of its original context in *Littérature orale. Birmanie...* where it was an intermediate stage in a process of translating from a recording in Bwato to a French text, the word-for-word translation of “*Le lézard et le bénitier*” that appears in *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* appears disjointed thanks to the line numbers that are included in the body of the text. In addition, the

⁶⁰⁶ Namely those of Burma, Korea, Japan, Mongolia and New Caledonia.

short sentences, repetitive structures and simple vocabulary that are features of the word-for-word translation, especially when read in conjunction with comments in the *Préface* regarding the linguistic competence in French of the *conteurs*,⁶⁰⁷ have the potential to create an impression of the text as artless, prosaic and of limited aesthetic value and, depending on the reader's familiarity with Kanak culture and oral tradition, may misrepresent the original version as sharing these qualities.

The second (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* to appear in *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* is “*Thu, le lézard et le coq*” collected by Loïc Mangematin. There is no mention of a person given as source of the story, and this is likely due to the method employed by Mangematin when (re)writing an element of Drehu oral tradition. In his section of the *Présentation des collecteurs*, Mangematin explains his “*méthode de travail*”. He states that in order to understand a group of humans from an ethnological point of view requires more than just observation, “[i]l faut vivre comme cet autre homme, penser comme lui, réagir comme lui, sans essai de compréhension”⁶⁰⁸ (19). Mangematin recounts his entrée into Lifou society, as a friend of “Kiki W...”, who was “the key to the door that opened for me into the Melanesian world” (20). Mangematin relates that he had wanted to understand “*les Vieux*”⁶⁰⁹ and that today *les Vieux* seem to understand him, fully appreciating that what is written down will remain for their grandchildren, and, “faced with the modern world that crushes men”, they want to preserve their tradition intact. Mangematin writes that *les Vieux* know that what he records and writes down will be faithful. For him, the myth is the key to any human society, and he has been lucky enough to gain the trust of those privileged persons who have the right to transmit these myths (20).

Mangematin then goes on to describe his method, which consists predominantly of reconstituting fragments of stories heard over the course of years spent living side by side with Kanak, participating in daily life, working the fields, fishing, travelling the pathways filled with toponyms of significance, listening and observing, and hearing firsthand from the mouths of *les Vieux* the myths that constitute the history of Wet [Wé] on Lifou. He writes of

⁶⁰⁷ Reference is made to the “sometimes imperfect French” of the *conteurs*, and the approach utilised in the book which involved “sacrificing the purity of the French language” in order to remain closer to the original ideas expressed.

⁶⁰⁸ [One must live like this other man, think like him, react like him, without trying to understand]

⁶⁰⁹ [the Elders]

how at the end of each day he would scrupulously write down what he had seen and heard, accumulating over time many pages covered with phrases, names of places and people which helped to orient his enquiries. He also writes of working with his *informateurs* to translate certain stories word-for-word and then “transcribing” them in French to make them easier to read, and of the need for thorough analysis of the meaning of terms in Drehu so as not to mistranslate them. For some of the *légendes* he writes that a half-page of text might represent numerous trips, with notes taken on several occasions, and that these “comings and goings” do not always result in a full text, due to interruptions to meetings, inappropriate timing, or the wish of a particular *informateur* to say no more on the matter, in which case, either a new *informateur* would become involved, or no further work would be done on the legend in question. Finally, Mangematin would correct or reconstitute the stories with the help of “*ceux qui savent*” (21).⁶¹⁰ Bourret writes in the *Introduction* that “*L. Mangematin parle le lifou, mais sauf exception, ne traduit pas ; il restitue, avec le contrôle de ses informateurs privilégiés, la version fournie par ceux-ci des mythes qui le passionnent*” (6).⁶¹¹

Thus the (re)writing process for Mangematin involves a mixture of recording, collaboration and osmosis over a period of time in a kind of participant-observer relationship that is at once conscious and unconscious, and the resulting (re)writings are filtered through the mind of the (re)writer. He gives no detail of the provenance of “*Thu, le lézard et le coq*”, the text is marked simply “*recueilli par Loïc Mangematin*”,⁶¹² and provides no information on the specifics of the process involved in its production.⁶¹³

The transformations undergone by the story are evidently those implicit in the textualisation process and in the change in genre from an element of Drehu oral tradition to part of an element of New Caledonian written tradition designed to explain and present aspects of Kanak oral traditions and culture to a predominantly non-Kanak readership. The content of

⁶¹⁰ In other words, *les vieux* (the phrase “*ceux qui savent*” also recalls the subtitle of Baudoux’s 1952 *Légendes canaques 1 : Les vieux savaient tout*”).

⁶¹¹ [L. Mangematin speaks Lifou, but exceptions aside, does not translate; he reconstructs, checked by his privileged informants, the version they have presented of the myths that enthrall him]

⁶¹² [collected by Loïc Mangematin]

⁶¹³ Of the 20 *contes* contributed to the collection by Mangematin, the role of an *informateur* is acknowledged for six stories. Of these six stories, the name of the *informateur* is given in three, the initials only in one, and the *informateur* is not named in two. The other fourteen texts are simply marked as “*recueilli par Loïc Mangematin*” or “*recueilli par Loïc Mangematin à Lifou*”.

the story follows the basic structure of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption, and it would appear that unlike, for example, de Rochas, who appeared to remove most of the references to techniques and practices around hunting and gardening that featured in Lambert’s version, Mangematin has not abridged the story, and includes these cultural references, beginning the story with a description of the techniques involved in the manufacture of traps. Mangematin has clearly departed from the original version or versions of oral tradition that he heard in his choice of narrative style, the predominantly present-tense narration that is common to oral performances is replaced by a narrative style that fits with target readership expectations and conforms to French literary conventions, in particular in its use of the *passé simple* and *imparfait* tenses,

*Lorsque le chef arriva au village, tous les guerriers aperçurent le lézard perché sur son cou, et ils eurent très peur, mais celui-ci leur dit: “Ne tremblez donc pas ainsi” (170).*⁶¹⁴

*Les jours passaient, le grand chef se reposaient et reprenait des forces dans la case de la grand-mère et le coq montait toujours la garde dans la passe entre les coraux (171).*⁶¹⁵

Loïc Mangematin arrived in New Caledonia in the early 1970s and lived in Lifou in the decade preceding the publication of *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* Adopted by the family of his friend, Kiki W., he wrote of living *en famille*, participating in everyday life and building up relationships that allowed him to learn to speak Drehu, and that gave him access to elements of the rich oral tradition of the island. Consultation and collaboration appear to have been part of his “*méthode de travail*” and emphasis is placed, both in the SEHNC’s introduction and Mangematin’s own presentation of his work (19–22), on the relationships of trust built between Mangematin and the people with whom he lived. It is clear that Mangematin is motivated by a sense of responsibility, and a mission to record and preserve legends and myths from Kanak oral tradition that he sees as doomed to extinction, “[a]vec les nouvelles générations, bientôt les Mélanésiens seront comme nous : ils n’auront plus de patrimoine verbal transmissible (21).⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ [When the *chef* arrived in the village, all of the warriors caught sight of the lizard perched on his neck, and they were very afraid, but he said to them “Do not tremble so”].

⁶¹⁵ [The days passed, the great *chef* rested and regained his strength in the grandmother’s house, and the rooster still guarded the coral pass].

⁶¹⁶ [With the new generations, soon the Melanesians will be like us: they will no longer have transmissible verbal heritage].

He writes that he feels a sense of duty to preserve the “legends from the past” that have been transcribed, analysed and studied as a result of his encounters with Melanesians (by implication *les vieux*), with whom he has been able to build relationships that permit the conservation of the stories. This notion of trust that is difficult to obtain according to Mangematin – “*les connexions nécessaires pour déclencher de telles confidences fondamentales sont rares et difficiles à réaliser*”⁶¹⁷ – has the effect of conferring authority on the (re)writings that he has produced.

His use of footnotes and other explanatory apparatus (introductions contextualising texts, explanations within texts), the absence of the original versions, and for the most part, the lack of detail regarding the *informateurs*, in conjunction with the notion of the difficulty of access to these traditions for outsiders, work to establish Mangematin as a privileged interpreter of the elements of Drehu oral tradition and culture that he (re)writes.

The encounter between Mangematin and *Le Chef et le lézard* can be seen as generating both positive and negative images of Kanak culture, positive through his evident affection and respect for the people of Lifou, the friends, adopted family and *les vieux* to whom he refers in his texts, his passion for the mythology that had always seemed to him “*la clé de toute édifice humain*”⁶¹⁸ and his twofold purpose in collecting the stories,

... tant pour améliorer chez les Européens la connaissance que l'on a des Mélanésiens, que pour des Mélanésiens eux-mêmes, ceux qui sont jeunes aujourd'hui, car ils seront heureux de pouvoir se ré-imprégner d'une culture dont le système de transmission verbal mais spécifique a été détruit par l'impact de la civilisation mécanique et écrite (22).⁶¹⁹

However, the privileging of Mangematin's voice in the (re)writings, through the explanatory apparatus, the lack of information about the *informateurs*, the absence of original versions and the framing of the (re)writing process as being part of a salvage operation for a mode of transmission destined for extinction in the face of “mechanical and written civilisation”, serve to create an impression of the encounter being less an example of genuine communication

⁶¹⁷ [the connections necessary to unlock such deep secrets are rare and difficult to form]

⁶¹⁸ [the key to every human edifice]

⁶¹⁹ [as much for improving Europeans' knowledge about Melanesians, as for the Melanesians themselves, those who are young today, because they will be happy to be able to immerse themselves in a culture whose system of transmission, verbal but specific, has been destroyed by the impact of mechanical and written civilisation]

between equals than of an unequal communication between an advanced civilisation possessing the written word and technological superiority and a less developed culture whose defining mode of expression, oral tradition, is inevitably destined to disappear.

Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie is a collection that contains a mixture of positive and negative images of Kanak oral literature and culture, which may in part be attributed to the variation in methods and approaches employed by the different contributors to the book. The introductory comments by Brou and Bourret acknowledge the dynamic nature of Kanak oral traditions,

*Si la tradition orale perpétue les rites, elle n'est pas pour autant figée. Les textes groupés sous l'appellation antinomique de **Tradition moderne** montrent comment les conteurs font entrer les événements récents dans les grilles mythiques et comment le discours conserve sa force agissante” (7).⁶²⁰*

The two (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that feature in *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, along with other texts and sections within the collection contain positive representations of the stories, and in the case of the two (re)writers discussed in this section, convey a sense of respect for the people and traditions from which the stories derive. However, the lack, or limited amount of context provided for the stories, the blurring of boundaries created by grouping Kanak and ni-Vanuatu stories together under the heading, “Melanesian stories from New Caledonia”, along with the way the structure of the book privileges the voices and interpretations of the “*collecteurs de contes*”, create a clear impression of Kanak oral tradition seen at a distance. The overall effect of the book is to reinforce the binary opposition of tradition/modernity (explicitly in fact in the quote above), relegating Kanak traditions and culture to a less advanced stage than the cultures and traditions of France in particular, the West in general. Hence the mixed nature of the images of Kanak oral traditions, and the potential for the work to influence processes of identity construction at the level of Kanak identity and at the collective level of the *destin commun* in positive or negative ways.

⁶²⁰ [If oral tradition perpetuates rites, it is far from fossilized. The texts grouped under the antinomic title **Modern Tradition** show how the storytellers integrate recent events into mythic frameworks and how discourse maintains its effective strength.] (emphasis in original text).

TEXT 42: Collectif. *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie*. N° 21. Re-edition. Noumea: Société d'Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1986.

TEXT 43: Collectif. *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie*. N° 21. Re-edition. Noumea: Société d'Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2008.

“LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER” (PP. 152–56) AND “THU, LE LÉZARD ET LE COQ” (PP. 169–72).

The story of *Le Chef et le lézard* moves along two further pathways within New Caledonian oral tradition, as the “*Le lézard et le bénitier*” and “*Thu, le lézard et le coq*” move from the SEHNC’s 1980 *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* to the two reprints of the collection made in 1986 and 2008. The text and layout of the original book is not altered in the re-editions, other than a note on the back cover of the 2008 version by Gabriel Valet, president of the SEHNC, and the addition of the date of re-edition on the front cover.

While the (re)writings themselves are unchanged, the context in which they are published has an influence on the representation they create. The socio-political context of the 1986 re-edition was the turbulent period of the *Événements* and the literary context was the period following the publication of *De l’Ataï à l’indépendance* (1984) and the various collections of texts derived from oral traditions published by the *Bureau des langues vernaculaires* between 1984 and 1987. As has already been discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3, in relation to the re-editions of *Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens*, the SEHNC’s publication strategy during this period seems to have been frequently reactive, and for the 1986 re-edition of *Littérature orale : 60 contes...* this would also appear to be the case. The reason for the 2008 re-edition of the collection is less clear.⁶²¹ Gabriel Valet, who took over the role of president of the SEHNC, introduces the re-edition as continuing to be relevant, but no further detail is given for the reasons behind the re-edition. The 2008 edition does not necessarily arise from the publication strategy of the 1980s and 1990s, perhaps because of changes in editorial

⁶²¹ The reasons for the 2008 re-edition are less clear, and need to be further investigated.

policy, shifting attitudes, or as a result of the distance from the turbulence of the two preceding decades.

The encounters between the SEHNC and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* through the re-editions of *Littérature orale : 60 contes de Nouvelle-Calédonie* in 1986 and 2008 have seen a transformation of the contexts in which the books are received. These re-editions have both positive and negative aspects with reference to their potential influence on identity construction processes. The simple fact of their existence, and their repeated publication, points to an acknowledgement of the relevance of elements of Kanak oral traditions. This represents a valorisation of these traditions, at very different moments in New Caledonian history, in the midst of the *Événements* and later at a time when the country is preparing for the post-Noumea Agreement future. The negative aspects remain the same as for the original publication, the contributors to the collection speak for and analyse Kanak through examples of their oral traditions, and while there is a wide variation between the different *collecteurs* in terms of their methods, and of their acknowledgement of those who provided the stories and collaborated to varying degrees in the (re)writing process,⁶²² the overall impression projected is of an empirical study of a possibly anachronistic form of cultural expression, destined to disappear as its members are assimilated into the more advanced moral and technological civilisation offered by France.

5.5 TEXT 44: Maurice Coyaud. *Contes chinois et kanak*. Paris: Pour l'Analyse du Folklore, 1982.

“7. LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER (TEXTE BWATO I)” (PP. 52–54).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story of “Le lézard et le bénitier” moves out from *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1980) and into *Contes chinois et kanak*, a collection of texts from Chinese and Kanak oral traditions collected by the French linguist, Maurice Coyaud and published by his *maison d'édition Pour l'Analyse du Folklore* in 1982. A

⁶²² This is due to the differing approaches of the linguist, ethnobotanist, missionary-ethnographers and self-taught ethnologist who contributed to the book.

facsimile of “Le lézard et le bénitier”, one of the texts contributed by Coyaud to the SEHNC’s *Littérature orale : 60 contes...*(1980) has been included in *Contes chinois et kanak*, which contains 24 French translations of Kanak texts he collected during two research trips to New Caledonia, in August-September 1975 and July-November 1977.⁶²³ *Contes chinois et kanak* also contains five Chinese *contes*. “Le lézard et le bénitier” is the 23rd text in the collection, it covers three pages (52-54) and is an exact reproduction of the story that appeared in *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* with the same layout and typeface. The text, originally from Bwato oral tradition, was recounted to Coyaud by the *vieux* Diela Joseph Thi, who also contributes the final story in *Contes chinois et kanak*, an autobiographical text commissioned by Maurice Coyaud. All of the texts derived from Kanak oral tradition are presented in their French translation, the original texts do not feature in the book.

The (re)writing process that produced this version of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “Le lézard et le bénitier” involved a simple duplication of the pages taken from the previous publication in which it appears, *Littérature orale: 60 contes...* (1980).

The transformations are that the page layout is slightly different, as page breaks occur in different places because of the difference in page size between the two books (*Contes chinois et kanak* is printed on A4 pages). The (re)writing of “Le lézard et le bénitier” now features in a more international work, set alongside elements of Chinese oral tradition, rather than the almost exclusively Kanak texts presented in the *Littérature orale: 60 contes...* (two of the texts in that collection were from Vanuatu). *Contes chinois et kanak* would appear to be part of Coyaud’s mission, realised in part through his direction of the publisher *Pour l’Analyse du Folklore*, to make public all of the texts that he has collected. The other seven works in the series of which *Contes chinois et kanak* is the fourth instalment, contain material from the Asian countries which comprise Maurice Coyaud’s primary areas of research as a linguist: Korea, Japan, Philippines and Vietnam, the New Caledonian texts are the only ones that he collected from the region.

⁶²³ See section 5.3 of this chapter for more detail on these research missions.

As discussed in section 5.3 of this chapter, Maurice Coyaud worked in French as the *lingua franca* in order to obtain the recordings that he made during his two brief research trips to New Caledonia. He makes no claim to competence in Bwatoo, the language that the story of “Le lézard et le bénitier” was recorded in. Rather, he made use of his linguistic expertise as a field researcher and employed a strongly collaborative approach in the process of selecting, recording, transcribing and translating the texts. The (re)writing reflects this, as the introductory paragraph outlines his method of collection. The original text is acknowledged in the introductory paragraph, which attributes it to “M. Diéla”,⁶²⁴ and relates the time and place of the recording, and the process that produced the (re)writing.⁶²⁵ The reactions of the football players who listened to the recording also vividly illustrates the performative context.

The images of Kanak oral tradition projected by *Contes chinois et kanak* are predominantly positive. There is no analysis of the literature, any notes are concerned purely with the linguistic aspects of the texts, and by placing them in a comparative context, alongside the texts from oral traditions in China, the texts are treated as part of the rich tapestry of world oral traditions, value judgements are not made. In this sense, the (re)writing of “Le lézard et le bénitier” can be seen as an example of genuine communication, seeking to increase understanding through providing access for non-speakers of the languages concerned to these elements of their oral traditions.

5.6 TEXT 45: Maurice Coyaud. *Textes kanak*. Paris: Pour l’Analyse du Folklore, 2004.

“6. *BODANU, PWÊMANU, LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER (TEXTE NIGOUMAK)*” (PP. 69–75).

The pathway of this version of “*Le Chef et le lézard*” leads from Nixumwak oral tradition to New Caledonian written tradition in the Nixumwak language. The story moves out from Nixumwak oral tradition in September 26, 1977 at Wanak, Koumak, when Djak Pwêak Paetèn, aged 70, narrated the story “Bodanu et Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier” to Maurice

⁶²⁴ [Mr. Diéla] - a respectful form of address.

⁶²⁵ See section 5.3.

Coyaud, and into *Textes kanak* (2004) a selection of Kanak-language texts recorded by Coyaud during his research trips in 1975 and 1977.⁶²⁶

The relatively late discovery of the existence of the book on my part, and difficulties in accessing a copy of it within the timeframes set for this study, have meant that I have been unable to examine the work directly. However, in response to an emailed request, Maurice Coyaud was able to send me a photocopy of the text of “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier (texte nigoumak)” which is the ninth text in the book (pp. 69-75).

This is the first time that the Nixumwak-language version of “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier (texte nigoumak)” has been published. Only the French text appeared in Coyaud’s *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* published in 1979, although the existence of the source language version is evident in the layout of the French text, which is divided into five numbered sections which are most likely to represent the divisions made in the word-for-word translation. It would appear quite possible that the timing of the publication, in 2004, and some 25 years after the story’s first publication in French, may be connected to the explosion of writing and reflection on matters of identity and Kanak identity that had taken place in the six years between the signing of the Noumea Agreement and the publication of *Textes kanak*. The reasons for the publication merit further investigation.⁶²⁷ From the list of publications found on the website of *Pour l’Analyse du Folklore* under the headings of “*Essais et notes de voyages*” “*Ethnographie et langues*” and “*Poésie et peintures*”, it is clear that Coyaud’s prolific publishing activity is based in a openness and desire to disseminate the information he has gathered during a long and extremely active research career. Thus Coyaud has published not only contextual information in the form of journals and observations, or linguistic studies, but also the writings (predominantly in the form of translations) that reflect and convey aesthetic dimensions of

⁶²⁶ See section 5.3 of this chapter for more information on Coyaud’s research trips to New Caledonia in this period.

⁶²⁷ Maurice Coyaud, still actively publishing, has been extremely forthcoming and generous with the limited time that he had available when I contacted him regarding the book, and it is only questions of time restrictions that have prevented followup interviews from being undertaken before the completion of this study.

the literatures of different regions of the “*Extrême-Orient*”⁶²⁸ that constitute his major area of research interest.

According to the entry relating to *Textes kanak* on the website of *Pour l'Analyse du Folklore* (www.analysefolklore.fr), it consists of 130 pages, and the description reads as follows:

*Textes kanak : originaux des textes enregistrés en 1975 et 1977 par l'auteur, et traduits dans la publication précédente. Édition annotée de contes dans les langues du nord de l'île : bwato, pwame, nigoumak, yuanga.*⁶²⁹

The (re)writing of “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier” that appears in *Textes kanak* consists of the Nixumwak text, chopped up into numbered lines that correspond to those present in the French version published in Coyaud et al (1979). The only French to feature is in the footnotes, which are numerous (around 15–20 on each of the seven pages of the (re)writing). These appear to work as a kind of glossary, there is no critical analysis or explanatory material accompanying the texts, other than the footnotes containing information on specific items of vocabulary.

Given that the text is entirely in Nixumwak, and thus outside my linguistic competence, it is not possible to comment on the modifications made to the story at the level of content. The story is certain to have changed during the passage from oral to written code, and the transcribed text bears the marks of the process that produced it, as the numbers of the lines corresponding to the French translation have been inserted, mid-sentence sometimes. It would be an interesting exercise for a speaker of Nixumwak to reconstitute the bilingual version from the Coyaud’s 1979 and 2004 works in order to establish the translation strategies employed and the transformations undergone by the story.

Though a comprehensive analysis of *Textes kanak* has not been undertaken here for reasons already outlined, it is clear from the (re)writing of “Bodanu, Pwêmanu, le lézard et le bénitier” that features in the book, that Coyaud’s work has the potential to contribute in a positive way to the building or reclaiming of Kanak identity, in that it recognises the value of

⁶²⁸ [Far East]

⁶²⁹ [*Textes kanak*: originals of texts recorded in 1975 and 1977 by the author and translated in a previous publication. Annotated edition of *contes* in the languages of the north of the island: bwato, pwame, migoumak, yuanga].

the texts in Kanak languages by considering them worthy of publication, and in the fact that, in a sense, it provides missing pieces of a puzzle – the original texts. Interested parties, whether speakers of the languages concerned, linguists, or other researchers, might use these source texts to see how the translations have been produced. As has been discussed earlier in this chapter (in section 5.3), Maurice Coyaud’s (re)writings have been produced in a respectful manner, acknowledging the identity of those involved in the (re)writing process, and his decision to publish *Textes kanak* can be considered to be a continuation of his approach which appears to acknowledge the value of these texts as Kanak heritage, historical documents and a potential source of pride. Asserting the value of the Kanak text is a way of demonstrating a sense of respect for the culture from which the story derives, and in that sense, Coyaud’s (re)writing appears to be potentially an example of genuine communication, corresponding to a desire to increase understanding that may potentially have a positive impact on processes of identity construction.

5.7 TEXT 12: Patrick Pillon. “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” in *Ethnologies comparées* 7, (2004): 1–21.

RÉSUMÉ OF “LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER”, “BODANU PWEMANU, LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER” (P. 11).

Of the five converging pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* that lead to “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, Patrick Pillon’s 2004 article that appeared in *Ethnologies comparées* No 7, “Figures Sahariennes”, the pathways relevant to the network discussed in this chapter are those originating in New Caledonian written tradition in Nixumwak, Bwato and French, “Le lézard et le bénitier”, and “Bodanu Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier” *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1979).

The other four pathways that converge in Pillon’s article begin in the following texts found in New Caledonian written tradition: “Le Chef de Touho” from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900), “Virhenō ne ka to Kone/Le Maître de Koné” in *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), and “Pasikan et le lézard” from *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna* (1979). To avoid repetition of material, the full discussion of

the context in which the (re)writing process takes place, as well as the images projected by the article is found in Chapter 3, section 3.6.

5.8 TEXT 14: Lorna Miskelly. “La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français.” MA thesis. Department of French, School of European Languages and Literatures, University of Auckland, 2006.

“THU, LE LÉZARD ET LE COQ” (PP. 143–44) AND “LE LÉZARD ET LE BÉNITIER” (PP. 145–47).

Two pathways of *Le Chef et le lézard*, beginning and ending in New Caledonian written tradition in French, see the stories “Thu, le lézard et le coq” and “Le lézard et le bénitier” move out from *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1980), published by the SEHNC, and into “*La Transformation du Maître de Koné*”, a Masters thesis written in French by Lorna Miskelly, a student in the Department of French at the University of Auckland.

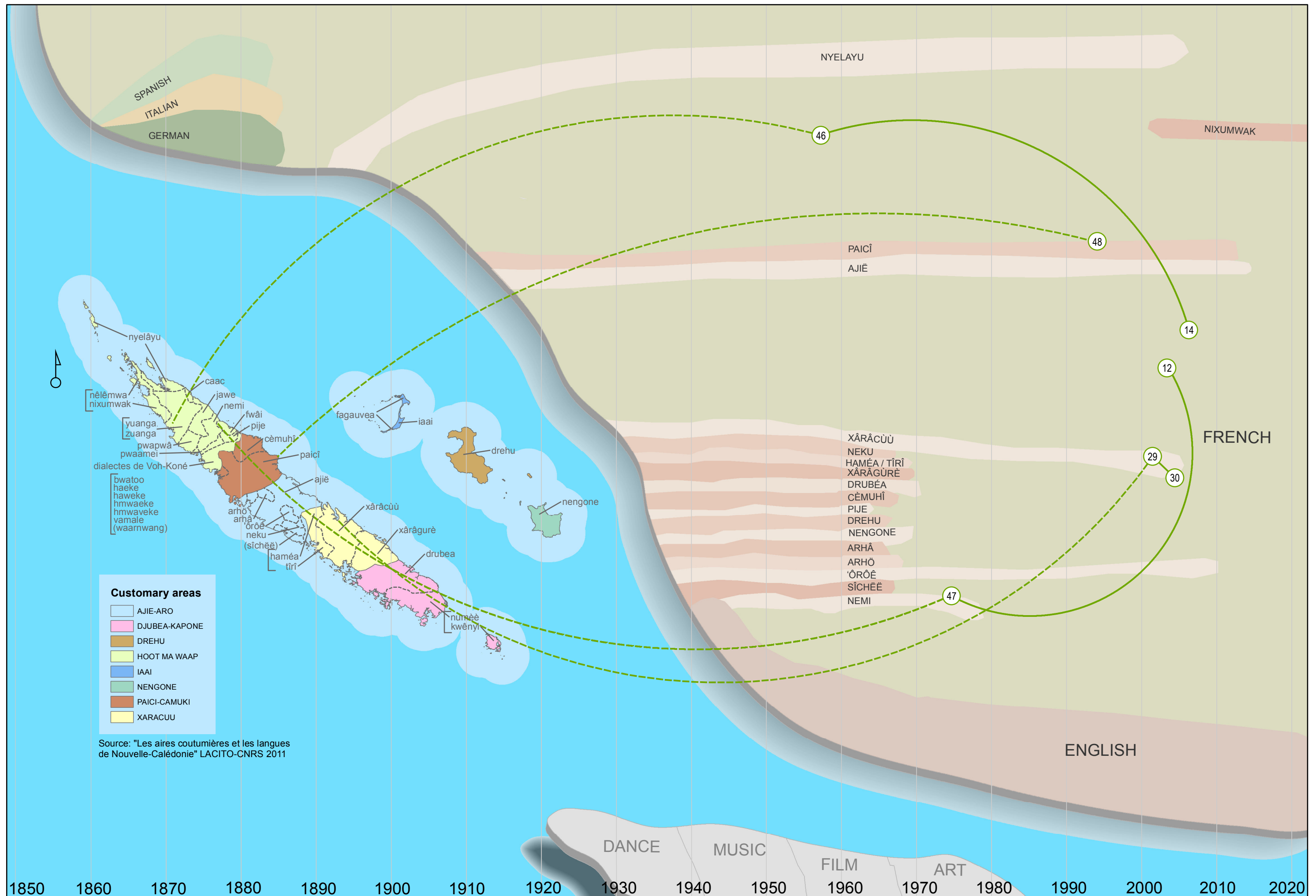
The (re)writings consist of re-typed versions of the source texts placed at the end of chapter 5 – “Thu, le lézard et le coq and Le lézard et le bénitier”. For a discussion of the commission, (re)writing process, the encounter between the elements of oral tradition and the (re)writer, and the image projected of Kanak oral traditions and culture by this and the four other (re)writings that figure in Miskelly’s thesis, see Chapter 3, section 3.8.

CHAPTER 6. Pathways originating in Yuanga, Nemi, Paicî and Xârâcùù Oral Traditions

A number of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that have moved into written traditions from various oral traditions are not connected to the networks of (re)writings discussed in the three previous chapters. These “independent” pathways leading from Yuanga, Nemi, Paicî and Xârâcùù oral traditions are discussed in this chapter. Below is a list of the seven texts that feature in the pathways charted on the map on the following page.

Corpus Text ID	Section	Publication details	Page
46	6.1	J. Guiart. <i>Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre</i> . 1957.	332
14	6.2	L. Miskelly – “La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français.” 2006.	341
47	6.3	F. Ozanne-Rivierre & P. Téin. <i>Textes nemi. Volume 2. Bas Coulna et Haut Coulna</i> . 1979.	341
12	6.4	P. Pillon. “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	347
48	6.5	A. Bensa & J.-C. Rivierre. <i>Les filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî</i> . 1994.	348
29	6.6	A. Ba Duong Nguyen et al. <i>Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> . 2001.	360
30	6.7	A. Ba Duong Nguyen et al. <i>Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> . 2005.	365

Figure 18 - Pathways Originating in Yuanga, Nemi, Paicî and Xârâcùù Oral Traditions



6.1 TEXT 46: Jean Guiart. *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre*. Petite Collection Mélanésienne. Noumea: Éditions des Études Mélanésiennes-Commission du Pacifique Sud, 1957.

“32. GOMEN. DIAKAMALA ET LE LÉZARD” (PP. 66–68).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads out from the Yuanga oral tradition of the Gomen area, where it was recounted by Kakala Téin Hwala, and into New Caledonian written tradition in French as “Diakamala et le lézard” in *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* (1957) by Jean Guiart. The book, a collection of 39 stories from Kanak oral traditions of the north of the Grande Terre, is a monolingual French publication organised into five sections: *I-Fables*, *II-Contes*, *III-Légendes*, *IV-Mythes*, and *V-Cosmologie*. Thirty of the texts give the narrator’s name and the location at which the story was recorded, with three of the texts containing information on the collection or the constitution of the story but no information regarding the narrator.⁶³⁰ “Diakamala et le lézard” is found in the section entitled *IV-Mythes* of Guiart’s book.

Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre (1957) was produced by the anthropologist during his time at the *Institut français d’Océanie*, an organisation created in 1946 by the *Office de la Recherche Scientifique d’Outre-Mer*, whose mission was to “generate, promote and carry out scientific studies throughout the French Pacific” (Leenhardt, “L’institut français d’Océanie” 7). The *Institut français d’Océanie*, based in Nouméa, worked closely with the *Commission du Pacifique Sud*,⁶³¹ of which the *Bureau du Livre* is acknowledged on the cover page, along with the *Études Mélanésiennes*,⁶³² as publisher of *Contes et légendes...*

While the collection fulfils one of the stated objectives of the *Institut français d’Océanie*, namely “*assurer collections et documentations pour la recherche dans cette partie du*

⁶³⁰ See “Conte recueilli à Hwayangéne” (p.26), “Conte recueilli à Pagou” (p.27), “Ce texte provient de la conjonction de bribes de ce récit recueillis tant personnellement, qu’auparavant par le R. P. Lambert et Maurice Leenhardt” (p.79).

⁶³¹ The international organisation whose members at the time were Australia, the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand and the Netherlands, was created as a consultative body focused on developing the economic and social wellbeing of the non-independent populations of the South Pacific region.

⁶³² The periodical published by the *Société des Études Mélanésiennes*, of which Maurice Leenhardt was a founding member in 1938.

monde”⁶³³ (Leenhardt, “L’institut français d’Océanie” 7), Guiart also outlines his motivation for producing the collection in the *Avertissement* of the book,

*Après l’œuvre de Baudoux et celle de Jean Mariotti, il nous a semblé qu’il fallait autre chose au grand public. Après l’interprétation du colon et celle de l’homme de lettres, j’ai voulu présenter ici, sans apprêts, le récit d’un conteur indigène. [...] Par ailleurs, ce livre est destiné en premier lieu au public autochtone lui-même. J’ai désiré qu’il y retrouve son âme traduite par ses propres mots (7).*⁶³⁴

He specifies that his target readership is first and foremost a Kanak one, and appears to wish to correct the interpretations of Kanak oral literature presented in the books of Georges Baudoux and Jean Mariotti,⁶³⁵ by publishing texts created by Kanak narrators for a Kanak readership. Guiart also makes it clear that an important objective of the collection is to valorise Kanak “folklore”,

*Certains informateurs sont morts. C’est à leur mémoire que je dédie cet ouvrage destiné à leurs fils, et aux générations à venir, afin qu’ils se souviennent, et sachent que leur folklore est une tranchée d’un passé dont ils n’ont pas à rougir (7).*⁶³⁶

The tone of this formulation, along with its use of the term “folklore”, gives the impression of a somewhat paternalistic attitude on the part of Guiart, however, when considered in the context of the time of writing – the same year as Kanak were allowed access to secondary education and only eleven years after the lifting of the *Indigénat* – a context in which there remained great separation between Kanak and non-Kanak, Guiart’s words would have been taken as openly sympathetic to Kanak, and his implicit criticism of Baudoux and Mariotti,

⁶³³ [to undertake collection and documentation for research in this part of the world]

⁶³⁴ [After the works of Baudoux and Mariotti, it seemed to us that the general public needed something else. After the interpretation of the colonist and the writer, I wanted to present here, without embellishment, a native storyteller’s tale. [...] Moreover, this book is intended primarily for the indigenous public. I wished that it might find here its soul translated by its own words].

⁶³⁵ For a discussion in English of Baudoux’s and Mariotti’s writing see Raylene Ramsay’s “Colonial Representations of Kanak Culture” in *Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia*, 2011. In French, see Dominique Jouve’s 2002 article “L’expérience et l’écriture de la multiculturalité dans l’œuvre de Jean Mariotti” and the recent re-editions of Mariotti’s complete works by the *Association pour l’édition des œuvres de Jean Mariotti* and the research group *Transcultures* of the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (headed by Dominique Jouve) in conjunction with the publishers *Éditions Grain de Sable*.

⁶³⁶ [Certain informants have died. In their memory, I dedicate this work to their sons and to the generations to come, that they might remember and know that their folklore is a piece of their past that they do not have to be ashamed of.]

who were viewed by the population of European extraction as presenting the “authentic” interpretation of Kanak culture and oral literature, could arguably be considered courageous.

That *Contes et légendes...* was primarily aimed at a Kanak readership is borne out by the fact that the book, which sold out rapidly, was distributed in Kanak villages through the “*bibliobus*” mobile library service funded by the *Commission du Pacifique Sud* (Guiart “Jean Guiart”). However, this is not the only readership envisaged by Guiart – as the following remarks from the *Avertissement* demonstrate, a non-Kanak audience with an interest or experience of the Kanak world is also envisaged,

Ceux qui ont vécu au contact des gens de la Grande-Terre y retrouveront la verdeur de leurs propos. [...] Le lecteur à l'esprit philosophique y retrouvera tous les genres, la fable, le conte, la légende et le mythe. On rencontrera des textes amusants, moralisateurs, parfois sous une forme inattendue ; des récits à péripéties, non dépourvus de romanesque ; des aperçus sur la cosmologie mélanésienne (7).⁶³⁷

The scholarly dimension of the text, related to the previously mentioned role of the *Institut français d'Océanie* in the promotion of research, is mentioned in the *Avertissement*, and an explanation given for the presentation of the texts in French, rather than in vernacular languages,⁶³⁸ since Guiart’s aim is to present a synthesis of Austro-Melanesian “folklore” rather than focusing specifically on the stories from the North of the Grande Terre,

Il y a là un ensemble qui, géographiquement, intéresse surtout le Nord de l'île, mais vise en réalité à présenter une synthèse du folklore austro-mélanésien. C'est pourquoi y sont inclus des textes traduits, pour lesquels il a fallu un certain appareil de notes (7).⁶³⁹

In *Contes et légendes...* Guiart does not provide any detail regarding the process involved in the production of the (re)writing of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “*Diakamala et le lézard*”, or the book in which it figures. However, he has recently uploaded an annotated

⁶³⁷ [Those who have lived in contact with the people of the Grande Terre will find the earthiness of their words here. [...] The reader of a philosophic bent will find all of the genres here, the fable, the *conte*, the legend and the myth. One will meet with amusing, moralising texts, sometimes in an unexpected form; eventful stories not lacking in fantastical aspects; glimpses of Melanesian cosmology.]

⁶³⁸ The influence of the law passed in 1921 forbidding publications in Kanak languages, which was only lifted in New Caledonia in 1984 (Vernaudon “Cadre démo/sociolinguistique”), on Guiart’s decision not to publish the vernacular texts is unknown.

⁶³⁹ [This is a group [of texts] which, geographically, concerns mostly the North of the island, but in reality aims to present a synthesis of Austro-Melanesian folklore. This is why translated texts have been included here, for which a certain system of notes has been required.]

bibliography of his works to his website,⁶⁴⁰ and in this he states that all of the texts in the collection were either dictated to him (presumably in French) or translated from the Kanak language concerned during the 1950s (Guiart “Jean Guiart”). In “*Diakamala et le lézard*”, Guiart mentions the area that the story comes from (Gomen), and the name of the narrator, Kakala Téin Hwala, as well as the location it was collected (Gamin), but no more information than that is provided.

It is possible to generalise from other (re)writings undertaken by Guiart, such as the version of *Téa Kanaké* that features in *Contes et légendes...*, which was produced through a collaborative effort involving transcription and translation,⁶⁴¹ and from the fact that he was a devoted student of Maurice Leenhardt, whose approach to translation was collaborative, that Guiart would have enlisted the aid of native-speakers to assist him with the transcription and translation of the narrations, though to what extent for this particular (re)writing it is not possible to say.

The story of “*Diakamala et le lézard*” has undergone changes in the passage from oral to written tradition, with the removal of elements of the performative context as part of the textualisation process, and in the change from Yuanga to French. It is difficult to know the kind of transformation undergone by the story at the level of content, as *Contes et légendes...* is a monolingual French-language work, and so although the original language version is acknowledged, through the mention of the *conteur*’s identity and the location at which the story was recorded, it is impossible to verify the translations against the Kanak-language version of the story on which it is based. In the *Avertissement*, Guiart places a note at the bottom of the page describing his treatment of the spelling of the place names, names of people and terms in vernacular languages in the book, “*N. B. Pour des raisons d’opportunité*

⁶⁴⁰ www.jeanguart.org. The annotated bibliography is part of Guiart’s project, outlined on the homepage of the website, to make available online “tous les manuscrits édités, ou pas encore livrés à l’impression, qui correspondent, mis bout à bout, à ce que pourrait être une encyclopédie anthropologique canaque.” [all of the published texts, or those not yet sent for publication, that, when placed end to end, correspond to what might be a Canaque anthropological encyclopedia.]

⁶⁴¹This (re)writing of *Téa Kanaké* is entitled “*Histoire des vieux d’il y a longtemps et des pays de Nouvelle-Calédonie*” (Guiart, *Contes et légendes* 80–83). It was dictated by Pierre Pwârâpwéa in Paicî, transcribed by Philippe Görödé in Paicî and Ajië and translated by Jean Guiart and Auguste Wabéalo into French. The three Kanak experts involved in the (re)writing process also were part of the network of *pasteurs* who had trained with Maurice Leenhardt at Do Néva. Leenhardt provided Guiart with an introduction to the members of the network, who subsequently aided the anthropologists in his research endeavours.

locale, les noms des lieux, d'hommes et les termes de la langue vernaculaire ont été transcrits en écriture gallicisée" (7).⁶⁴² The reason Guiart considered the use of Gallicized terms more expedient is not made explicit.

With respect to the content of the story, "Diakamala et le lézard" conforms to the pattern of "transgression–punishment–flight–redemption" shared by the other texts in the corpus. However, rather than the main protagonists being a chief and a lizard, in this version, we find a child, Diakamala, whose transgression leads to his flight from the pursuing lizard. In this version of *Le Chef et le lézard*, Diakamala, the child of Koumèpou and Kapou, catches some birds in a trap set in a tree, cooks them and serves them to his parents, who then send him out to set his traps in a banyan tree. When he discovers a lizard caught in his trap, Diakamala tries to flee, but the lizard demands that he free it, and scolds him for catching the birds, who are his children. The moment the lizard is set free, it jumps onto the back of Diakamala's neck and the terrified child returns home crying. When his parents see the lizard, they go out and gather food and prepare dinner for Diakamala, who refuses to eat. The lizard demands his share and the crying Diakamala passes the plate up for the lizard to eat from. They retire and all fall asleep. The lizard releases Diakamala from its grip and he awakes, realises he is free and runs away to hide under a sugarcane plant, but the next morning the lizard finds him and climbs back up onto him again.

The second night, after it has eaten its meal while still perched upon Diakamala, the lizard falls asleep and releases him again. This time, he flees and seeks shelter with the *grand chef* of Pamboa, Téin Malouma, who promises to kill the lizard, but on seeing it approaching, sends Diakamala away. He flees to the home of Téin Gomen, who promises to protect him, but again, when the lizard approaches, Diakamala is sent away. He runs to Téin Nondi, the *grand chef* of Koumac, then to Téin Pa at Bondé, then to Téin Ovatch at Arama. When he is forced to leave Téin Ovatch's home, he goes to Pam, where he comes across some boys his age swimming. They ask him to tell his story, and invite him to swim with them. When the children hear the huge and terrifying lizard approaching, they tell Diakamala to follow them under the water should the lizard reach there. The lizard comes, the children and Diakamala

⁶⁴² [N.B. For local reasons of expediency, the names of places, of men and the terms in vernacular language have been transcribed in Gallicized writing].

dive down and follow the trunk of a tree that is growing under the water down from its tip to its base.

The lizard, seeing that it cannot go under the water, calls together all of the birds of the island and asks them to drink the seawater. The birds take turns drinking the sea, but all end up vomiting, except for the duck, who drinks the water up until the tree is uncovered. The lizard climbs down the trunk and the children see it coming. They each take a shell knife and go back into the underwater house, one child sits on each side of the doorway and Diakamala is seated inside at the back of the house. The lizard arrives and demands to know where its “food” is, the two boys tell the lizard that Diakamala is inside and as soon as the lizard pokes its head inside the door, they strike it, so hard that its brains come out. Then they cut the lizard up into pieces that they share amongst the *grands chefs* of the North of the island. Diakamala takes the lizard’s head back to his parents Kamèpou and Kapou, and the story ends there.

The (re)writing features in the section *IV-Mythes*, and Guiart does not elaborate on the criteria for inclusion in this category. The change in genre undergone by the story of “Diakamala et le lézard” would require more investigation, as the genre to which it belongs in Yuanga oral tradition is not mentioned in the book. However, in the entry on *Contes et légendes* in the annotated bibliography of publications found on Guiart’s website,⁶⁴³ he acknowledges the inadequacy of the genres of European traditions for the description of genres of Kanak oral traditions, writing that the divisions in genre made in the book were arbitrary,

*La distinction entre fables, contes, légendes, mythes et cosmologie correspond à une classification de simple commodité, et nullement à une volonté de clarification scientifique. De ce dernier point de vue, il eût mieux valu ranger ces textes par lieu d’origine, les conteurs étant nommément désignés.*⁶⁴⁴

The influence of source culture poetics upon the (re)writer is evident when Guiart writes in the *Avertissement* that the “simplicity” of language found in the texts is that of the speakers

⁶⁴³ See Guiart, “Jean Guiart, Bibliographie – Ouvrages”, 2011.

⁶⁴⁴ [The distinction between fables, *contes*, legends, myths and cosmology consists of a simple classification of convenience, and in no way a wish for scientific clarification. From this last perspective, it would have been better to organise these texts by their place of origin, the *conteurs* being designated by name].

who recounted the stories, that he has not censored any of the content as the book is aimed at a Kanak readership, and that those who have lived in contact with the people of the Grande Terre will find the “*verdeur*” or “earthiness” of their stories represented in the book.⁶⁴⁵ When the language of the text is examined closely, it is true that the style could be described as simple. There is a distinct lack of embellishment in the form of descriptive language – a characteristic common to many of the translations of stories from Kanak oral that can be explained by the loss of performative context. The descriptive language that is necessary in a written version is an attempt to recapture the vivid descriptions communicated through gestures, facial expressions, sounds and voice during an oral performance event.

Guiart’s decision to remain closer to source culture poetics is also evident in the use of the present tense throughout the (re)writing. This is a common feature of translations of stories from Kanak oral literature, and as has been discussed in a previous chapter,⁶⁴⁶ the use of the present tense is in part connected to the sense of immediacy, and results from a Kanak conception of the past as being integral to the present, rather than somehow disconnected or at a distance from it.

Regarding his knowledge of Kanak languages and culture, Guiart, who arrived in New Caledonia in 1948 as a young man, had been in the territory for nine years by the time *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* was published in 1957. He spoke Ajië and his role at the *Institut français de l’Océanie* had meant he was very active in the collection of information regarding the Kanak world, travelling throughout the Grande Terre frequently, in particular recording stories and information relating to social organisation, which would later form the basis of his doctoral thesis, published in 1963 as *Structure de la Chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud*. He acknowledges the tellers of the stories in the collection, presents their names and the

⁶⁴⁵ “On remarquera la simplicité du langage. Elle est celle des récitants. Par ailleurs, ce livre est destiné en premier lieu au public autochtone lui-même. J’ai désiré qu’il y retrouve son âme traduite par ses propres mots. Ces contes et légendes ont été écrits pour les adultes. Ils n’ont subi aucune censure. Ceux qui ont vécu au contact des gens de la Grande Terre y retrouveront la *verdeur* de leurs propos” (7).

⁶⁴⁶ See Chapter 2, Pathways section, “Type 2 – Pathways between Oral and Written Traditions”.

places that the stories were recorded, and as described above, the (re)writing process involved collaboration and consultation with Kanak experts.⁶⁴⁷

The Kanak-language texts are absent from the *Contes et légendes...*, it is unclear whether this was due to constraints inherent in the publication process, or if other considerations were in play. Since the publication of *Documents néo-calédoniens* in 1932, there had been no publications of Kanak texts *en langue* and only one publication containing two stories from oral tradition published in French in 1948 (Coulon 12)⁶⁴⁸ prior to the appearance of *Contes et légendes...* in 1957. This means that the simple publication of such a collection was significant in itself, and perhaps questions of publication in the vernacular language were not seen as of central importance at that time. *Contes et légendes...* appeared at a time of great change, autonomy had been conferred on the territory by the 1956 *loi-cadre de Gaston Deferre* and the *Union Calédonienne*, the multi-ethnic political party created in 1953 whose slogan was “Two colours, one people”, controlled almost all of the territory’s institutions. The book was published in the same year that universal suffrage for Kanak was finally introduced.

Unlike the (re)writings of elements of oral tradition found in Guiart’s other publications, in which the texts are surrounded by extensive explanatory apparatus or commentary, in *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* “Diakamala et le lézard” is one of 39 texts presented with virtually no extra information, aside from a handful of footnotes. As he intimates in the *Avertissement*, this strategy of “non-explanation” is designed to focus the attention on the stories themselves, allowing them to stand alone on their own merits, demonstrating to a Kanak readership that their “folklore” is a “slice of their past that they should not be embarrassed by”.

Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre creates a positive portrayal of Kanak oral literature and culture in several ways. The image of Kanak oral literature as belonging to the global community of literatures is projected through the use of the terms “*Contes et légendes*” in the title, which recall for a Francophone readership the titles of countless collections published

⁶⁴⁷ Those involved in the (re)writing process (other than the *conteurs*) are only recognised explicitly in the case of the (re)writing of the Paicî *jémàà*, *Téâ Kanaké*, “Histoire des vieux d’il y a longtemps et des pays de Nouvelle-Calédonie (*Pierre Poinrinpoéa*)” (pp.80–82).

⁶⁴⁸ See table “6.1 Ouvrages et textes de littérature orale publiés” in Marc Coulon’s *Introduction à la littérature kanak* (1993).

from all over the world. This image is also reinforced by the division of the book into sections based on the genre categories of European literature: “*fables*”, “*contes*”, “*légendes*”, “*mythes*” and “*cosmologie*”. As Guiart notes, the language of the stories is simple, however, it is still transcribed or translated into acceptable French, and therefore it does not detract from the content, and there is no false impression of clumsy or inadequate linguistic expression created. Finally, by limiting the critical apparatus to essential footnotes, Guiart helps to portray the body of texts and the cultures from which they derive as belonging to a universal creative human heritage, which, given the deep divisions present in New Caledonian society at the time of the book’s publication, represented a significant step. In that sense, *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* might be considered as an example of genuine communication, emphasising as it does the worth of Kanak oral literature, and seeking to increase understanding between communities through the dissemination of this literature in written form.

Although the tone of the *Avertissement* can be read as paternalistic at times, for example, in Guiart’s concluding statement that his wish is for his Kanak readership to realise that their folklore is part of their past that they should not be ashamed of, and in the placing of Guiart in the position to speak for and about Kanak. This reading can be tempered, however, by the obvious respect Guiart has for his Kanak *interlocuteurs* whose names are mentioned alongside each story that they recount, and to whom he dedicates the book.

Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre is both a book of its time, and an example of an encounter that reflects the ideological perspective of the (re)writer, his belief in his role as researcher and authority to speak for the people he studies. It also represents an effort to allow those same people a voice, and although the Kanak language versions do not feature in the book, their existence is clearly signalled by the names and places listed with each (re)writing and the occasional footnotes providing extra detail. Guiart’s (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* was undertaken in the spirit of respect for Kanak culture that pervades his writings on oral tradition and reflects his personal convictions. It also bears the marks of the era in which it was written. As such, it projects a mixture of images that may or may not be taken up in identity construction processes. It also represents an important step towards the creation of the conditions of mutual understanding and recognition in which this identity might be realised.

6.2 TEXT 14: Lorna Miskelly – “La Transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d’une histoire kanak en récit français.” MA thesis. Department of French, School of European Languages and Literatures, University of Auckland, 2006.

“DIAKAMALA ET LE LÉZARD” (PP. 124–25).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends in New Caledonian written tradition in French. The story travels from *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* (1957) by Jean Guiart, where it is entitled, “Diakamala et le lézard”, and into “*La Transformation du Maître de Koné*”, a Masters thesis written in French by Lorna Miskelly, a student in the Department of French at the University of Auckland. The (re)writing consists of a re-typed version of the source text from *Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre* placed at the end of Chapter 4 of her study, under the heading “Diakamala et le lézard”. For a discussion of the commission, (re)writing process, the encounter between the elements of oral tradition and the (re)writer, and the image projected of Kanak oral traditions and culture by this and the four other (re)writings that figure in Miskelly’s thesis, see Chapter 3, section 3.8.

6.3 TEXT 47: Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre & Poindi Téin. *Textes nemi. Volume 2. Bas Coulna et Haut Coulna*. Paris: LACITO 32, SELAF, 1979.

“B. C. 13 - PASIKAN ET LE LÉZARD” – MADAME LOUIS TEIN (PP. 156–73).

This (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* travels along a pathway leading from Nemi oral tradition into New Caledonian written tradition in Nemi and French. The story, “Pasikan et le lézard”, recounted by Madame Louis Tein at Bas-Coulna in 1973, figures in *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 2. Haut-Coulna et Bas-Coulna* (1979), by Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Téin, published by the *Société d’études linguistiques et anthropologiques de France* (SELAF).

Textes nemi... is the second of two volumes containing texts of the oral traditions of the Nemi language spoken in the north-east of the Grande Terre. The first volume, *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 1. Kavatch et Tendo* (1979), consists of a phonological and grammatical presentation of the Nemi language, and 21 texts from Nemi oral tradition collected in Kavatch and Tendo. The second volume, *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol.*

2. *Haut-Coulna et Bas-Coulna* (1979) is organised into two sections, *I-Textes*, containing 14 stories from Bas-Coulna and 7 stories from Haut-Coulna. Section *II-Lexique nemi-français* is a 100-page lexicon. The texts are divided into numbered lines, and presented in a bilingual French-Nemi format, with the Nemi text on the right-hand page and the corresponding French text on the left-hand page, and the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “B.C.13 – Pasikan et le lézard” figures in Section *I-Textes. Textes de Bas-Coulna*.

The name of the *narrateur*, the place and time of the recording, and a short introduction precede each text, and 14 of the stories are also accompanied by an interlinear translation. Why this is not the case for the remaining 28 texts is not mentioned in the book, however it is likely to have been connected to constraints on the size of the book, as was the case for Bensa and Rivierre’s *Les filles du rocher Até...* (see section 6.5 of this chapter).

Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre was an eminent linguist, a specialist in Comparative Oceanian Linguistics and the languages of New Caledonia, whose research career and longstanding relationship with the islands spanned around four decades. In the *Remerciements*, she acknowledges Poindi Tén as the co-author of the book, who, she writes, “*avec une inlassable patience, m’a aidée à transcrire et traduire ces textes issus de son terroir*” (12).⁶⁴⁹

In the *Remerciements*, Ozanne-Rivierre describes the commission of the *Textes nemi...* and the reason for the two volumes. The texts were collected during two research trips financed by the CNRS, in 1973 and 1976. The first trip was part of an interdisciplinary RCP (*Recherche Coopérative sur Programme*)⁶⁵⁰ entitled “Ethno-Histoire du Pacifique” and directed by the archaeologist José Garanger.⁶⁵¹ The second trip was made under the auspices of LACITO, a project directed by Jacqueline Thomas. Ozanne-Rivierre writes that the number of texts recorded and transcribed was such that it necessitated dividing the texts into two distinct volumes (12).

She also outlines the aim of the two volumes,

⁶⁴⁹ [with tireless patience helped me to transcribe and translate these texts that come from his land].

⁶⁵⁰ Organised by the CNRS.

⁶⁵¹ Whose work demonstrated the validity of oral traditions as sources of information about the past, showing that a significant number of facts contained in oral traditions were corroborated by the archaeological record.

A l'heure où se fait jour, en Nouvelle-Calédonie, le souci de donner la parole aux Mélanésiens, je souhaite que la publication de ces traditions orales permette à ceux qui les liront d'avoir un aperçu de la richesse et de l'originalité de ce patrimoine culturel de plus en plus menacé (12).⁶⁵²

Ozanne-Rivierre recognised the importance of understanding the cultural context from which the stories arise, and expressed her hope that the texts of the two volumes of *Textes nemi...* might one day be of use in the kind of wide-ranging and in-depth study of the social context that is needed to fully illuminate the stories,

Il eût fallu, pour donner à ces deux volumes de textes nemi tout leur éclairage, les compléter par une analyse approfondie du contexte social dont ils sont issus : inventaire des clans, étude des relations qu'ils entretiennent entre eux et avec l'extérieur, relevés toponymiques détaillés, etc. Une telle approche dépasse malheureusement assez vite les compétences du linguiste, et mes deux missions de 1973 et 1976 ont été beaucoup trop courtes pour que j'aie pu entreprendre sérieusement un tel travail. Je souhaite que ces textes puissent un jour servir de support à ce genre d'étude (Vol 1. Kavatch et Tendo 16).⁶⁵³

It is clear that the purpose of the two volumes of *Textes nemi...* was to give voice to Kanak, to demonstrate the richness of Nemi oral tradition, and to produce information that might be of use in future research. These aims are also a logical fit for the organisations (the CNRS, LACITO, SELAF) that supported the book's production.

The (re)writing process that generated the text "B.C.13 – Pasikan et le lézard" involved the recording by Ozanne-Rivierre of Madame Louis Téin's telling of the story at Bas-Coulna in 1973. Once recorded, the transcription and translation stages were completed collaboratively by Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Téin. The story is transformed in the textualisation process and has also undergone a change in genre, from a *hingo*⁶⁵⁴ to a textual representation of the genre in a collection produced through linguistic research. Ozanne-Rivierre acknowledges the

⁶⁵² [At the time where, in New Caledonia, the concern to give a voice to the Melanesians is emerging, I hope that the publication of these oral traditions will permit those who read them to get a glimpse of the richness and the originality of this cultural heritage that is more and more threatened].

⁶⁵³ [In order to fully illuminate these two volumes of texts, they should have been complemented by an in-depth analysis of the social context from which they come: inventory of the clans, study of the relationships that they have between themselves and with the outside world, detailed toponymic surveys, etc. Unfortunately, such an approach rapidly moves beyond the competence of the linguist, and my two research trips of 1973 and 1976 were much too short to allow me to undertake such a task. I hope that these texts may one day be of use in this type of study].

⁶⁵⁴ Defined by Ozanne-Rivierre as a "humorous or moral tales" (14) and "tales and legends" (7).

loss engendered by the passage from oral to written. She outlines the approach taken to translating the texts, in which the source language version is followed as closely as possible in order to try and render the rhythm and artistic expression of the oral performance event,

Les textes nemi sont ici présentés en langue vernaculaire, avec un mot à mot juxtalinéaire, et accompagnés d'une traduction française qui suit volontairement de très près la version autochtone, dont le découpage en phrases respecte, autant que possible, les pauses du conteur. Ces récits appartiennent en effet avant tout à la tradition orale. En les figeant dans l'écriture, on leur fait déjà perdre une partie de leur saveur : mimiques, débit et intonations du récitant, rires ou autres réactions de l'auditoire. Il m'a semblé important d'essayer au moins de restituer, par des traductions qui collent le plus possible au texte, un rythme, un art du récit tel qu'on peut le saisir de la bouche même de ceux qui nous les donnent. (Vol. 1. Kavatch et Tendo, 20).⁶⁵⁵

In the *Introduction* to *Vol.2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna*, she also emphasises the effects of the transition from oral to written and restates and elaborates on the (re)writing strategy employed to try and mitigate some of these effects,

Les traductions françaises sont restées volontairement très proches du texte en langue vernaculaire. Il m'a semblé en effet plus important de restituer un rythme, un art de récit tel qu'il nous est donné, plutôt que d'enjoliver, pour des effets littéraires, un texte qui est fait, avant tout, pour être dit et écouté (Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna, 14).⁶⁵⁶

The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* follows the typical structure of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption shared by the other texts of the corpus, and as the short introduction to “B.C.13 – Pasikan et le lézard” (on the Nemi-language page) states, the story is related to “Le Maître de Koné” of *Documents néo-calédoniens*, which contains the theme of a lizard clamped onto the back of a chief. Ozanne-Rivierre points out however, that in this case the story does not see the chief flight take him all around the Grande Terre, rather Pasikan flees from island to island, before he is saved by his paternal aunt (157).

⁶⁵⁵ [The Nemi texts are presented here in the vernacular language, with a interlinear word-for-word translation, and accompanied by a French translation that deliberately follows the indigenous version very closely, which has been cut up into phrases that respect, as much as possible, the storyteller's pauses. These stories belong, above all else, to oral tradition. By fixing them in writing, we cause them to lose part of their flavour: mimicry, the delivery and intonation of the orator, laughter or other reactions of the audience. It was important to me to try to at least restore, through translations that stick as closely as possible to the text, a rhythm, an art of storytelling, as it comes straight from the mouth of those who give them to us].

⁶⁵⁶ [The French translations have deliberately remained very close to the text in the vernacular language. To me it seemed more important to try to restore a rhythm, an art of storytelling such as it was given to us, rather than to embellish, for literary effect, a text that is above all made to be spoken and listened to].

The treatment of the element of repetition that is a feature of the story, highlights Ozanne-Rivierre and Téin’s strategy of remaining as close to source culture poetics as possible, while at time making concessions to target readership expectations. This can be seen in the following example, when two instances of the French verb “*courir*” are used to represent three instances of the Nemi “*tnoon*”⁶⁵⁷ to avoid creating the impression that there is an excess of repetition attributable to stylistic faults in the source text,

54. *Et (Pasikan) de courir, de courir.*
[And (Pasikan) runs and runs].

54. *ye am tnoon tnoon tnoon*

For the same reasons, in the next example, where the Nemi text uses repetition to project the idea of an action with a long duration “*knona, knona, knona*”,⁶⁵⁸ the idea of long duration is projected by the meaning of the French stative verb “*rester*”,⁶⁵⁹

43. *Pasikan reste affalé jusqu’à ce que les forces lui reviennent.*
[Pasikan stayed stretched out until his strength returned].

43. *pmwavo pasikan ye am knona knona knona mwa am u pmwa wii-n nga*

Three examples shown below also demonstrates the strategy in which concessions are made to target readership expectations – when the subject of a sentence is not explicitly mentioned in the Nemi version,⁶⁶⁰ it is frequently inserted in the French text to aid comprehension,

8. *et (Pasikan) les mange jusqu’au dernier*
[and (Pasikan) eats them all up].

8. *pmwavo ngeli ciibwi o nai- vi geena*

37. *Quand il est à bout de forces, (le lézard) dit : “Cours jusqu’à ce que tu n’en puisses plus, toi qui envoies des gens faire de l’hécatombe dans mon élevage”.*
[When he is pushed to his limits, (the lizard) says: “Run until you can run no more, you who sends people to cause carnage in my domain].

37. *pmwawe koi nga wii-n ye peei “tnoon - do-n ga pmwa vo koi wii-m o na vi do-n faxe ngeli kac we-le hen kaai negeli naiu-ng”*

⁶⁵⁷ The definition of “*tnoon*” which means “*courir*” [to run] is taken from the “*Lexique nemi-français*” at the end of *Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna*.

⁶⁵⁸ The *Lexique nemi-français* gives the definition as “*se coucher, être étendu, gésir*” [go to bed, be lying down, lying].

⁶⁵⁹ [to stay, remain].

⁶⁶⁰ Most likely because the narrator’s voice and gestures would communicate the identity without needing to name the person.

69. *Et (le chef de Lifou) ajoute :*
“Prenez garde à ne pas vous endormir ;
installez Pasikan tout au fond de la
maison.”

[And (the chief of Lifou) adds:
Be careful not to fall asleep; put Pasikan deep
inside the house ”].

69. *ye peei* “*pmwavo na o hwe-daa*
knouleeng - daa na-da pasikan xoda
knudi”

In considering the encounter between the (re)writers and *Le Chef et le lézard*, it is clear that the (re)writing has arisen out of a context in which there is a deep level of linguistic and cultural competence – at the time of the book’s production, Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre had been involved in research into New Caledonian languages for at least eight years⁶⁶¹ and her co-author, Poindi Téin, brought to the work a deep and essential native-speaker’s expertise in matters of Nemi language and culture. Collaboration and consultation are cornerstones of Ozanne-Rivierre’s approach, and the joint authorship of the book attests to this. With respect to the visibility of the original version of *Le Chef et le lézard* in the (re)writing, Ozanne-Rivierre and Téin’s work includes not only the full Nemi transcription, but also the tools for the non-speaker to attempt to decode the Nemi text (in the form of the Nemi-French lexicon provided at the end of the second volume of *Textes nemi...*).⁶⁶² Equally, the oral dimension of the text is given prominence, through the acknowledgement of the narrators, and the commentary in the *Introduction* that points out the challenges of transforming a story that is part of a vibrant oral tradition into a textual artefact.

The encounter between (re)writers and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that has produced “B.C.13 - Pasikan et le lézard”, and the work in which it figures is respectful of the *vā*, through its creation of a positive portrayal of Nemi oral literature. This has been accomplished through the careful attention paid in the commentary and in the (re)writing strategies employed to the creation of the images of the stories projected to the target readership. The inclusion of the source language text makes the translations open to reinterpretation, and the degree of Kanak agency in the production of the (re)writings (on the

⁶⁶¹ Having undertaken her first field research for her PhD in 1971, also, her husband, Jean-Claude Rivierre had been carrying out linguistic research in New Caledonia since the mid-1960s (see section 6.5 of this chapter for more discussion of his work).

⁶⁶² In this sense, Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Téin’s book can be seen as continuing and developing the positive dimensions of Leenhardt’s (re)writing approach.

part of the narrators who have chosen to provide the stories, and on the part of Poindi Téin, as co-author) also helps to create a portrayal of the authenticity and value of Nemi oral literature. The positive portrayal and recognition of the importance of the source literature work together to make “B.C.13 - Pasikan et le lézard” and *Textes nemi...* the product of an encounter in which the communication is genuine, in that it promotes an increase in understanding of Nemi oral literature and culture and is underpinned by a sense of mutual respect.

6.4 TEXT 12: Patrick Pillon. “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)” in *Ethnologies comparées* 7, (2004): 1–21.

RÉSUMÉ OF “PASIKAN ET LE LÉZARD” (P. 11)

Le Chef et le lézard travels down five pathways which converge in “Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)”, Patrick Pillon’s 2004 article in *Ethnologies comparées* No 7, “Figures sahariennes”. The pathway relevant to the network discussed in this chapter is the one originating in New Caledonian written tradition in Nemi and French, in *Textes nemi (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Vol. 2. Bas-Coulna et Haut-Coulna* (1979) which contains a bilingual version of *Le Chef et le lézard* entitled “Pasikan et le lézard”.

The other four pathways that converge in Pillon’s article begin in the following texts found in New Caledonian written tradition: “Le Chef de Touho” from *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900), “Virhenö ne ka to Koné/Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), and “Le Lézard et le bénitier” and “Bodanu Pwemanu, le lézard et le bénitier”, both of which figure in *Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1979). As previously mentioned, the full discussion of the context in which the (re)writing process takes place, as well as the images projected by the article can be found in the first chapter of this thesis in which the (re)writing figures, Chapter 3, section 3.6.

6.5⁶⁶³ TEXT 48: Alban Bensa & Jean-Claude Rivierre. *Les Filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî*. Paris: Geuthner; ADCK, 1994.

“C.15 – LE MAÎTRE DE KONÉ” (PP. 309–25).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from Paicî oral tradition into New Caledonian written tradition by way of *Les Filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî*,⁶⁶⁴ by the anthropologist Alban Bensa and linguist Jean-Claude Rivierre, published in 1994.

Les Filles du rocher Até... is a collection of 31 stories from Paicî oral tradition, recounted to Bensa and Rivierre by 19 different narrators.⁶⁶⁵ The book is organised into three sections, on the basis of the geographic areas in which the texts were collected and the thematic material they explore. The first section contains six *contes* that come from the northern part of the Paicî linguistic region, the second comprises thirteen *contes* from the east coast of the Paicî linguistic region, and the third part features twelve *contes* that come from the west coast of the Paicî linguistic region. Introductions to each of the texts provide contextual information such as the identity of the *narrateur*, the time and place of collection, a summary of the story and the themes contained within it, the situation of the story in relation to others and information on the existence of other versions. The (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* that features in *Les Filles du rocher Até...* is narrated by Léon Pwùrùde, and entitled “C.15 – *Le Maître de Koné*”, and is found in the second section of the book “*Contes de la Côte est (de l’Amoa à Ponérihouen)*”.

Rivierre and Bensa first undertook fieldwork in the Paicî and Cèmuhi language areas in the central-northern region of the Grande Terre more than 25 years before *Les Filles du rocher Até...*⁶⁶⁶ was published. The texts included in the book were collected over a period of almost

⁶⁶³ Material in this chapter is drawn from the case-study “Ethnolinguistic Rewriting: Alban Bensa’s and Jean-Claude Rivierre’s *Les filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî* (1994)”, which features in my Masters thesis “Translation as Rewriting: Representations of Kanak Oral Literature”.

⁶⁶⁴ [The Daughters of Até Rock: Paicî *Contes* and Stories].

⁶⁶⁵ All of whom figure on the inside cover page under the heading “*Les Narrateurs*”. They are: Barthélémy Bwérékëu, Cécile Göröipëwé, Clément Görömôtö, H.F. Bwëunga Görömwêédö, Mme Göröwirijaa, Uée Göröwirijaa, Michel Katéko, Irénée Kowi, Dominique Nāboomê, Cau Alphonse Nāboomê, Kōréé Nānyāākārāwā, Mme Nāpéémā, Paabu Oï, Elise Pwadaé, Clément Pwârâcāgū, Léon Pwùrùde, Henri Téa, Fidéli Waka, and Marthe Waka Céu.

⁶⁶⁶ Jean-Claude Rivierre beginning in the mid-1960s and Alban Bensa in the early 1970s.

twenty years from 1967 to 1986. From the large corpus built up over more than three decades,⁶⁶⁷ the pair have published several collections, including *Les Chemins de l'alliance : L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (région de Touho)* (1982), *Histoires canaques* (1983) and *Les Filles du rocher Até* (1994).

Les Filles du rocher Até... is the first volume of a LACITO collection entitled “*Collection Patrimoine Kanak de Nouvelle-Calédonie*”⁶⁶⁸ and in the *Avant-propos* the authors indicate that the book complements and extends the earlier *Histoires canaques*, offering a more wide-ranging sociological overview (Bensa and Rivierre, *Filles* 9). They go on to describe the importance of the genres of the Paicî oral tradition, such as the *Ténô* (versified poetry), *Tägadé* (*contes* and legends), and *Jêmââ* and *Jèkutä* (historical-mythic stories), as a means of access to an understanding of contemporary and historical Kanak culture (9). The stated aim of the book is to provide, through the presentation of texts of Kanak oral literature, insight into the Kanak world, the social institutions of Kanak societies, past and contemporary cultural practices, ways of perceiving and understanding nature and the world, and into the literature itself (10).

As a publication produced under the auspices of a French research organisation, and put together by a linguist-anthropologist team, *Les Filles du rocher Até...* clearly arises from an academic context. It is jointly published by the ADCK and the *Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner* in Paris. The involvement of these institutions and organisations suggests the commission of a work whose purpose is the promotion, preservation and investigation of Kanak cultural heritage.

Bensa and Rivierre describe in the *Avant Propos* the different readerships that *Les filles du rocher Até...* is directed towards: a Kanak readership, who will appreciate “*la mémoire, l'humour et l'imagination de leurs « vieux »*”;⁶⁶⁹ a readership of literary enthusiasts, who will find in the book “*un florilège a la fois distrayant et intéressant de l'art narratif kanak*”;⁶⁷⁰ and an academic/pedagogical readership comprising “*les linguistes, ethnologues et*

⁶⁶⁷ Of which, according to Alban Bensa, only a small fraction (perhaps almost 1 percent) has been published (Bensa, “Personal Interview”).

⁶⁶⁸ [Kanak Heritage Collection of New Caledonia].

⁶⁶⁹ [the memory, the humour and the imagination of their “elders”].

⁶⁷⁰ [an anthology of the Kanak art of narrative that is both entertaining and interesting].

enseignants” who will find the book a source of “*précieux documents de première main*”.⁶⁷¹ The selection of the texts, determined at a significant and fundamental level by the *narrateurs* who chose to contribute stories and which ones to tell, is also influenced by the readerships envisaged for the collection, and the texts included are selected for their literary interest and their illustration of certain aspects of Kanak society and culture (Bensa “Personal interview”).

The influence of the linguistic and anthropological orientations of Rivierre’s and Bensa’s research is visible in the presentation of the book. Following the title page is a map of linguistic areas, the next page outlines the system used in the book to phonetically transcribe the sounds of the Paicî language, with tables showing the notation used for consonants and vowels, and the diacritical marks used in the transcriptions for the different tonal registers are given. There are also notes on the tonal characteristics of the language and for further information the reader is referred to Jean-Claude Rivierre’s 1983 *Dictionnaire paicî-français* which utilises the same system of transcription. Following the *Avant-Propos*, which sets out the sociological focus of the work, is a list of abbreviations used in the interlinear translations. These abbreviations refer to linguistic characteristics of the texts such as “*dist.*” (at a distance, out of sight), “*indéf.*” (indefinite) and “*interr.*” (interrogative).

The linguistic and anthropological framework having been established in these first ten pages, the first section, “*Première Partie. Aux confins nord de l’aire Paicî : Les chefferies et leurs alliances*”, continues the anthropological focus, beginning with twenty-three pages of contextual information on the *chefferies* of the northern part of the Paicî linguistic region and elements of their oral traditions that illustrate the political and cultural contexts of marriage and alliance.

The first five *contes* are presented with the Paicî version (written using the transcription system outlined at the beginning of the book) on the top half of each page, and an interlinear translation below each line. Each line of the original text is numbered as are the corresponding lines of French translation which appear on the lower half of the page. The numbering of each line of source text and translated text, which features throughout the book, allows comparison of the translation with the source text and/or its interlinear translation.

⁶⁷¹ [linguists, ethnologists and teachers]...[precious first-hand documents].

From the sixth *conte*, “Les Filles de Poindimié (Köiapwë)”, onward the interlinear translation is no longer present, and the source text and target text are on opposing pages rather than the same page, with the translated text on the left hand page and the source text on the right.⁶⁷²

In an interview in 2003, Alban Bensa describes the various contexts in which he and Jean-Claude Rivierre recorded the *contes* that feature in *Les Filles du rocher Até...* Sometimes they were recorded on ceremonial occasions, at other times the *narrateur* and the recorder were the only people present, and on other occasions the *contes* were recorded in front of a small audience of family members. In most cases, the stories were recorded with only the *narrateur* and recorder present, and although this recording was sometimes initiated by the *narrateur*, it most often came about as the result of a request from himself or Jean-Claude Rivierre.⁶⁷³

After the oral performance event was recorded, the next step in the process was to transcribe the recording using the system of notation described at the beginning of *Les Filles du rocher Até...* The researcher would enlist the aid of a Paicî speaker, sometimes the *narrateur* of the *conte*, but more often a young person who was willing to help, and this person would repeat the phrases from the recordings slowly until the researcher had transcribed them fully and correctly. This was painstaking and time-consuming work. The (re)writing of the transcribed oral performance event could be undertaken either in collaboration with the *narrateur* or someone else who would read the text, or the researcher would translate everything that he could understand and highlight the sections that he did not understand so that he could ask

⁶⁷² The change in format was dictated by practical publishing constraints; since the inclusion of interlinear translations would have resulted in a work of more than the five hundred pages, it was decided that from the sixth *conte* onwards, the interlinear translations that constitute an important part of the translation process would not be included (Bensa, “Personal interview”).

⁶⁷³ Bensa tells of a kind of “*mouvement de narration*” that was created after the initial recordings were made in the late 60s-early 70s; people began to come forward and tell stories that had been hidden in the past. This was the time of the emergence of Kanak culture into the public domain, the struggle for the recognition of Kanak identity and culture, and the recovery of land. He notes that different versions of stories, especially those linked to land rights, lead to contestation, and that at times, the *narrateur* is engaging in a political act by having a certain story recorded and knowing that it will be published. He also considers that the term “*littérature orale*” does not capture the full significance of the stories and their recording, citing situations in which *narrateurs* have said that they will tell a story but that afterwards they will die because of the jealousy it will arouse, and that, on occasion, this has happened. Or a *narrateur* might say that he/she will allow a particular story to be recorded but that it is not to be published until after his/her death. For Bensa “*les récits, c’est des armes*” [stories are weapons], as they can provoke physical attacks or sorcery, hence the inadequacy of the label “*littérature orale*” (Bensa, “Personal interview”). For Déwé Gorodé, these “stories” or “myths” are Kanak history: “*Pour nous, ce que les Européens ont traduit par mythe, ce ne sont pas des mythes. C’est notre histoire, à nous*” (Stefanson 84). [For us, what the Europeans have translated by *myth* is not myths. It is our own history].

questions to clarify the meaning. Finally, after the (re)writing had been produced, it would be shown to the *narrateur* for approval (Bensa, “Personal interview”).

One of the most obvious transformations of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, comes as a result of the passage from oral to written mode. From an oral performance event, the story becomes “C.15 - Le Maître de Koné”, chopped into numbered constituent phrases, with the French translation presented on the left-hand page, and the transcription of the oral performance event in Paicî on the right. There is a change in genre from a *tāgadé* in Paicî oral literature to a *conte* forming part of a collection constituting an academic publication.

Another transformation involves the addition of explanatory text to the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*. The introduction to each of the texts in *Les Filles du rocher Até...* gives the name of the *narrateur*, the place where the *conte* was recorded and the date that it was recorded. A title in French is also given to each *conte*. The introductions vary in the amount of contextual information presented, and may include information on cultural practices, the characters and themes present in the *conte*, the relationship of the *conte* to other versions from different areas, and the political and social contexts illuminated by the *conte*.

Bensa and Rivierre introduce “C.15 - Le Maître de Koné” with a paragraph-long summary of the story, followed by a second paragraph in which they note that the theme of the lizard caught in the trap who makes the hunter his victim is frequent in stories collected on the East Coast of the Grande Terre, the lizard pursuing his attackers beyond the limits of its territory of origin. They point out that the lizard’s pursuit of his victim across the land has the air of an educational tale, a kind of traditional trek through which the main coastal lands can be named, and at the same time, the relationships that the *Maître de Koné* can call upon, such as those that link him to the *Maître de Kouaoua* who is able to deliver him from the lizard. In a final sentence, the authors indicate the existence of Leenhardt’s virtually identical version of the story, found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and of the 1987 interpretation and analysis of the story by Jean Guiart.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁴ This article, “La vallée de Houailou, Nouvelle-Calédonie, une analyse renouvelée” is discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.8.

Bensa and Rivierre's (re)writings of the *contes* in *Les Filles du Rocher Até : Contes et Récits Paicî* are consistent with their aim of presenting elements of Paicî oral tradition that demonstrate its literary interest as well as giving insight into Paicî social institutions and cultural practices. To this end, they have closely followed the source text in both form and content, producing target texts that reflect the poetics of the source culture more than that of the target culture. The (re)writing "C.15 – Le Maître de Koné" is an example of this, as although it has undergone the transformations inherent in the textualisation process, the French text appears to closely reflect the structure and content of the Paicî source text. The absence of an interlinear translation means an in-depth discussion of the degree of resemblance between the numbered lines of Paicî text and their corresponding French translations is not possible here, however, examination of the first five *contes* of the collection, which do have interlinear translations presented below the segments of Paicî text, shows that the (re)writers remain close to the language and structure of the source text.

In accordance with source culture conceptions of time,⁶⁷⁵ Bensa and Rivierre have used the present tense throughout their (re)writings of the *contes*, rather than the range of narrative tenses that would be expected in good models of French writing, thus conforming to source rather than target culture poetics. They also employ different strategies for the treatment of the repetition.

In the description of the flight of the *maître de Koné* from place to place, his encounters with the chiefs of Voh and then Gomen are described. After he is forced to flee from Gomen, a paragraph in italics summarises the itinerary followed by the *maître de Koné*. He travels from Koumak, to Arama, around the northern tip of the island to Taau, Hienghène, where the chief assures him that the lizard's skull will soon become an ornament for the rooftop spire of his house, but then changes his mind just like the others. The next nine destinations on the *maître de Koné*'s journey, are simply listed, "*La même scène répète encore à Touho, Poindimié,*

⁶⁷⁵ In particular the notion of the past being brought into the present at the moment a story is being told (see discussion of this point in Chapter 2, Pathways section, "Type 2 - Pathways between Oral and Written traditions").

Tiparama, Paama, Bayes, Ometteux, Ponérihouen, Monéo, Houailou”⁶⁷⁶ until he finally reaches the home of the chief of Kouaoua, who “*ne craint pas à faire face au lézard*”.⁶⁷⁷

Two versions of this summary are found, one below the French text and the other below the Paicî text on the facing page. The text of the summary is in French in both cases, with the spelling of the place names changed to reflect Paicî spelling conventions on the page containing Paicî text. It is not possible to infer from the information in the text whether (a) the paragraph summary was written by Bensa and Rivierre, (b) Léon Pwùrùdë included the summary in his telling of the story, or (c) the summary was produced at the time of transcription of the recorded oral performance event. Regardless of which stage the summary was produced at, it seems likely that it represents an attempt to tailor the story to target readership expectations, through its reduction of repetition through summary.

In another example of the treatment of repetition, the repeated elements of the original text are followed closely, but concessions to target culture poetics are also made through the use of synonyms as can be seen in the following extract from “Le Maître de Koné” (310–11).

At the beginning of the story, the *maître de Koné* has decided to set snares along a path, and from the point where he reaches Pouembout, his itinerary is traced in the narrative:

5. *il y dépose un piège.*
[he places a trap there].

5. *é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*

6. *Il chemine, chemine...Arrivé à Népoui,*
[He walks along, walks along...Once at Népoui,]

6. *é mwââ pärä é mwââ pärä...é mwââ tèèpaa pä nââ näpuii*

7. *il y dépose un piège.*
[he places a trap there].

7. *é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*

8. *Il continue sa route...Il atteint Poya ;*
[He continues on his way...He reaches Poya;]

8. *é mwââ pärä é mwââ pärä... é mwââ tèèpaa nââ poia*

9. *il y dépose un piège.*
[he places a trap there.]

9. *é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*

⁶⁷⁶ [The same scene is repeated at Touho, Poindimié, Tiparama, Paama, Bayes, Ometteux, Ponérihouen, Monéo, Houailou].

⁶⁷⁷ [who is not afraid to face the lizard].

10. *Il continue son chemin...passe à Bourail ;*
[He continues on his path...passes by Bourail;]

10. *é mwââ pärä é mwââ pärä...é mwââ tèèpaa pä nââ dö boraai*

11. *il y dépose un piège.*
[he places a trap there.]

11. *é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*

12. *Il marche, marche...Il arrive à Moindou ;*
[He walks, walks... He arrives at Moindou;]

12. *é mwââ pärä é mwââ pärä...é mwââ tèèpaa pä nââ dö mwâduu*

13. *il y dépose un piège.*
[he places a trap there.]

13. *é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*

In the extract above, the lines 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13 are repeated exactly in the source text, as “*é mwââ töpwö nââ wêê i jè jé*”, and this repetition has been reproduced by Bensa and Rivierre in the French, “*il y dépose un piège*”. Lines 6, 8, 10 and 12 of the source text each begin with the same six words: “*é mwââ pärä é mwââ pärä...*”, however, in the French text, this has been translated slightly differently each time; “*il chemine, chemine*”, “*il continue sa route*”, “*il continue son chemin*” and “*il marche, marche*”.

In the source text, lines 10 and 12 differ only in the final word, which gives the name of the location reached by the *maître*; “*boraii*” (Bourail) in line 10 and “*mwâduu*” (Moindou) in line 12. The translations for each line into French, while still conveying an idea of repetition (continued movement) through meaning, do not reproduce the formal repetition of the source text: “*Il continue son chemin...passe à Bourail ;*” and “*Il marche, marche...Il arrive à Moindou ;*”.

These examples show the influence of target culture poetics on the (re)writing strategy of the (re)writers, who, by not translating all of the formal aspects of repetition in the source text, avoid the production of a translation containing more repetition than normally tolerable by the standards of French poetics. Exceeding the accepted limits with respect to repetition may lead members of the readership unfamiliar with the poetics of Kanak oral literature in its original languages to judge the *conte* against French poetic conventions and see the “excessive repetition” as a sign of inferior technique.

Bensa and Rivierre have sought a compromise – there is a tension between source and target poetics visible in their work, and we see them adapt the elements of repetition to target culture poetics at times, while at the same time following the source text structures closely and patterning target text accordingly. In the process, they foreground an underlying feature of Paicî poetics with regard to repetition – the Paicî texts, through their use of repetition with slight variation, create a sense of rhythmic, incremental expansion rather than simple chronological progression.

In their treatment of the “*mots crus*” present in some of the *contes*, the translation strategy of Bensa and Rivierre also seems to be to stay as close as possible to the source text, working within what is acceptable in terms of the poetics of the source culture rather than tailoring the text to target culture (French) poetics.

In lines 35-48 of “Le Maître de Koné”, the *maître de Koné* is walking along the path with the lizard perched on his head. Extremely unhappy and uncomfortable, he asks the lizard to get down from his head because “*j’aimerais aller pisser*”,⁶⁷⁸ but the lizard replies “*Bwa ! Pisse si tu veux ; moi, je reste là*”.⁶⁷⁹ So “*le maître de Koné pisse, termine son affaire et reprend la route*”.⁶⁸⁰ In this exchange, the verb “*pisser*” is used in the French translation rather than a euphemism or a more technical term such as “*uriner*”,⁶⁸¹ and this probably reflects the banality of the equivalent term in Paicî.

Two lines later, the *maître de Koné* asks the lizard again to get down from his head, this time because “*je voudrais aller dans la brousse*”.⁶⁸² Again the lizard refuses to budge, “*Bwa ! Va dans la brousse si tu veux; moi, je reste où je suis*”,⁶⁸³ so the *maître de Koné* “*s’écarte du sentier*”⁶⁸⁴ and the lizard stays clamped to his head. In a footnote the Leenhardt/Efijiyi version of “Le Maître de Koné” from *Documents néo-calédoniens*, Leenhardt describes the expression “*Visè na tēwa*” as meaning the need to leave the path⁶⁸⁵ and indicates that this is a

⁶⁷⁸ [I would like to go and piss].

⁶⁷⁹ [Bah! Piss if you want; I’m staying up here].

⁶⁸⁰ [the maître de Koné pisses, finishes and carries on walking].

⁶⁸¹ [to urinate].

⁶⁸² [I would like to go into the bush].

⁶⁸³ [Bah! Go into the bush if you want; I’m staying right where I am].

⁶⁸⁴ [leaves the track].

⁶⁸⁵ “*devier du chemin*”.

euphemism for the need to stop and answer the call of nature (9).⁶⁸⁶ He translates this part of *l'homme de Koné's* request to the lizard as “[...] *j'éprouve en moi le besoin de me détourner vers la brousse*”.⁶⁸⁷ Thus it is quite likely that the translation “*je voudrais aller dans la brousse*” in Bensa and Rivierre’s “Le Maître de Koné” is an example of the euphemism originating in the source text, rather than being included in the target text as a concession to the sensibilities of the target-text readership, and thus represents a further example of the focus on source text poetics that is central to the (re)writers’ translation strategy.

The linguistic and cultural competence of those involved in the (re)writing process that produced “Le Maître de Koné” and *Les Filles du rocher Até...* is significant. While the production of the book is not collaborative to the same extent as, for example, François Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindî Téin’s, where the co-authors bring together the complementary linguistic expertise and cultural knowledge of both cultural outsider and cultural insider (see section 6.3 of the present chapter), it is clear that both Jean-Claude Rivierre and Alban Bensa’s approach to the (re)writing process (a) involves collaboration with native-speaker experts, (b) arises from a longstanding research presence in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, which has also seen them gain considerable linguistic competence in Paicî, and (c) is grounded in relationships of mutual respect between the researchers and the members of the societies in which they undertake their research.

The importance placed by Bensa and Rivierre on collaboration with the *narrateurs* in the (re)writing process, is evident in their acknowledgement on the title page of the book of the central role in the book’s production played by the *narrateurs*, each of whom is mentioned by name. The importance of the collaboration is not solely a function of a scientific imperative to collect first-hand data “as close as possible to its source”, in the form of Kanak oral literature that provides valuable insights into the cultural practices and social institutions of Kanak societies. It is also part of the respect that underlies the encounter that produced the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard*, summed up by Bensa in *Chroniques kanak: l’ethnologie*

⁶⁸⁶ “*s’arrêter pour un besoin naturel*”.

⁶⁸⁷ [I feel the need to go into the bush].

en marche (1995) when he wrote that “*Pour moi, la pratique de l’ethnologie est inséparable d’une expérience de l’amitié transculturelle*” (24).⁶⁸⁸

The structure of *Les Filles du rocher Até...*, with its commentaries, introductions to texts, linguistic notation and dissection of the *contes* into numbered phrases, tends to overshadow the oral dimension of Paicî oral literature. However, the original versions of the stories are very visible in the collection, and the oral contexts from which they arise are acknowledged as are the *narrateurs* who provided them. The authors also show an awareness of this dimension in their comment that “*cet irremplaçable matériel ethnolinguistique a en outre le mérite de restituer [...] une parole vivante et authentique aussi proche que possible de sa source*” (10).⁶⁸⁹ References in the texts to elements of the performative context such as the *narrateur’s* gesture, the presence of the *narrateur’s* voice at the beginning and end of the *contes*, pauses in the text (represented by “...”) that reflect pauses in the narration in the recording, and the inclusion of Paicî words, expressions and formulae for ending the *contes*, all contribute to the creation of a representation of the oral dimension of the texts.⁶⁹⁰

The representation of Paicî oral literature created in the (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* found in Bensa and Rivierre’s *Les Filles du rocher Até...* is strongly shaped by the constraints and conventions of the disciplines of Linguistics and Anthropology. The organisation and presentation of the book are primarily tailored to the requirements of the academic audience. The critical apparatus is extensive, including over sixty pages of introductions and commentary on the thirty-one texts, and in conjunction with the presentation of the source texts using linguistic notation and the division of the texts into numbered lines, creates an overwhelming impression of *Les Filles du rocher Até...* as a scientific and academic text. Although one of the stated aims of the book is to demonstrate the literary merit of the elements of Paicî oral literature that figure in the book, any literary focus is greatly outweighed by linguistic and anthropological perspectives. A Paicî-speaking Melanesian readership is able to disregard the critical apparatus, read the transcriptions alone and come

⁶⁸⁸ [For me, the practice of ethnology is inseparable from an experience of transcultural friendship].

⁶⁸⁹ [this irreplaceable ethnolinguistic material also has the merit of reconstructing [...] a living and authentic spoken word as close as possible to its source].

⁶⁹⁰ A Paicî speaker will be able to appreciate the sonority of the texts whilst reading them, perhaps out loud. An extremely motivated non-Paicî speaker would technically be able to recreate the sounds of the language by referring to the notes on the system of phonetic transcription given at the front of the book and to Jean-Claude Rivierre’s *Dictionnaire paicî-français*, however, this undertaking would require a reasonable degree of specialist linguistic knowledge.

up with an independent reading of the texts. Bensa's and Rivierre's readings of the texts, on the other hand, are largely imposed on the non-Paicî speaking readership, particularly in the case of those *contes* which do not feature an interlinear translation of the source text.

Although it could be argued that the representation of Kanak oral literature created by Bensa and Rivierre does fit the model of Jacquemond's "inscrutable text" by virtue of the extensive critical apparatus that accompanies the book and the reading imposed by the "specialists" on the readership, it can also be argued that *Les Filles du rocher Até...* does not present Kanak (in this case Paicî) culture and oral tradition as difficult or inscrutable, but rather attempts to inform, entertain and allow the reader to appreciate and gain a greater understanding through the presentation and explanation of elements of oral literature in translation.⁶⁹¹ The source text orientation of the (re)writings and the attendant effort required of the reader to move towards an understanding of the source culture, rather than a presentation of the texts predominantly tailored to target culture expectations, also reflects the influence of the translators' ideological perspectives on the (re)writing process.⁶⁹²

The encounter between Bensa and Rivierre and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* has resulted in a positive portrayal of Paicî oral literature, with an emphasis on its literary and aesthetic merits as well as its utility as a means by which understanding of Kanak culture and societies can be increased. In this sense, and because their research is undertaken against a background

⁶⁹¹ It is somewhat of a paradox that the (re)writing of Kanak oral literature by specialists such as Bensa and Rivierre, which could be described as more authentic in terms of its rendering of the stylistic features and content of the stories in comparison to versions read by the general public, reaches a limited readership due to the perceived "academic" nature of the text, whereas the versions that reach a wider general readership tend to be adapted to the structures of European realism (a case in point being the 1965 reworkings of the stories contained in Leenhardt's *Documents néo-calédoniens* by his daughter Roselène Dousset-Leenhardt in *La grande case*).

⁶⁹² An important focus of both Rivierre's and Bensa's research has been the dynamic nature of Kanak languages and cultures over time. Rivierre has written on the impacts of colonialism on the Kanak languages and in *Chroniques kanak: l'ethnologie en marche*, Bensa describes the change in focus of his anthropological work following the Événements of the 1980s. He discusses the transition from a "traditional" anthropological approach, in which the anthropologist as "cultural specialist" focuses, for example, on social institutions and kinship relations, to a new approach which had to try and take into account the emergence of Kanak from the reserves onto the political stage, their engagement in the process of decolonisation and their demands for justice. Bensa writes of the role he believed the anthropologist needed to play in this context that it involved attesting to the interest and the richness of Kanak society and bringing about respect for both Kanak and their claims, especially in the face of the ignorance and 19th century fantasies about Kanak that prevailed in political and journalistic circles at the time (14). Bensa goes on to describe this approach as insufficient and even a little naïve, and states the importance of trying to understand the situation in terms of power relations between Kanak and the French state, and from a political point of view. He sees the role of the anthropologist in such a situation as putting forward arguments in the debate taking place between the different parties (15).

of respect and advocacy for Kanak people and the value and richness of their cultural heritage, this work can be said to be an example of genuine communication with the potential to positively influence construction of Kanak identity, and through the increase of understanding of Kanak culture, the potential to positively influence the construction of an inclusive New Caledonian identity as exemplified by the notion of the *destin commun*.

6.6 TEXT 29: André Ba Duong Nguyen, Kamilio Ipere, Marcel Até, Claude Laheurte. *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*. Noumea: Association des langues et culture Xârâcùù-Xârâgurè-Mairie de Thio, 2001.

“XVIII – AAXA KÈ KOONE MÊ CHAWA KÈ XAJIE/LE CHEF DE KONÉ ET LE LÉZARD DE HOUAÏLOU” (PP. 173–205).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* leads from Xârâcùù oral tradition, from the Xârâcùù customary area on the east coast of the central Grande Terre, into New Caledonian written tradition in Xârâcùù and French. The story, entitled “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie/Le Chef de Koné et le lézard de Houaïlou” moves out from Xârâcùù oral tradition into *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, a joint publication produced by the *Association de langues et culture Xârâcùù* and the *Mairie de Thio*⁶⁹³ in 2001. “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie” was recounted in Xârâcùù by David Diaike of Canala, and recorded and transcribed by Samuéla Léonora Ouetcho.

Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù... a collection of 18 *contes* and *légendes* from Xârâcùù oral tradition. It was produced in 2001 by the linguist André Ba Duong Nguyen,⁶⁹⁴ and Kamilio Ipere, a retired Kanak educator, with the assistance of Marcel Até and Claude Laheurte. The version of *Le Chef et le lézard*, “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie” is the eighteenth and final text in the collection, and features on pages 173–205. In the (re)writing, as with the other stories, the Xârâcùù text and its word-for-word linguistic translation into French are divided into numbered phrases and presented on the top half of the page, while the fluent French translation, also divided into numbered phrases, is situated at the bottom of the page.

⁶⁹³ [Thio District Council]

⁶⁹⁴ Also priest at Thio at the time of publication (Rivierre et al 2010).

The *Avant-Propos*, written by André Ba Duong Nguyen, outlines the commission of the book, which he describes as a “*recueil de contes*”⁶⁹⁵ designed to complement the first volume of a textbook “*Apprendre le xârâcùù*” also published in 2001 by Ba Duong Nguyen and Ipere, and aimed at native speakers and those who wish to “familiarise themselves with an Oceanian language” (1). *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù...* came about as a result of the publication activity following the signing of the Noumea Agreement in 1998 that was a response to the need for pedagogical resources in the Kanak languages to be taught at all levels of the education system.

With respect to the (re)writing process that produced “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie”, both in the *Avant-Propos* and also on the first page of the story, David Diaike is credited with recounting the story, and Samuëla Lauréna Ouetcho for its recording and transcription. It is unclear who exactly worked on the translation, though it seems likely that Ba Duong Nguyen played a major role, and Claude Laheurte is thanked in the *Avant-Propos* for checking and editing the translations.

The story of “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie” was recounted, recorded, transcribed then translated into French. The primary transformation involved is evidently the passage from oral to written, and the passage from the Xârâcùù language to French also involves transformation. As far as genre is concerned, all of the texts in the collection are described as “*contes et légendes*” and no attempt is made to take account of Xârâcùù genres in the book, thus it appears that the story has changed in genre from the source genre in Xârâcùù to a *légende*.

The content of the story follows the basic pattern of transgression–punishment–flight–redemption found in the other (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* examined thus far, however the names of the locations passed through have changed. This would seem to be a logical development given that the story is recounted in Canala by David Diaike, and the final stages of the journey of *le chef de Koné* take place on the east coast of the Xârâcùù region, unlike the Ajië versions in which the final stages take place on the west coast of the Ajië region. The *chef de Koné*’s trajectory is as follows: Koné-Houaïlou-Koumac-Hienghène-Poindimié-

⁶⁹⁵ [collection of *contes*]

Ponérihouen-Kouaoua-Canala-Gelima-Nakety-Thio-Borendi-Unia. It is at Unia, on the coast south of Canala, that the *chef* meets the two children who take him to the underwater sanctuary and decapitate the lizard when it tries to enter the house beneath the sea in order to capture the *chef de Koné*.

In the Ajië versions of the story in the corpus, the lizard is linked with a precise location (for example, “Le Lézard de Bwéxaawé”), whereas in this version, the use of the more general title, “Le Lézard de Houaïlou”, a designation which covers an entire valley and regional centre encompassing numerous clans and lineages, would appear to make sense. More specific names and locations from the Ajië region, so intimately linked with land tenure, would have less pertinence for Xârâcùù speakers than for Ajië speakers, and this may be a reason for the general locations employed in the story.

It would be an error, however, to assume that this story is simply a less detailed version of the Ajië one. Even though one protagonist comes from the Ajië region, the children⁶⁹⁶ are based in Unia, in the Drubéa-Kaponé customary area that borders on that of the Xârâcùù customary area, and there are also elements and toponyms within the story that are specific to the Xârâcùù region. In addition, the contribution of the performative context of this story must be taken into account – the content of the version is influenced by the composition of the audience, in terms of both its perceived cultural competence and variables such as gender, age, clan and lineage membership. David Diaike and the other *conteurs* who contributed to *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù...* would have been well aware that while aimed at a Xârâcùù-speaking readership, the target readership of the book is potentially limitless. Because of this, they would have included and excluded information from their stories as a function of the potential composition of this readership. It is logical to assume that some detailed information would be omitted in a version aimed at a “general” and not necessarily Kanak audience,⁶⁹⁷ and that were Diaike to retell the story in, for example, a ceremonial context, to an audience of Xârâcùù speakers, the level of detail regarding patronyms and toponyms would quite likely be greater.

⁶⁹⁶ Who may represent ancestral spirits in the story.

⁶⁹⁷ The conclusions of this study have necessarily (given the cultural background of its writer) been developed from versions of elements of oral tradition provided for just such a readership.

The transformations undergone by David Diaike’s version of *Le Chef et le lézard* inevitably relate to the passage from oral to written modes (textualisation), and from Xârâcùù to French (translation). While it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the translation closely, it is notable that the fluent French translation recounts the story in the past tense, conforming to target text expectations for a *légende*, but not reflecting the source language practice of telling stories in the present tense, bringing them into the moment at which the story is told. There is a change in genre, that of the source in Xârâcùù oral tradition (not specified in the book) to that of a *légende* featuring in a collection of *contes et légendes* created primarily for pedagogical purposes. The numbered phrases, the positioning of the text on the page (Xârâcùù text at the top, with interlinear linguistic gloss translation directly below each line, and the fluent French translation, with corresponding numbered phrases, at the bottom of the page), and the use of footnotes for both linguistic and cultural information echo both the presentation style of Maurice Leenhardt’s *Documents néo-calédoniens*, and the presentations that have been produced by predominantly French professional linguists since the 1970s. The repetition that is a hallmark of the stories of oral tradition has been retained,⁶⁹⁸ and a comparison of the French text and the interlinear translation shows that the (re)writing follows the source story closely.

Contes et Légendes en langue Xârâcùù... is a collection of (re)writings produced by a team whose collective linguistic competence in matters of the Xârâcùù language is extensive. In the *Avant-Propos*, André Ba Duong Nguyen outlines the collaborative approach to recording, transcribing and translating the stories, thanking in particular Kamilo Ipere and Marcel Até for their role as his *informateurs* and for providing most of the *contes et légendes* that feature in the book. He also thanks other collaborators in the book’s production: David Diaike of Canala, Mme Xwâkwépu Jorédié of Nakéty, and Mme Adelaïde Chamoinri of Thio for the stories that they contributed; Samuéla Lauréna Ouetcho for recording and transcribing several *contes*; and Claude Laheurte for re-reading and rewriting the French translations (presumably originally produced by Ba Duong Nguyen). Thus there are native and non-native speakers

⁶⁹⁸ For a typical example, see line “16) Rè wâ mê, rè wâ mê, rè wâ mê.” (interlinear translation “3sg / acc. /venir/ 3sg / acc. / venir / 3sg / acc. / venir /”) is translated in the French text as “16) *Il marcha, il marcha, il marcha.*” [He walked, he walked, he walked] (175).

involved in the production of the (re)writings, and the team of Ba Duong Nguyen and Kamilo Ipere are also responsible for writing the manual for the acquisition of Xârâcùù.

Throughout the collection, the original Xârâcùù stories are acknowledged, along with the orators, and the Xaracu text is given prominence. The oral dimension of the performative context is hinted at, for example through the use of the deictics “this way” and “here” that feature in lines 153 and 154, which translate as,

153) He pursued him relentlessly. The chief of Koné didn't stop at Houaïlou, because it's from Houaïlou that the lizard came. He kept going this way.

*154) He ran and ran and ran and arrived here, at Kouaoua.*⁶⁹⁹

Rather than finishing with a formulaic expression indicating that it is the next person's turn to tell a story, as frequently is the case in oral tradition, this text finishes with the more written tradition oriented “*C'est ainsi que se termine l'histoire du chef de Koné et du lézard de Houaïlou*” (205).⁷⁰⁰

The representation of Xârâcùù oral tradition that is produced in the (re)writing “Aaxa kè Koone mê chawa kè Xajie/Le chef de Koné et le lézard de Houaïlou” is positive – it is part of a cooperative project involving Xârâcùù speakers and language experts, the *Association des langues et culture Xârâcùù-Xârâgurè*, and local government in the form of the *Mairie de Thio*, and there is a strong community dimension to the (re)writing process. The elements of Xârâcùù oral tradition that feature in the book are valorised, because of the authority associated with the written word, and because of their inclusion in the development of teaching materials for the language, source of cultural identity for present and future generations. *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)* helps to reaffirm and valorise Xârâcùù identity, and through this it also contributes in a positive manner to the production of the Kanak identity described in the Noumea Agreement as a necessary precursor to the construction of the community of the *destin commun* in New Caledonia.

⁶⁹⁹ “153) Il le suivait sans relâche. Le chef de Koné ne s'arrêta pas à Houaïlou, car c'est de Houaïlou que venait le lézard. Il continua par ici. 154) Il courut, courut, courut et arriva là, à Kouaoua” (196).

⁷⁰⁰ [And that's how the story of the chief of Koné and the lizard of Houaïlou ends].

6.7 TEXT 30: André Ba Duong Nguyen, Kamilio Ipere. *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*. Langues kanak 20. Noumea: Coédition CDPNC and ADCK, 2005.

“XVIII – AAXA KÈ KOONE MÊ CHAWA KÈ XAJIE/LE CHEF DE KONÉ ET LE LÉZARD DE HOUAÏLOU” (PP. 173–205).

This pathway of *Le Chef et le lézard* begins and ends within New Caledonian written tradition in Xârâcùù and French. It moves out from *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, a collection of elements of Xârâcùù oral tradition, produced by André Ba Dong Nguyen, Kamilo Ipere, Marcel Até and Claude Laheurte, and jointly published by the *Association de langues et culture Xârâcùù* and the *Mairie de Thio* in 2001.⁷⁰¹ The story then moves into the 2005 re-edition of this text, also entitled *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*.

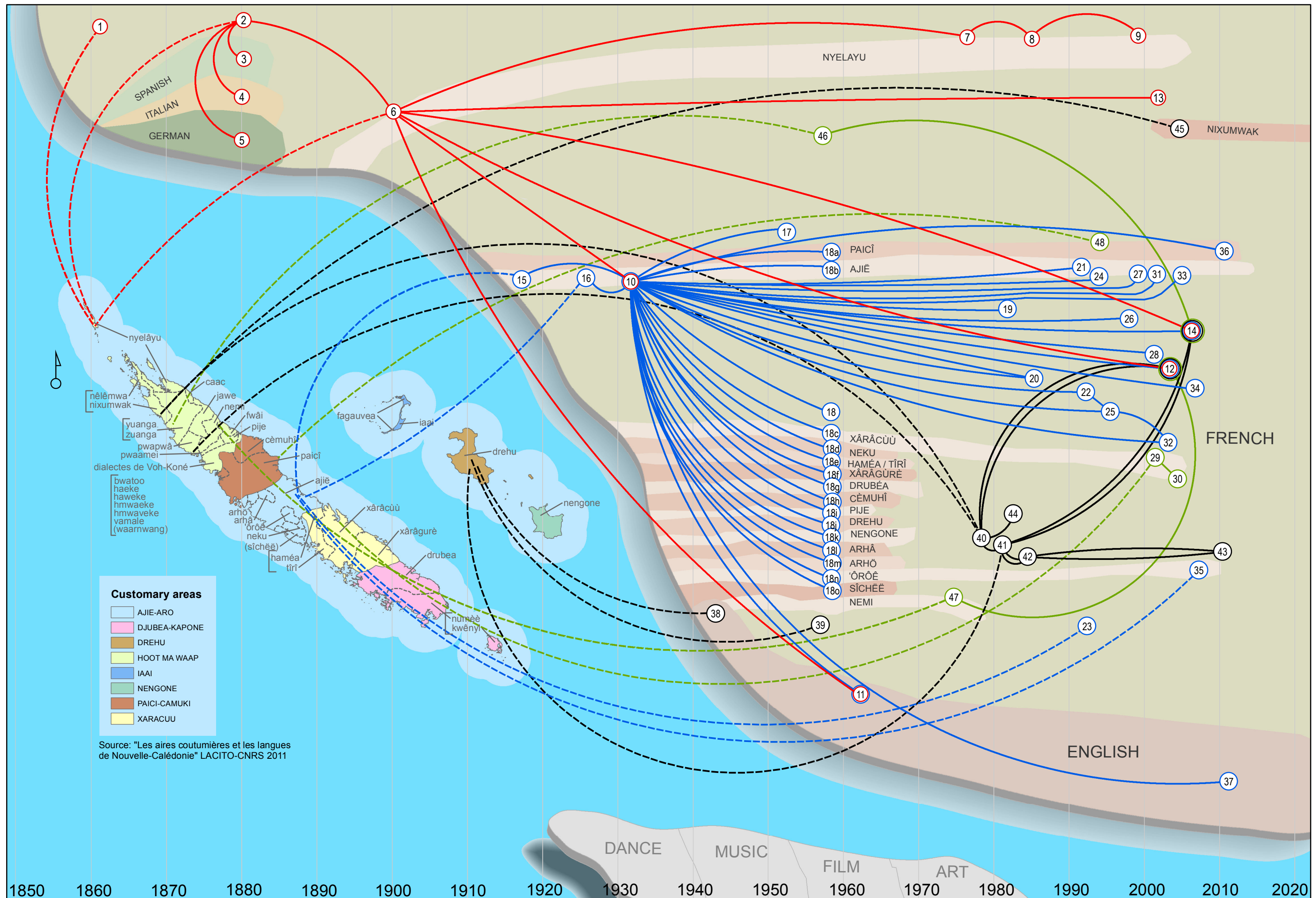
The only differences between the 2001 and 2005 editions relate to the presentation (there is a new cover), the attribution of the work to just two authors, Ba Duong Nguyen and Ipere, the inclusion of the book as the twentieth volume in the series “Langues kanak”, as a joint publication by the Centre de Documentation Pédagogique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (CDPNC) and the ADCK. Where the 2001 edition had five names credited on the cover as having produced the book, this second edition has just two of the five original names as authors, these are André Ba Duong Nguyen and Kamilo Ipere. Inside the book, the Avant-Propos, Remerciements, and the stories included remain unchanged from the 2001 edition. Commissioned in 2005, the reproduction of the book published originally by the Association de langues et culture Xârâcùù and the Mairie de Thio would have been undertaken in response to a need for texts in the Xârâcùù language in the New Caledonian education system, and thus the CDPNC, whose remit is the production of pedagogical resources for New Caledonia, and the ADCK, charged with the Kanak cultural development became involved. Thus, while the 2001 work was generated and produced locally in response to educational needs in the Xârâcùù linguistic area, the 2005 publication was destined for a New

⁷⁰¹ See the previous section (6.6) for discussion of this (re)writing.

Caledonia-wide audience, and the resource integrated into the pool of government-produced educational resources, which would probably result in an increased distribution of the book.

The professional looking presentation (the cover graphics and book construction), the inclusion in the series “*Langues kanak*”, and the backing of two prominent organisations in the field of education in New Caledonia, the CDPNC and ADCK, all work to affirm the educational value of the texts within the 2005 *Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù...* and produce positive images of Xârâcùù oral tradition and culture, and by extension, Kanak oral tradition and culture in general. The joint publication by the ADCK and CDPNC, organisations whose main focus is respectively Kanak and New Caledonian educational development, can be seen as a concrete example of the cooperation and recognition of Kanak identity pointed to in the Noumea Agreement as necessary for the construction of an inclusive, collective New Caledonian identity.

Figure 19 - Pathways of *Le Chef et le lézard* across the Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie



Part III: Discussion, Conclusions, Reflections and Future Directions

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has explored the processes and the historical, political and literary contexts involved in the incorporation of an element of Kanak oral tradition, *Le Chef et le lézard*, into New Caledonian written tradition through the production of (re)writings. How these (re)writings might contribute to ongoing processes of identity construction in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie has also been considered, with a particular focus on the identities that figure prominently in the Noumea Agreement (Kanak and *destin commun*).

To date, little published research exists on the interactions between oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, or the implications of these interactions for notions of identity. This thesis has sought to contribute to knowledge in these areas by investigating the following questions: Does Kanak oral tradition exert any influence on identity construction processes beyond the boundaries of Kanak societies? If the answer is yes, then how much influence does Kanak oral tradition have on identity construction processes and in which areas is this influence exerted? And finally, how does Kanak oral tradition exert influence through the medium of the written word on identity construction processes in wider New Caledonian society?

In answer to the first question, I have argued that (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions have the potential, through the representations they contain and the images they project, to influence identity construction processes, both within and beyond the limits of their cultures of origin. In response to the second question, an indication of the degree of influence that these (re)writings may have can be derived from the consideration of the scope of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰² Where the “scope of the (re)writings” covers: the number of (re)writings; the number of texts in which they feature; the number of (re)writings produced from each of the four types of (re)writing pathway outlined in Chapter 2; the range of different language zones that the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* has travelled through on

The corpus contains 79 (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*. These (re)writings feature in 48 concrete, “bricks-and-mortar” texts⁷⁰³ that have been produced from several different types of (re)writing pathway. Twelve texts arise from pathways taken by the story out of nine different Kanak oral traditions and into New Caledonian written tradition. Twenty-seven texts are the result of pathways taken within New Caledonian written tradition,⁷⁰⁴ six texts arise from pathways taken between different written traditions, and three texts are the result of converging pathways that originated in both oral and written traditions.

Le Chef et le lézard has travelled widely across the New Caledonian literary landscape: the twelve pathways taken between oral and written traditions lead out from the Nyelâyu, Ajië, Bwato, Drehu, Nixumwak, Yuanga, Nemi, Paicî and Xârâcùu linguistic zones in the “real literary landscape”, attesting to the presence of versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* in oral traditions all over Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.⁷⁰⁵

The story has also travelled over the “imaginary literary landscape” of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, appearing in (re)writings in nineteen different Kanak language zones/written traditions (Ajië, Arhâ, Arhö, Cèmuhi, Drehu, Drubea, Haméa, Neku, Nemi, Nengone, Nixumwak, Nyelâyu, ‘Ôrôê, Paicî, Pije, Sîchëë, Tîrî, Xârâcùu and Xârâgùrè), as well as the European language zones of French, English, Spanish, German and Italian.

Twenty-seven texts arise from pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* within New Caledonian written tradition, of which sixteen figure in nineteen Kanak language zones on the imaginary literary landscape (Kanak languages are used exclusively in three of these texts).⁷⁰⁶ Twenty-four of the twenty-seven texts feature in the French linguistic zone, a logical

the real and imaginary literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie; and the relationships of influence existing between (re)writings.

⁷⁰³ For the purpose of this calculation, the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that were undertaken as part of the 1958 linguistic survey by Raymond Leenhardt (see Chapter 4, section 4.5, texts 18, 18a-o) are considered to be part of one “bricks-and-mortar” text (comprising loose-leaf pages filed in the same folder), but count as 16 separate (re)writings, as they were written in separate contexts, and geographic locations by a range of different people, who used either the French or the Ajië text as a *point de départ* for the production of their (re)writings.

⁷⁰⁴ Considered to consist of New Caledonian written tradition in French, and New Caledonian written tradition in each of the Kanak languages represented. See the discussion of what constitutes New Caledonian written tradition in Chapter 2, “Pathways” section, “Type 5 – Pathways between written traditions”.

⁷⁰⁵ It would be interesting to look further into the question of the distribution of the story, and to discover whether it does in fact exist in all of the oral traditions of the islands.

⁷⁰⁶ These three texts are part of the Ajië network of pathways, discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.9: Text 21 (Ajië), section 4.23: Text 35 (‘Ôrôê) and section 4.24: Text 36 (Paicî).

finding given the status of French as the *lingua franca* of both general New Caledonian society and the research communities operating there.

The map of the pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* over the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie also charts the influence exerted by different (re)writings on those that follow them. It is clear that Bwêyöuu Eñijiyi's "Virhenō ne ka to Kone", published with Leenhardt's French translation in *Documents néo-calédoniens* (1932), is the most influential; *Le Chef et le lézard* has travelled directly from this (re)writing into twenty other texts, evidence that supports claims for this version of *Le Chef et le lézard* as the best-known.⁷⁰⁷ The other influential (re)writing of *Le Chef et le lézard* is Père Lambert's "Le Chef de Touo" (1880),⁷⁰⁸ from which four other (re)writings are directly derived, one of which, "Le Chef de Touho" in *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (1900),⁷⁰⁹ in turn features in the production of a further six (re)writings.

This study has demonstrated the astonishing variety in the (re)writing pathways, the actors involved,⁷¹⁰ and the conditions and resources that have led to the production of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* over a period of almost 150 years (1862-2011). The texts in the corpus feature in a wide range of genres: from ethnography to literary anthology; from novel to essay-memoir; from *cahier* to article in a cultural *revue*; from regional promotional material to linguistic presentation of bilingual texts; from primary school text to post office annual; from cultural encyclopedia to atlas; from religious periodical to academic dissertation.

The wide distribution across genres, coupled with the number and variety of (re)writings of just one story, indicates that Kanak oral traditions have the potential to exert a significant influence across a wide range of genres and possible readerships. While only indicative, these results justify the extension of the corpus to incorporate (re)writings of other elements of

⁷⁰⁷ The influence of Eñijiyi's writing is even greater when the influence of his writings, reproduced in translation by Leenhardt in *Notes d'ethnologie...* is taken into account. His writings on totems were also the basis of the text used in the calling of the clans in the first act of *Kanaké : jeu scénique en trois tableaux* that was performed at *Mélanésie 2000*.

⁷⁰⁸ See Chapter 3, section 3.2 for discussion of this (re)writing.

⁷⁰⁹ Discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3.

⁷¹⁰ At least 50 (re)writers are named directly, it is likely that a number of other actors in the (re)writing process have not yet been identified.

Kanak oral tradition, with an aim to better measure the potential for these (re)writings to have an influence on identity construction processes in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

An insight into the ways in which Kanak oral tradition can exert influence on identity construction processes has been gained by considering the (re)writing encounter: the different actors in the (re)writing process; the characteristics of the (re)writings associated with different categories of (re)writers; and the voices represented in the different (re)writings of the corpus.

Each (re)writing encounter involves one or more (re)writers, who transform the story as part of a process that is contingent upon contextual factors at a given moment in time. The product of the (re)writing process is marked by the ideological, pragmatic and poetic influences on the (re)writer as well as factors inherent to the different (re)writing pathway types.⁷¹¹ The analyses in Part II of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, their contexts of production and the transformations they have undergone during the (re)writing process, have shone a more intense light on the complex web of contextual factors at play when (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral literature are produced.

No (re)writing is the same as another, even when the same (re)writer creates more than one (re)writing of the same story.⁷¹² Associated with the changes in form and content that result in each new (re)writing are changes to the images projected of Kanak cultures and identity and of the relations between the different communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. This is because each encounter between reader and story is mediated by the text of the (re)writing, each act of reading is a type of performance in a particular moment in time and space, and the understandings brought to the encounter by the reader reflect his or her positionality⁷¹³ at that point. After each reading encounter, the positionality of the reader is altered, to a greater or

⁷¹¹ That is, the difference between pathways that lead from oral to written traditions, in comparison to pathways within and between written tradition.

⁷¹² Compare, for example, Père Lambert's 1880 (re)writing "Le Chef de Touo" in *Les Missions Catholiques...* (see Chapter 3, section 3.2) and his 1900 "Le Chef de Touho/Anla Touo" in *Mœurs et superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens* (see Chapter 3, section 3.3), or the different (re)editions of *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie* published by the SEHNC since 1980 (see Chapter 5, section 5.4), or Louis-José Barbançon's two (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard*, in *Bourail : entre mer et montagne...* and *La Terre du lézard* in 1992 and 1995 (see Chapter 4, sections 4.10 and 4.11).

⁷¹³ In the idea of *positionality*, "people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location in shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed" (Maher & Thompson Tetreault 164).

lesser degree. Genuine communication, as defined by Roger D. Sell,⁷¹⁴ sees the increase in overlap between the “contexts” of the participants result in an increase in mutual understanding.

This dynamic of constant change in which no two readings are the same serves to underline the features common to both oral and written traditions; just as no two oral performance events are the same, arising as they do from unique performative contexts, so no two readings (or written performance events) are the same, as they too arise from unique performative contexts.

In the case of pathways from oral to written tradition, the encounter, at its most basic level, involves the story being told, and then recorded in some form. A variety of possible ways in which this can happen has been elucidated in the aforementioned chapters, and can be illustrated using the extended model of the (re)writing process developed and discussed in Chapter 2 - “(Re)writing”, and shown again here in Figure 20.

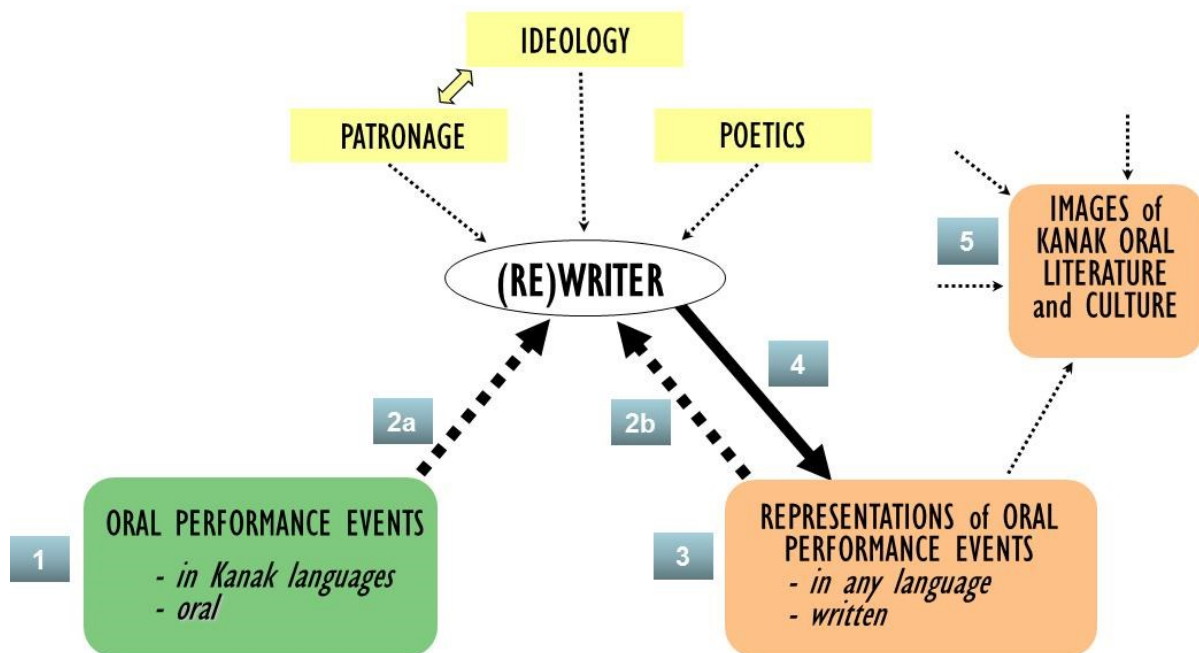


Figure 20 - Extended Model of Lefevere's Rewriting Process

⁷¹⁴ Where the communication context is bi-directional and involves overlapping contexts of autonomous minds that conceive of each other as being equally empowered.

The first and most simple encounter is when the narrator and the recorder are the same person, and the telling (2a) and recording (4) of the story take place simultaneously, as was the case for the production of Bwêyöuu Eñjiyi's and Sisille's *cahiers*, although whether the telling was silent or spoken aloud is unknown.

A second situation sees a narrator recount the story (2a) in a typical context, for example, when stories are told around the fire in the evening to a group of people of different ages, and the recorder has several options: participate as part of the audience, listen to the story and record/reconstitute it after the oral performance event, from memory (4), or from notes (2b, then 4);⁷¹⁵ record the event by taking down the story as a form of dictation (4);⁷¹⁶ or record the event using audio-visual technology and produce the (re)writing (4) after the event by re-experiencing it (2a).

The third possible situation sees the narrator telling the story (2a) to the recorder in an interview-type situation that occurs outside the context in which the story would usually be told. This storytelling act may be recorded by dictation (4), or using audio-visual equipment (recording voice or voice and image). In the case of dictation, the (re)writing is constituted directly. For audio-visual recordings, another stage is necessary, in which the narrative is transcribed (4), either by the recorder working alone (for example, in cases where the recorder's linguistic competence is sufficiently developed, such as in the case of the transcriptions produced by the ADCK collector-researchers⁷¹⁷), or by the recorder working in collaboration with native-speaker experts (such as when Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Téin worked together to produce the transcription on which "Pasikan et le lézard" is based⁷¹⁸).

In each of the (re)writing processes described above, a final stage is possible, in which collaboration with native-speaker experts is undertaken to verify the accuracy of the (re)writing. Here, the expert as (re)writer experiences the (re)writing (2b) and may contribute

⁷¹⁵ This seems likely to have been the case for the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* produced by Loïc Mangematin (see Chapter 5, section 5.4) or Jean Laville (see Chapter 5, sections 5.1 and 5.2).

⁷¹⁶ As was possibly the case when Père Lambert recorded "Le Chef de Touo" (see Chapter 3, section 3.2).

⁷¹⁷ See Chapter 4, sections 4.23 and 4.24.

⁷¹⁸ See Chapter 6, section 6.3.

modifications (4) that produce the final text. The narrator of the story may be the expert consulted, or one or more other experts with appropriate cultural and linguistic competence.

This consultation and verification exercise is a hallmark of the approach taken by the linguists and anthropologists when recording versions of *Le Chef et le lézard* (see the (re)writings produced by M. Leenhardt, J. Guiart, F. Ozanne-Rivierre, M. Coyaud, J.-C. Rivierre, A. Bensa, A. Ba Duong Nguyen, M. Naepels)⁷¹⁹ and appears to reflect not only the scientific dimensions of their research (the need to collect “reliable” data, thus the need for it to be verified), but also the relationships of respect that researchers develop with those from whom they learn and gather information about the languages and cultures concerned. Understandably, it appears that those (re)writings that involve Kanak expertise in the production of the (re)writing, beyond the act of narration, tend to produce representations of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* that project more positive images of the oral literatures and cultures concerned.⁷²⁰

Other (re)writings in the corpus see the input of the cultural insider limited to the telling of the story; no consultation with native speakers takes place and the (re)writers, as cultural outsiders with varying degrees of familiarity with the Kanak languages and cultures concerned place themselves in the position of interpreters speaking on behalf of the group to whom the story belongs, (this appears to have been the case for de Rochas⁷²¹ and to a certain extent, Loïc Mangematin⁷²²). The resulting (re)writings, while they may contain positive references, also bear the marks of the (re)writers involved, and may or may not represent the stories as they were recounted, possibly including inaccuracies or misinterpretations, intentional or unintentional, that gain a certain currency by virtue of having been published.

In this study I have proposed that the encounter between the (re)writer and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* is the actualisation of the *vā* or relational space between the (re)writer and

⁷¹⁹ It would also appear to have been the approach employed by Père Pierre Lambert, who in some respects could be argued to have been a precursor of anthropological and linguistic research in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

⁷²⁰ This is not to say that the portrayals in (re)writings produced by linguists and anthropologists are entirely positive, or that the texts are homogeneous. Rather, that on the whole, the positive portrayals of Kanak oral literature and culture, and evidence of respect for their *interlocuteurs* are key features of these (re)writings.

⁷²¹ See Chapter 3, section 3.1.

⁷²² See Chapter 5, section 5.4.

the oral tradition from which the story derives. The text of the (re)writing thus symbolises the encounter between the cultures of origin of the (re)writer and the story. In the case of pathways leading from oral to written tradition, the encounter between (re)writer and story (and its culture of origin) is mediated by the person of the narrator. For pathways that lie within and between written traditions, the encounter that takes place between the (re)writer and the story is mediated by an existing (re)writing that may itself be the direct representation of an original encounter between narrator and (re)writer, or, alternatively, may be the latest in a succession of (re)writings leading back to an original encounter, in person, between narrator and (re)writer. In the case of (re)writings produced as a result of convergent pathways, especially if they lead out from both oral and written traditions, the encounter becomes more complex, a space in which the (re)writer engages with multiple versions of the story, in both textual and interpersonal settings.

Against this background of variation, what remains constant is that the encounter between the (re)writer and the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, and the ensuing (re)writing process, can be viewed as shaping the *vā*, the relational space between (re)writer and story, and between the cultures that they represent. I have used the criteria of linguistic and cultural competence of the (re)writers, visibility of the source of the story, degree of collaboration and consultation with cultural insiders, and acknowledgement of the oral dimension of the story, as a way of exploring the nature of the (re)writing process and uncovering aspects of its potential to contribute to processes of identity construction for Kanak and the community of the *destin commun*. The different contexts in which the encounters can take place, depending on whether the pathways taken by the story lead from oral to written tradition, or move within or between written traditions, or a combination of these, may result in each of the criteria above assuming a greater or lesser significance.⁷²³

For example, for pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* within written tradition, (re)writers with linguistic competence in the story's language of origin may bring a deeper understanding to the production of a monolingual (re)writing in French from another

⁷²³ Methodologically this shift in the relative importance of criteria between (re)writings does not pose any difficulties, as the purpose of the criteria is to enable different aspects of the (re)writing encounter to be teased out, rather than to quantify elements such as linguistic competence, cultural competence, degree of consultation and collaboration during the (re)writing process, visibility of the original story or acknowledgement of the performative context.

monolingual (re)writing in French, (as they are able to discern the patterns and traces of the original version in the French text). However, linguistic competence is arguably more important for a (re)writer producing a bilingual (re)writing. Equally, while the criteria of collaboration and consultation to verify the (re)writing's accuracy and acceptability are of great importance in the case of a pathway taken from oral to written tradition, this verification may not be possible for (re)writings that arise from existing (re)writings. This may be because the participants in the original (re)writing process are not accessible (for reasons of time and distance), or the (re)writer may not see the need to "re-check" the (re)writing, deeming the original encounter to have resulted in a successful and respectful representation of the original story. This is the case in some of the academic writing that figures in the corpus, and is illustrated in the articles written by Jean Guiart⁷²⁴ and Patrick Pillon,⁷²⁵ in which (re)writings by Lambert, M. Leenhardt, Coyaud, Ozanne-Rivierre and Tén are accepted as reliable representations of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*.

Looking at the map at the end of Part II of the pathways taken by *Le Chef et le lézard* across the literary landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, it is clear that the majority of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* were produced from 1976 onwards, when there was a resurgence of Kanak culture in the New Caledonian public domain. Prior to this, the fifteen (re)writings that feature on the landscape were produced by a handful of (re)writers: de Rochas and Lambert in the latter half of the nineteenth century (six (re)writings); Leenhardt, Eñijiyi and Sisille in the early twentieth century (three (re)writings); and Laville and Berkowitz in their English-language (re)writing during WWII. In the 1950s, Laville, Guiart, Barrès and Raymond Leenhardt produced four (re)writings at a time which saw Kanak admitted to New Caledonian society as voters and students, and the *Institut Français de l'Océanie* established in Noumea; and Jim Hollyman's 1962 (re)writing in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* is another English-language "outlier". Following this article, there were no more (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* created until the 1970s.

⁷²⁴ See Chapter 4, section 4.8.

⁷²⁵ See Chapter 3, section 3.6.

The findings of this study, focused solely on one story of oral tradition, are only preliminary, however, when the publication data for *Téâ Kanaké*⁷²⁶ are taken into account, it seems to confirm the findings for *Le Chef et le lézard*; there is a flurry of (re)writing activity observable in the decade following the 1975 *Mélanésia 2000* festival, and also around the signing of the Matignon (1988) and Noumea (1998) Agreements. Further investigation is necessary to gain more insight into the different forces driving these increases in publication activity, however it would seem that these events all mark moments in which questions of identity have surfaced in New Caledonian society.

Notwithstanding the general evolution⁷²⁷ in portrayals of Kanak people and cultures from nineteenth-century social Darwinist models to those of the present day, the results of the analyses of the (re)writings suggest that there is no strong correlation between historical period and production of a predominantly positive or negative image of Kanak culture or oral tradition. Both negative and positive portrayals can occur within a single (re)writing, and equally, positive images can be projected by (re)writings that are contemporaneous with (re)writings that are negative in their portrayals of Kanak oral tradition and culture, and this occurrence can take place at any stage in time.⁷²⁸

Compare, for example, Francis Garnung's 2004 *Contes et légendes canaques du XIX^e siècle*, which projects nineteenth-century images of Kanak society as "less-evolved" than "modern civilisation" (an essentially negative portrayal), with Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre and Poindi Téin's 1979 *Textes nemi : Volume 2. Bas Coulna et Haut Coulna*. The latter text is a study of oral literature of a particular region produced from a collaborative effort between French and Kanak experts. It valorises elements of oral tradition in various ways, not least through the assertion made that the material in the book would constitute a useful resource for future

⁷²⁶ Originally part of the corpus and mapped on the literary landscape (see Appendix III).

⁷²⁷ Evidently, different attitudes coexist in New Caledonian and other societies today, some of which have evolved very little from those of the 19th century...

⁷²⁸ It is also interesting to note, with respect to the timing of (re)writings of each of the two stories, that while *Le Chef et le lézard* has been (re)written reasonably regularly from the time of the annexation of New Caledonia by the French state to the present day, the first published (re)writing of *Téâ Kanaké* did not appear until around the beginning of the second World War. The fact that *Téâ Kanaké* is specific to a particular oral tradition (Paicî) in a particular location (the Paicî linguistic region) whereas *Le Chef et le lézard* is heard across the Grande Terre and on the islands of Belep and Lifou may account for the difference in (re)writing history between the stories, also the difference in genre between the two stories (*légende* or *virhenô* vs. "mythe-histoire") may have played a role, determining who would be allowed to hear each story, with *Téâ Kanaké* having a more restricted sphere of performance.

studies by using the stories as the basis on which the analysis is founded, a decidedly positive portrayal of the authority and value of Kanak oral traditions in contemporary academic enquiry.

A comparison of Victor de Rochas' 1862 *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants* with Père Lambert's 1880 "Littérature néo-calédonienne" in *Les Missions Catholiques...* also demonstrates the way that (re)writings containing positive portrayals of Kanak oral literature and culture can be contemporaneous with (re)writings that project negative images. Each of the two (re)writings, through its presentation of the story of *Le Chef et le lézard*, makes a comment on the value of the vernacular version (and by extension, the tradition from which it derives). De Rochas minimises the value by abridging the original in order to "improve" it, while Lambert valorises the original by staying extremely close to it in translation, taking care to explain elements within the story that may be foreign to a non-Kanak readership, and even including vocabulary from Nyelâyu in the text itself (*mouaran*, the convocation signal).

With respect to Kanak identity construction, for a Kanak population that is increasingly urbanised and experiencing the tensions of living in a globalised world – both factors that can make it difficult to remain in contact with what is happening in the *tribu* where language and custom are kept strong – these texts of encounter can be an extremely rich resource to help learn about, rediscover, maintain contact with, or affirm their own traditions. These (re)writings can indeed serve as a source of pride in Kanak language and its expression, ideas and themes. Existing in written form, bequeathed to the new generations by the older generations, especially the first ones to commit these stories to writing, they represent the passing of "*ce souffle venu des ancêtres*"⁷²⁹ into a new domain where it holds its own.

An example of the continued relevance of *le souffle des ancêtres* can be found in the continued influence of the version of *Le Chef et le lézard* (re)written in *Documents néo-calédoniens* by Bwêâyöuu Eîjiji and Maurice Leenhardt. The existence of the various (re)writings in the corpus that are versions of the Ajië story "Le Maître de Koné" that originate in oral traditions other than Ajië oral tradition illustrates the point that written tradition can influence oral tradition just as the reverse is possible. Perhaps these (re)writings

⁷²⁹ [this breath of the ancestors].

were undertaken to demonstrate that different versions of the story were already in existence in other languages, or in order to share in the status⁷³⁰ acquired by this “classic text” of Kanak oral tradition. It seems that the notion of variations on a theme, the existence of multiple versions of a same story, and the idea of versions in competition with one another, which are all characteristic of Kanak oral traditions, are continuing to influence the dynamics of story production beyond the boundaries of oral traditions.

Indeed, what has emerged during the course of this study is a picture of Kanak agency in the production of the diverse (re)writings that constitute the corpus. Different interpretations of the timing of the mobilisation of Kanak exist among scholars, for example, the historian David Chappell writes of “the Kanak awakening of 1969-1976”⁷³¹ with respect to the emergence of Kanak political activism during that period. The year 1975 is also frequently used to mark a starting point, as it was the year of the *Mélanésie 2000* cultural festival, the culmination of many months of preparation through the (re)activation of social networks existing between the different indigenous societies of the islands. *Mélanésie 2000* saw Kanak culture enter the public domain in dramatic fashion, giving lie to the misconception prevalent at the time that Kanak culture had all but disappeared as an inevitable consequence of its collision with technologically and morally superior “modern” civilisation. The anthropologist Jean Guiart asserts, however, that, rather than an awakening or a beginning, *Mélanésie 2000* represents the culmination of many years of Kanak agency that date back to the writings of the *natas* who trained at Do Néva with Maurice Leenhardt. Regardless of the perspective one adopts regarding the “emergence” of Kanak culture, what is clear from the mapping out and contextualisation of the texts of the corpus is that Kanak have been actively engaged in processes of (re)writing since the earliest days of colonial encounter. By way of response to the question of the interpretation of what *Mélanésie 2000* represents, the study of the (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* does demonstrate that these processes accelerated significantly from 1975 onward. However, when the preliminary results obtained regarding (re)writings of *Téâ Kanaké* are considered in conjunction with the results from the present

⁷³⁰ Derived from its inclusion in *Documents néo-calédoniens*.

⁷³¹ In his article “The Kanak Awakening of 1969-1976: Radicalizing Anti-Colonialism in New Caledonia” in *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 2. 117, (2003-2): 187-202.

study, there is a strong suggestion of significant (re)writing activity on the part of Kanak prior to the festival, and this area warrants further investigation.⁷³²

It is true that certain factors, such as the degree of collaboration and verification, the acknowledgement of orators, the presence or acknowledgement of the Kanak language version in the (re)writing, and the linguistic and cultural competence of those involved in the (re)writing process, have, to different degrees, determined the nature of the representation produced, and are responsible for the great variation in the texts produced. What has remained constant from the earliest (re)writing that features in the corpus (1862) to the most recent (2011), is that the ultimate decision as to the form and content of the elements of oral tradition “delivered” so that they might be (re)written always lies in Kanak hands, though this fact is not always made obvious. The names used for those who told the stories – *narrateurs*, *conteurs*, *transcripteurs*, *informateurs* – indicate an emphasis on the actions involved in the (re)writing process. In the texts that provide information on how the (re)writing process unfolded, very little, if any attention is given to the factors involved in the selection of stories to be (re)written.

In many cases, the (re)writers would ask the Kanak experts with whom they worked to provide certain types of story. Maurice Coyaud writes of his method for collecting *contes*, that once he had obtained an introduction to a person who was willing and able to provide recording material, he would ask the said person if they knew any stories about animals. If the *narrateur* was not interested in telling animal stories or had none to tell, then he or she would decide what story to relate and record. Also Maurice Leenhardt famously distributed *cahiers* to the *natas* whom he had taught to read and write, and who in turn had taught him about their language and culture, requesting that they write down in private any elements of their oral traditions that they deemed to be of interest. The writings in these *cahiers* would form the basis of *Documents néo-calédoniens* and *Notes d'ethnologie...* and they had a profound influence on Leenhardt's other writings. An area for future research is how much of

⁷³² Bernard Gasser's forthcoming book *Mon école du silence* provides a comprehensive view of the considerable (re)writing activity undertaken by members of the Görödé and Nabaï family, principally the writings of the father (Waïa Görödé), paternal grandfather (Philippe Görödé) and maternal grandfather (Éléisha Nâbai) of Déwé Görödé.

the decision-making regarding the selection of stories to be (re)written is governed by the rules of oral tradition, both in the past and in the present.

I have argued that rewriting involves the creation of a representation, of knowledge about a particular “reality” and therein lies its power. In the past forty years, Kanak have themselves increasingly made use of (re)writing as a channel for decolonisation, creating information about Kanak history and culture using the written word of the colonising power.

One of the earliest examples of this Kanak agency can be found in *Documents néo-calédoniens*, where the *transcripteurs* played a primary role in the initial stage of the rewriting process, selecting and transcribing the source texts. As there is currently very little written material available on the subject, it is difficult to know the exact motivations, around a hundred years ago, of the early *narrateurs* involved in the process of transporting elements of their own oral traditions out of their original contexts and into written tradition, by deciding what to record in their *cahiers*. Equally, it is difficult to definitively determine the “audience” that Bwêÿöuu Eÿijiyi and the other *transcripteurs* (including the important Houaïlou chief Mindia Néjia) had in mind when they transformed “Le Maître de Koné” and the other texts that feature in *Documents...* from ephemeral elements of oral tradition to the fixed and enduring form of written texts.

Considering the devastating impact of colonisation, especially the military repression that followed the 1878 and 1917 “insurrections”, and the alienation of Kanak lands, which had a destructive effect on the fabric of their societies, participation in the (re)writing process would, for many, have been viewed as a way to preserve elements of oral tradition for future generations. There is also the possibility that recording certain texts is a strategic act on the part of each Kanak *narrateur*/(re)writer, an act conditioned by the internal dynamics of Kanak culture. In Kanak oral traditions, audience participation, through the acceptance or rejection of elements of the version, means that each version is a negotiated truth at a given moment in history, and competing versions of a story can exist at the same time. “Fixing” a version in the written code is a way of preserving it, expanding its potential audience and conferring upon it the authority and relative permanence of the written word. Given the important role played by stories in structuring roles and relationships within Kanak societies, especially with respect to hierarchies of lineages and relationships to the land, writing them down would have been a way of increasing their status as “truth”. As Alban Bensa has

observed for the period preceding the *Événements*, the recording of oral stories in local languages gave the narrators the opportunity to assert their political positions within the *chefferies*, and to support land claims (*Père de Pwädé* 34).

Beyond the local political project, it is also possible to see the Kanak *narrateurs*' choices of stories and their involvement in the writing project as a way of fighting for recognition of Kanak culture. As a result of the evangelical project that had begun even before French annexation of the islands, they would have been aware of the Christian ethos and its emphasis on the equality of all human beings. The Christian, especially Protestant, reverence for the written Word also had a strong resonance for Kanak culture for whom the Word has the highest significance. Thus the *narrateurs*/(re)writers may have seen the authority of the written word as a means to communicate the idea of their equal claim to "humanity" and the value of their culture to an outside world largely ignorant of their existence.

Jean Guiart makes the following observations about the perspective of the "*donneurs*" of the stories on the (re)writings and publication of the elements of oral tradition they offered to Leenhardt, and later, to Leenhardt's student Guiart. Guiart highlights their sophisticated and strategic use of the channel of communication made available through the anthropologists,

Les grand-pères ont accepté que Maurice Leenhardt publie bien des choses, tant était important pour eux, politiquement, le témoignage porté sur leur civilisation. Ils ont accepté au début que je le fasse aussi. Il n'est pas certain que le même travail rassemble aujourd'hui tous les suffrages, même s'il est encore plus précis et plus nuancé. La tolérance envers l'ethnologie est liée sur la Grande Terre à la volonté des gens de retrouver leurs anciens habitats et toutes leurs anciennes terres, et donc leur sert à justifier, y compris scientifiquement, leurs revendications. Aux îles Loyalty où il n'y a pas eu de dépossession foncière, cette tolérance est bien moins donnée d'avance, et les raisons de controverses, potentielles ou bien réelles, sont nombreuses. [...] Une expérience de quarante ans d'ethnologie théorique et pratique en Nouvelle-Calédonie, à voir vivre et agir déjà trois générations successives de Canaques, m'a montré à la fois la précision volontaire des gens dans les informations livrées – l'imprécision éventuelle est elle-même significative –, et leur valeur pratique, toujours liée aux revendications foncières ou de statut social, même si ces dernières étaient laissées dans l'ombre. On constate que, dans

les textes vernaculaires disponibles, même l'ordre des mots dans la phrase relève aussi d'une pertinence (“La Vallée de Houaïlou” 159).⁷³³

Another reason for writing down elements of oral tradition, and this is especially the case for the *transcripteurs* who worked with Leenhardt, is out of a sense of friendship. Leenhardt was a staunch defender of Kanak against petty and not so petty colonial injustices, and he was unusual in this respect, a rare ally for Kanak at that time, and someone who clearly respected Kanak culture and wished to learn about it. It is also clear that the quality of the relationship between *informateur* and *collecteur* has an influence on the content of the story related, and this is illustrated by the example of *Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*.⁷³⁴ In this collection of elements of Kanak oral tradition, a number of stories were provided by Léon Pumwan, including two relating to the origins of people. “*Les premiers hommes*” was collected by the ethno-botanist Dominique Bourret in April 1975 and “*Origine des Calédoniens*”, also narrated by Léon Pumwan, was collected several months later in August 1975 by the linguist Maurice Coyaud of the CNRS.

Dominique Bourret was a botanist and anthropologist based in New Caledonia from 1965-1980 at ORSTOM, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on *les ignames* [yams] “*Étude ethnobotanique des dioscoréacées alimentaires ignames de Nouvelle-Calédonie*” in 1973. She undertook fieldwork studying medicinal plants during the fifteen years that she spent in New Caledonia, building up relationships with Kanak, particularly Waya Gorodé, who aided her in her research helping her to navigate through the Kanak cultural milieu and introducing her to experts (Gasser, “*Mon école du silence*” n.p.). It is therefore not surprising that the content of the version of “*Les premiers hommes*” recounted to her by Léon Pumwan should be filled with references to plants, and contain more names, of locations and of plant species. The style

⁷³³ [The grandfathers accepted Maurice Leenhardt’s publication of many things, so politically important for them was the account given of their civilisation. At the beginning they accepted that I do it too. It is not certain that the same work would gain all the votes today, even if it is even more accurate and more nuanced. Tolerance for ethnology on the Grande Terre is linked to people’s wish to recover their former habitats and all of their ancient lands, and thus it serves to justify their claims for them, including scientifically. In the Loyalty Islands, where there was no land confiscation, this tolerance is much less a given, and the reasons for controversy, potential or real, are numerous. ... Forty years of theoretical and practical ethnological experience in New Caledonia, seeing three successive generations of Canaques living and acting, has shown me both the voluntary accuracy of people in the information given – possible inaccuracy is itself meaningful –, and its practical value, still linked to land claims or social status, even if these were left in the shadows. It can be seen in the vernacular texts that are available, that even word order in a sentence is also pertinent]

⁷³⁴ See Chapter 5, sections 5.3 and 5.4.

and vocabulary of the narration has less of a biblical tone than the version that was related to Maurice Coyaud (although there is still a clear reference to the biblical Flood). The version recorded for Maurice Coyaud is much more focused on the human dimension, in particular human behaviour, and it also contains obvious biblical overtones, referencing the story of Noah and the story of the Tower of Babel.

Could this be an illustration of Pumwan recounting to each of the *collecteurs* what he thought they could understand, as a function of their respective linguistic and cultural competence, thus respecting the rules and practice of oral traditions, in which what is recounted is tailored to the perceived cultural competence and status of the audience? Pumwan's different versions, given within six months of each other, may also have been shaped by what he presumed were their expectations – the version recounted to Coyaud contained fewer specifically Kanak cultural references, as he was relatively unfamiliar with New Caledonia and Kanak society compared to Bourret. Whatever the explanation for the variations created by Pumwan, it is clear that these two versions of the story of the origins of people provide a glimpse of Kanak agency in the (re)writing process, in which the material included in the stories is decided in a way that is fully consistent with the logic and dynamics of Kanak oral traditions.

The simple existence of these influential early (re)writings has the potential to affect processes of identity construction for Kanak. In the challenging times that exist today for the two-fold tasks of preservation and transmission of Kanak cultural heritage, it can be a source of pride, affirmation and encouragement, that a small handful of Kanak – those who were able to access the technology of writing⁷³⁵ – managed to make maximum use of the opportunities presented and act as conduits between their own oral literary polysystems and the New Caledonian literary polysystem. As it can be seen from the corpus, these key individuals have had a significant impact on the development and communication of information about Kanak cultures and languages on which contemporary projects for valorisation, preservation and transmission continue to be based.

⁷³⁵ Either directly, which in itself was a great achievement given the conditions in schools and the limited access to education afforded to Kanak until the lifting of the *Indigénat*, and indeed for several decades afterwards, or by working in collaboration with non-Kanak (re)writers, (predominantly linguists and anthropologists).

Harnessing Roger D. Sell's model of literature as a form of communication that is a means to build community, where "genuine communication" is a "meeting of autonomous minds which conceive of each other as equally empowered" and operate from separate, yet partially overlapping contexts, is a way to examine the potential of (re)writing to build community. One of the outcomes of genuine communication is that the area of overlap between the participants' contexts is increased and this increase in mutual understanding is one of the key elements for the creation of a sense of community, which is the precursor to the creation of a sense of Kanak identity and a sense of a common identity for the groups resident in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie who are called upon by the Noumea Agreement to form the community of the *destin commun*.

The (re)writings that occur along the pathways between and within oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie are places of encounter and sharing in this *Terre de parole, Terre de partage*.⁷³⁶ As such, they are a potential influence on the "imagining" of both identity and community. Beyond the surprising scope of the interactions between oral tradition and written tradition that they reveal, all of the variants of the story examined create their own representation of the reciprocity involved. The images of Kanak oral tradition, languages and culture that are created in each encounter between oral tradition and written tradition have the power to influence Kanak identity construction processes, in particular, to the extent that they confirm or contradict the colonial stereotypes that are responsible for the denied or "confiscated" identity of which the Noumea Agreement speaks. Or to the extent that they affirm reciprocity between the two communities, and in this sense, they have the power to influence the construction processes relating to the identity implicit in the *destin commun*.

Kanak oral tradition can be a cultural actor in many domains, and further work remains to be done to examine its influences and effects in areas such as art, music, politics, dance, and film. This study has focused on the written word, following Kanak oral tradition as it has extended beyond its normal realm to infiltrate and permeate the domain of written tradition. This proliferation is demonstrated by the scope of the corpus, both in terms of the range of genres represented and in terms of the number of texts. Of course there are many more

⁷³⁶ The official motto of New Caledonia [Land of the spoken word, Land of sharing]

elements and stories of Kanak oral tradition that have undergone (re)writing. Investigation of the pathways followed by other stories will serve to expand the scope and complexify the conclusions of the present study. In addition, the gathering of data about reception – the readership of (re)writings, reactions to the texts and perceptions of the encounters between traditions that they contain, as well as information about sales, publication and popularity – will be useful in building a picture of the potential of (re)writings to influence identity construction processes.

The corpus of texts assembled in this study shows that there is a diversity of (re)writings of *Le Chef et le lézard* that echoes the diversity that has always existed in Kanak societies. Different voices are heard over time through these (re)writings, from the unnamed *informateurs* who aided the early explorers and colonial officers, to the *transcripteurs* who worked with Leenhardt, to the more recent collaborators working with linguists and anthropologists, as well as those who have contributed to the incredibly rich resource of the Centre Culturel Tjibaou.

Another set of voices is heard alongside the Kanak voices in the different (re)writings of the corpus. These voices are local, and include the *Société d'Études Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, whose patterns of publication and re-edition of texts relating to Kanak culture and society appear to be characterised by response to new Kanak voices at key moments in contemporary New Caledonian history. These (re)writers are most often part of New Caledonian society, either having been born there or having spent a considerable part of their lives in the islands, as is the case for Louis-José Barbançon, Bernard Brou, Claudine Jacques, Pierre Lambert, André Ba Duong Nguyen, and Christine Salomon. There are also (re)writers who are working from a distance (some with longstanding relationships to the country, others having spent less time there, even possibly next to no time), such as Victor de Rochas, Francis Garnung, Lorna Miskelly, Raylene Ramsay, Maurice Leenhardt, Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre, Jean-Claude Rivierre and Alban Bensa.

As I have argued, positive and negative images of Kanak oral traditions and culture generated in (re)writings are the means by which these texts can participate in processes of identity construction. These images clearly have a connection to processes of identity construction for Kanak, as positive or negative portrayals of essential elements of their traditions and culture can be either taken up or rejected. Less obvious is the potential of these (re)writings to influence processes involved in the construction of the identity implicit in the *destin commun*.

Although at first reading, the overwhelming majority of the texts of the corpus appear to be directly concerned with material that feeds into notions of Kanak identity, close examination of (re)writings and their context of production shows that most of the (re)writers are non-Kanak. The sheer variety of the (re)writings and the connections they establish between communities provide fertile and diverse ground for the development of interactive identities, and the way that these (re)writers represent elements of Kanak oral traditions and culture, in an affirming or a negative manner, can be read as a microcosm of the dynamics of interaction between non-Kanak and Kanak groups in New Caledonian society.

Oral and written traditions are shown to be extremely diverse as are the communities from which they derive. Everyone is represented, and most particularly, there are no monolithic groups based on membership of Kanak or non-Kanak blocs. The great variation found between the (re)writings corresponds to the diversity of authors, actors and contexts of production, and is thus representative of the diversity of contemporary New Caledonian society. In the texts of encounter found in the corpus different aspects of New Caledonian society can be read. Relations between Kanak, Caldoche and France are explored in Louis-José Barbançon's *La Terre du lézard*. Issues that transcend ethnicity, such as the socio-economic difficulties of life in Noumea's squats are addressed in Claudine Jacques's *L'Homme-lézard*. Matters relating to specific Kanak societies and traditions are addressed in the various collections of Kanak oral literature from different regions (for example, *Textes nemi...*, *Les Filles du rocher Até*, *Contes et légendes en Xârâcùù*), and matters affecting Kanak as a group, feature in documents such as those created by the research teams of the *Département Patrimoine et Recherche* of the ADCK in their *Rapports de collecte*.

(Re)writings are not only sources of potential influence on processes of identity construction through the projection of images that can be taken up or rejected, but also the simple fact of their existence signals the presence of a common heritage. They are tangible proof of relationships between Kanak and non-Kanak⁷³⁷ – someone told the stories, someone listened to the stories, someone had to write them down. Very often there was a greater degree of

⁷³⁷ This is the case for the majority of the texts of this corpus. It is possible that a greater number of (re)writing processes involving only Kanak actors could be uncovered in future research in which the corpus is expanded to encompass all (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral traditions.

collaboration than this, all of which makes these (re)writings unique as physical embodiments of meeting places between cultures, attesting to the existence of a shared history.

Collaboration, acknowledgement, and the creation of a sense of Kanak and non-Kanak operating on equal terms (as encompassed by the notion of genuine communication) together have a positive contribution to make to the construction of a shared identity, by modelling the relationships of mutual respect that underpin the notion of a *destin commun*. Within these texts, Kanak culture is able to coexist beside other groups, specific voices belonging to each group are heard, they are not always the same, and they do not always agree but they communicate with each other, through the reading experience. These (re)writings create a non-threatening place of encounter for the reader, who can discover the microcosm of relationships represented within the stories, and participate in a kind of dialogue or communication between cultures through the action of reading. This would be difficult for many to undertake in face-to-face communication situations, for reasons such as want of confidence, willingness, openness, or opportunities to communicate with members of other communities.

(Re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition can participate directly in identity construction processes, relating to both Kanak identity and the identity of the *destin commun*, through the medium of the New Caledonian education system. These (re)writings constitute non-threatening places of encounter where young readers can critically explore ideas in the texts that result from the interaction between different traditions, and be provided with opportunities for genuine communication and advancement of mutual understanding and respect – key elements in the nation-building project that the community of the *destin commun* implies.

The size of the contribution that (re)writings can potentially make to the construction of such an inclusive, collective identity also depends on the size of the readership that has access to them. (Re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition can be argued to occupy the margins of the New Caledonian literary polysystem at present. Texts that occupy the centre of a literary polysystem are part of its central canon, therefore they are generally acknowledged as having higher significance than those at the periphery. Texts in the central canon of a literature tend to be the most influential, whether in terms of form or of content. They are held up as models, they shape poetic norms, and they are generally included in the curriculum of the education system.

The usual routes to the central canon are through publicity, popularity, or state intervention, and in the New Caledonian context, the most likely and logical route to the central canon would be through incorporation into the education system. Including selected (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition in the school curricula would see these texts reach a wider New Caledonian reading public.⁷³⁸ If, for example, just one (re)writing per school year were to be integrated into the existing curricula, not to be examined for its anthropological merits, but for its literary and aesthetic dimensions, which derive from both Kanak and non-Kanak traditions, this would provide an opportunity for mutual understanding and respect to begin to develop out of discussions of literary, social, historical dimensions of the texts undertaken in a safe and non-confrontational environment.

As well as meeting places for explanation and exchange of information, these texts are part of a shared literary heritage that is rooted in the soil of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. They are evidence of the point of meeting between traditions, they are evidence of the collaborative work at best and interaction at the very least between Kanak and non-Kanak that gives rise to their production. Where different communities present in the territory alongside Kanak communities appear in the content of the stories, these texts are a potential foundation for a shared identity. As time goes on, the (re)writing will continue, and this dynamic process will continue to operate between oral and written traditions in the common culture of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Kanak oral traditions, through (re)writings, have the potential to act far beyond the boundaries within which they live and develop today. On a regional level, in the Pacific, (re)writing activity between the English and French languages is increasing understanding and building relationships between Anglophone and Francophone neighbours in Oceania. On a local level, as tangible objects in the form of texts,⁷³⁹ (re)writings are available to present and future generations in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, to be reinterpreted and re-experienced in new and ever-changing contexts. (Re)writing pathways link Kanak oral traditions that are grounded in the real landscape with written traditions set in imaginary literary landscape, by

⁷³⁸ Such an initiative would involve taking into account the suitability of each text for teaching: its appropriateness for the level of the class in which it is to be explored, and the context of its production (in particular the degree of collaboration, acknowledgement and respect involved).

⁷³⁹ And of course, as has already begun to happen, as intangible texts on the internet.

acknowledging the deep connections between Kanak oral traditions and the land, connections that also help to anchor the (re)writings of the imaginary landscape, in the real landscape, *la terre*, that is the source of identity not only for Kanak, but also for the other communities who together with Kanak constitute the founding members of the community of the *destin commun*.

D'une langue à l'autre, d'une civilisation à l'autre, par la tradition de l'hospitalité ou par la force des choses, des alliances se nouent entre ceux qui sont là et ceux qui arrivent. De gré or de force, des liens se tissent ainsi vers l'interculturel (Déwé Gorodé, *Chroniques du pays kanak* 11).⁷⁴⁰

Reflections and Future Directions

The expression “*défricher le terrain*”, which translates as “to prepare the ground” by clearing it for cultivation, is an expression that I heard often during the four years I lived in Noumea. Léonard Drilë Sam’s use of the expression as a metaphor for research during the 2010 Masters seminar “*Oraliture et Traduction*” at the *Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* struck me as particularly apt for the research undertaken for this doctoral thesis, both in terms of its relevance to the research process, and its pertinence as an image that recalls the central importance of horticultural practices to Kanak cultures.

The wide-ranging nature of the corpus and the number of (re)writings assembled within it have meant that there is neither the time nor the space to fully explore all of the material that has been uncovered, or to clear the ground completely. In some areas, the ground has been easier to clear than others; some texts have been easier than others to access due to constraints of time and distance.⁷⁴¹ The discovery of information about people and texts has in some cases taken time, following from the development of relationships, or the opportunities for conversations and interviews over a period of years. The fact that so much information is held in oral tradition but little of it has been recorded in written tradition has

⁷⁴⁰ [From one language to another, from one civilisation to another, through a tradition of hospitality or through the force of events, alliances are formed between those who are here and those who arrive. By will or by force, in this way bonds begin to be forged between cultures].

⁷⁴¹ This was made all the more complex by the practical implications of frequent movements between Noumea and New Zealand.

meant that access to people and information has been of central importance in this study, and, as described above, challenges posed by constraints of time, distance and access have resulted in an at times rather uneven clearing of the ground.

A conscious decision was made early on to include every (re)writing in the corpus as it came to hand, and a number of new versions were added to the corpus up until the final months of 2011. While this poses certain problems in terms of the depth of analysis possible for certain of these newly discovered (re)writings, to leave them out would have meant less complete answers to the question the scope of influence of elements of oral tradition, which is key to this research. The combination of variable degrees of access to texts and information and the late addition of some texts to the corpus has meant that a wider area of ground has been cleared than if stricter cut off points for inclusion in the corpus had been imposed. However, this means that there may still remain some cover vegetation to remove in certain areas.

The deeper the understanding of any element of Kanak oral tradition, such as the story of *Le Chef et le lézard* investigated in this study, the more comprehensive the analysis of its variants can be. In the case of *Le Chef et le lézard*, the analysis has centred on the story's transformations. This study has been undertaken by a Pakeha researcher from Aotearoa/New Zealand, whose cultural roots lie outside the oral traditions of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie. While it would be ideal for research into the connections between oral and written traditions in Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie to be directed by those with cultural and linguistic competence in both Kanak and non-Kanak domains, the simple constraints of a relative paucity of research activity undertaken on these topics, and more pressing priorities facing Kanak researchers⁷⁴² make it apparent that there is still space at present for outsiders to contribute in collaboration with the experts who have so many demands on their time and expertise.

The position from which I have undertaken the research for this study has been acknowledged and allowed for in the method, by the requirement to confirm information with

⁷⁴²Such as the need to produce linguistic documentation, develop standardised writing systems for Kanak languages, and develop teaching resources as part of the struggle for the survival of Kanak languages in the school system.

native speakers and experts,⁷⁴³ and the restriction of the analysis of the content of the (re)writings to that of the presence or transformation of the simple narrative structure “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption”,⁷⁴⁴ rather than more detailed analyses of the symbolism and linguistic and cultural dimensions of the texts. These are more particularly the domain of native-speaker researchers who are at home in both source and target linguistic traditions.⁷⁴⁵

The status of cultural insider or cultural outsider also has an impact on the constitution of the corpus itself. While I have included only (re)writings that reproduce the “transgression–punishment–flight–redemption” structure in the corpus, I have excluded “partial” (re)writings, that make reference to the story without retelling it. Evidently, *Le Chef et le lézard* has multiple levels of meaning, and it is more than likely that in addition to the “partial” versions, (re)writings of the story at different levels exist that I am not able to recognise or identify, but that cultural insiders – effectively, Kanak experts – would be able to pick up and include in a more comprehensive corpus. It is to be hoped that these more subtle (re)writings will be studied in the future by researchers who are cultural insiders, able to operate from a position of deeper comprehension of the stories and traditions involved.

There are several future areas for research leading from this study that can be identified. One area of interest is the investigation of the influence of elements of Kanak oral traditions upon art forms such as dance, music, art and film, and through different performance media (oral, visual, written, electronic). For example, there have been theatre productions of versions of *Le Chef et le lézard*; there is evidently an important sculptural treatment of the story; and

⁷⁴³ The value of conversations with Kanak experts to clarify elements of writings further reinforces the great power of the spoken word to communicate complex cultural information. I very quickly became aware of the great depth of understanding required to comment on elements of these traditions. Everything is so interwoven that a mastery of many areas is needed in order to be able to speak with any authority. This is why the original project of analysis of the stories has been modified, with the weight shifted towards the contextual factors, and any inferences that I have drawn about the symbolism of the story, or aspects of oral tradition, have been checked in conversations with Kanak experts.

⁷⁴⁴ The structure itself was developed from conversations and interviews with Kanak experts during the course of my research.

⁷⁴⁵ An example of the depth of literary analysis possible can be seen in Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta’s *DEA* dissertation, which, from a starting point of a lullaby, is able to weave together rich and wide-ranging explanations from threads of linguistic, literary, social and cultural analysis, and frame the information in a way only someone intimately familiar with this literature is able to. There are other *mémoires* and theses held at INALCO and other higher learning institutions, and more theses being undertaken at present. The movement towards this kind of analysis, can only provide more valuable resources for those who are interested in the literatures of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, both written and oral.

(re)writings also exist on the internet. These art forms may have an even greater influence on processes of identity construction than written versions.

Continuing from the discussion of the potential utility of (re)writings of elements of Kanak oral tradition in the education system as a means of fostering intercultural understanding and building the community of the *destin commun*, applied research could be usefully undertaken into potential for (re)writings to be developed into pedagogical resources: as study guides for literature, and as part of an approach in which teaching materials can be adapted to the cultural needs of the students of different communities of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

In the domain of literary studies, descriptive and comparative studies of the dynamics of different Kanak oral traditions, their recurring characteristics and themes, and wider comparative studies situating these traditions in their Oceanian context,⁷⁴⁶ would all be of great value, especially with respect to the stylistic and thematic influences these traditions have had on writings of New Caledonian tradition.

Finally, the very rich resource of Kanak writing dating back to the mid-nineteenth century demands further investigation as part of Kanak, and New Caledonian written tradition. Leading the way in this area is a research project entitled *Archivage et valorisation d'un corpus de manuscrits kanak, une approche génétique*, overseen by M. Capo et J.-C. Rivierre and undertaken by the researchers of the *Études Océaniques* at LACITO. The stated aim of the project is to create for every Kanak manuscript a contextual dossier with information on the text's circumstances of production, history, interpretation, and relationships with other writings. This work is in its early stages,⁷⁴⁷ and given the great number of Kanak writings

⁷⁴⁶ Michel Aufray's 2000 HDR thesis, with its rich and comprehensive analysis of *Le Rat et le Poulpe* as it occurs across the Pacific, comes to mind as both a model and a starting point for such studies.

⁷⁴⁷ Eight publications relating to Kanak writings are listed in the bibliography of the LACITO webpage that features the project - they include: Sylvain Aramiou and Jean Euritein's two volumes of the writings of Bwêyöu Ērijiji: *Pèci i Bwêyöu Ērijiji / Cahiers de Boesou Eurijisi. Première série 1915-1920*. FELP: Houailou, 2002, and *Pèci i Bwêyöu Ērijiji / Cahiers de Boesou Eurijisi. Seconde série 1918-1921*. FELP: Houailou, 2003; Alban Bensa, Yvon Görömwèdö and Adrian Muckle's *Les sanglots de l'aigle pêcheur. La guerre kanak de 1917 en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (forthcoming); Bernard Gasser's *Mon école du silence* (forthcoming); Jean Guiart's *Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque*. Le Rocher-à-la-voile: Nouméa, 1998; Michel Naepels and Christine Salomon (eds) *Terrains et destins de Maurice Leenhardt*. EHESS: Paris, 2007; Julia Ogier-Guindo's doctoral thesis "Les chemins de l'imaginaire poétique dans le vivaa, discours traditionnels a'jië (Nouvelle-Calédonie)," 2005; and Jean-Claude Rivierre and Sabine Ehrhart's *Les textes de Raymond Diéla, Le Bwatoö et les dialectes de la région de Koné (Nouvelle-Calédonie)*, Peeters: Paris, 2006.

stored in the *Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, not to mention the *cahiers* that remain in private homes, there is a vast amount of Kanak writing to be documented and contextualised. Literary and aesthetic analyses are an important area of research into these founding texts of both Kanak and New Caledonian written traditions.

For my part, I would hope to continue work as a cultural reader, analyst and translator, mediating between work on this Oceanian archive from the French-speaking Pacific and work being undertaken in other Pacific research communities in the English-speaking Pacific.

Appendices

I. Table of corpus texts, chapters and sections in which they are discussed

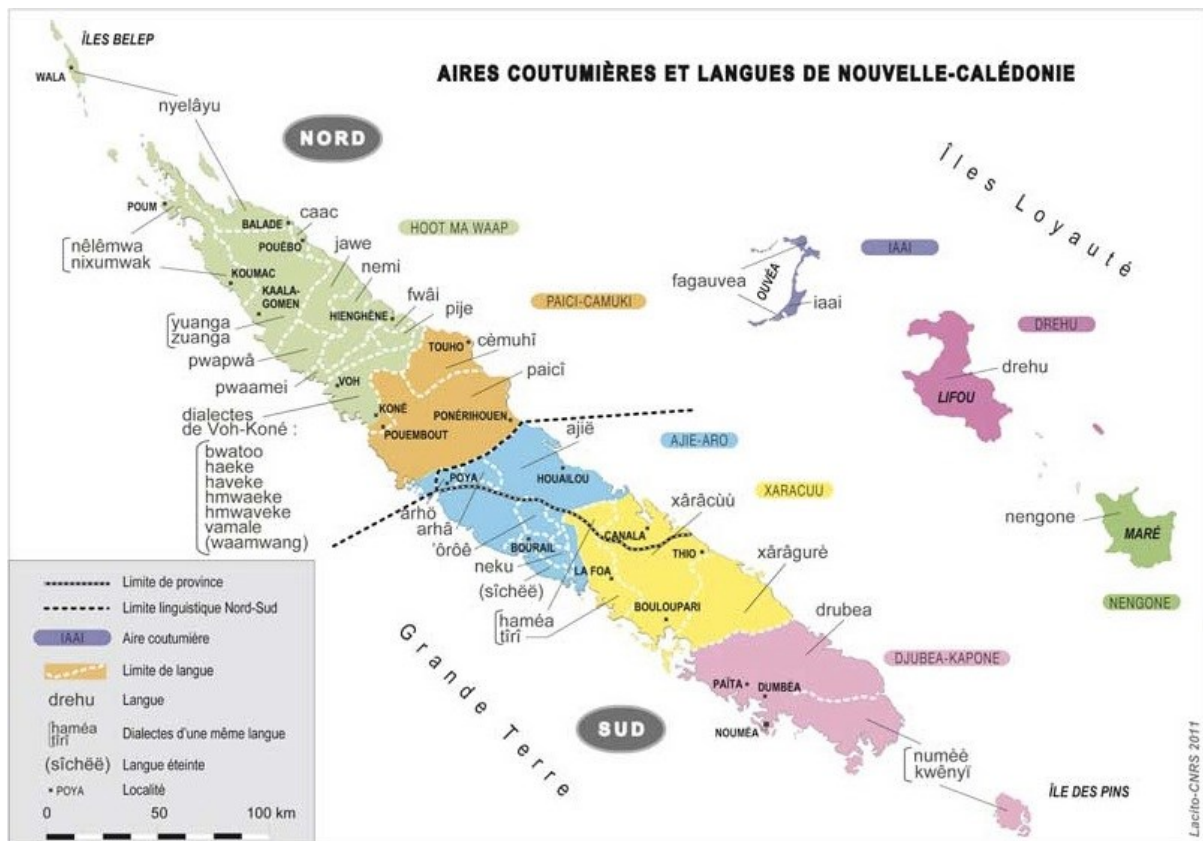
Text ID	Section	Publication details	Page
①	3.1	V. de Rochas. <i>La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants : productions, mœurs, cannibalisme</i> . 1862.	122
②	3.2	Père P. Lambert. "Littérature Néo-Calédonienne" in <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> . 1880.	136
③	3.2	Père P. Lambert. Spanish edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Las Misiones Católicas</i> , Barcelona. 1880.	143
④	3.2	Père P. Lambert. Italian edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Le Missioni Cattoliche</i> , Milan. 1880.	143
⑤	3.2	Père P. Lambert. German edition of <i>Les Missions Catholiques. Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'œuvre de la propagation de la foi</i> published as <i>Die Katholischen Missionen</i> , Fribourg. 1880.	143
⑥	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . 1900.	145
⑦	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1976.	150
⑧	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1985.	150
⑨	3.3	Père P. Lambert. <i>Mœurs et Superstitions des Néo-Calédoniens</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC. 1999.	150
⑩	3.4	M. Leenhardt. <i>Documents néo-calédoniens</i> . 1932.	160
⑪	3.5	K. J. Hollyman. "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" in <i>JPS</i> , 1962.	164
⑫	3.6	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	168

13	3.7	F. Garnung. <i>Contes et coutumes canaques au XIXe siècle</i> . 2003.	172
14	3.8	L. Miskelly. "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	182
15	4.1	B. Eñijiyi. <i>Cahier 8</i> . Unpublished, ~1919.	188
16	4.2	Sisille. <i>Cahier</i> . Unpublished, ~1925.	190
10	4.3	M. Leenhardt. <i>Documents néo-calédoniens</i> . 1932.	197
17	4.4	A. Barrès. <i>Le Maître de Koné</i> . 1954.	205
18, 18a-18o	4.5	Various. Documents from Linguistic Survey. <i>Carton 12J-55 Raymond et Geneviève Leenhardt, 1958</i> in the <i>Fonds Leenhardt</i> of the Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.	208
11	4.6	K. J. Hollyman. "The Lizard and the Axe: A Study of the Effects of European Contact on the Indigenous Languages of Polynesia and Melanesia" in <i>JPS</i> , 1962.	210
19	4.7	J. Guiart. "Clans autochtones : situation pré-coloniale" in <i>Atlas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances</i> . Paris: Éditions ORSTOM, 1981.	211
20	4..8	J. Guiart. "La vallée de Houailou (Nouvelle-Calédonie) : une analyse renouvelée" in <i>JSO</i> , 1987.	213
21	4.9	S. Aramiou & J. Euritein. <i>Gô Vâřâ Mêrê A'jië</i> . 1992.	220
22	4.10	L.-J. Barbançon. <i>Bourail : entre mer et montagne. Capitale rurale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1992.	223
25	4.11	L.-J. Barbançon. <i>La Terre du Lézard</i> . 1995.	227
32	4.12	C. Jacques. <i>L'homme-lézard. Roman</i> . 2002.	230
23	4.13	M. Naepels. "Conflits fonciers et rapports sociaux dans la région de Houailou, Nouvelle-Caledonie." 1996.	241
24	4.14	F. Bogliolo. <i>Paroles et Écritures. Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne</i> . 1994.	244
26	4.15	J. Guiart. <i>Bwesou Eurijisi. Le premier écrivain canaque</i> . 1998.	246
27	4.16	Collectif. <i>Chroniques du pays kanak. Tome 3</i> . 1999.	250

28	4.17	C. Salomon. <i>Savoirs et pouvoirs thérapeutiques kanak</i> . 2000.	254
31	4.18	B. Eñijiyi. Pèci i bwêyöuu êñijiyi : pèci ka baayê 1915-1920 / Cahiers de Boesou Eñijiyi : première série 1915-1920. 2002.	257
12	4.19	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> . 2004.	261
33	4.20	B. Eñijiyi "Vi rhenô né ka tö Koné. Le Maître de Koné" in <i>Mwà Véeé</i> 44. 2004.	262
14	4.21	L. Miskelly. "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	267
34	4.22	S. Camille. <i>Le Livre des timbres 2006. Nouvelle-Calédonie: Des timbres à l'image d'un pays</i> . 2007.	267
35	4.23	R. Aiï. "Wörênô ê a tö Kooné / Histoire du Léopard de Koné" in <i>Rapport 2007. Collecte du Patrimoine immatériel de l'aire A'jië-Aro</i> . 2007.	269
36	4.24	I. Péarou & S. Goromido. "Jèèmâ goo pwi Bwiirü" in <i>Rapport 2007. Collecte des traditions orales de l'aire Paicî-Câmükî</i> . 2007.	272
37	4.25	R. Ramsay. <i>Nights of Storytelling</i> . 2011.	274
38	5.1	J. Laville and Captain J. Berkowitz. <i>Pacific Island Legends. Life and Legends in the South Pacific Islands</i> . 1944.	285
39	5.2	J. Laville. "Oukenesö me Sinelapa me Tsou. Le grand chef Oukenesö, son domestique et le léopard" in <i>Études Mélanésiennes</i> , 1956-57.	297
40	5.3	M. Coyaud & D. Bernot. <i>Littérature orale. Birmanie, Corée, Japon, Mongolie, Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1979.	303
41	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1980.	310
42	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC.1986.	322
43	5.4	Collectif. <i>Littérature orale : 60 contes mélanésiens de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Re-edition. SEHNC.2008.	322
44	5.5	M. Coyaud. <i>Contes chinois et kanak</i> . 1982.	323
45	5.6	M. Coyaud. <i>Textes kanak</i> . 2004.	325

12	5.7	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	328
14	5.8	L. Miskelly. "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	329
46	6.1	J. Guiart. <i>Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre</i> . 1957.	332
14	6.2	L. Miskelly – "La transformation du Maître de Koné : traduction d'une histoire kanak en récit français." 2006.	341
47	6.3	F. Ozanne-Rivierre & P. Téin. <i>Textes nemi. Volume 2. Bas Coulna et Haut Coulna</i> . 1979.	341
12	6.4	P. Pillon. "Une hypothèse sur les anciennes organisations sociales de la Grande Terre (Nouvelle-Calédonie)" in <i>Ethnologies comparées</i> , 2004.	347
48	6.5	A. Bensa & J.-C. Rivierre. <i>Les filles du rocher Até : contes et récits paicî</i> . 1994.	348
29	6.6	A. Ba Duong Nguyen et al. <i>Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> . 2001.	360
30	6.7	A. Ba Duong Nguyen et al. <i>Contes et Légendes en Xârâcùù, langue de Thio-Canala (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> . 2005.	365

II. Map of Customary Areas and Languages of New Caledonia (LACITO–CNRS, 2011)



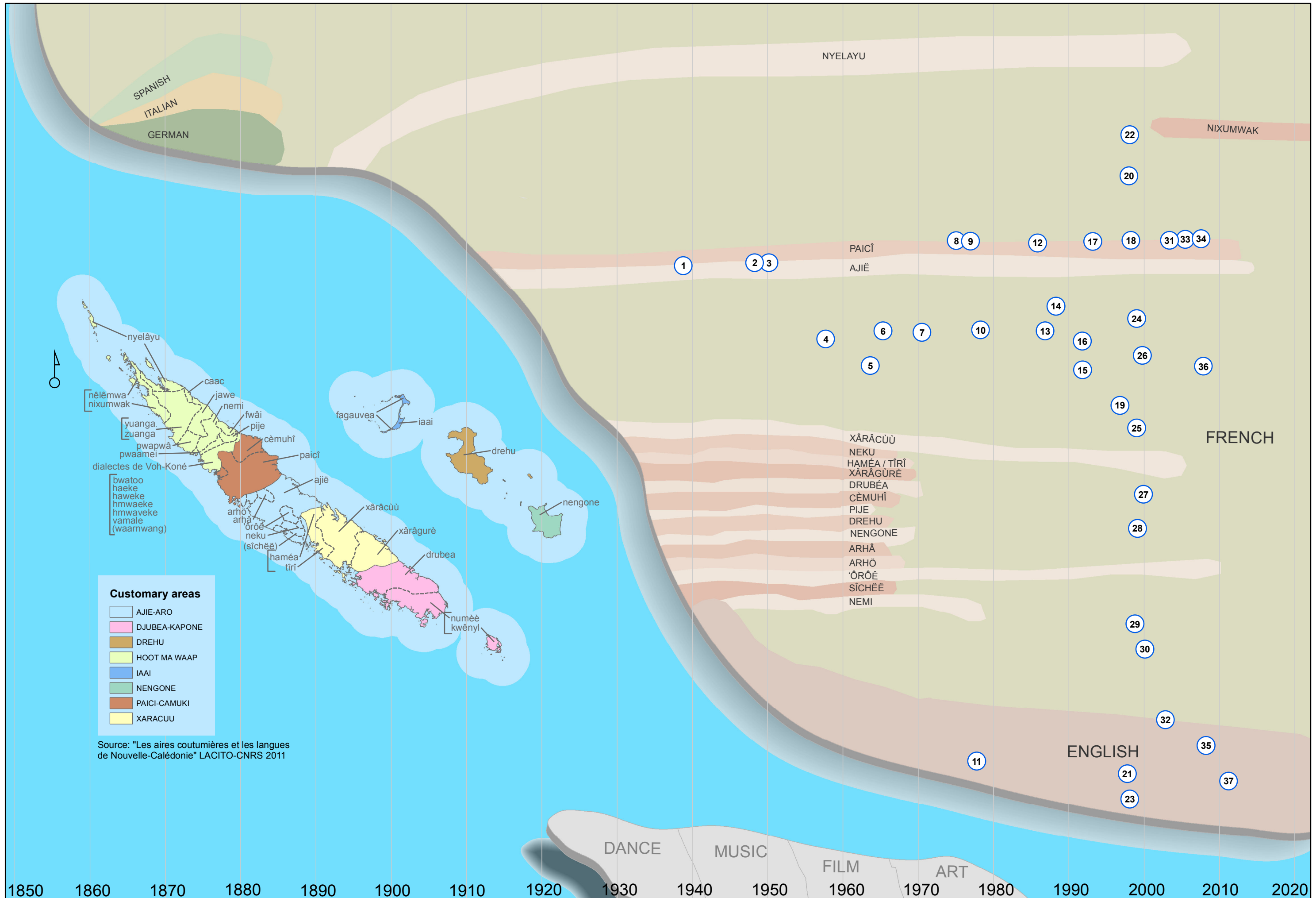
III. (Re)writings of *Téâ Kanaké*

Text ID	Publication Details
1	Pierre Pwârapwéa & Philippe Gorodé <i>Cahier</i> (circa 1939).
2	Philippe Gorodé <i>Cahier</i> (circa 1950).
3	Baptiste Pwadae <i>Cahier</i> (1950).
4	Guiart, Jean. <i>Contes et légendes de la Grande Terre</i> . Nouméa: Études Mélanésiennes; Commission du Pacifique Sud, 1957. 66-68.
5	Guiart, Jean. <i>Structure de la chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud</i> . Vol. LXVI - Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'ethnologie. Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1963.
6	"Histoire des vieux d'il y a longtemps." <i>Trait d'Union</i> . Paris, 1965.
7	Brou, Bernard. <i>Préhistoire et Société Traditionnelle de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Nouméa: Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1970.
8	Bonnabesse, Bernard and Philippe Missotte. <i>Festival d'art mélanésien : Mélanésia 2000</i> . Noumea, 1975. Print.
9	Tjibaou, Jean-Marie and Philippe Missotte. <i>Kanaké : mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Papeete: Éditions du Pacifique, 1976. Print.
10	Brou, Bernard. <i>Préhistoire et Société Traditionnelle de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1970. Nouméa: Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1977. Print.
11	Tjibaou, Jean-Marie and Philippe Missotte. <i>Kanaké: the Melanesian Way</i> . Trans. Christopher Plant. Papeete: Les Éditions du Pacifique, 1978. Print.
12	Bouchet, Bernard, Madeleine Gurrera-Wetta and Viviane Siorat-Dijou. <i>Jè pwa jèkutâ. Recueil de textes en langue paicî</i> . Nouméa: CTRDP Bureau des langues vernaculaires – Collection Langues Canaques, 1984. Print.
13	Brou, Bernard. <i>Préhistoire et Société Traditionnelle de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . 1970. Nouméa: Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1987. Print.
14	Bensa, Alban and Jean-Claude Rivierre. "De l'histoire des mythes. Narrations et polémiques autour du rocher Até." <i>L'Homme</i> 28 (106-107), 263-295.

Text ID	Publication Details
15	Guiart, Jean. <i>La chefferie en Mélanésie</i> . 2nd edition. Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1992. Print.
16	Collectif. <i>La Nouvelle-Calédonie, Histoire CM</i> . Nouméa: CTRP and ADCK, 1992. Print.
17	Bogliolo, François. <i>Paroles et Écritures. Anthologie de la littérature néo-calédonienne</i> . 1994, Nouméa: Les Éditions du Cagou, 1994. Print.
18	Tjibaou, Jean-Marie and Philippe Missotte. "Kanaké : jeu scénique en deux tableaux." <i>Mwà Véeé</i> 10 (1995)
19	Tjibaou and Missotte. <i>La case et le sapin</i> . Editions Grain de Sable, 1995, Noumea.
20	Kasarhéro, Emmanuel, Wedoye Béalo, Roger Boulay, Claire Merleau-Ponty. <i>Guide des plantes du chemin kanak</i> . ADCK/CCT, Noumea, 1998.
21	Kasarhéro, Emmanuel, Wedoye Béalo, Roger Boulay, Claire Merleau-Ponty. <i>Guide to the plants of the Kanak Pathway</i> . Trans. Roy Benyon. ADCK/CCT, Noumea, 1998.
22	Mozziconacci, Cécile et al. <i>Ngan Jila: Centre Culturel Tjibaou. Le souvenir, la parole, le rêve</i> . Ed. Cécile Mozziconacci. Nouméa: ADCK, 1998. Print.
23	Octave Togna and Emmanuel Kasarhéro. <i>Ngan Jila: Centre Culturel Tjibaou. The Memory, the Voice, the Dream</i> . Trans. Roy Benyon. Nouméa: ADCK, 1998.
24	Guiart, Jean. <i>Autour du rocher Até : l'axe Kone-Tiwaka et les effets d'un siècle de résistance canaque</i> . Éditions Le Rocher-à-la-Voile, Nouméa, 1998.
25	Firmin Dogo Gorouna "Version du fond de Koné" and Pierre Pwârapwéa "Version de la côte est" in <i>Chroniques du pays kanak</i> . Ed. Orso Filippi and Gilbert Bladinières. Vol. 3. Nouméa: Éditions Planète Mémo, 1999.
26	Godin, Patrice. "Téâ Kānaké : mythe, politique et culture." <i>Chroniques du pays kanak</i> . Ed. Orso Filippi and Gilbert Bladinières. Vol. 4. Nouméa: Éditions Planète Mémo, 1999. 342-344.
27	Leblic, Isabel. "Le dualisme matrimonial paicî en question (Nouvelle-Calédonie)." <i>L'Homme</i> 154-155 (2000): 183-203.
28	Görödé, Déwé. <i>Kēnâké 2000 ou KNK 2000. Une adaptation du jēmââ de Téâ Kēnâké</i> . Unpublished manuscript, 2000.
29	Klein, Florence. <i>Le Livre des Timbres 1999</i> . Ed. Jean-Yves Ollivaud. Nouméa: Office des Postes et Télécommunications de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2001.

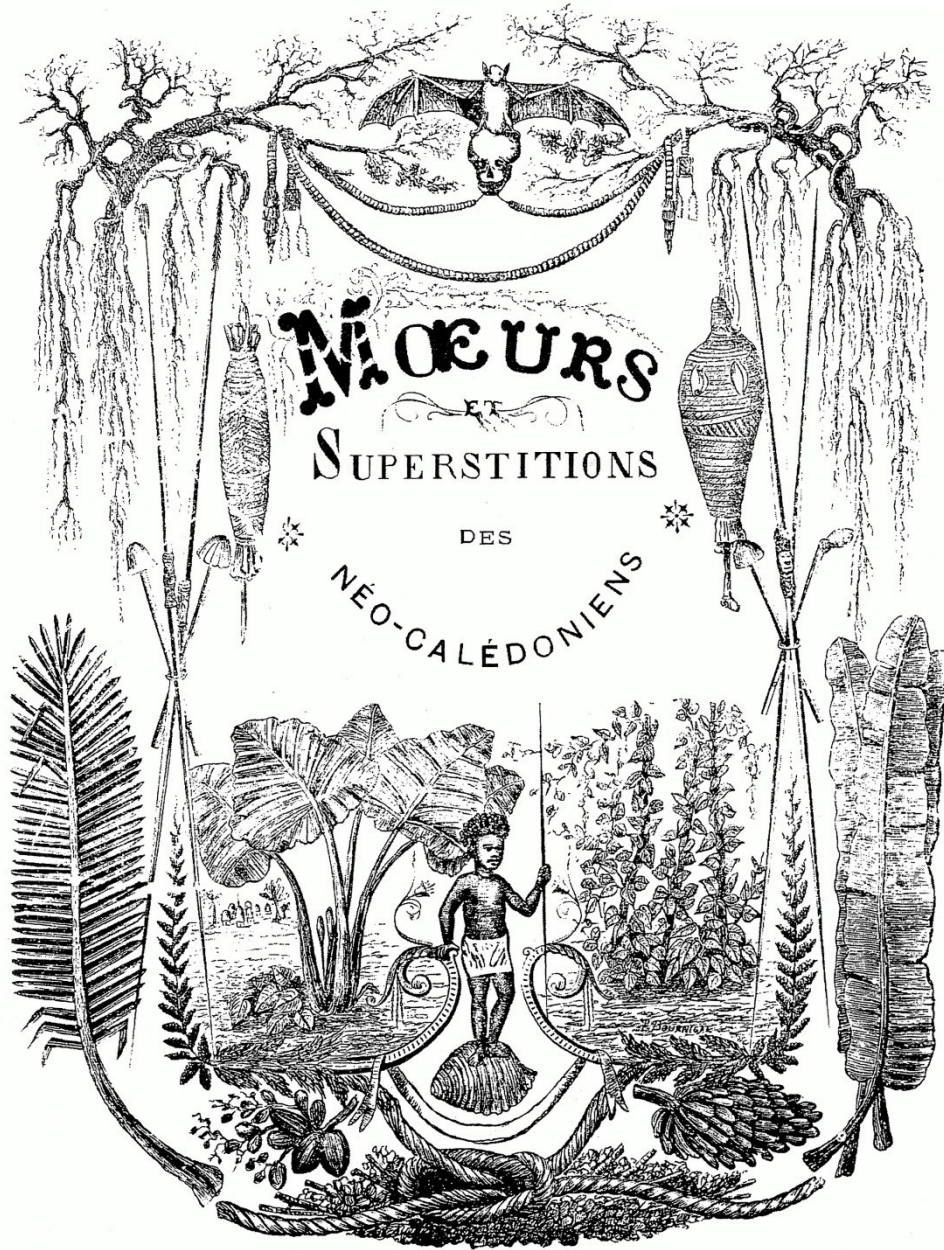
Text ID	Publication Details
30	"Chemin kanak, chemin de mémoire." Mozziconacci, Cécile. Voyage dans le centre culturel Tjibaou. Nouméa: Éditions Grain de Sable, 2001. 54-59. Print.
31	Naouna, Emmanuel and Antoine Goromido. "L'origine du monde et des hommes" and Emmanuel Naouna. "Jèmââ goo jojoro abôro / Histoire des ancêtres." <i>Mwà Vée</i> 35. (2002): 8-10.
32	Air Calin. "Le chemin kanak / the Kanak Path." <i>Altitude. La revue de bord d'Air Calédonie International</i> janvier-février 2002: 30-32.
33	Pourawa, Denis et Éric Mouchonnière, Solange Néaoutyine. <i>Téâ Kanaké : l'homme aux cinq vies : Téâ Kanaké, i pwi âboro ni caa kiri î-jè wâro kê</i> . Noumea: Centre Culturel Tjibaou/ADCK; Éditions Grain de Sable, 2003.
34	Bensa, Alban and Atéa Antoine Goromido. <i>Histoire d'une chefferie kanak. Le pays de Koohnê (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> . Paris: Karthala, 2005.
35	Dobbelaère, Georges and Jean-Marie Tjibaou. <i>Kanaké: A Three-Act Play</i> . Trans. Roy Benyon. Suva: Pacific Writing Forum, USP, 2006. Print.
36	Amiot, Isabelle and Christine Terrier. <i>Histoire Cycle 3 Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> . Nouméa: CDPNC, 2007. Print.
37	"The Myth of Teê Kanaké." <i>Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky-New Caledonia</i> . Ed. Raylene Ramsay. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 2011. 22-25. Print.

(Re)writings of *Téâ Kanaké* plotted on the Literary Landscape of Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie



Source: "Les aires coutumières et les langues de Nouvelle-Calédonie" LACITO-CNRS 2011

IV. Cover Image of *Mœurs et Superstitions...*, 1900, 1976 and 1985 editions



Reproduction de la couverture de l'édition originale

Le Père Lambert s.m.

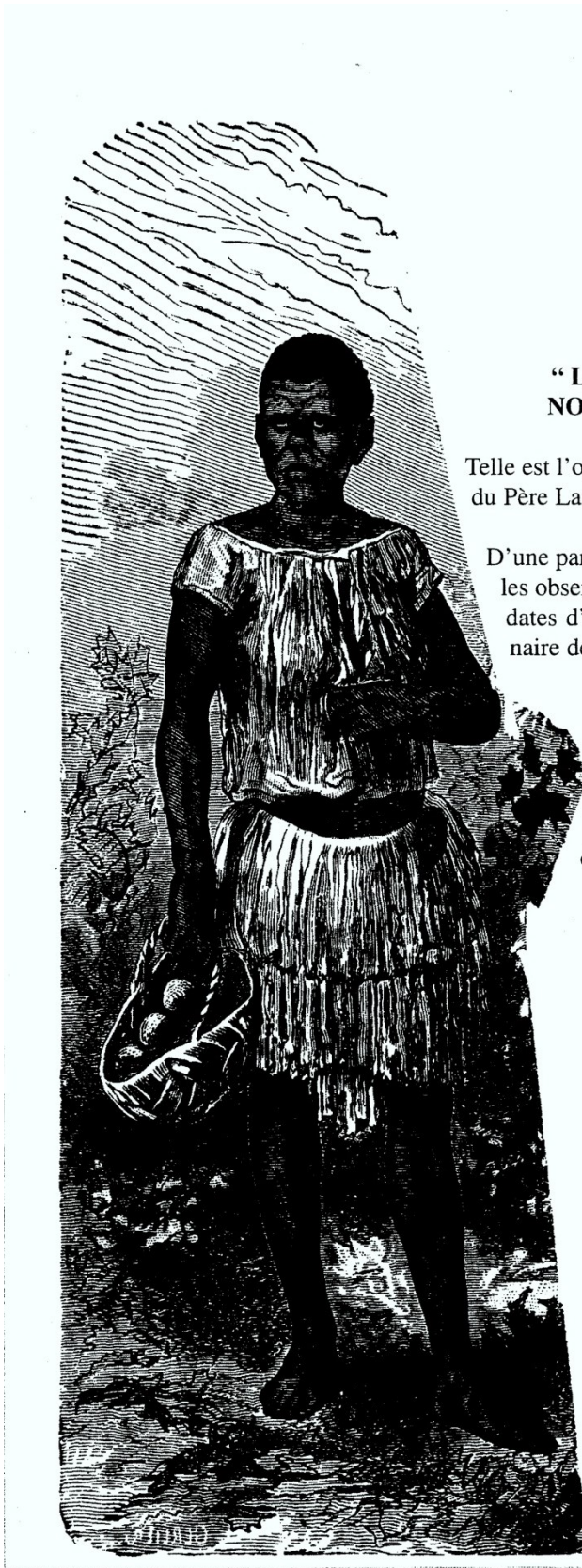
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MŒURS
et
SUPERSTITIONS
des
NÉO - CALÉDONIENS

SOCIÉTÉ D'ÉTUDES HISTORIQUES
DE NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE N° 14

VI. Back Cover of *Mœurs et Superstitions...* 1999 re-edition



“ LE DOCUMENT ESSENTIEL SUR LA NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE ANCIENNE. ”

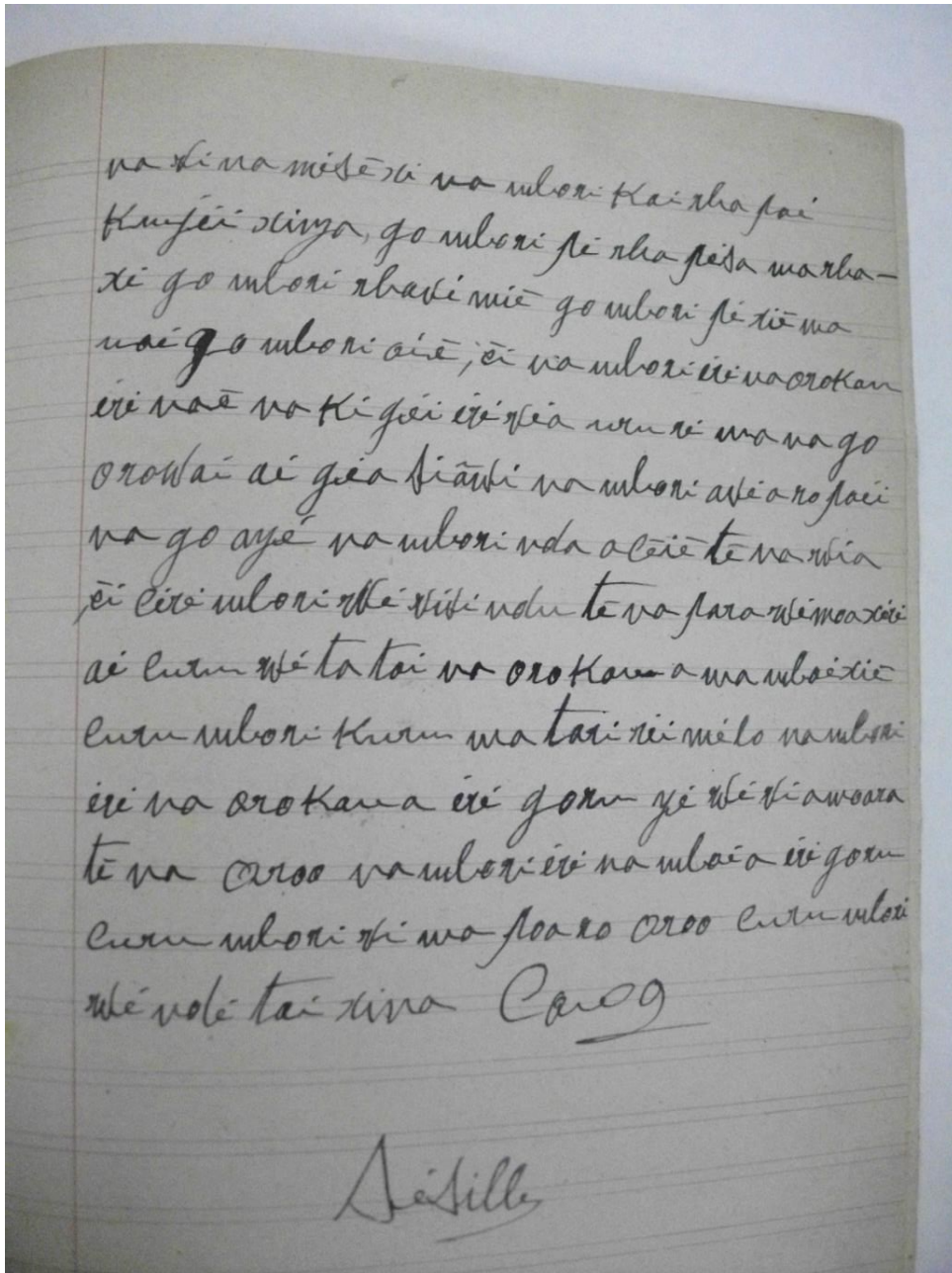
Telle est l'opinion catégorique de Patrick O'Reily sur l'ouvrage du Père Lambert.

D'une part, le texte est celui d'un précurseur de l'ethnologie : les observations qui y figurent ont été faites de 1856 à 1863, dates d'affectation de ce fin observateur au poste missionnaire de Bélep.

D'autre part, les dessins sont ceux d'un artiste fidèle et scrupuleux : Pierre Bournigal, auteur des originaux exécutés au trait et à l'encre de Chine. Consciencieusement reproduits, ils forment une documentation irremplaçable et unique aujourd'hui.

Bernard Brou

VIII. Excerpt from *Cahier* – Sisille



na ki na mi se si na ulori tra i rha pai
kum fii si nga, go ulori fi rha peia marha-
xi go ulori rha vi mie go ulori fi ti ma
na i go ulori aie; ei na ulori ei na orokan
ei na e na ki fii ei rha uen si ma na go
orokan ai gea si ari na ulori aie a no pai
na go aye na ulori na aie te na rha
ei ei ulori rha rha uen te na para uen aie
ai eum uen ta tai na orokan a ma uen aie
eum ulori kum ma tai si mie na ulori
ei na orokan a ei go uen ye uen aie aie
te na orokan aie na ulori ei na ulori ei go uen
eum ulori si ma pa aie orokan eum ulori
u en uen ta rha Carog

Sisille

Source: Final page of “Le lézard de Ourouro” signed by Sisille. *Cahier*. Unpublished. Carton Number 12J-35 – “Elia et Sindai Manarhë”. Archives Territoriales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

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