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Conflict and Alliance in a Colonial Context

*Case Studies in New Caledonia 1853-1870**

BRONWEN DOUGLAS

STUDIES OF VIOLENT CONFLICT INVOLVING PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND representatives of a colonizing power may be classified into three explanatory categories. In the first, the least subtle, conflict is assumed to be inherent in colonial situations, especially those involving widespread European settlement. Indigenous violence is seen as invariably a reaction to the colonial presence, as indicative of wholesale rejection of European sovereignty and encroachment on lands and resources.¹ The second category explores the relationships between 'resistance' and 'collaboration' at the local level and incorporates clear evidence that many islanders were either neutral or active allies of the colonial authorities in suppressing local opposition, or ignored non-violent attempts by some island leaders to evade colonial jurisdiction by promoting local initiatives and institutions.² Peter Hempenstall stresses in the context of German Pacific colonies that violent conflict between colonized and colonizer was far from the 'normal' or general state of affairs and that most islanders were positively receptive to at least some aspects of European culture. Studies in this category are valuable because they focus explicitly on islanders, their aims, motivations and range of response and initiatives, and because of the theoretical perspective of some, largely derived from African models and unusual in Pacific historiography. Their utility as a general model for violent conflict in colonial societies in the Pacific is limited, however, because concepts like 'resistance' and 'collaboration' presuppose that the events and attitudes in question were

*An earlier version of this paper was presented to Section 26 of the 49th ANZAAS Congress, Auckland, 1979.

¹ E.g. Roselène Dousset, *Colonialisme et contradictions. Etude sur les causes sociohistoriques de l'insurrection de 1878 en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris 1970); Roselène Dousset-Leenhardt, *Terre natale, terre d'exil* (Paris 1976); Keith Sinclair, *The origins of the Maori wars* (Auckland 1961), 193-4.

² Peter Hempenstall, 'Resistance in the German Pacific empire: towards a theory of early colonial response', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, LXXXIV (1975), 5-24; idem, *Pacific islanders under German rule: a study in the meaning of colonial resistance* (Canberra 1978); Colin Newbury, 'Resistance and collaboration in French Polynesia: the Tahitian war, 1844-7', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, LXXXII (1973), 5-27. See also Jean Guiart, 'Le cadre social traditionnel et la rébellion de 1878 dans le pays de la Foa, Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, XXIV (1968), 97-119; idem, 'Les événements de 1917 en Nouvelle-Calédonie', *ibid.*, XXVI (1970), 265-82. Cf T.O. Ranger, 'African reactions to the imposition of colonial rule in east and central Africa', in L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan (eds), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, I (Cambridge 1969).

basically 'responses' to colonialism, that not only were Europeans 'generally masters of the colonial situation',³ which is sometimes debatable, but that they were always so regarded by islanders.

This drawback is partly overcome by the third category, in which indigenous violence towards Europeans is seen as a by-product of local intergroup relationships. What colonial administrators tended to regard, depending on context and their own priorities, as either outbursts of primitive savagery or as 'rebellion' against legally constituted sovereign authority is seen as an extension of intergroup hostilities, in which colonial governments and officials intervened. By this reasoning the latter were a new element, but by no means necessarily the most important, in pre-existing patterns of alliance and enmity. This approach, essentially empirical, is best exemplified by Hank Nelson's work on the Binandere and other Orokaiva peoples of Papua. He aims to elucidate the aspirations and perceptions of the interacting groups and stresses internal factors influencing social change and the roles played by locally recruited agents of the colonial powers.⁴

The study of violent conflict in colonial societies is further complicated by the tendency of modern nationalists and their sympathizers to see all collisions involving Europeans and islanders as manifestations of nascent nationalist sentiments, as part of an on-going struggle for national liberation from imperial oppressors. In New Caledonia, for instance, the chief Atai, who fought against the French in 1878, has attained legendary status amongst Melanesians seeking independence, and the 1878 revolt has become their most powerful symbol: one of the first radical nationalist organizations was called 'Groupe 1878'.⁵ Common symbols are essential to unify tribally and regionally fragmented peoples, but modern symbol-builders tend to oversimplify or misrepresent the contemporary relationships and motivations in the context of which collisions

³ Hempenstall, 'Resistance in the German Pacific empire . . .', 22, quoting J. F. A. Ajayi, 'Colonialism: an episode in African history', in Gann and Duignan, op. cit., 502.

⁴ Hank Nelson, 'Miners and men of the fighting variety: relations between foreigners and villagers on the Yodda and Gira goldfields of Papua New Guinea, 1895-1910', *Oral History*, III: 3 (1975), 93-106; idem, *Black, white and gold. Goldmining in Papua New Guinea, 1878-1930* (Canberra 1976), 89-174. See also Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders* . . ., 207-10; Linda Latham, 'Revolt re-examined: the 1878 insurrection in New Caledonia', *Journal of Pacific History*, X 3-4 (1975), 48-63; idem, *La révolte de 1878. Etude critique des causes de la rébellion de 1878 en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Noumea 1978). Cf Muriuki's treatment of early clashes between Kikuyu and British in East Africa. Godfrey Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu 1500-1900* (Nairobi 1974), 136-75.

⁵ Apollinaire Anova-Ataba, 'Deux exemples de réflexions mélanésienne: 1. L'insurrection des Néo-Calédoniens en 1878 et la personnalité du grand chef Atai; 2. Pour une économie humaine', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, XXV (1969), 218; Douset-Leenhardt, op. cit., passim, e.g. 31, 94; *Nation Review* (Melbourne), 19 Oct. 1978; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Feb. 1976, 13; *The Age* (Melbourne), 21 Dec. 1978. Cf Ig-bafe's study of the Ekumeku movement in western Igboland (Philip A. Ig-bafe, 'Western Ibo society and its resistance to British rule: the Ekumeku movement 1898-1911', *Journal of African History*, XII (1971), 441-59), and Ray's analysis of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya (Benjamin C. Ray, *African religions: symbol, ritual and continuity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1976), 165-72).

occurred. In so doing they obscure the historical operation of those internal conflicts and divisions which they now seek to overcome and their historical analyses of conflict tend to fall within the first and least discriminating of my three categories.⁶

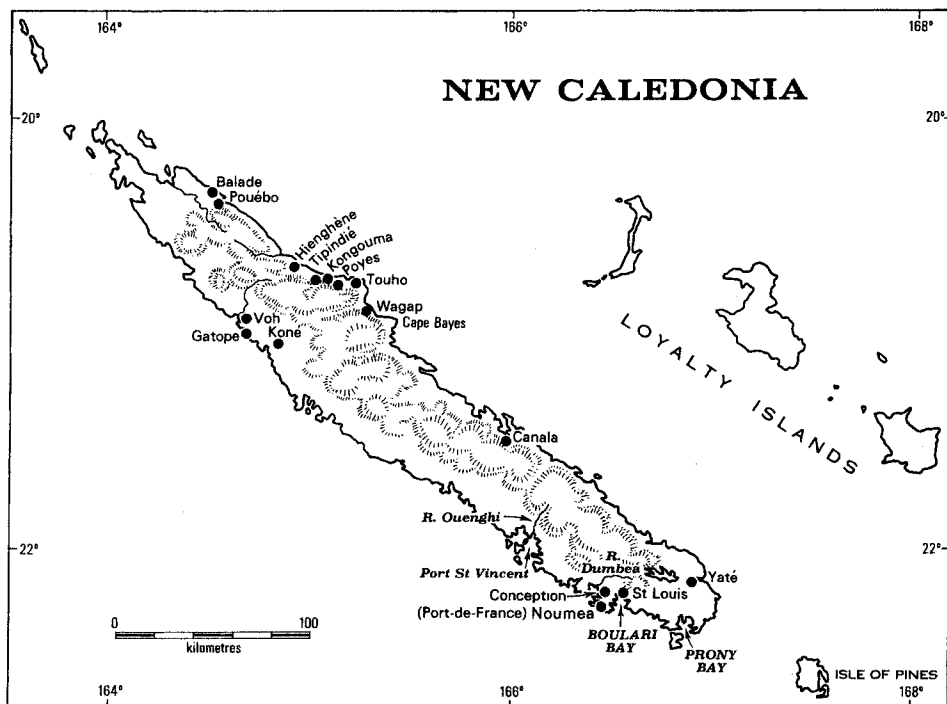
Though the latter two categories are likely to be productive and to penetrate behind modern political symbolism, neither by itself provides an adequate general framework for the analysis of violent conflict in colonial Pacific societies. The 'resistance/collaboration' model makes Europeans the critical factor, while the very term 'collaboration', used in conjunction with 'resistance', implies an often inappropriate judgement about the motives and values of those who actively supported the colonial powers. There is little doubt that most tribal peoples who did so perceived neither their own actions nor their relationships with the colonizers as 'collaboration'; indeed, perceptions of who were 'the enemy' frequently determined alignment for or against a colonial régime, as the case studies will demonstrate. The interpretation of indigenous violence towards Europeans solely in terms of local patterns of alliance and hostility tends to ignore the wider colonial context of which such patterns eventually became part and, while rightly stressing continuity in the operation of local allegiances and rivalry, may insufficiently acknowledge the dynamic aspect of political alignments, the various processes of change both before and after European contact provoked by the pressure of events, individual ambition or the actions and influence of newcomers, whether European or indigenous. In its least perceptive form this approach may, perhaps unwittingly, depict islanders' violence towards Europeans as the mindless reflex of uncomprehending savages. For example, New Caledonians in a recent study of the 1878 revolt appear as anarchic reactionaries. Possessing few, if any, coherent perceptions of the implications of French presence and no co-ordinated plans of action, they lashed out because of momentary grievances and clung obdurately to customary modes of warfare and political action which, in retrospect, doomed them from the start. As a result, the French are seen to have achieved victory because of the deficiencies, especially the lack of fortitude, desperation and sense of common interest, of their foes.⁷ Such an interpretation has some force by European standards of strategy and political scale, but these provide an inappropriate basis for evaluating and understanding people who, as the author

⁶ Cf the works on New Caledonia of Rosèlene Dousset-Leenhardt (Dousset, op. cit., and Dousset-Leenhardt, op. cit.). Her overriding concern is political, to demonstrate the inevitability of confrontation between two irreconcilable cultures. As a result she ignores individual and regional variations in Melanesian actions and responses to Europeans and all but disregards the role played in the French conquest of New Caledonia by Melanesian allies and auxiliaries.

⁷ Latham, *La révolte . . .*, passim, espec. 63-6.

acknowledges, operated in quite a different social and martial context. This shortcoming is compounded by failure to penetrate beyond the external appearances of events, actions and social relationships to an appreciation of the values which gave meaning to actions and which help explain not only what Melanesians actually did, but their expectations of what the French would do.

A need exists, then, for a comprehensive and flexible general framework for the examination of violent conflict in Pacific colonies. It should combine the best aspects of earlier approaches with a new dimension of its own.⁸ The methodology proposed here correlates an ethnographic reconstruction of customary social organization and values, in largely institutional terms, with a fine-grained historical analysis of particular instances of violent conflict in terms of the varying perspectives and motives of individuals, groups and categories of people involved. It emphasizes relationships, behaviour and perceptions at local, tribal and regional levels before and during the culture



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⁸ Oliver and Thomson's study of the war on the east coast of New Zealand in the 1860s approaches such a synthesis, although it is in no sense theoretical. W. H. Oliver and Jane Thomson, *Challenge and response: a study of the development of the Gisborne East Coast Region* (Gisborne 1971), 76-94. See also Allen F. Isaacman, *The tradition of resistance in Mozambique* (London 1976).

contact and colonial periods. It examines ways in which these changed as a result both of internal societal factors and the influence of outsiders, European and indigenous, and the effects of such changes. It correlates this essentially local and particularistic perspective with the broader context created by a colonial régime, and examines the strengths and limitations of colonial power, relative to time and place, both locally and in the wider context. This multifaceted approach enables customary warfare and expansion, intergroup conflict, anti-colonial resistance and deliberate or inadvertent co-operation and compromise with Europeans, at various stages during the colonial process, to be integrated within a common interpretive framework.⁹

The methodology is here used to elucidate several series of violent conflicts during the early colonial period in New Caledonia. It is clearly more difficult to discern Melanesian motives and perceptions than those of Europeans because Melanesian protagonists have left little direct testimony. No first hand indigenous accounts were recorded and no Melanesian has as yet written on the history of the early colonial period. Extant traditions are often patchy, confused and inexact. As Jean Guiart has demonstrated, many data can be obtained from Melanesian informants on patterns of interrelationship, alliance and hostility, migration itineraries, and beliefs, values and modes of thought, which tend to endure even in contexts of rapid social, political and economic change. The meaning of specific events and processes to the people involved and their motives must, however, largely be inferred from a detailed reconstruction of what they actually did. Events and action are explained partly in terms of the general social and cultural contexts in which they occurred, but the relationship between particular and general is dialectical, since the ethnographic reconstruction of pre-contact institutions and values is extrapolated from contemporary observations of Melanesian behaviour, as well as from more recent ethnographies. The difficulty of attempting to reconstruct the social relations, actions and values of one people through the perceptions of representatives of another, very different culture should not be underestimated. The documentary record on New Caledonia is sufficiently rich and varied, however, to permit minute examination on a small scale and within a limited time span of how and why particular people acted.¹⁰

THE Melanesian inhabitants of New Caledonia in the middle of the 19th century had no concept of their unity as a people and their horizons were essential-

⁹ Cf the concept of colonial societies as 'social fields with many dimensions, with parts that may be loosely integrated, or virtually independent from one another, . . . that have to be studied over time'. Marc J. Swartz, Victor W. Turner and Arthur Tuden (eds), *Political anthropology* (Chicago 1966), 3; see also Max Gluckman, *Order and rebellion in tribal Africa* (London 1963) 232-4.

¹⁰ 'Thick description' in Clifford Geertz's phrase (*The interpretation of cultures* (London 1975), ch. 1).

ly kinship and locality oriented.¹¹ The primary focus of identification was the localized clan, an exogamous patrilineal descent group led by a hereditary chief, in theory the senior male member. Clan membership was defined by the dual ties of common blood, real or assumed, and attachment to a particular named territory. By the mid-19th century the main political units generally transcended single clans, and are usually designated by the term 'tribe': an aggregate of clans which acknowledged the political authority of a particular chief. 'Tribe' is an analytic rather than an indigenous concept, however, and no synonym existed in New Caledonian languages. Moreover, its usage is confused because it has come officially to be applied to one in a hierarchy of modern administrative units. New Caledonians seem to have conceptualized political authority less in terms of the units so formed (as 'tribe' implies) than in terms of relationships of seniority and juniority between groups and their leaders and the resulting territorial patterns of control, influence and deference. For instance, the term *maciri* (*Ajie* language) implies among other things the territory inhabited by those recognizing the political authority of a powerful paramount chieftaincy.¹² The concept of chieftdom is therefore central and the most appropriate way of looking at New Caledonian political organization is in terms of localized patterns of allegiance to particular chieftaincies.¹³ The groups so formed, which ranged from a large chieftdom incorporating a hierarchy of smaller chieftaincies and clans to a small, autonomous chieftdom, were named and were recognized by their members and by outsiders as forming distinct political entities. The term 'chieftdom' will be used here and 'tribe' reserved for its French administrative application.

An idiom of kinship defined relationships at all social levels, from the nuclear family to the most extensive multiclan chieftdom, and validated chiefly status: chiefs were 'elder' in respect to their dependents and as such were responsible for social direction and control and were entitled to respect, deference and certain services.¹⁴ In a large chieftdom the kinship idiom was generally more symbolic than an expression of actual blood relationships and the chieftdom may be regarded as a territorial political unit rather than a descent group. Clan loyalties endured, while those to a political chief tended to be

¹¹ For an outline of traditional social organization see Bronwen Douglas, 'A history of culture contact in north-eastern New Caledonia, 1774-1845', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1972), ch.1; Jean Guiart, *L'organisation sociale et coutumière de la population autochtone*, pub. with Jacques Barrau, *L'agriculture vivrière autochtone de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Noumea 1956), 17-29.

¹² Jean-Pierre Doumenge, *Paysans mélanésien en pays Canala-Nlle Calédonie* (Talence 1974), 48-9; Maurice Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie néo-calédonienne* (Paris 1930), 24-5; idem, *Vocabulaire et grammaire de la langue houailou* (Paris 1935), 174.

¹³ Doumenge, op. cit., 45-68; Guiart, op. cit., 23-6.

¹⁴ Doumenge, op. cit., 45-9; Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie* . . . , 63-5, 97-8.

more ephemeral and were often more ambiguous. Chiefdoms expanded, contracted and altered in composition on the basis of political and military considerations and the success or otherwise of their leaders. During the first half of the 19th century a tendency to political consolidation emerged in several areas, especially on parts of the east coast and in the south, and led to the formation of larger, more complex chiefdoms, organized on a hierarchical basis. In such cases an ambitious chieftaincy used a variety of means, often including wars of conquest, to extend direct or indirect control over most of the clans and small chiefdoms of an entire region.¹⁵ By 1840 powerful, well-established chiefdoms existed in several areas, though they were never as autocratic or territorially extensive as they appeared to some European observers.¹⁶ Examples included the Ti Téré of the Isle of Pines, the Bwaghéa of Canala, the Bouarate of Hienghène and the Mwelebeng of Pouébo. Others, such as the Kamba of Païta, seem to have been in actual process of expansion at about that time.¹⁷

The sanctity of all New Caledonian chiefs¹⁸ and the deference to which they were entitled rested on their implied genealogical connexions with deified ancestors and on their status as 'elder' in relation to their dependents, but they were not autocrats. They were expected to be able and successful and to respect the rights of their dependents, 'junior kinsmen'. They shared authority with an advisory council comprising such dignitaries as the chiefs of dependent clans, the war leader, masters of the soil,¹⁹ priests, experts and respected elders, and group action was normally based on consensus. As secular leader the chief was mainly a spokesman, administrator and diplomat. Relations between the leader of a chiefdom and the heads of junior clans were mainly a matter of

¹⁵ Guiart, *op. cit.*, 27-8; Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 105; Maurice Lenormand, 'L'évolution politique des autochtones de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, IX (1953), 247-8.

¹⁶ E.g. Tardy de Montravel to Ministre de la Marine (hereinafter MM), 8 July 1854, Carton 40, Paris, Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer, Série Nouvelle-Calédonie (hereinafter ANOM); Jules Garnier, *Voyage autour du monde. La Nouvelle-Calédonie (côte orientale)* (Paris 1901), 222; Jules Patouillet, *Voyage autour du monde. Trois ans en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris 1872), 50.

¹⁷ Andrew Cheyne, *The trading voyages of Andrew Cheyne, 1841-1844*, Dorothy Shineberg (ed.) (Canberra 1971), 38; Bronwen Douglas, 'Bouarate of Hienghène: great chief in New Caledonia', in Deryck Scarr (ed.), *More Pacific Islands portraits* (Canberra 1979), 38-42; Doumenge, *op. cit.*, 48-68; Prosper Goujon, *Journal de l'île des Pins, 1848-54*, entry for 15 Apr. 1849, TS, Noumea, Archives du Vicariat apostolique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (MF, Sydney, Mitchell Library); Jean Guiart, *Structure de la chefferie en Mélanésie du sud* (Paris 1963), chs 4-6; Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 105; Adolphe Mathieu, 'Aperçu historique sur la tribu des Houassios ou des Manongôés', *Le Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Journal Officiel de la Colonie* (Noumea), 12 Jan. 1868, 9-11.

¹⁸ On chieftainship see Bronwen Douglas, 'Rank, power, authority: a reassessment of traditional leadership in south Pacific societies', *Journal of Pacific History*, XIV (1979), 16-22; Doumenge, *op. cit.*, 45-61; Guiart, *L'organisation sociale . . .*, 24-6; Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 88-98.

¹⁹ The representative of a clan which claimed and exercised the rights of earliest inhabitants of a particular area. He was generally not a political chief, but possessed authority through his control of the land and link with the spirits associated with it. Doumenge, *op. cit.*, 56; Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 45; idem, *Vocabulaire et grammaire . . .*, 140; Guiart, *Structure de la chefferie . . .*, 35, 41.

negotiation between relative equals and realization of the potential of a chiefdom depended on the ability and character of its leader.

According to Maurice Leenhardt the position of war leader was not hereditary, but was filled by a warrior known for his valour and his leadership qualities and success in battle.²⁰ Chiefs did not normally participate in actual combat,²¹ presumably because to do so would have compromised their harmony-maintenance role and their important integrative functions of peace negotiation and authorizing the return of vanquished enemies to their lands or their incorporation into the victorious group.²² Furthermore the loss of a chief was socially so traumatic, because it struck at the link between living and past generations on which a group's socio-economic welfare depended, that his exposure to death, injury or capture in combat was probably unthinkable. Reports exist of particularly ambitious, aggressive and successful war leaders who came to play a significant political role beyond the limited sphere of battle: such instances seem to have included Kahoua, Gondou and Poindi Patchili, who were active in some of the events considered here. Leenhardt, however, insists that this was unknown traditionally and resulted from European confusion of the roles of war leader and chief.²³ It is difficult to determine if the case is one of contradiction between traditional norms and practice, of mid-19th century institutional change, possibly European-induced, or of European confusion.

Warfare was a constant preoccupation, and with gardening was one of the main roles of male Melanesians. Though endemic it was not anarchic but was hedged about with ceremonial, conventions and controls which ideally operated to limit its extent, its duration and its destructiveness, though in practice they were not always successful. Withdrawal, in the form of temporary self-exile or emigration of a weaker party, was a common form of conflict avoidance,²⁴ and mechanisms existed to permit peace with relative honour: compensation was paid by both sides for dead and injured,²⁵ and remnants of a defeated enemy were commonly absorbed without prejudice into a victorious group. The integrative role, above combat, played by chiefs has already been mentioned. While grievances could be harboured for generations and long-

²⁰ Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie* . . . , 42-3.

²¹ Doumenge, op. cit., 59; Leenhardt, op. cit., 40-6, 90-7; Guiart, op. cit., 40; Victor de Rochas, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants. Productions, mœurs, cannibalisme* (Paris 1862), 207.

²² J. Durand, 'Chez les Ouébias en Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Tour du monde*, n.s., VI (1900), 514; Pierre Lambert, *Mœurs et superstitions des Neo-Calédoniens* (Noumea 1900), 177; Leenhardt, op. cit., 43-6, 52; Patouillet, op. cit., 164; Rochas, op. cit., 252.

²³ Leenhardt, op. cit., 43, fnl.

²⁴ Guiart, op. cit., 640-1; Maurice Leenhardt, *Gens de la Grande Terre. Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris 1937), 152.

²⁵ Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie* . . . , 46.

term preparations were often made for warfare over a wide area,²⁶ actual fighting tended to be short-lived, and battle was a corollary of anger:

The Caledonian has no word to distinguish a violent gesture from an organized battle Thus New Caledonians were greatly astonished [and appalled?] during the [first] European war to see the Whites capable of coldly entering into a serious war.²⁷

Formal battles generally caused little loss of life. Ambush, raid and surprise attack were the preferred modes and could be very destructive indeed, occasionally causing the obliteration of whole groups,²⁸ both through massacre and incorporation of survivors into the victor's group. Devastation and pillage of the gardens, trees, habitations and canoes of weaker or defeated groups normally occurred. Conquest of territory and expulsion of earlier inhabitants was fairly unusual and defeated masters of the soil were normally left in control of their territory because of their links with the spirits associated with the land.²⁹ Land was of fundamental value, one basis for the identification and differentiation of social groups, a central element in the Melanesian personality and world view. Rights to all land and resources were clearly defined and the territory of a clan symbolized its identity, its vitality and its lineal continuity as an organic whole comprising past, present and future generations.³⁰ Political authority did not normally encompass primary rights over the lands and resources which comprised a *maciri*.³¹ Indeed, the incumbents of some chieftaincies, recent immigrants who had been interpolated at the apex of a political hierarchy, had limited rights to land.³² Disputes and misunderstanding over land often caused conflict during the colonial period.

Although the main foci of New Caledonian existence were clan and chiefdom, all groups claimed links with others, actually or theoretically related, throughout the mainland and in the surrounding islands. These links reflected previous population movements, generally small-scale, and provided known itineraries for future emigration.³³ In the centre and north, especially, these

²⁶ Jean Guiart, 'Le cadre social traditionnel . . .', 119; idem, 'Les évènements de 1917 . . .', passim.

²⁷ Leenhardt, op. cit., 38.

²⁸ Goujon, op. cit., 9 Nov. 1849; Mathieu, op. cit., 10; Ta'unga, *The works of Ta'unga. Records of a Polynesian traveller in the south seas, 1833-1896*, R. G. and Marjorie Crocombe (eds) (Canberra 1968), 74, 112-3.

²⁹ Leenhardt, op. cit., 45; idem, *Vocabulaire et grammaire . . .*, 141; Rochas, op. cit., 243; cf Guiart, *Structure de la chefferie . . .*, 633, 649-52.

³⁰ Anova-Ataba, op. cit., 207; [Groupe d'autochtones calédoniens], *Mélanésiens d'aujourd'hui. La société Mélanésienne dans le monde moderne* (Noumea 1976), 15-19; Guiart, op. cit., 15; Lambert, op. cit., 85-9; Alain Saussol, 'New Caledonia: colonization and reaction', in Ron Crocombe (ed.), *Land tenure in the Pacific* (Melbourne 1971), 228-9; Jean-Marie Tjibaou, 'Recherche d'identité mélanésienne et société traditionnelle', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, XXXII (1976), 284-5.

³¹ Doumenge, op. cit., 49-61.

³² Guiart, op. cit., 641; Leenhardt, *Vocabulaire et grammaire . . .*, 140-1; Rochas, op. cit., 244.

³³ Jean Guiart, 'Nouvelle-Calédonie et Iles Loyalty. Carte du dynamisme de la société indigène à l'arrivée des Européens', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, IX (1953), 93-7; idem, *Structure . . .*, passim.

relationships were expressed in terms of an institutional dualism which linked clans to one or other of two parallel networks of alliance and identification and was cross-cut by a dual or tripartite system of preferential marriage.³⁴ Regional networks were more clearly defined in some places than others and they appeared in several guises, but they provided a form of supra-local consciousness amongst peoples whose social organization was at base fragmented. The tendency was most evident in the partition, chequer-board fashion, of the clans of northern New Caledonia between the mutually and permanently hostile networks known as Oot and Waap.³⁵ On the basis of such links, often quite widely separated clans and chiefdoms joined in offensive and defensive alliance and people involved themselves in affairs which did not directly concern them. This capacity for concerted military action beyond the purely local level had profound — and to the French unexpected and disturbing — implications in the colonial context.

NEW Caledonia was annexed by France in September 1853. French Marist missionaries, who had evangelized there with very limited success for the previous decade, had two tiny footholds on the northeast coast and one in the south at the Isle of Pines. The colonial régime before 1870 can be divided into two phases: 1853-62, when no coherent policy or sense of direction existed and an extreme shortage of men and resources forced administrators to concentrate on the south; 1862-70, when more detailed and purposeful policies for the development and pacification of the colony were implemented during the governorship of Charles Guillain, with the aid of increased, though still inadequate, budgetary and military resources.³⁶ Political and military crises in France during 1870-71 led to a severe cutback in the colony's budget, manpower and equipment and caused the withdrawal of French forces from much of the north, where Guillain had concentrated his efforts.

The recurring problem of inadequate money, manpower and material affected official policies and practice in several important ways. Before 1862 the authorities generally gave full support and virtually a free hand to the Marists, whose scattered stations, especially in the north, were seen as outposts of

³⁴ Jean Guiart, 'Les modalités de l'organisation dualiste et le système matrimonial en Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie*, n.s., 4^e année, XXII (1957), 21-39; idem, *Structure . . .*, ch. 3.

³⁵ Du Bouzet to MM, 20 June 1855, Carton 40, ANOM; Guiart, 'Les modalités de l'organisation dualiste . . .', 21-7; idem, *Mythologie du masque en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris 1966), 49-53; Lambert, op. cit., 173-4; Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie . . .*, 105; Eugène Vieillard and Emile Deplanche, *Essais sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris 1863), 21.

³⁶ On French policy and shortage of resources see Douglas, 'A history of culture contact . . .', passim, App. II. In July 1866 there were 706 European troops of all services in the colony. *Moniteur . . .*, 30 Sept. 1866. They were augmented by 206 marine infantry in May 1868. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1868.

French rule and as providing an important civilizing and pacifying influence. As a result the mission in places operated as a virtual state within the state, and reducing the Marists' sway over Christian and mission-influenced 'tribes' became a major priority of the anticlerical Guillaïn. Throughout the whole period the colonial government was heavily dependent on the support of Melanesian allies and auxiliaries, both Christian and pagan, though after 1862 the most trusted allies were all aggressively pagan. Even before 1862 the administration refused to compel Melanesians to accept missionaries and both before and after this date was forced to tolerate the continued practice by pagan allies of customs such as cannibalism, which otherwise were vehemently condemned.³⁷ Before 1862, apart from one small post in the extreme north which was abandoned in 1859, the government maintained a continuous presence only in the south, around the administrative centre of Port-de-France (Noumea after 1862) and at Napoléonville (Canala) after 1859. At this time the administration intervened minimally in Melanesian affairs, except when compelled to act by open hostility towards the French, missionaries, settlers or Melanesian allies. Punitive expeditions, of which there were at least 13 outside the south before Guillaïn's arrival, were little more than isolated incursions into unpacified territory and were regarded by most officials as a last resort, likely to aggravate rather than discourage violence.

Guillaïn was much more aggressive and interventionist. Expeditions were numerous in retaliation for attacks on Europeans and on several occasions French forces became involved in local conflicts, generally at the behest of allied groups. He attempted to give substance to the legal fiction of colonial rule by establishing strategically-placed military posts in the wake of expeditions. He aimed thereby to intimidate unpacified peoples, provide visible support for allies and lessen missionary influence. Despite his energy and greater resources, however, large areas of the colony still remained unpacified by 1870, and except in the south and in the immediate vicinity of the posts Melanesians continued to enjoy considerable freedom of action.

THE several series of events to be considered are organized geographically and chronologically as follows: the south to 1859; the north 1856-62; the centre-north to 1869. Though numerous other instances of violent conflict were recorded during this period, this schema covers many of the major known

³⁷ [Emile Foucher], *Coup d'oeil rétrospectif sur les premières années de l'occupation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie — Souvenirs d'un des trois moineaux, sur les épisodes et expéditions qui ont eu lieu pendant les années, 1855, 1856 et 1857* (Noumea 1890), 6; Garnier, op. cit., 357-9; Jules Parquet, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Alger 1872), 26; Patouillet, op. cit., 50.

clashes. The first of the three cases is examined in detail, to illustrate the explanatory potential of the methodology outlined above, while aspects of the others are referred to more briefly. In the first two case studies European and Melanesian perspectives on a particular sequence of events are explicitly juxtaposed. The following questions are implicit throughout: Who was involved on which side? What were the discernible motives of the various individuals, groups and categories of people involved or, in the case of neutrals, not involved? What were their perceptions of events and of their own and others' roles?

The French choice in 1854 of the Noumea peninsula as the site for the main centre of their new colony introduced a new set of factors to a politically turbulent region, which had had contacts—sometimes violent—with aliens, sandalwood traders and missionaries, since the early 1840s.³⁸ In August 1854 Kuindo, designated 'chief of the tribe of Numea', and Kandio, 'chief of the tribe of Morari', placed their marks on documents which proclaimed their recognition and acceptance of French sovereignty. Almost at once a military establishment began to grow on the sparsely populated peninsula, apparently an outpost of Kuindo's Kamba chiefdom, and a few settlers soon spread to small-holdings in the nearby valleys. Late in 1855 the administration granted the Marist mission two large contiguous properties on land controlled by Angara, an ally or kinsman of Kandio, and by Kandio himself. During 1856 several hundred converts and neophytes from the northern districts of Balade, Pouébo and Touho were settled on these lands at Conception and St Louis. In mid-1856 200 hectares at Morari were granted to a colonist named Bérard, on land also under the ultimate authority of Kandio, and a sizable establishment developed comprising more than a dozen Europeans and about 40 New Hebridean labourers.

The initial settlements were followed by a period of calm, during which some trade grew with local people, a few of whom also worked sporadically for colonists, including Bérard. Frequent thefts and threats against the mission and Bérard led to official reprisals, the arrest and brief imprisonment of chiefs, including Kuindo and Kandio, and raids on canoes, two of which were given to the Christians. Trading contacts, on which Port-de-France partly depended for supplies, continued, but open hostilities broke out late in 1856 following attacks on the mission properties and isolated settlers and the killing of troops

³⁸ Except where otherwise indicated this section is based on the following sources: numerous letters and reports, Cartons 40 & 42, ANOM; 'Letters de l'administration civile locale, 1855-8', Rome, Archivio di Padri Maristi, section Oceania, Nova Caledonia (hereinafter APM,ONC); Eugène Bourgey, 'Une exploration dans l'intérieur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages*, IV (1865), 179-89; R. P. Félix [Boutin], 'Essai d'établissement des missionnaires à Yaté (Oct. 1849-Janv. 1850)', *Etudes Mélanésiennes*, n. s., V (1951), 5-39; [Foucher], op. cit.; Guiart, *Structure* . . . , 212-3, 244-6, ch.6; Mathieu, op. cit.; Ta'unga, op. cit., 27-111.

close to Port-de-France itself. In January 1857 Bérard and 27 of his companions, including 15 New Hebrideans, were killed by a band led by Kandio and Angara, who for some time had come daily to work for Bérard. The actual survival of Port-de-France seemed in doubt, since it faced what looked like a general uprising of all the southern 'tribes' with a complement of only 129 men, plus a garrison of 21 at Conception. The nearby presence of more than 400 Christians at Conception and St Louis was crucial once the French commandant persuaded the mission superior to take up arms in the common cause of Christianity and France. Stiffened by the small garrison and liberally supplied with firearms and ammunition by the authorities, the Christians served as the front line of the defences of Port-de-France, as spies and unofficial police in surrounding districts, as support troops in early expeditions and ultimately as a military spearhead. Further active co-operation was provided by Titéma, a subordinate chief of the Kamba chiefdom, who from the outset aligned himself firmly with the French.

In the wake of the first murders the French commandant launched an energetic and for the European troops extremely onerous campaign lasting about 17 months against groups suspected of complicity in the various attacks: that is, all the surrounding peoples save those under Titéma. Generally without local guides, the first expeditions plunged blindly into unknown and unpacified territory, aiming to devastate gardens and destroy settlements in order to achieve submission by attrition. It was rightly believed that individual suspects could not be apprehended in such wild and difficult terrain which they knew intimately and where initially they could expect to find refuge. The early expeditions were indiscriminately destructive, though rarely a threat to life. From the beginning of 1857 Titéma provided guides and while devastation continued to be the major tactic, it was on a more selective basis, determined as much, no doubt, by Titéma's priorities as by the French military command. Early in 1858 the commandant adopted a new policy of replacing French troops as the spearhead of expeditionary columns with warriors, armed with firearms, from the mission stations. He hoped thereby to inflict more damage on enemy personnel:

Our soldiers are too heavy in the behind to be able to run after the natives; the 40 or more men whom you can supply, with a detachment of soldiers in reserve and always within range, would pursue the enemy with agility and speed and perhaps with success.³⁹

During the warriors' absence an equivalent number of French soldiers protected the mission.

³⁹ Testard, 25 Jan. 1858, 'Lettres . . . 1855-8', APM, ONC.

The campaign ultimately had the desired effect. The peoples of Morari and Boulari, under Angara and Kandio, were dispersed and reduced to fugitives. While no one, even Titéma, was prepared to surrender them before 1859, they could find no nearby permanent refuge since reports of their presence in a district provoked reprisals from the French, and they were forced to seek a haven in the rugged, sparsely populated extreme south. Kuindo, whose main settlements had initially escaped, though his hold over the disparate sections of his chiefdom was severely shaken, submitted to the French in July 1857 following the burning of his own village, and henceforth his people joined the Christians and Titéma as auxiliaries in expeditions. He was murdered by a former subordinate in mid-1858. By then the entire southern part of the colony was in effect pacified, though much of the region remained virtually unknown territory to the French, and the Noumea peninsula and the Boulari plains had been abandoned by their former inhabitants.⁴⁰ In mid-1859 the administration consolidated its occupation of these lands, which were henceforth secure for colonization. A further expedition in strength to the extreme south at this time met with no resistance, in apparent acknowledgment of the French potential to dominate the region. Simultaneously five 'tribes' accused of Bérard's murder were formally expropriated and a price placed on the heads of their chiefs, including Angara and Kandio.⁴¹ The French demonstrations of power and the promise of reward finally impelled Titéma to take positive action to capture them. Angara, Kandio and two other fugitives were handed over by Titéma and Kuindo's successor during 1859 and were shot. The remnants of the expropriated tribes were pardoned and allowed to resettle fragments of their former territories in December 1859.⁴²

This account of events in the south before 1860 is essentially Eurocentric. Their meaning for Melanesian participants remains to be investigated. Political relationships in this part of New Caledonia in the mid-19th century were complex and are now very difficult to decipher. Constant turmoil was the norm in a sparsely populated region noted for poor soil and scarce resources. A continual struggle for pre-eminence and, presumably, for control of a larger share of the limited resources available was reflected in a series of shifting alliances involving the powerful Ti Téré chiefdom of the Isle of Pines and at

⁴⁰ Du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858, Carton 231, ANOM; Durand to MM, 26 May 1860, Carton 42, ANOM; [Foucher], op. cit., 77-8.

⁴¹ 'Expédition des Lacs, d'Unia, d'Yaté, des Tuaurus, faite en 1859 par le Gouverneur Saisset', Extrait du Journal de l'Etat-Major Général, 15 June-6 July 1859, Carton 42, ANOM; Durand to MM, 26 May 1860, *ibid.*; Saisset to MM, 3 July 1859, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Margry, France, nouvelles acquisitions, 9448 (Océanie et mers Australes, Nouvelle-Calédonie) (hereinafter BNCM). 'Décision du gouverneur . . .', 10 June 1859, *Bulletin Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Noumea 1859-60), 110-1.

⁴² 'Proclamation du gouverneur adressée aux indigènes du Sud, et rendant leur territoire aux tribus de Jack, Kandio, Kuindo et Maqué', 2 Dec. 1859, *Bulletin Officiel* . . ., 259.

least three mainland chiefdoms: the Kamba or Houassio (who occupied the vast territory from the River Ouenghi, which flows into Port St Vincent, to the River Dumbéa, northwest of Noumea, with outposts on the Noumea peninsula and Nou Island); the Nengara (who occupied the coastal plains between the Dumbéa and Prony Bay, in the south, but were concentrated in the region of Boulari and Morari); the people of Yaté, in the southeast, under Damé, a descendant of a former subordinate and rival of the Nengara chiefs. Damé consistently opposed the Kamba and the Nengara, who were generally allied, and co-operated with the Ti Téré in attacks on earlier settlers in the southeast. The Ti Téré, secure at the apex of a highly structured, hierarchical chiefdom and impregnable in their island stronghold,⁴³ seem to have manipulated conflicts on the mainland to their own advantage, supporting now one side and now another. By the mid-50s, as important members of the chiefly clan came under missionary influence, their direct intervention in mainland affairs declined and they seem not to have been involved in the colonial wars. Each of the three mainland chiefdoms sought to expand its own influence over autonomous clans, to resist the expansion of its rivals and to maintain control over previously subjected clans. The resulting wars involved frequent massacre, conquest of territory and expulsion or incorporation of defeated groups.

All the major Melanesian participants in the events of the early colonial period can be identified within this pattern of relationships. The most influential mainland chief was probably Kuindo, to whom the early administrators attributed a general suzerainty over the territory from Port St Vincent to the extreme south and overall responsibility for all acts of violence against the French, settlers and the mission stations at Boulari. The extent of Kuindo's authority and influence is obscure, but they were probably only 'moral' beyond the acknowledged confines of the Kamba chiefdom. Unlike the Ti Téré, the Kamba chiefdom seems still to have been in the process of consolidation in the mid-19th century. Kuindo and the Nengara chiefs Kandio and Angara are probably best seen as senior and junior partners in a military alliance, with the latter retaining considerable freedom of action. Their common efforts were mainly against the Nengara renegade Damé, towards whom Kuindo also bore an ancient enmity. Among the clans more immediately subject to Kuindo's authority was Titéma's, whose alliance with the French was probably forged in order to escape Kuindo's hegemony and the requirement to

⁴³ Reinforced by an improved canoe design, influenced by Tongan castaways, and weapons obtained from English traders. Lambert, *op. cit.*, 196-7; Dorothy Shineberg, *They came for sandalwood. A study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific, 1830-1865* (Melbourne 1967), 29-46, 102, 111, 251. It seems clear, though, that the expansion and consolidation of the Ti-Téré chiefdom predated the arrival of Europeans. Cheyne, *op. cit.*, 38.

render him tribute. Also subject to Kuindo were the Nundo (Mounédo), a remnant of clans defeated by Kuindo's grandfather. Though hostile to the French and the mission, the Nundo, like Titéma, took advantage of Kuindo's declining prestige and power in the wake of the French expeditions of 1856-57 to throw off the Kamba yoke. Titéma eventually became chief of the independent Manongoé tribe, always faithful allies of the French, while the Nundo murdered Kuindo in 1858 after his submission to the government. Whether, as a French source suggested, they were motivated by contempt at the 'betrayal' of the Melanesian cause by the chief who was said to have instigated the war against the French,⁴⁴ or whether they simply took the opportunity to avenge old grievances is impossible to say, though the former motive sounds more European than Melanesian.

Before examining motives for acts of violence committed against the French military settlement, colonists and the mission stations during 1856-57 it is necessary to consider whether, as the government insisted in justification of its policy of indiscriminate repression, a formal anti-colonial coalition, possibly under the ultimate authority of Kuindo, existed by the mid-1850s, incorporating all the southern 'tribes' except Titéma's.⁴⁵ Possible supporting evidence is suggested by a French source which claims, on the basis of local traditions collected in 1864, that Damé successfully sought in 1854 to make peace with his bitter enemy Kandio: 'The reliable person who told me this story, assured me that mysterious conversations took place which bore largely on the recent arrival of the French'.⁴⁶ Furthermore, both Kandio and Angara after their capture claimed to have acted under Kuindo's orders. A consciously anti-French alliance may have been forged, and certainly the internecine wars which had shaken the region for decades moderated at about the time of the French occupation. The effectiveness of such a coalition, if it existed, was limited in any case by the continuance of local clan loyalties, by the failure of attempts at co-ordinated action and by the numerical weakness of the clans of southern New Caledonia. Guiart has estimated that the Kamba chiefdom itself probably contained at most 500 warriors, from which must be subtracted those owing allegiance to Titéma, and that 'the forces united against the first inhabitants of Nouméa could at no time have reached 1,000 men'.⁴⁷ In this context the presence at Conception and St Louis of more than 400 pro-French

⁴⁴ [Foucher], op. cit., 76.

⁴⁵ Testard to Rougeyron, various letters, mostly undated, 'Lettres . . . 1855-8', APM, ONC; Saisset to MM, 3 July 1859, BNCM; [Foucher], op. cit., 12-15, 33, 38-42.

⁴⁶ Bourgey, op. cit., 184.

⁴⁷ Guiart, *Structure* . . . , 268; see also Tardy de Montravel to MM, 8 July, 25 Dec. 1854, Carton 40, ANOM; [Foucher], op. cit., 39.

Christians — at least a quarter of whom would have been warriors — becomes of central significance.

Whether or not a concerted anti-colonial uprising occurred, there is no doubt that widespread Melanesian hostility existed against the newcomers by the middle of 1856. Reasons are not hard to find. The acceptance of French sovereignty by Kuindo and Kandio surely meant little in terms of their grasp of the abstract concept of the creation of an island-wide sovereign authority, legally transcending that of local chiefs, though it became for the French a useful *post hoc* legal basis on which to justify actions taken against whole 'tribes' and their chiefs.⁴⁸ However, by 1856 some implications of the new order must have become apparent, many unpleasant. The Noumea peninsula and surrounding districts had been partially occupied by relatively numerous strangers who clearly intended to stay and who made it plain that they would not accept the jurisdiction of local chiefs. In this they were unlike the few earlier settlers associated with a trading station set up on Nou Island in 1853, who had had no choice but to remain on good terms with the local chiefs and who provided a valuable source of European goods. The prospect of more extensive trade was no doubt to Melanesians a favourable aspect of the establishment of the colony.⁴⁹

Other aspects were less attractive. Apart from the punishment of chiefs in reprisal for the misdeeds of members of their 'tribes', which caused resentment, the question of land seems in this context to have been central. By 1856 it was a factor both in concrete and in abstract terms: substantial areas had already been alienated and Melanesians might reasonably have expected that demands would increase. Probably because the local 'tribes' were numerically insignificant and there appeared to be large areas of 'vacant' land,⁵⁰ the administration in practice made little effort to work out a mutually satisfactory basis for land transactions, though in principle the first governor was concerned with ensuring that Melanesians received fair treatment in regard to land.⁵¹ Token attempts were made to indemnify the previous claimants to the lands occupied by the mission ('deserted' according to the mission superior,⁵² but traditionally they would have belonged to particular clans) and by Bérard. That Europeans

⁴⁸ Le Bris to MM, 7 Aug. 1856, Carton 42, ANOM; 'Décision du gouverneur . . .', 10 June 1859, *Bulletin Officiel* . . ., 110-1.

⁴⁹ Tardy de Montravel to MM, 25 Dec. 1854, Carton 40, ANOM; [Foucher], *op. cit.*, 11, 39.

⁵⁰ Du Bouzet to MM, 15 Mar., 20 June, 1855, Carton 40, ANOM.

⁵¹ Du Bouzet to MM, 28 Mar. 1854, 20 June 1855, *ibid.*; Douglas, 'A history of culture contact . . .', 358-73.

⁵² [Forestier], 'Pièces justificatives', [1864], 'Lettres de l'administration civile locale 1859-63', APM, ONC.

and New Caledonians understood different things by the exchange of goods in return for rights to land is suggested by the following account:

I went myself to preside over . . . [Bérard's] establishment, I believe I almost succeeded in making the Chief who claimed to be possessor of the land understand that in accepting in exchange for his property the objects that Mr. Bérard gave him, he renounced the right to continue to live there. Well, in spite of all these precautions and our [Port-de-France's] proximity I still fear some disagreement between the new and the former proprietor.⁵³

The main problems over land arose from the incompatibility between traditional and European concepts of land tenure and transfer. Customary proprietary rights to land resided in the clan under the overall direction of the clan chief and were inalienable. Individuals, however, possessed usufructuary rights to particular tracts, which could be transferred with the chief's approval in return for regular offerings of produce.⁵⁴ The transaction with Bérard was probably seen by the usufructuary as the transfer of short-term use rights, rather than absolute sale, and in any case seems to have been opposed by Kandio and Angara, who claimed ultimate political authority over the land in question. The previous owners of Pae, the site of the mission settlement of Conception, were said to have acquiesced because they felt too weak to oppose the transaction. Given the size of the mission establishment this is hardly surprising. The concession of St Louis was said to have caused much resentment and to have been regarded as illegitimate by Kandio and Angara.⁵⁵ The most concerted attacks on the mission were directed against St Louis. The overall picture to the local Melanesian populace was probably something like this. The loss of land at Boulari and Morari was associated with immigration both from without and within New Caledonia of unprecedented proportions: Bérard's 40-odd New Hebridean labourers, presumably male and of warrior age, and more than 400 potentially hostile northern strangers, who in addition were clearly allied to the numerically weak but well-armed foreigners radiating outwards from their base on the Noumea peninsula. The latter, moreover, refused to accept chiefly authority and from time to time actively interfered in local affairs. The French retaliatory expeditions, highly destructive of gardens, dwellings and property, no doubt fuelled existing hostility and provoked fresh.

The conflict should not be seen simply in terms of the entanglement of the French in established patterns of alliance and enmity.⁵⁶ Titéma was a special

⁵³ Le Bris to MM, 7 Aug. 1856, Carton 42, ANOM.

⁵⁴ Douglas, *op. cit.*, 22-3, 353-6; Doumenge, *op. cit.*, 58-61.

⁵⁵ Testard to du Bouzet, 14 Jan. 1856 (encl. in du Bouzet to MM, 12 June 1856), Carton 40, ANOM; Le Bris to MM, 28 Oct. 1856, *ibid.*; Forget to MM, 15 June 1860, BNCM; Lambert, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁵⁶ Latham, *La révolte* . . . , 68-71.

case, more a matter of the seizure of new opportunities to create new relationships than of the continuance in a changing context of ancient hostilities. Indeed, established patterns of enmity seem to have weakened at about the time of the French settlement. Neither the motivation nor the role of Kuindo is entirely clear. His initial concern was probably to continue the extension and consolidation of his chiefdom, while taking advantage of the newcomers' presence. He may have supported those actively opposed to the French -- who included warriors directly under his authority -- in order to safeguard his position as senior political chief in the region and to maintain the unity of his chiefdom, already compromised by Titéma's defection. He abandoned the anti-French forces fairly quickly once setbacks occurred, when his own immediate interests and person were threatened, and as his hold on his chiefdom slackened. His situation was unenviable, since by 1857 his closest allies were hunted fugitives whom he was forced -- apparently unwillingly -- to sacrifice to save his own skin, while the Kamba chiefdom had collapsed, strained by centrifugal forces which included both pro- and anti-French elements.

Titéma's followers and the Christians of Conception and St Louis benefited, in the short-term at least, from co-operation with the French. Both received presents, payment and bribes from a grateful government, which interfered hardly at all in their internal affairs, plus the opportunity for plunder and adoption of refugees (thus expanding their groups) during expeditions. In this context the French commandant reported that Titéma's people, 'not adept at pillage' (!), initially took nothing following a successful expedition against a remote portion of the Kamba chiefdom, formerly their own. The problem was overcome when the Christians, constrained by no such local or blood ties, held a ceremony in honour of Titéma's people, during which they presented them with part of the loot.⁵⁷ Similar residual sentiments of loyalty to former patterns of allegiance and alliance probably explain Titéma's unwillingness to enter into open hostilities against Kuindo, before the latter's submission, and their common failure to surrender the Boulari fugitives, to the extent of allowing them to establish gardens on remote parts of their territory, until pressure from the French and the lure of substantial reward for their capture became too much for Titéma in 1859.⁵⁸ In the longer term Titéma's Manongoé tribe was to be confined within an inadequate reserve, like all other New Caledonian tribes, while services rendered during the initial stages of the colony did not save the Christians of Conception and St Louis from harassment during the governorship of the anticlerical Guillain.

⁵⁷ Testard to Rougeyron, 26 Feb. 1858, 'Lettres . . . 1855-8', APM, ONC.

⁵⁸ [Foucher], *op. cit.*, 36, 51, 66-71.

The only real beneficiaries from the campaign were the French, though the men on the spot were forced to expend inordinate time and effort, given the numerical weakness of their foes, to achieve relatively limited results. They did, however, acquire an impregnable base from which to begin the much more difficult conquest of the more populous parts of the island. They also learned several important lessons. To begin with, Melanesians generally refused to meet them in open combat, which made it virtually impossible for the French to kill or capture them in any numbers. The Melanesians' preferred tactics of small-scale raid, ambush and surprise attack, while effective enough against isolated individuals or small groups and a serious obstacle to rapid colonization, were ineffective against fortified military positions or sizable expeditionary columns. Furthermore, however limited in offensive power, firearms properly used conveyed an immense defensive advantage, which could be crucial given the Melanesian tendency to attack only in the heat of anger and to be satisfied with immediate, short-term gains. The French, whose psychology, if not their resources, was much more attuned to the conduct of drawn-out campaigns conducted to the bitter end, were quickly led to refine the technique of attrition, in which their Melanesian allies co-operated, though not without misgivings on the part of those most closely related by ties of kinship and alliance to the fugitives. Related to this, the French saw at once that their limited military resources necessitated reliance on Melanesian auxiliaries, the most effective of whom at this stage were strangers to the local peoples, though hereditary enemies were to prove equally effective in other parts of the colony. Finally, a by-product of victory, of the French insistence on holding whole 'tribes' responsible for the actions of chiefs and individuals, and of their refusal to allow members of the proscribed groups to make peace in detail, was the freeing of land for colonization.⁵⁹ Recognition of this during the 1860s may have disposed the administration to take extreme measures in cases where it felt strong enough to reduce its opponents to total subjection. When confronted by powerful chiefdoms or coalitions, however, the French were more likely to compromise or use conciliation.

CONFLICT in southwestern New Caledonia before 1859 only marginally involved clans actually resident further north and was regarded by the French as a separate campaign, the main focus of their efforts, the exigencies of which

⁵⁹ Du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858, Carton 231, ANOM; Testard to MM, 29 Oct. 1858, Carton 42, ANOM; 'Décision du gouverneur . . .', 10 June 1859, *Bulletin Officiel* . . ., 110-1; Forget to MM, 15 June 1860, BNCM; Garnier, *op. cit.*, 214.

clearly limited their ability to act elsewhere. In contrast, events in the north in 1856-62 and the centre-north before 1869 were discrete neither in French nor Melanesian terms and their separation is an analytic convenience. To the French they represented successive military campaigns against related rebel groups which resisted the implementation of French rule. From the perspective of most Melanesians they were probably in the first instance associated with the expansion of several powerful chiefdoms, culminating in the activities of the renowned war chiefs Gondou and Poindi Patchili. To Melanesians, Marist missionaries and French military personnel became involved initially as allies or opponents of one or other warring group, while the French clash with Gondou and Poindi Patchili has been aptly labelled by Guiart as 'one attempt at colonization colliding with another'.⁶⁰ One feature of the traditional New Caledonian political landscape absent or not apparent during the campaign in the south was the operation of permanent regional patterns of alliance and enmity. This was to be a major factor further north during the 1860s.

The peoples with whom the French fought in the south had at least in part responded to the actual presence or future prospect of colonization. As indicated earlier, however, French presence further north before 1862 was limited to a few mission stations, one small post (abandoned in 1859) and an occasional punitive expedition, of brief duration and in general destructive mainly of property. French sovereignty was at most a sporadic phenomenon, both in concept and in fact. But from 1856 the French authorities saw their position as seriously threatened by a succession of 'northern coalitions',⁶¹ whose purpose was generally seen as resistance to colonial rule and mission influence. The French and especially the missionaries tended to see conflict between Melanesians as a result of a deliberate stance either for or against French rule and civilization and to attribute their leading opponents' local status to rejection of colonial and/or mission influence.⁶² The coalitions were led initially by Bouarate of Hienghène, whose role in the political history of New Caledonia has been examined in detail elsewhere.⁶³

⁶⁰ Jean Guiart, 'Sociologie et administration. Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1959', *Etudes Mélanésiennes*, n.s., X & XI: 12-13 (1958-9), 9. Cf., e.g., the clash between Ezza expansionism and British in Nigeria (Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo people* (London 1976), 87-91) and between Hehe and German in Tanganyika (Alison Redmayne, 'Mkwawa and the Hehe wars', *Journal of African History*, IX (1968), 409-23).

⁶¹ Events and processes in the north 1856-62 are documented in detail in Douglas, op. cit., 111-36, 216-24, and idem, 'Bouarate of Hienghène . . .', 47-50.

⁶² E.g. Saisset to MM, 1 Feb. 1860, BB4 723, Paris, Archives Nationales, Section Marine (hereinafter ANM); J.-M. Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et graces reçus de la Tres Sainte Vierge', 9 Sept. 1889 (TS copy), APM, ONC; Rougeyron to Favre, 1856, 418.1, APM, ONC; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859, Personal file, Montrouzier, APM; Jules Garnier, 'Voyage à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1863-1866. Texte et dessins inédits', *Tour du Monde*, XVIII (1869), 58; Patouillet, op. cit., 48.

⁶³ Douglas, 'Bouarate . . .'.

Hostilities broke out early in 1856 when the Bouarate chiefdom and several other groups attacked the partly Christian peoples of Touho and Pouébo. The Pouébo missionaries became involved in support of their neophytes and French intervention began in 1857, when Bouarate was kidnapped and exiled to Tahiti, where he remained until 1863. Leadership in subsequent coalitions passed to Kahoua, chief of the districts of Poyes, Kongouma and Tipindié. In 1858 these coastal peoples were punished by a French expedition in which, contrary to the usual pattern, 15-20 warriors were said to have died. They remained resentful but quiescent, while Kahoua withdrew into the interior. Sporadic hostilities continued between the Christian-influenced peoples of Pouébo, Wagap and Touho and a shifting alliance led by Kahoua and, before 1860, always including the Bouarate. The French again intervened in 1859, when a week-long expedition devastated Hienghène. Both these expeditions involved mainly French troops—a force of 170 attacked Hienghène—with support as scouts and guides from members of a small ‘native company’ which had been formed in 1857. Aid offered by the Marists and their supporters was declined on the grounds that it might compromise the mission.

The Hienghène expedition did not have the desired effect since the administration was unable to maintain a permanent presence in the region. Kahoua and his allies launched a new attack on the Mwelebeng chiefdom of Pouébo, swearing, it was said, to avenge the Bouarate by destroying mission influence, killing the Christian chief and devastating Pouébo. The Mwelebeng halted the pagan offensive with the aid of a contingent sent by the Christian chief of Wagap and 30 warriors from Conception, armed with firearms by the government, which could spare no troops. The Mwelebeng, stiffened by a small Christian army drilled by the missionaries, launched a counter-attack which defeated inland and coastal groups as far south as Hienghène. Their mission-supported victory changed attitudes and relationships throughout the north, established Mwelebeng dominance and seemed likely to ensure the rapid success of the mission cause. Only Kahoua, withdrawn into the mountains beyond the reach of Mwelebeng or missionaries, refused to submit.

Two years later anti-Christian and anti-missionary sentiments played a part in a war involving Kahoua in alliance with kinsmen of the former chief of Wagap. The Touho mission was abandoned and subsequently looted, while the Wagap mission, also thought to be under threat, was defended by a small detachment of soldiers and warriors from Pouébo and Hienghène, now allied under the Christian banner. According to the missionaries Kahoua had sworn to extirpate Christianity from the island and would grant peace to the temporarily defeated Touho Christians only on condition that they cast away their clothes and rosaries, symbols of Christianity, and resumed their ancient

religious practices.⁶⁴ A highly destructive French punitive expedition followed, after which a military post with an initial garrison of 100 was established near the Wagap mission and four chiefs, kinsmen of Poindi Patchili, were shot. This marked the first permanent official presence in the north since the suppression of the small Balade post nearly three years before, and provides a useful dividing line between the second and third case study.

This outline of events in the north from a European viewpoint must be balanced by an examination from a Melanesian perspective. The powerful Bouarate chiefdom, which belonged to the Waap network of identification, was both numerous and influential over a wide territory, though by no means as powerful or as extensive as some contemporary Europeans believed. The expansionist tendencies of the high chief Bouarate, with the aid of steel axes and firearms obtained from Australian traders, had been reported as early as 1846,⁶⁵ when he defeated his southern Oot neighbours of the lower Tipindié valley, an area later said to be controlled by Kahoua. Bouarate was a traditional enemy of the powerful Mwelebeng chiefdom, also Oot, whose chief Bonou was baptized in 1850 and was firmly to link the mission to his own expansionist ambitions. Bouarate accepted French sovereignty in 1854, but clearly did not acknowledge the right of the authorities to intervene in the internal affairs of his chiefdom or in its relations with other groups. It was over this issue that the Bouarate finally came into open conflict with the French.⁶⁶

It is unclear which clans apart from the Poyes under Kahoua were involved with the Bouarate in the early coalitions against Touho and the Mwelebeng,⁶⁷ but it is perhaps noteworthy that the latter groups belonged to related networks of identification, traditionally opposed to the Waap.⁶⁸ Attitudes for or against the French clearly played no part in the war of 1856 and hostility towards the missionaries resulted partly from their identification with one side in the conflict, though Bouarate had long expressed indifference to their religious message, and they were widely regarded as sorcerers who possessed the power to cause illness and death.⁶⁹ The French naval officer who negotiated a truce between the warring parties in April 1856 commented:

⁶⁴ Thomassin to Poupinel, 4 Feb. 1862, Rome, Archives of the Province of Oceania, incorporated in APM (hereinafter APO); Rougeyron to Poupinel, 5 Feb., 1862, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ François Leconte, 'Notice sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie, les moeurs et les usages de ses habitants', *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, 32^e année, 3^e sér., II (1847), 854.

⁶⁶ Garnier, *Voyage autour du monde* . . . , 313.

⁶⁷ Villard, 'Rapports . . .', APM, ONC.

⁶⁸ Guiart, *Structure* . . . , 102, 125-7.

⁶⁹ Douglas, 'A history of culture contact . . .', 53-9, 65-6, 69, 97, 206, 216.

The Christian neophytes of Puébo and, up to a certain point, the missionaries themselves, had been forced to take part in the conflict, and were threatened with collapse under the weight of numbers of their powerful adversaries. *The missionaries had requested the intervention of the [colonial] authorities* (my emphasis).

At Hienghène Bouarate gave

. . . on the causes of the war a very different version from that I had heard at Puébo. . . . He in no way appeared to me to be hostile to whites; he lived almost constantly on board and was to be found there regularly enough at meal times.⁷⁰

It seems clear, then, that initially the 'northern coalitions' were traditional alliances against customary enemies, with essentially traditional ends, combinations, in the main, of Waap or related clans and chiefdoms against Oot adversaries. They became bitterly anti-missionary at least in part because the Marists supported their enemies and encouraged the intervention of the administration against them. Such intervention took the form of—to Melane-sians—sudden and capricious interference in local affairs which should in no way have involved a remote and barely acknowledged superior authority. Far from pacifying 'rebellious' tribes, the occasional incursions of the government actually inspired and hardened anti-colonial sentiments, which, because of the absence of a permanent French presence in the region, could only be directed against the Marists and the Christian-influenced peoples.

Unlike Bouarate, about whom quite a lot is known, Kahoua is a shadowy figure, possibly a war chief who managed in these turbulent times to translate success in battle into political authority. A French source described him as 'a very minor chief . . . [who] for some time has been acquiring a certain importance; he grows in influence every day by attracting about him malcontents and bad types from the other tribes'.⁷¹ His territory was southeast of Hienghène in the districts of Poyes, Kongouma and Tipindié, extending inland into the mountains, and he may have belonged to the opposite alliance network to the Bouarate, though this is uncertain.⁷² It seems clear that, following the arrest of Bouarate and the expeditions of 1858 and 1859, the composition of the opposing alliances began to be affected by new factors extraneous to the operation of traditional networks. For example, the small, weak Pouma chiefdom of Balade, which was occupied continuously by the French from 1853-59, fairly soon concluded that changed circumstances demanded a new

⁷⁰ Laurent to MM, 13 Jan. 1857, Carton 42, ANOM.

⁷¹ Forget to MM, 15 June 1860, BNCM; see also *Moniteur* . . . , 14 May 1865.

⁷² Guiart, op. cit., 136; idem, *Mythologie du masque* . . . , 148.

approach and aligned themselves firmly with the French, the only group outside the south to do so in the 1850s. They participated against their kinsmen and traditional allies, the Bouarate of Hienghène, in the expedition of 1859 and later in the same year sided, apparently without a great deal of enthusiasm,⁷³ with their former enemies the Mwelebeng against a coalition including several of their former allies. The coalition which attacked Pouébo in 1858 included the Tendianou, a remote, inland Oot people who possessed an outpost on the coast between Hienghène and Pouébo and who were traditionally allied with the Mwelebeng. Again, in 1862 warriors from Hienghène supported the Mwelebeng and the Wagap missionaries, previously their bitter enemies, against their former ally Kahoua. There seems, then, to have been an emerging and widespread perception of a change in political realities, necessitating the formation of new alignments. Except at Balade, however, the change appears to have been perceived in terms less of the overwhelming power of the colonial régime, whose visitations, while dramatic, were highly intermittent, than of their potential in alliance with the missionaries to alter the political balance in the region and provide the Mwelebeng with an unprecedented source of power.

These fears, if they were so articulated, were realized in and after 1860. The Christian victory in that year was complete, but it was victory for the Mwelebeng and for Catholicism and only indirectly for France. The Mwelebeng chiefdom brought firmly under its sway outlying and neighbouring clans which had previously at most only indirectly acknowledged its authority. Within the chiefdom itself customary limitations on chiefly power broke down and all overt opposition to Christianity disappeared. 'Clothed in the dual authority of Father Gagnière [the Pouébo missionary] and of Hippolyte [Bonou]',⁷⁴ catechists were sent to all the defeated groups and as far afield as the west coast, vanguards of Catholic proselytism and Mwelebeng influence. By the time of Guillain's arrival in June 1862 the missionaries in the northeast, working with and through powerful Christian chiefs and catechists, had come to exercise a broad control over many aspects of daily life and over relationships between Melanesians and other Europeans, including representatives of the government. This situation appalled Guillain and became a major factor in his often brutal campaign to reduce mission influence over Melanesians in temporal matters.⁷⁵ In the context of this paper, however, its main interest lies in its demonstration of the fact that Marists and Mwelebeng, and not colonial

⁷³ Saisset to MM, 1 Feb. 1860, BB4 723, ANM.

⁷⁴ Rougeyron to Poupinel, Oct. 1859, APO.

⁷⁵ Douglas, *op. cit.*, 165-92, 220-87 *passim*; *idem*, 'Bouarate of Hienghène . . .', 51-4.

rulers, became major determinants of group alignments in the northeast between 1860 and mid-1866, when Guillain's anti-missionary and anti-Christian campaign began to erode their position amongst all but their most committed supporters.

The position acquired by the Mwelebeng and the Marists after 1860 also helps explain the stance taken by Bouarate after his repatriation by Guillain and the similar one later adopted by Kahoua. Both remained opponents of the mission, but they became supporters of the government and military allies in Guillain's many expeditions against 'rebellious tribes' both Christian and pagan. Their actions are frequently interpreted in French sources as indicating acknowledgment of their weakness in the face of French arms and by missionaries as further proof of their ferocious hostility to Christianity.⁷⁶ These explanations, however, are incomplete. Bouarate, certainly, had no reason to love the Marists who had engineered his exile and he had no doubt gained some appreciation of the force potentially at the disposal of a European colonial power. Yet his attitude towards the mission/government conflict seems to have been coldly pragmatic⁷⁷ and to have been influenced by factors other than a subservient devotion to the government. Even under Guillain's energetic programme of punitive expeditions followed by the establishment of military posts, much of the northern two-thirds of New Caledonia remained unpacified and the administration was forced to rely heavily on its allies to represent its interests, to protect isolated settlers and traders and to bolster its military capacity. All the major allies after 1863 were aggressively pagan. In the northeast they were all Waap, and they used their favoured position to harass the Oot, especially, with official blessing, the Christian Mwelebeng. Indeed, one result of Guillain's anti-missionary campaign was a tendency for political alignments in the north to revert to an older pattern, as the sphere of influence of the Mwelebeng receded towards earlier limits. Government interference in the internal affairs of allied chiefdoms was minimal and they seem to have continued to operate largely on traditional lines, unlike in the Christian chiefdoms, where the role of consensus in decision-making was undermined by increasing centralization in the hands of the chiefs.⁷⁸ Like Bonou before him, Bouarate took advantage of a new situation to restore the political balance in the north and ultimately to weight it to his own advantage, by extending the authority of his

⁷⁶ E.g. Guillain to MM, 10 Aug. 1863, Carton 26, ANOM; de la Richerie to Guillain, 3 July 1863 (encl. in *ibid.*); Rougeyron to Favre, 21 Oct. 1863, 'Rapports I', APM, ONC; Garnier, 'Voyage à la Nouvelle-Calédonie . . .', 58; *Moniteur* . . ., 14 May 1865.

⁷⁷ Douglas, 'Bouarate . . .', 52-3.

⁷⁸ *Idem*, 'A history . . .', 194-5, 331-46.

chiefdom over neighbouring groups which traditionally had been autonomous or only marginally under Bouarate influence.⁷⁹

Kahoua's motives are more obscure, but were probably similar to and influenced by those of Bouarate, his long-time ally. His ultimate failure to defeat the Christians of Touho, Wagap and Pouébo in 1862, followed by the Wagap expedition and the establishment there of a military post, seem to have contributed to a decline in his prestige as a military leader and to the defection of the coastal parts of his chiefdom. Kongouma henceforth became subject to Touho, a realignment which owed nothing to official interference.⁸⁰ In this context the threat from the growing power in the mountains behind Wagap of another successful war chief, Gondou, and his ally Poindi Patchili may have provided the final impetus to induce Kahoua to change camps. His action cost him what remained of the allegiance of two other coastal districts, Tipindié and Kotoendé, which joined Gondou until Tipindié was compelled by an expedition of the Wagap post early in 1865 to adopt an attitude of sullen acquiescence.⁸¹ To gain an insight into Kahoua's attitude towards his new allies, remarked a French observer in 1865:

... it would suffice to scrutinize this man for a moment; to examine his observant eyes, which missed no detail, and which followed each of our gestures and movements; to catch unawares the scornful smile or the hatred etched on his sinister countenance, when a young soldier heedlessly passed near him. One would especially have needed to understand the derisive remarks that he made about us to the warriors who surrounded him and which provoked them to peals of contemptuous laughter.⁸²

EVENTS concerning Gondou and Poindi Patchili constitute the final of my three case studies. They are dealt with only briefly, a consequence of lack of space rather than a reflection of their relative importance in the political history of the period, which was substantial. Gondou's aggressive political expansion considerably predated his entry into French consciousness after 1862, when both he and Poindi Patchili fought on the pagan (Kahoua's) side.⁸³ It seems to have

⁷⁹ Idem, 'Bouarate . . .', 54-5.

⁸⁰ *Moniteur* . . ., 14 May 1865. Kahoua was said to be resident once more at Kongouma in 1866. Ibid., 11 Nov. 1866.

⁸¹ Guillain to MM, 3 Sept. 1865, BB4 847, ANM; *Moniteur* . . ., 14 May 1865. It was reported in 1866 that the chief of Kotoendé had 'recently declared again his formal intention to remain in a state of rebellion against us', and attacked Kahoua. Ibid., 11 Nov. 1866.

⁸² Garnier, loc. cit.

⁸³ On Gondou and Poindi Patchili in the 1860s see Guillain to MM, 3 Sept., 3 Oct., 2 Nov. 1865 (incl. encls.), BB4 847, ANM; Guillery to Guillain, 26 July 1865 (encl. in Guillain to MM, 3 Sept. 1865, BB4 847, ANM), Carton 26, ANOM; 'Bordereau des documents joints au Rapport adressé le 3 Octobre 1865 à Son Excellence le Ministre', ibid.; *Courrier du Havre* (Le Havre), 14 Jan. 1866; Guillain to MM, 19 Feb. 1869, ibid.; *Moniteur* . . ., 29 Jan., 14 May, 30 July, 6 Aug., 17 Sept., 1, 29 Oct., 12 Nov. 1865, 9 Sept., 11

been related to an already ancient, on-going movement of *Paci* speakers into regions occupied by speakers of the *Aeke* (Koné region on the west coast) and *Camuki* (region of Touho and Cape Bayes) tongues. Though the movement seems initially to have been peaceful, the *Paci* speakers ultimately formed a loose military confederation, which under Gondou became an attempt to conquer and establish political control over the whole region from Koné in the west to Tiwaka and Amoa in the east.⁸⁴ Gondou was particularly able, aggressive and ambitious and possessed powerful protective magic, while it is perhaps not insignificant that he belonged by birth to one network of identification and by adoption to its rival.⁸⁵ His activities seem to have transcended the operation of such loyalties. In 1865 Kahoua rebuffed his request for an alliance and subsequently made considerable efforts to encourage active French intervention against his former ally.⁸⁶ Fear and hatred of Gondou and desire for vengeance drove otherwise unpacified and sometimes virtually uncontacted groups into the French camp. One such case was the chief Mango⁸⁷ and his people, who had been driven by Gondou from their former lands at Koné during the 1850s and forced to take refuge at Voh and Gatope. In 1865 a French expedition, in which Kahoua and Bouarate participated, descended on Gatope to avenge the murder of several Europeans and found a willing ally in Mango, who implicated Gondou in the deaths and successfully directed the French forces against him, though it is unclear whether he had in fact been involved. Whatever Gondou's previous perceptions of the French, their alliance with several of his most bitter enemies and the events of 1865 ensured his future enmity towards them. He was reported, probably apocryphally, to have exclaimed in (a French version of) Pidgin English, ' "*Frenchmann od same pouaca [pig]: supposite I look one, I vomite*" '.⁸⁸

In 1869 Gondou's Melanesian and European enemies combined to bring about his downfall. A disgruntled opponent, possibly a kinsman or affine, betrayed his whereabouts to the commandant of the Wagap post. The latter accompanied a war party of native fusiliers and Amoa and Ounoua warriors who

Nov. 1866, 24 Feb. 1867, 14 Feb. 1869; Vincent to Poupinel, 25 July 1867, 20 June 1869, APO; Garnier, op. cit., 33-60 passim; Guiart, *Structure* . . . , 107-10; Ulysse de la Hautière, *Souvenirs de la Nouvelle-Calédonie: voyage sur la côte orientale* (Paris 1869), 169-200 passim; Patouillet, op. cit., 47-9, 135-6.

⁸⁴ Guiart, *L'organisation sociale* . . . , 22, 27-9; idem, *Structure* . . . , 107-10; Leenhardt, *Notes d'ethnologie* . . . , 261-2.

⁸⁵ Guiart, *Structure* . . . , 107.

⁸⁶ E.g. *Moniteur* . . . , 29 Jan., 14 May 1865, 24 Feb. 1967.

⁸⁷ Though Mango had few dealings with the French before 1865, he had long enjoyed amicable relations with sandalwood traders, most of whom were Australian. Shineberg, op. cit., 76-7, 165-6. He belonged to the same alliance network as Kahoua. Guiart, op. cit., 120-1, 136-9.

⁸⁸ Patouillet, op. cit., 48.

managed to surprise Gondou and kill him.⁸⁹ His death was essentially a Melanesian affair, in which advantage was taken of the presence of the post to redress local grievances. Poindi Patchili remained anti-French, but at liberty despite an occasional punitive expedition, until the 1880s when he was captured and exiled.

There is no doubting the ultimate hostility felt by Gondou and Poindi Patchili towards the French, but it was the major determinant neither of their actions nor of their status in their own society, as French sources tend to assume. They were not anti-colonial resistors but became rivals of the French for regional hegemony. In their mountain strongholds they were independent and generally beyond the reach of French arms, except on the rare occasions when the latter penetrated inland in concert with Gondou's local enemies. It was clearly inevitable that two expansionist military régimes, both bent on conquest and occupation of the same territory, should eventually collide. It is interesting that the French were widely seen by Melanesians as the lesser of two evils.

A HISTORICAL study of violent conflict in a colonial context, like any study of human interaction, should examine the meaning of events and processes to the various individuals, groups and categories of people involved and their motives in their own terms. The explanatory process must partly be couched in cultural and institutional terms, especially when it involves interaction between members of very different cultural and social systems, but this approach is inadequate if it ignores internal differentiation within each of the main socio-cultural blocs. The political situation in New Caledonia was never monochrome, spatially or over time, and hence account must be taken of local and regional differences and of change, both internally and externally induced.

Three related points require final comment or emphasis: the relevance in the context discussed of long-standing regional patterns of identification, alliance and enmity; the weak or intermittent impact of colonial rule over much of the island; the resultant heavy reliance of the French on Melanesian agency. The French were sorely troubled when confronted in the north by concerted military action beyond the purely local level, since they had expected that the extreme fragmentation of local groups would lead to rapid pacification.⁹⁰ The traditional networks were not absolute determinants of group or individual action, however, but rather provide one set of factors in terms of which group

⁸⁹ Guiart, *op. cit.*, 107-10; *Moniteur* . . ., 14 Feb. 1869.

⁹⁰ Tardy de Montravel to MM, 27 Apr. 1854, Carton 40, ANOM; du Bouzet to MM, 14 Feb. 1855, *ibid.*

alignments may be traced and explained. Other factors, such as military weakness or defeat at the hands of traditional or more recent enemies, the existence of long-standing reciprocal marriage alliances with clans identified with the opposite network,⁹¹ individual ambition and so on, could in particular instances prove more compelling. Furthermore the regional networks did not provide a basis for a genuine anti-colonial resistance movement, even had such a thing been conceivable or necessary at this time. They did not allow for mass mobilization; on a regional or island-wide basis they divided as much as they united; unanimity was difficult to attain; alliances tended to break up once limited objectives had been achieved or setbacks suffered. In other words, the wars of the early colonial period tended, on the Melanesian side, to be fought in traditional terms — in the heat of anger. Deeply felt and nurtured grievances and fears did exist against both Melanesian foes and newcomers, plus long-term plans for their redress involving clans over a wide area, but a flash-point was generally needed to spark action and each phase of a war was usually brief. Furthermore, Melanesians may have expected the French to react in similar ways: to give up once serious losses had been suffered and to stop once honour had been satisfied. Gondou in this sense seems to have been as unusual a phenomenon as the French. In retrospect his activities probably helped more than hindered the French cause because they stimulated widespread Melanesian revulsion and readiness to forge the new alliance which ultimately killed him.

Co-operation by Melanesians with the French clearly played a vital role in the piecemeal pacification of New Caledonia. In each of the cases discussed some Melanesians allied with the French or chose to act in ways which ultimately aided the French cause: as Christians, subordinates, allies, auxiliaries, guides, native fusiliers, and in more indirect ways, as traders, labourers or producers for the Noumea market. Sometimes they acted from compulsion but more often to serve their own best interests. The capacity for united action on a regional basis was not restricted to opponents of the French and in the long run French 'divide-and-rule' tactics were to be successful, though applied on a wider scale than was originally anticipated. The co-operation of Melanesians, with their insider's knowledge of country, local methods of warfare and local psychology, was to prove the single most important factor in the conquest in detail of New Caledonia. By 1870, however, that conquest was still only in its early stages — indeed, it was to regress during the early 70s. Beyond the pacified south and a limited radius of the posts, few of

⁹¹ Guairt, *L'organisation sociale* . . . , 26; idem, *Structure* . . . , 106.

which were retained after Guillain's departure, the French 'governed' through their allies, most of whom they hardly governed at all. The relationship between the government and its pagan allies in the 1860s was essentially equal and evidently mutually satisfying.

The 'thick description' of a variety of conflict situations in New Caledonia to 1870 demonstrates that none of the categories of explanation employed in earlier studies is sufficiently comprehensive to provide a general model for violent conflict in colonial societies, though the latter two are useful as partial explanations in particular instances. Superficially each of the case studies could be broadly categorized: the first as 'resistance and collaboration'; the second as 'continuation of local politics in a colonial setting'; the third as 'clash of rival contenders for regional hegemony'. Yet these labels do little justice to the subtlety, complexity and dynamism of the range of violent conflict and alliance demonstrated between French and Melanesians and between Melanesians, nor to the variety of Melanesian motives and perceptions which emerged. The latter, too, often altered radically over time in response to changing circumstances, leading to a change of stance by individuals and groups. In contexts as diverse and mutable as these no single explanatory formula nor all-inclusive category is adequate. A more appropriate methodology stressing variety and change and based on dense historical analysis of particular situations needs to be adopted before useful generalizations can be made.



TE RANGI HIROA ESSAY COMPETITION 1978

The trustees of the Te Rangi Hiroa Trust Fund have pleasure in announcing the winner of the 1978 essay competition. The prize has been won by Ray Wood of Macquarie University. The runner up was Beverley Anne Miller, also a student of Macquarie University. The winner of the Pacific Universities Prize was Mr Herman Vaai of the University of the South Pacific. Students and teachers of Pacific History are reminded that entries should be submitted before Christmas each year, stating whether the essay is submitted for the open competition, or for the competition among Pacific Island universities. Entries should be addressed to:

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