Jean Guiart: Methodology, Fieldworker, Debates and Politics in Ethnology

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Abstract : Guiart designed a methodology that, instead of working with a single or a few informants, consisted in collecting exhaustive records or 'inventories' of all formalized social relations, which is necessary to understand kinship and social systems, and to translate the complexity of behaviours, strategies and relativity of norms, in the frame of various relational levels. Thus, he criticized structuralism's kinship models and functionalism's a-historical societies, with people following, possibly unconsciously, unchangeable ancestral rules. His long fieldwork practice made him aware of the various ways indigenous people use anthropologists, including himself, to get advantages from colonial administration, based on 'manipulations' of oral tradition. He is also well known for his frequent bitter criticisms of his colleagues and heated debates that ensued, particularly about New Caledonia.

Keywords: Jean Guiart, Anthropological methodology, structuralism, kinship systems, authenticity, critics, Vanuatu, New Caledonia

INTRODUCTION

Ethnology had a more exotic than scientific beginning and produced various fictions, with functionalism and structuralism, developed in the early twentieth century, appearing less and less satisfactory as field studies increased. Guiart challenged Lévi-Strauss's kinship structures and the presupposition of a-historical societies as early as the 1960s (Guiart, 1966; Lévi-Strauss and Guiart, 1968; see also Godelier, 2013). He developed an innovative method, applying the statistical principle of exhaustiveness to qualitative data. This method, which has almost no successor, except for genealogical coverage, nevertheless deserves to be evaluated in its results. A man of the field, Guiart also set out principles for collecting information from the local populations, whose strategies he knew well in relation to the colonists, the missions and the colonial power. He taught that the ethnologist must beware of being used or, in his words, 'manipulated' as an intermediary between the colonised and the administration in order to obtain various advantages, a subject that, with few exceptions, ethnologists do not address, presenting the information received as purely scientific material. Guiart is also known for his

numerous and often acerbic criticisms of his colleagues' work, some of which have led to heated debates outside the bounds of good scientific conduct.

I will first outline Guiart's method in data collection, analysis and field practice, illustrating or challenging it with examples from North Malekula (Vanuatu) that I have studied, with an extension of his method to indigenous ethnographic literature, the writings of Racrac Charley (Rallu, 2020). I will assess the contribution of his method in relation to earlier practices and the theories they led to, adding a critique of kinship diagrams representing a classificatory system in a non-classificatory terminology. The second part will present the social and political circumstances of information gathering, and different forms of 'manipulation' of Europeans and traditional narratives. Finally, we will briefly consider Guiart as a critic of his colleagues. These three parts are closely related, with Guiart basing his criticisms on methodological flaws or 'manipulated' versions of myths and history, in relation to the political situation.

1. THE METHOD OF JEAN GUIART

1.1 Information gathering in ethnology in the Jean Guiart method

Scientific research is fundamentally based on the completeness and quality of the data and its analysis, as well as on the respect of ethical rules. Guiart followed these principles, which led him to move away from the fathers of ethnology who worked with a single informant or, at best, a few selected informants. According to him, "*all members of a population have something to teach the ethnologist.*" (Guiart, 2012: 26). This led him to make 'inventories', or sociological censuses, i.e. an exhaustive collection of the formalised relationships in society, which is essential for understanding the functioning of a system. He thus recorded the various hierarchical positions, relationships between chiefdoms, lineages (including their externalised branches), their mythical places, animal or plant symbolic affiliations, their ritual functions, etc. He asked that the information collected be localised, "*symbolic affiliations [...] linked to the vocabulary of toponymy*" (26), because in Vanuatu and New Caledonia, societies are inscribed in the soil, and that it be collected with the vernacular terms and traditional names - and not the surnames used by the administration's civil registry, which are the objects of various strategies and manipulations[1], freely declared at the time of the creation of the civil registry[2] and fixed for future generations. It is indeed necessary to know all the elements of a system in order to be able to describe it and understand its functioning. Guiart warned against "*the danger of establishing, from individual cases, models against which to confront reality.*" (2012 : 26). In my opinion, a few dozen cases are still very insufficient to capture the complexity of a

[1] Thus, Chief Kaku gave one of his sons to the Assessor's lineage to bring it under his authority, despite the latter's opposition. He later had him registered as such in the civil registry, which was created in preparation for Vanuatu's independence.

[2] According to Leblic (in JSO 154), Guiart sometimes intervened in the constitution of the civil registration.

social system. For example, interviews with some informants have resulted in 'ethnocentric' theoretical diagrams - using Western kinship terminology - representing the preferential marriage with the cross-cousin as a four-degree kinship marriage, giving a very inaccurate view of the functioning of a classificatory system and of individual behaviours because, in the Oceanian kinship system, marriages are only allowed with at least 6 - and often much more - degrees of kinship (see below). There are also particular local rules such as, in North Malekula, the 'return of a granddaughter' of the given wife. This rule is observed by the Small Nambas of the North-east Malekula islets in the context of sister exchange, real or mostly classificatory, but in Nort-west Malekula it is practised in triangular relationships[3], while maintaining the same kinship terms (Rallu, 1985: 197- 198). Later, the study of genealogies from several clans showed that, under a classificatory system, there were potentially a large number of wives. It was also found that the choice of spouse took into account 'political' and other relationships[4]. Then, genealogical coverage of large areas revealed that proportions of marriages, as high as one in five or more, were not with a 'preferred' wife. Social systems, which are much more complex than kinship systems, obviously also require comprehensive data to be studied properly.

For Guiart, the worst way to collect information is through interviews because

"G*eneral questions provoke general answers*" (2012: 29-30). "*It is in the ethnologist's interest to let himself be led by the people themselves, once the method of investigation has been made explicit, by actual demonstration and not by means of a preliminary theoretical exposition.*" (26); (see also Graille, Leblic, Lindstrom, in JSO 154).

If a general question leads to a general answer, the ethnologist must also be wary of his or her own preconceptions, particularly those linked to the Western patriarchal model, and avoid suggesting an answer in the wording of a question, a problem well known to statisticians drafting a survey questionnaire. Guiart had learned from his field experience that the interviewer might get the 'expected' answer to get rid of a European, the opposite or a more 'surprising' or completely wrong answer to ridicule him. The colonised mocked the Europeans in this way, seeking to make them look ridiculous wherever they talked about them. He also reminded us to be wary of our own 'subjective judgements' or preconceptions and, above all, not to forget that those under investigation often seek to manipulate Europeans: "*the ethnographer is the focal point of diverse strategies*" (Guiart, 2012: 29).

It is therefore always necessary to be lucid about the content of the information gathered. To avoid these pitfalls, he advised making an effort to understand and become accustomed to the complexity of local situations by listening to the people concerned. Information about the functioning of social institutions and personal behaviour should be recorded in a way that can be verified later: dated, located, named and detailed - but he did not do this regularly (Ballard, in JSO 154). One approach to comprehensive data collection and variants of oral tradition is

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3 There is therefore no two-way exchange, but a triangular or circular exchange.

4 This also shows that kinship systems give an incomplete view of spouse choice.

to consider the differences, for instance "*the 'opposition' between public language and private statements - which allow for cross-checking*" (Guiart, 2012: 26).

1.2 Information analysis in Jean Guiart's method

The analysis should be based on a "*constant recourse to data completeness and totality of variants*" (Guiart, 2012: 26). For Guiart, any limitation of information leads to a simplifying and inaccurate vision, or even to a fiction. Only by taking into account the diverse positions and relationships of the actors in the various domains can one understand how the system works, whereas general or poorly posed questions lead to a normative model, which is rarely followed in reality. Guiart's long lists of hierarchical functions, rituals, etc., show the multiplicity of positions and relationships of individuals, lineages and chiefdoms, as well as the complexity of the relationships around which Melanesian societies are organised. This is in contrast to the reductive image of small isolated societies, dominated by a chief, with a few dignitaries and the common people relegated to the indistinction of 'subjects', conveyed by colonial ideology, even though there is a large number of functions and prerogatives. This vision of indigenous societies in fact justified colonisation and Christianisation. Guiart thus opposed the early structural-functionalist theories, according to which decisions are framed by strict rules in which the actors follow 'automatisms' (see below).

With regard to the myths, even if all the variants were available, he recognised that one should not hope to arrive at historical facts, except, on certain points, by resorting to archaeology, because each variant translates and justifies claimed political positions. In this respect, he warned against certain versions, elaborated after colonisation, with the aim of arrogating to themselves, with the support of the administration, non-traditional rights to power or land (see section 2). Guiart was one of the first to understand myth and its variants as manipulable material, not structurally, as Lévi-Strauss had done, but from a political and land perspective. Myths are 'localised': he said that these stories are only given in the place linked to them, in relation to the spirits of the ancestors, still powerful despite Christianisation, as I have seen with the mythical snake graves in Malekula (Rallu, 2020, annexe 6).

Let us open a parenthesis on the adaptation of this method - which consists in taking into account all the versions of a given theme - to the study of a corpus of texts, the writings of Racrac Charley, Matanvat, North Malekula (Rallu, 2020). Racrac Sale, called Charley by Europeans (ca. 1910 - 1962), was a Melanesian member of the Nekhnel Batikh nakhamal[5], from the Lenelvaklakh chiefdom. He participated in the Cooperative Native Company (also known as Malnatco) from its foundation in 1939. He was, according to his writings, 'indigenous labour officer'. The texts that have come down to us were mainly written for Europeans. They are letters or long 'reports' on events in the villages of North-west Malekula, intended for the administration or Guiart and aimed at influencing the local political situation. They are therefore committed writings and not a diary or a chronicle. Racrac signed all the

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5   Men's long house and patrilineal clan.

written texts that he had translated into English, like letters that he was about to send. His judgement on the impact of colonisation is very perceptive and caustic (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1: 98) and Guiart considered him a good witness of the society of his time.

Following Guiart's methodology, I was able to show that a content analysis of a few 'remarkable' texts does not allow us to understand Racrac's ideas and their evolution. Only the perspective of the corpus and the comparison of all the texts on the same subject shed light on his claims concerning the right to use weapons, to drink alcohol and to be polygamous. These are neither a mark of unreason nor a reflection of a violent nature or a penchant for the bottle or lust, for he otherwise deplores murder and drunkenness as causes of death. It is a demand for equal rights with the Europeans and their auxiliaries: the colonists got drunk, sometimes killed each other, had several Melanesian concubines, and the assessors, indigenous auxiliaries of the administration, were all polygamists. Similarly, it is the variations between his letters to the Resident commissioner, in which he often reports the same facts but with different presentations, that reveal his strategy of demanding cultural and social equality and the evolution of his response to the colonial system, which, in the face of the administration's inertia, led to his pro-independence stance (see section 2).

In the study of the social system, Guiart insisted on the need to have information on old situations and their evolution: the new relationships that could appear while others were no longer active, possibly temporarily for particular reasons, such as deaths or the extinction of lineages. In the field, he frequently went back and forth to see how disagreements and conflicts had been resolved, or not, which allows us to see how a society organises itself and resolves, over time, the problems of rank and function between its various members and lineages, showing the flexibility and constraints of the system. A society is constantly evolving and he was interested in the innovations to the system, observing its permanence and monitoring how it changes and becomes more complex. Within this framework, he saw the relationships between chiefdoms as "*the structures of communication* [...] *well rather than the structures of subordination*" (Guiart, 2012: 30).

Let's take an example from North Malekula. There are several ways of looking at relationships. This is illustrated by the case of three related chiefdoms in the interior east of Matanvat village (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1: 28-29). At Small Nambas New Year ceremonies, the order of presentation of the yam premise is usually identical to that of the seniority of the social groups, Tamalvar I (Botormalav), Tamalvar II (Leneluab) and Lenelvaklakh (Botniar - Lebwet Mul), following the chronology of the migrations of their founder, Tor Tara, to Teste villages[6] (names in brackets), nine generations ago (in 1950). But it follows from Tor Tara's final settlement in Lenelvaklakh that this is 'the father's', and therefore 'superior', or rather genealogically older. Thus, the order of these chieftaincies remains chronological for the presentation of the premises, and 'pseudo-chronological' (genealogical order or number of generations, but also the play of the elder-cadet relationship between Tamalvar I and Tamalvar II) for precedence.

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6 Pre-existing, chiefless population with a 'Big Man' system.

In a broader context, these three chiefdoms were part of the Yarre group, the 'principal' chiefdom (in the Latin sense of origin, or head of the lineage) who created, by splitting up or migrating, ten chiefdoms forming, between them and with the other villages in this area (local chiefdoms or Teste villages), various relational networks. The types of relationship within these networks were matrimonial (with the obligations that follow), hierarchical - or precedence -, ritual, economic, including the partnerships associated with the *nanaki* (or *namanggi*, sacrifices of several hundred pigs) ceremonies and the resulting exchanges and debts of a more economic nature; they also referred to various political, warlike and other alliances. This interweaving of precedence, prerogatives, protocols and alliances demonstrates the complexity of the social fabric in North-west Malekula which requires knowledge of all the various types of functions and relationships to be described and understood correctly. The arrival in Navhav of the founding immigrants from Yarre sixteen generations ago, who were subsequently accepted as chiefs in Teste villages[7] (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1: 24 and 149), was a historical event of considerable socio-political importance. It determined the replacement of the previous Big Man political system that existed among the Teste with a chieftaincy, either through the reception of an external chief or locally: a Big Man becoming a hereditary chief. Later, the establishment of this chieftaincy allowed the introduction of the rite of rank taking within the framework of the *nanaki* and favoured its diffusion. It is also worth noting that Salior, a war chief at the end of the 19th century, had gained ascendancy over the chief of Lenelvaklakh, showing how hierarchical change was possible. These events, well before the questioning of tradition following contact with Europeans and the administrative or missionary presence, show how erroneous is the structural-functionalist presupposition of a-historical societies (see also Guiart, 1952b).

Returning to Guiart's method, the analysis and modelling of the mass of qualitative data collected on the various types of hierarchical or precedence positions, ritual and otherwise, is difficult. Guiart, who was not a statistician, often made his inventories an end in themselves (Ballard, in JSO 154). However, he did make a qualitative analysis of the relationships and networks that emerged from these inventories, sometimes resorting to collaboration with computer scientists (see below). However, one point that Guiart raises relatively rarely is the demotion of maternal lines by the missions. Colonisation and Christianisation, with their strong patriarchal preference, lowered the social position of women, especially in chieftaincy lines, reduced or obliterated their traditional prerogatives and rights over land, (among others, Weiner (1977); Naupa (2009); McDougall (2016). However, he noted the transformation of matrilineal transmission of titles by Presbyterian missions (Guiart, 1992: 243), with women being able to take up *nanaki* titles in North Malekula. He also insisted on the presence of both men and women to make a genealogical record.

This method is rather long, since the collection of the different variants implies meeting all the stakeholders, and requires verifications and feedback that lengthen the duration of the

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7 In North-west Malekula, cadets from the Yarre chiefdom, and from the chiefdoms that came out of it, established chieftaincies with Teste villages that had no chiefs.

survey. The French Institute of Oceania (IFO)[8] for which Guiart worked on his arrival in New Caledonia) was responsible for producing results quickly for the management and development of the colony, limiting the duration of its missions. Nevertheless, one may be surprised by the speed of Guiart's working sessions with the inhabitants (Trépied and Wittersheim, 2019; see also Ballard, Leblic, in JSO 154). In the former case, Guiart was only collecting titles, their hierarchy and field of competence, as well as kinship terms. He recommended short stays of one or two days, as the presence of a European quickly became burdensome in a village. However, his speed of investigation sometimes led to errors, which were partly rectified in later publications. This practice of short stays is questionable. It is true that meetings save time, as they give the 'public' version, accepted by the majority, and corrected later for particular variants. But the ethnologist gains confidence by staying longer and people have time to talk about things that are more or less distant from the subject under study and whose importance was not assumed. However, feedback is still needed to compare the information received in different places and on different occasions.

Arriving in Oceania at a turning point, Guiart developed his method in order to avoid false models, inaccurate or imaginary systems and other fictions that emerge from incomplete information, and to provide evidence for his analyses (Tabani, in JSO 154), which is part of the ethics of scientific research (Adams, in JSO 154). It would be dishonest to give the version of a few people while ignoring those of a majority of lineages and to give, in the final product, the image of a society in which those concerned cannot recognise themselves. Guiart thus broke with the theoretical research whose representatives had unanimously criticised the work of Jomo Kenyatta (1938) - which he often quoted in his lectures -, afraid that they would compete with European 'scholars' with realistic descriptions of tropical worlds and reveal their living conditions under colonisation.

1.3 The field approach according to Jean Guiart

According to Guiart, in the villages, in the midst of people from a different culture, the personality of the investigator, his attitude and his sense of human relations are very important for the quality of the information gathered. On arrival, the ethnologist is observed, as Guiart put it, "living in a glass house"; then he is tested, eventually to be used as an intermediary vis-à-vis the colonial administration, and manipulated by those who seek to have him (re)write history to their advantage.

Guiart also recommended a natural, discreet humility: the ethnologist is there to learn the culture of a society with protocols of civility that it is in his interest to respect in order to distinguish himself from other Europeans, especially the colonists and the administration. In spite of this, he will never be told everything and he must not forget that he himself is part of the contact between different cultures, including the one from which he conducts his investigation and according to the paradigms of which he will organise his analyses and his presentation.

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8 Later became ORSTOM, then IRD.

Many ethnologists did not adapt to the field. They could not bear to live with the local populations, to be observed and manipulated. They naively thought they were welcomed as saviours of traditions that were in danger of being lost and dreamed of discovering the foundations of human societies. Many suffered depression, either in the field or on their return and the number of suicides of ethnologists and other researchers involved in 'participant observation' is particularly high, considering the small number of professionals involved. Garanger and Saussol, among others, who followed Guiart's advice to organise research in relation to the Melanesians, and not to arrive 'in conquered country', succeeded well; this is particularly, but not only, important when one has to work on mythical, sacred places, and when one is dealing with subjects related to land.

Guiart sometimes gave recommendations for the 'field' during his lectures. He formally advised against settling with settlers who, according to him, would tell absurd stories and try to influence the researcher with their stereotyped colonialist judgements. Similarly, it would be unwise for the ethnologist to settle at the mission (in the sense of a religious organisation), which always aims to see tradition disappear and be replaced by its doctrine, lest the local population hide from him everything they do not want the missionary to learn. In a discussion with a colleague close to missions, it appeared to me that he was unaware of the relationship between churches and domestic and sexual violence in relation to the very patriarchal support given to men, even though there is a three-volume work on this subject, including several chapters on Pacific islands countries (Blyth et al, 2018; Rallu, 2018a). He was probably also unaware that most pastors' wives complain about their husbands' infidelities as much as other women, particularly in Vanuatu and Fiji where many have told me about it, and I have heard similar echoes from female ethnologists in PNG.

If the ethnologist affiliates with a political, religious or other group, he or she blocks access to certain information and people and becomes their spokesperson. This advice is now applicable in a post-colonial context. The instrumentalisation of Europeans by religious and traditionalist influence groups is now a common practice in Pacific Island countries, challenging democratic values and hindering the work of international and regional organisations in adopting international conventions and related projects, sometimes with delays of more than five years, and affecting areas such as: updates of the code of laws, law enforcement, transparency and quality of statistical data, civil society, development, poverty reduction, fight against corruption, HIV prevention, gender equality and domestic and sexual violence (Rallu, 2018a; UNWomen, 2020).

Guiart taught and practised respect and listening to the Melanesians. He was appreciated for his way of living with them and his position at their side in the face of the various authorities of colonial society. When I arrived in a village, claiming to be his pupil, I was asked a few questions to make sure I knew him and I was welcomed; however, I was still being observed and tested.

1.4.- Evaluation of Jean Guiart's method

Inventories of objects, facts, clans, titles, etc., are data that allow statistical analyses (frequency calculations), but above all they make it possible to study the relationships between the various elements. The results are valid if the data are exhaustive or based on a representative sample, otherwise they are likely to be biased or even erroneous. Sociology, both quantitative and qualitative, medicine and other sciences use multivariate models including a large number of variables, some of which, including their interaction, have a significant effect. Such models and the variables selected may distinguish various types of causality (direct, indirect, endogenous, structural, etc.) related to the nature of the variables that explain the phenomenon under study; they may also reveal strategies. Archaeologists also carry out exhaustive surveys of monumental and habitat structures by type, for demographic and sociological purposes, to study populations, past societies and their evolution according to demographic growth, all of which are compared with changes in agricultural techniques and social relations, such as the development of chiefdoms (Kirch, 2010; Kirch and Rallu, 2007). Recently, archaeologists have begun to use multi-layered GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping models that are similar to multivariate models to study the settlement patterns of pre-contact New Caledonia (Dotte-Sarout et al., 2013).

Guiart's work, applying a comprehensive methodology to qualitative information (or data) from several domains, is akin to multivariate analysis and has produced non-quantitative, but nonetheless compelling results (see below). Qualitative sociology also now uses this type of analysis, on samples of more than a hundred people, to study the causes of behaviour.

As a man of the field, Guiart had little interest in, and was even hostile to, theories. Moving from systems, or structures[9] to general theories seemed problematic to him. Guiart debated his thesis Structure de la chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud (Guiart, 1963) with Lévi- Strauss who, in his defence report, contested the validity of the use of the term 'structure'. In his response, Guiart (1966) contrasted structures and models and said that, from a formalist point of view, Lévi-Strauss used this concept in too restrictive a sense. Later, he challenged Lévi-Strauss' structures in the field of kinship (Guiart, 1968).

These debates around terms covering different concepts according to the authors show the relativity of theoretical reflection which most often consists of synthesising knowledge from different sources. Theories are, in essence, destined to fall into disarray. This is true in the hard sciences, but even more so in the social sciences, where actors are capable of changing their behaviour and approach. Thus, norms are not absolute, they change according to time and are only followed by a statistically variable proportion of the population, as shown by the gap between the norm of a preferential marriage and reality (see above). - As another example, a rule as fundamental as the prohibition of adultery, theoretically punishable by death for both offenders, is belied by our genealogies of the Small Nambas of North Malakula which include frequent adoptions, sometimes recognised as adulterous children. Given the length of marriage negotiations and its cost, killing one's wife was avoided; moreover, it

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9 Guiart preferred the term 'structure' to 'system', which he saw as fixed. He also opposed the restrictive concept of 'structure' in the sense of Levi-Strauss (Guiart, 1966).

implied an interruption of the matrimonial exchanges, as one's group of origin lost the benefits associated with its position as wife giver, and a reconciliation had to take place. There was therefore the possibility of settling an adultery by fine or divorce (with repayment of - part of - the dowry back to the husband) and possibly adoption, especially between chiefs; but between chiefs and Teste the rules were stricter (Rallu, 2018; 2020: 31 and 271).

Guiart has also always been wary of the school concepts that guide scientific analyses, judging them to be standardised and unsuited to local realities. Nor do they make it possible to explain social behaviour or strategies, which combine several factors at different levels - why choose such and such a woman from among the many crossed-cousins one has, or migrate to such and such a clan from among all those with whom one is in contact, etc - and do not offer an overview of the different criteria involved in individual choices and the functioning of society, nor of its reactions to an internal or external problem. In 1974, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, visiting Paris to prepare the Melanesia 2000 festival, attended a course given by Guiart and summed up his impressions of the work of ethnologists as follows: "*Ethnologists slice and dice reality, but that's not how we do it. Guiart gives a more accurate picture of Kanak social processes, but still incomplete.*" (Bensa, pers. comm.). This statement reflects the opposition between a segmented analysis, based on various structural-functionalist school concepts, and a 'model' involving different relational networks that more accurately reflects the world in which Melanesians live.

The results of Guiart's method can be seen clearly in his analysis of the paroxysmal case of the John Frum movement. This reaction to colonisation and Christianisation was seen by the administration and its predecessors, according to their preferred informants, as a spontaneous, mythical or irrational, 'cargoist' reaction to the changes that had occurred since European contact. Guiart (1952a; 1956), with his inventory method, was the first to show the extent of the movement, its various aspects and causes in relation to local culture and society, their variants, and how different groups positioned themselves in relation to it (Tabani; Lindstrom, in JSO 154). His extensive work on elective or hereditary titles, which he had processed in collaboration with computer programmers (Espirat et al., 1973), provided a comprehensive representation of the functioning of the title system in South-central Vanuatu. His socio-demographic inventory of North Malekula (1952b) showed the process of disintegration of the Big Nambas chiefdoms that he was the first to study, but the intense depopulation of North West Malekula made it difficult to describe the complex process of relations between chiefs and Teste[10] beyond a few specific cases.

In New Caledonia, this method led to his long presentations of the actors, their origins and mythical places, present and past relationships and also the need to open up new 'roads', within the framework of systems and networks, which sometimes seem confused or 'free style'

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10 There were chiefs and Teste in the same village, following the appearance of chieftaincies in Teste villages, in the form of Big Man who became hereditary or chiefs of migratory origin (see above). It is difficult to know the various processes because of depopulation, as many Teste chieftaincies and villages have become extinct.

to some (see below, Bensa and Rivierre, 1984: 104), but which translate well the specificities of Kanak societies.

Guiart's analyses, close to local realities at a fine level, based on the exhaustive recording of functions, their holders and the relationships between the various domains structuring society, led him to distance himself from the theories in force after the war. Having found the theoretical constructs of preferential marriage and free-speech relationships to be inaccurate, he challenged the structuralism of kinship. In an article (Lévi-Strauss and Guiart, 1968)[11], he questioned the validity of structures at the level of behaviour, having found the existence of restrictive practices in supposedly 'free speech' premarital relationships. Free-speech was not allowed for girls, even with men in preferential marriage relationship - just like between classificatory 'brothers' and 'sisters' -, because several men were possible mates for them. Free-speech became only possible with the future husband, after they were engaged by exchange of ceremonial gifts and part of reverse dowry. In this paper, Guiart also presented the role of different relational domains (political, ritual or otherwise) in the choice of spouse, and the frequency of exceptions, revealing much more complex behaviour than that recognised by the structurist.

In the genealogies he had noted, Guiart had noticed a large majority of distant degrees of kinship (eight, ten or even more). But he did not go far enough in this direction. I have observed, from my North Malekulan and Marquesan genealogical coverages, that the diagrams of kinship relationships are merely a representation - or transposition - of classificatory systems in European, or Western, non-classificatory kinship terminology, giving a false view of degrees of kinship between spouses. This is particularly the case for the Oceanian system, which calls descendants of a lineage, patri- or matrilineal, over several generations 'brothers' and 'sisters', i.e. many are cousins (in the Western sense), some with distant degrees of kinship. The socalled 'preferential' marriage to the matri- or patrilateral cross-cousin, usually represented by a four-degree kinship diagram in Western terminology (Figure 1), is in fact forbidden, as in the Pacific Islands marriages are only permitted with at least six - but in fact eight or more - degrees of kinship. In the genealogies of the Marquesas Islands (Rallu, 1990), out of more than 3,800 marriages, I found only 0.5 per cent of these reprobate marriages, often forcing couples to elope. The exchange of sisters, often in marriages with the matrilateral crosscousin, is not practised over two successive generations with the same clan, as the degrees of kinship would be far too close. In Vao (North Malakula), as elsewhere in the Pacific Islands, it is practised several generations apart, ensuring distant degrees of kinship, otherwise it is prohibited. In the genealogies I collected in Vao and the far North Malekula, out of 623 marriages, I found no marriages where the relationship of the spouses was of degree 4 and less than 1 per cent of marriages of degree 6 (Rallu, 1985: 198-199). The representation of preferential unions and other types of marriages in a classificatory system by diagrams based on Western terminology is therefore totally inaccurate. Geneticists working on the transmission of genes from genealogical information, use only parentage by

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11 Article providing information on kinship and matrimonial strategies in New Caledonia (where Lévi-Strauss never worked) and to which Lévi-Strauss seems to have contributed only a short final note.

sex and degrees of relationship: they have abandoned all reference to the misleading structuralist diagrams.

In the representation of preferential marriage with the matrilateral cross-cousin, based on nonclassificatory Western terminology (Figure 1), brothers and sisters are real brothers and real sisters. Thus, (5), son of (1) and (4), marries (8) who is the daughter of his mother's brother (3) - or his matrilateral cross-cousin (maternal uncle's daughter in common Western parlance) - the degree of relatedness between the spouses in this marriage, through the common ancestor in the couple on the top right, is 4, which is forbidden in the Oceanian system. Similarly, (7), son of (2) and (3), marries (6), daughter of his mother's brother (1), i.e. 4 degrees of kinship passing through the couple on the top left. Moreover, the first exchange of sisters is replicated in the next generation, with the result that the matrilateral cross-cousin is also a patrilateral cross-cousin, which is rarely the case in the Oceanian system where sister exchanges are not practised in the next generation, but often several generations apart, and are not systematically practised with the same *nakhamal* (see below).
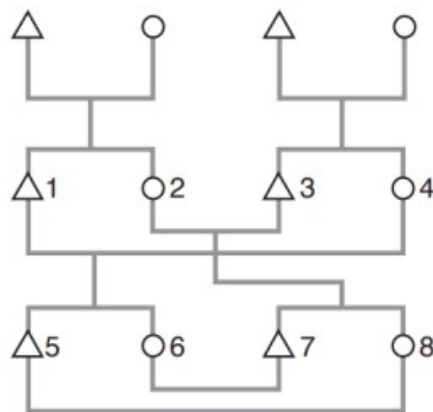

Figure 1: Preferential marriage to the matrilateral cross-cousin and sister exchange, represented in Western terminology by structuralism.
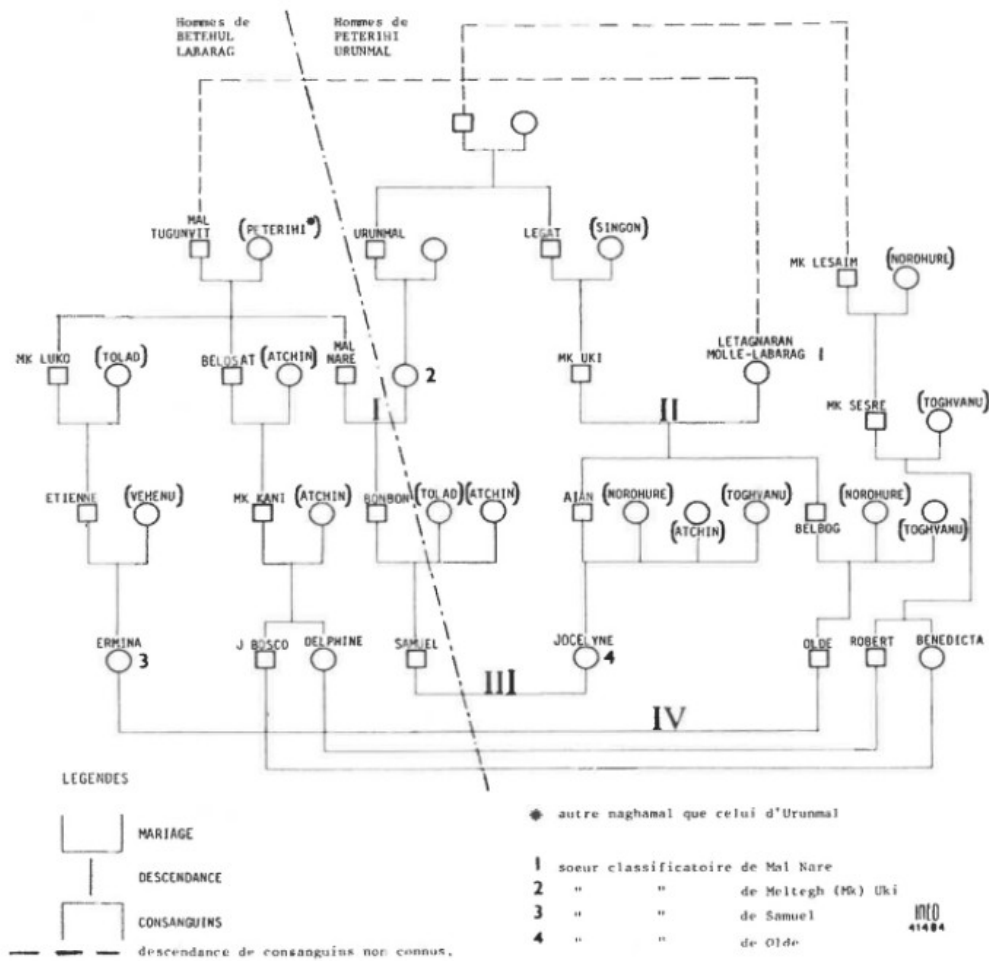
FIGURE 1. — Exemple de mariages entre Betehul (*naghamal* Labarag dont est issu Molle) et Peterihi (*naghamal* de Urunmal). Deux échanges de sœurs classificatoires apparaissent (mariages I et II, et III et IV) à une génération d'intervalle. Le degré des conjoints du mariage III est 8. Le degré d'apparentement des conjoints du mariage IV est supérieur. Jocelyne « retourne » dans le *naghamal* d'où est venue sa grand'mère vu l'origine commune de Molle et Labarag. De même Ermina, petite-fille classificatoire d'une femme de Pererihi : (2), en l'absence de petite-fille réelle de (2), « retourne » dans le *naghamal* d'Urunmal.

On observe aussi deux échanges de sœurs réelles dans les mariages de Jean Bosco avec Benedicta et de Robert avec Delphine.

N.B. Ce n'est là qu'une partie de la généalogie de Labarag (Betehul) et du *naghamal* d'Urunmal (Peterihi).

Figure 2: Sister exchanges and preferential marriage with the matrilateral cross-cousin in Vao genealogies - classificatory kinship. NB. For the sake of clarity, sisters, real or classificatory, who are not part of an exchange between the nakhamal Labarag and Urunmal, have been removed from this genealogy extract.

In a classificatory system, sister exchanges rarely involve actual sisters. In this extract from Vao's genealogy (Figure 2), in the three cases where information is available to count degrees of relatedness, Mk Uki and Olde give a degree 4 classificatory sister to Mal Nare and Samuel respectively, who gives a degree 6 classificatory sister to Olde. The degrees of relatedness between the spouses in these marriages are 8 in marriage III and at least 9 in marriage IV. Thus, Samuel marries Jocelyne (4), his matrilateral cross-cousin (daughter of his mother's

brother) in classificatory terminology or, in Western terminology, granddaughter of a classificatory brother (Mk Uki) (all men of the exogamous Urunmal *nakhamal* being brothers[12] of his grandmother (2) - similarly for the marriage of Olde and Ermina, considering Molle as part of Labarag at the time of the intital exchange. A man has maternals of several origins, through his mother, grandmother and beyond, whose kinship relations are also classificatory, their importance varying with the frequency with which these links are reactivated, which is particularly the case in the exchange of sisters, even several generations apart. In fact, what takes precedence is the return of the granddaughter of the given woman, whose nakhamal has a strong maternal significance, as this link is periodically reactivated. There is an exchange of real sisters between J. Bosco and Robert, but there have been none in these lines for at least three generations. The degrees of relationship between spouses in these marriages (Delphine and Robert, and J. Bosco and Benedicta) are at least 7 - but probably much more, as Mal Tugunvit's Peterihi wife is not from the Urunmal nakhamal. Thus, the reality of marriages in a classificatory system is far removed from the representation given by diagrams based on Western terminology, such as struturalism, which is false at the individual and lineage levels; for, lineages had matrimonial exchanges two by two with several other lineages - as shown by the villages of origin, from Vao or outside the islet, of the other wives -, and alternated exchanges between lineages to increase the distance between spouses measured by the degrees of kinship[13] and to avoid the superimposition of patri- and matri-lateral cross-cousins. Regarding the 'return of the granddaughter', Ermina (3) returns directly (2) to the nakhamal of Urunmal. However, with the separation of branches of a nakhamal into autonomous nakhamals in case of ancient common origin, there is some latitude to consider that the return of the granddaughter has been accomplished: thus, Letagnaran (1), coming from Molle, separated from Labarag, is returned to Labarag by Jocelyne (4). The system of classificatory kinship, as it is actually experienced, appears to be far more complex than anything imagined by the structuralists with their "primitive" school diagrams. Finally, it appears that the kinship terms by which members of a lineage are designated are determined by the distance from a common ancestor which can lead to a lineage being considered as a separate or independent nakhamal, making intermarriage possible. Genealogical, and biological, remoteness is the basis for the origin of nakhamal (clans) by splintering, alongside other causes: disputes, migrations, adoptions, etc. Thus, the system is constantly evolving and becoming more complex, with the exogamous unit evolving from the double-village a century ago (e.g. Betehul-Toghvanu) to the village, to the nakhamal and to the new nakhamal (from an older nakhamal).

Kinship systems, which are the basis of societies because they define incest, are also subject to change, as shown by the discrepancy between practices and terminology among the Small Nambas of North-west Malekula mainland (see above). This is even more the case for less

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[12]Taking into account the generation, they call each other sons, fathers, grandfathers, etc.

[13] And also to diversify and expand their social and political relationships.

fundamental social rules and practices, such as the relations between chieftaincies or between chiefs and Teste (see above), in contrast to the presupposition of a-historical societies, following immutable models whose origin remained to be discovered. Structuralism and functionalism have presented a vision of stereotyped, even unconscious, behaviour which is totally inaccurate and leads to the concept of 'primitive thought'[14] which is a fiction. Guiart said that he was no longer following Lévi-Strauss when the latter spoke of the collective unconscious[15]: the Melanesians were well aware of what they were doing.

From his observation of the inaccuracy of the structuralist model of kinship, Guiart rejected theoretical approaches that led to the inferiorisation of non-European behaviour. He did not make detailed criticisms of structuralism, functionalism, evolutionism, or their authors, but he did occasionally mention them in his lectures. He also avoided confronting Lévi-Strauss[16], after contradicting him on kinship behaviour, for which he was almost obliged to co-author an article (Lévi-Strauss and Guiart, 1968; see above, note 10). Following this experience, his main challenges to the concept of 'a-historical' societies consisted of analyses showing how Melanesian societies operate between diachronism and synchronicity, sometimes referring to a 'pseudo-chronologism' (Guiart, 1992). Thus, he did not write an exclusively theoretical work, limiting himself to very specific criticisms invalidating the theories in force at the time he began, and cautiously distancing himself from them. - On the other hand, he has engaged in overly aggressive name-calling of his colleagues' writings on specific topics and areas, notably in New Caledonia, but also on Vanuatu and the whole of the insular Pacific.

Through his extensive qualitative data analyses, Guiart has shown that the social behaviours of Melanesians are similar to those of Europeans, analysed by multivariate statistical models. In contrast to simplifying interpretations of stereotypical behaviour according to unchangeable rules, based on limited and inaccurate information, inferiorising non-Europeans, which was part of the justification for colonisation[17], their decisions took into account different relational levels and showed a certain distance from the norm.

2. 'MANIPULATION'

A man of the field, Guiart attached great importance to the circumstances and the sociopolitical situation in which the information was received and he often spoke of

14 It should be noted that, although the concept of 'primitive thought' was mainly used by evolutionism, its basis can be found in structuralism and functionalism.

15 This expression, mainly used by Mauss, was taken up by Lévi-Strauss, at least orally, according to Guiart.

16 Godelier waited decades to publish his critique of Lévi-Strauss, which he had been discussing since the 1970s.

17 Note that, contrary to the claim that colonisation taught indigenous people counting, social life is based on matrimonial, economic and ceremonial exchanges that involve numeracy; bride price, *nanaki,* funeral contributions, etc. were precisely recorded to be returned later (see above).

'manipulation'. For him, this term covered the instrumentalisation of Europeans, particularly ethnologists, to whom the Melanesians told various stories, more or less arranged, to get them to intercede on their behalf before the colonial administration[18] in order to obtain, if not better treatment, at least a loosening of the stranglehold of colonial society, where they were at the bottom of the ladder. They also sought to have them write revisions of myths, local history and tradition to their advantage against other clans. In his early days in the Loyalty Islands, Guiart himself had been misled by a single informant who had told him a fabricated story. Few ethnologists have escaped the manipulation of Melanesians. In Vanuatu, it was a constant tactic to gain superior status or land. In 1978, it soon became clear to me that Racrac's writings were too confrontational to organise a meeting in the manner of Guiart. But shortly before I left, Chief Kaku organised one, hoping to get me to put his position in writing. Several men came afterwards to correct what had been said, without removing any uncertainty; and I used nothing that came out of that meeting directly or indirectly, except what was corroborated by earlier information or obtained in other circumstances. My experience also shows that genealogical 'coverages' (complete records), which make it possible to know the matrimonial alliances, explain a lot of the interviewees' statements and views, or their silences, because of the rule that in-laws, or affines, must not harm each other - without however helping them unless other relations imply it -: they will therefore avoid contradicting each other, preferring not to say anything if they do not agree.

The manipulations associated with the colonial context are, if not ignored, usually absent from the writings of ethnologists, who present the information and data collected as purely scientific material and outside the context in which it was received, often without even naming their informants and their statutory positions. I will first present some of Racrac's writings to show the framework of Melanesian life in colonial society and their stratagems to try to obtain some advantages from Europeans. Then we will compare traditional variants of a myth and those related to the colonial situation to show how they differ.

2.1 The various forms of manipulation in Racrac

Let us quickly present the framework of the relationship between Racrac and the Condominium administration. Racrac was one of the great promoters of the Matanvat Native Company, a cooperative for the production and marketing of copra founded by six chiefs from the North Malekula, with Paul Tamlumlum as its director. This Company was 'registered' in Port Vila in 1939 (without any text governing indigenous enterprises, as they were supposed to be only labour for the colonists) before the Indigenous Lawyer who entrusted the management to a European, Dal Gubbay. In 1952, at the request of the Condominium, his son Donald split it into three branches and renamed it Malnatco (Malekula Native Company); he declared it bankrupt in 1958. Paul Tamlumlum, Racrac and Kaku (chief of Matanvat) were imprisoned several times. First in 1941, when Paul Tamlumlum and Racrac contacted Melanesians in the villages saying that they would earn more by working in the cooperative

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18 It should be remembered that a similar form of instrumentalisation of Europeans is practised in the post-colonial environment (see section 1).

and that it would outgrow the settlers' plantations. The settlers, fearing that they would no longer have a workforce, and the missions, fearing that they would lose their flock, alarmed the administration into taking sanctions: they imprisoned the leaders, fearing that they were facing an anti-European movement; and again in 1947, when the Melanesians returned to their plantations after the Americans left.

During his mission to North Malakula in 1950-1951, Guiart found them again in prison[19] and obtained their early release from Resident Anthonioz, assuring him that the organisation could restart on a purely economic basis. Racrac's writings show the social condition of Melanesians in Vanuatu under colonisation, their attempts to improve it and how they were received by the administration. They thus present a range of the various ways in which Melanesians approached Europeans to try to influence them, to obtain personal benefits, to improve the lot of their fellow human beings, or to worry them. Note that the settlers acted in the same way, pushing the administration to repress the Matanvat cooperative with simple rumours repeatedly accusing it of communism, of 'prophecies' and of forbidding work for Europeans (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1: 67), which was false, as the manager of the cooperative recruited members for his business or to sublet them to other settlers (see above). The immobility of the Condominium administration, which supported the settlers, pushed Racrac towards total opposition to colonisation, nationalism and the demand for independence.

The way in which Racrac tried to manipulate Guiart in 1951, after he had been released from prison with the other leaders of the cooperative, shows the logic of the manipulation and its finesse. Racrac showed Guiart a piece of land he had staked out and told him he would make an airfield for the planes promised by Captain Otto - a cargo theme if ever there was one, especially in the minds of Europeans[20]. In 1978, no one knew about this project and everyone claimed that it was impossible due to the size and relief of the terrain, and Racrac, having worked on the construction of the American bases in Vila and Santo, could not be mistaken. It was an invention for his interlocutor. If his 1947 'prophecies' had included this story, the administration would have had the pickets removed, as it did from the American flag at Matanvat in 1942. Joe Betnasal explained to me that Racrac was then in dispute with Kaku over a piece of land where he had marked out the area he claimed and, according to him - showing how everyone was trying to use the Europeans - he would have asked him to intervene on his behalf (69). Thus, Racrac would have sought to worry Guiart about his aims, and thus the future of the cooperative, waiting for him to advise him to make a plantation there, and he would then have told him his problem and asked for help. But Guiart did not react and the Racrac airfield became part of the cargo literature (Guiart, 1951a; 1951b).

Guiart had been manipulated, he knew it, and this is probably why he did not include his short articles on the cooperative (Guiart, 1951a; 1951b) in the bibliography he gave me to read for

19 For enlisting Big Nambas refugees without giving them their full share, as they did not pay rent for the land they occupied.

20 Racrac, like many Melanesians, held a grudge against the Americans for having dumped or sold jeeps, trucks, refrigerators, etc. to the settlers before they left Santo.

my thesis. Guiart was well aware of the Melanesian strategy of worrying the Europeans in order to be listened to and to make them act in their interests. He told me about the stories of canibalism that the Fijians told the Europeans. Racrac claimed that his great-grandfather, Verlili Maltanas, sacrificed a child of unknown father in a *nanaki*, a fact that Guiart questioned, just as he minimised the frequency of canibalism. Europeans were not insensitive to these stories of violence: before independence, the gendarmes of Norsup worried about a 'return to barbarism'. The Melanesians annoyed the Europeans as best they could... and it worked.

Racrac also tried to manipulate the administration of the Condominium. Because of his ambitions, personal and for the cooperative, which he wanted to give a political and nationalist dimension, he was denounced by the assessor of Matanvat and had to flee to Nouméa in April 1951, from where he wrote a letter (Rallu, 2020, Vol.1: 216) to the Resident commissioner. He accused the assessor of having ordered - which was false - murders whose perpetrators he did not condemn, of favouring his friends by not denouncing them, and of accusing the chiefs of neighbouring villages who limited his power. In contrast, he presented himself as ready to enforce Condominium order, attacking a man who refused to join the New Hebrides Defence Force in 1941 and a schemer. He claimed to have chieftaincy rights on the basis of manipulation of genealogies - in other cases he uses this process to claim land rights, which are totally inadmissible according to tradition. Finally, he was surprised that the assessor was not put in jail and, although he was not baptised, he added a cross sign and a short prayer before his signature, to show his support for the Europeans. Thus, he sought, without explicitly saying so, to have the assessor dismissed and to take his place. The Resident commissioner did not respond. This was a general attitude of the administration: unable to know who was right, it followed its assessors, even if it did not always have full confidence in them. Thus, colonisation resulted in a legal and social mess to the detriment of Melanesians, except for the administration's cronies.

Thus, Racrac, using arguments based on real facts, but interpreted tendentiously, tried to use the very principles of colonisation to get rid of the assessor, or even take his place. In the indirect government system of the Condominium, justice was based on denunciations, which were biased and sometimes false, and the Code de l'Indigénat was the institutionalisation of a double discrimination, as the assessors did not respect the laws themselves, were polygamous and got drunk ; they also usurped land.

In 1954, Racrac threatened the Resident commissioner with the death of the two North-west Malekula assessors, for an incitement to adultery[21] which almost caused a deadly conflict (Rallu, 2020, vol. 2.: 10-12). It was a blackmail, knowing that he was supported by Guiart and Resident Anthonioz, to try again to oust the assessor, and finally he fined them, as chief. In 1955, in a new letter to the Resident commissioner, Racrac went so far as to reverse the logic of colonisation, largely based on the missions, present in the villages on a daily basis,

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21 Adultery, incitement to adultery and alcohol consumption were included in the Indigenous Code.

claiming visions of the Last Judgement[22]: it is the Melanesians resisting colonial power who go to paradise "*men he make throubles from* _orders_ [emphasis added]*, he no go to lift side, he go to right sight, and men no keep* _orders_ *he go to left sight*" (84). It should be noted that in claiming cultural - and social - equality, he uses the same term for traditional and condominial law. The same is true of those who do or do not observe the Adventist prohibitions, which is a mockery; he considered their teaching a disregard for his customs and as a teenager he ran away from their school in Aore. - He agreed with a European woman, who had paid for his trip to Noumea and those of 1951 and 1953, not to send this letter.

The blackmail of 1954 and the use of the Europeans' religion to impose themselves on the colonial administration confirm Guiart's view that exile, even if voluntary - but felt as a consequence of the lack of justice in the colonial system - embitters and radicalises the opponents, leading them to reject everything related to the European presence.

In these three letters, Racrac is manipulating the administration to get help to return to Matanvat. He would never have claimed such arguments in front of the Melanesians without sounding like a madman - the Melanesians laughed at his audacity in saying such things to the Resident commissioners, but many felt the same way - and we do not encounter these themes in his other letters to the condominial administration or to Guiart, where he claims chieftaincy and land rights. Following the failures of his manipulations to make the administration act in a slightly more favourable direction for the Melanesians, Racrac became more and more openly an opponent of the Europeans. In 1956 (142), he contacted Nakomaha to involve him in the cooperative; the latter proposed a separation of the archipelago into zones of influence. Later, he contacted his son, J.W. Nakomaha, to whom he claimed that the cooperative was running a quasi-extraterritorial zone in Santo (198) to get him to participate. Back in Malekula in 1956-1958, he tried to dictate to the colonial adminisration on behalf of opposition movements, signing "*Cooperative Native Company* [and attaching] *movement John Frum [...], Tain Mal Faula, Nord Amprym. Residant mal mweleum Neha. Mol-Valiv. RonoVoru School*" (176).

The dialogue had broken down and he was engaging in a power struggle, including the John Frum movement. But he refused to participate. In July 1957, when Malnatco and the John Frum movement were threatened with further repression, he tried to draw J. W. Nakomaha into an uprising. Aware that this letter could reach the administration, he presented this action as a warning, balancing the fears (expressed in the same word) of the Melanesians of further repression with those of the Europeans in the face of the John Frum movement and the cooperative: "*1,289 peoples full New Hebrides Peoples all _fraid_ [emphasis added] for Tanna and Malekula. All white man in Santo all he _fraid_ too much along Tanna John Frum and Malekula Native Company.*" (208-211).

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22 In a coma, following ill-treatment on his arrival at Lamap prison in 1943, for having walked around in nambas (penis sheath) in Santo, which was forbidden in the towns and coastal villages. Racrac took advantage of the American presence to demonstrate what he saw as a demand for cultural equality, but was interpreted by the administration as opposition to colonisation.

This letter caused great concern to the Resident commissioner of Tanna. Racrac knew how to push the administration to the breaking point and escaped the imprisonments of 1957[23], being then considered without influence. At first sight, Racrac seems extravagant, if not unreasonable, however, his logic follows the bases and processes of colonisation by reversing them. Thus, the manipulation reached levels in him, knowing that he was supported by Guiart and Resident Anthonioz, whom he himself had met on a trip on the Residence ship, that one would hardly imagine - or interpret as unreasonable - what the Europeans were doing.

2.2.- Traditional variants and manipulations in a colonial context

Guiart distinguished between traditional variants and opportunistic manipulations of myths that had emerged in a colonial context to gain advantages from Europeans - which a colleague rejected "These are also political positions [...] and Guiart supported some and condemned others.".

We will now analyse the traditional variants of a myth and compare them with the versions manipulated for Europeans. Following Guiart's method, we will consider all the available versions of the myth of the foundation of the Lenelvaklakh chieftaincy in order to show that different arguments are used according to these types of stories.

We have five versions of the myth of the foundation of the Lenelvaklakh chiefdom, North-west Malekula (see above). According to Chief Kaku's version, Lenelvaklakh was founded by Tor Tara who migrated from Yarre to the Teste of Botormalav, then to the Teste of Leneluab and finally to the Teste of Botniar-Lebwet Mul, having left his adolescent children, 'young chiefs', in the first two chieftaincies he founded (see above). Thus, the Lenelvaklakh chiefdom, that of the father, is genealogically prior and therefore has precedence over the other two. This version is disputed by the chief of Tamalvar II - Leneluab, according to whom the three chiefdoms were not founded by the same man, without saying how many founders there were. His son later told me that Lenelvaklakh was founded by the son of the founder of Leneluab, which puts Tamalvar II before Lenelvaklakh. Both of them were very discreet when talking about myth, because as Adventists they have to detach themselves from tradition.

We do not have the version of the chief of Tamalvar I - Botormalav, as the chieftaincy died out in 1956. It is not impossible that the foundation of Tamalvar II is the result of a second migration of the founder of Tamalvar I, as the name of the two chieftaincies may refer to such facts. In this case, Leneluab takes precedence over the other two chiefdoms, which the chief and his son would not have explicitly stated, either out of Adventist 'detachment' from tradition, or to avoid a denial by Kaku.

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[23] Paul Tamlumlum and two other Malnatco leaders from Pentecost, Bule Sarinose John and Daniel de Melsisi, were imprisoned in Lamap. Guiart visited them and asked for an improvement in Paul Tamlumlum's detention conditions, which endangered his health and life. He died before the end of his sentence (Abong, 2013)

Guiart advised to consider only the versions of those directly connected with - or 'owners' of - a myth. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the Teste of Botniar-Lebwet Mul, who welcomed the founder of Lenelvaklakh, support their chief's version. On the other hand, they claim that when he arrived, Tor Tara was too old and the father of his children would be a man of Botniar. They thus free themselves from an authority that they have never historically contested, accepting the chieftainship since its foundation, a point confirmed by the chiefs of Lenelvaklakh as well as Leneluab. The Teste of Botniar-Lebwet Mul took over the land loaned to Tor Tara, when the chiefs moved to Tontar, on the land of Norukvat which was theirs due to the extinction of that village.

The version of Racrac, a offspring of Neknel Batikh, second nakhamal, of the Lenelvaklakh chiefdom, challenges Kaku's version, which he sought to supplant. He gave two versions of the founding of Lenelvaklakh. The first one includes a contradiction, so that it does not exclude that there was only one founder (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1: 228-229). The second implicitly plays on the name of the founder(s): Tor Tara for Lenelvaklakh, and Tor Vakharu for Tamalvar I and II; but Tor Tara means Tor the old, which may be just a change of name when he became old (a fact widely acknowledged by the other chiefs and the Teste) - Racrac's text leaves an unsolvable ambiguity for the translation (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 2: 32). Racrac had little interest in the myth itself, which was merely an opportunity to oppose Kaku. His argument for claiming chieftaincy is a manipulation of the lineage order within Neknel Batikh, going back at least three generations. He also claims that Tor Tara, who came to Lenelvaklakh during the Notulokhian (yam festival), settled in the bush and not in the Teste land. But, there was no free land in North-Malekula and, moreover, this point is inconsistent with tradition, yams premises are presented in front of the nakhamal of the chieftaincy, therefore in the village, at the place where Tor Tara had decided to build his nakhamal. Kaku strongly contradicted Racrac on these last two points, and the anteriority of his branch over Racrac's is recognised by all the chiefs and the Teste.

The assessor died before my 1978 mission. He was from the youngest branch of Neknel Batikh, and from an earlier generation than the chief[24], i.e. the 'father' of the chief. I was told that he was therefore claiming to be the chief, which is totally contrary to tradition. His son only told me that he was the chief. Then he asked me if I was for independence. I said 'Yes', and he left without saying anything else. Two years before independence, the assessors had already lost much of their power, and his hopes were lost.

The traditional variants of the Lenelvaklakh foundation myth are characterised by different positions on the number of founders and migrations to claim a level of precedence within the customary framework. The versions of Racrac and the assessor, which are part of the colonial framework, are distinguished, in addition to a false genealogy, by arguments contrary to custom: on land ownership and the first-fruits ceremony, for Racrac; and, for the assessor, by an interpretation of the hierarchical rank that goes against the order of the eldest and youngest

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24 In the case of a large number of branches, the youngest is often one generation younger than the first, as it is much more recent.

branches, which is totally unacceptable traditionally. These arguments can only be suitable for Europeans who know nothing about genealogy or custom. The traditional versions do not include this kind of manipulation to justify differences in historical facts. Obviously, one cannot give credit to opportunistic versions, contrary to custom, which appeared in a colonial context, and Guiart considered them as mere attempts to usurp power and land with the support of the administration, which could only make it hostile to his work.

Guiart's (2006) method of collecting all the variants or versions of a traditional story, with detailed information on their origin and the conditions in which they were told, is a good way to ensure that the story is as accurate as possible, but it is rarely followed by ethnologists. Most of them present, often without even giving the names and status of their informants, only one or, at most, two versions, which they comment on for their factual differences, but rarely for their form, the conformity of the arguments to custom, traditional law, rituals, etc. Thus, the versions manipulated for the benefit of the colonial power are put on the same level as the traditional variants, accrediting false assertions and imaginary facts, on the part of various people seeking to attribute to themselves positions and rights that do not belong to them.

In North Malakula, there is no longer much fighting over manipulated myths. Claims, mainly for land, now use dubious translations of nakhamal names, or inaccurate, possibly adulterous, filiations that are difficult to prove or disprove over a depth of three or four generations; or claims that the only survivors of a village are of immigrant origin, as part of the displacement during the wars in the late 19th century.

3.- CRITICAL GUIART

Guiart criticised the work of his colleagues on the basis of his methodological principles: what he considered to be based on incomplete, inadequate, inaccurate or poorly analysed information, or contrary to what the Melanesians had told him. However, the repetition of work he considered bad and the personal attacks he suffered led him to criticise individuals. Thus, Guiart was a very controversial figure in the ethnology of the Pacific, particularly New Caledonia.

3.1 Guiart and colonisation

An article by Trépied and Wittersheim (2019) claims to provide a 'dispassionate' analysis of Guiart's work in the context of colonisation. We will not comment on the origin of Guiart's career, as described by the authors, because, contrary to what they imply, it does not determine Guiart's methodology alone, any more than that of other researchers; such a determinism - so primary as to take the reader for a fool - does not exist and sets the tone of their article. Guiart has adopted a method inspired by statistics to avoid being locked into the views - or manipulations – of a small number of informants and in order to provide evidence for his analyses (see above). Secondly, according to the authors (269), "*By anchoring his*

ethnography in Leenhard's Protestant network [...] *He thereby prevented himself from any critical distance* [emphasis added - which the authors also call] *Guiart's Protestant myopia"*. Not only is this new denominational determinism just as exaggerated as the previous one, but the authors contradict themselves within a few lines, as Guiart's informants include "*four parish priests and Pastor Charlemagne"* (269). They criticise the "*list of 80 people who helped most in the development"* (269) of Guiart's thesis which, although reduced to the essentials, shows the great diversity of his informants, most of whom they describe as "*autochtones* [natives]*(in majority protestants)"* - They seem to be unaware that the Kanak were then overwhelmingly Protestant, and it is therefore normal that this was also the case among Guiart's informants - note that Kanak chiefs appointed by colonial administration (see below) rapidly adopted colonizer's religion, catholicism.

This is followed by an all-out critique of Guiart's method, against which they propose nothing more than "*a slow ethnographic insertion 'at ground level'* ", which neither constitutes nor defines a scientific method of enquiry, let alone analysis, and simply conceals an absence of method. Trepied mainly interviews a few selected informants, on subjects of acculturation, local politics, inter-ethnic relations, discrimination, etc., which fall within the scope of qualitative sociology and would require at least a hundred cases and a minimum of statistical analysis to give reliable and representative results. Wittersheim is known for practising "*a skilful blend of political analysis and journalistic description* [...] *strongly committed* [... and] *challenges us on the role of the political analyst, his duties and his limits"* (Tabani, 2011: 235), sometimes ambiguously playing with regrettable, if not condemnable, statements, e.g. "*Black is black"* (Wittersheim, 2014).

Regarding Guiart's collection of information in the field, they refer to a single example, in the New Hebrides, reported by M. Allen (Trépied and Wittersheim, 2019: 271) to discredit his method of enquiry in public meetings, the speed of which they criticise. Guiart collected only kinship terms and titles to analyse this aspect of the functioning of the social system. Ballard (in JSO 154) gives a more complete presentation of the way Guiart investigated. He stayed much longer in Tanna and North Malkula, where he also worked in public meetings, going back and forth between villages and key people in the John Frum movement and the Malnatco. It is again, to say the least, an exaggeration to say, based on this one article by Allen, that "*Guiart took almost no distance from his field"* [emphasis added] (Trépied and Wittersheim, 2019: 273). This is the second time the authors use this expression in a supposedly 'dispassionate' analysis (259); it is rather a redoubled attack. This lack of distance from the field is based solely on Guiart's advice to Allen to "*write down the information in my notebooks so that it is ready for publication"* (271). In this case, one cannot exclude a reaction by Guiart to an unpleasant remark by Allen on his method of investigation, to mislead him, as Melanesians do when one questions what they say (see below). The authors forget his work on the chieftaincies; the reasons for the choice of spouses; the relationships between clans; the networks of ritual and political relationships, etc., which he revealed, which is quite impossible without a thorough analysis of the information received. He asked me to write short cards for each piece of 'circumstantial' information and to organise them according to

various themes to see the relationships that emerge. Seeing several informations on some of my cards, he said, "You could put it all on one page," and then added, "You won't get anywhere that way."

They also criticise Guiart for his connection to the Protestant Charlemagne mission and for facilitating its establishment in the former New Hebrides - do they regret the sharp opposition of "*an archipelago divided between Catholic Francophones and Protestant Anglophones*" (280) which almost led to disaster at independence? Guiart sought to reduce this divide because of the risks it led to.

Trépied and Wittersheim (283) consider that, from his notes to the administration, he has a "*very* [why "very"] *special relationship with the field*", giving his work "*an air [...] of police investigations and his informants a status of quasi 'indicators' *". This paragraph is the opposite of the conciliatory role Guiart played in conflicts between villages that could get out of hand. Not only do they seek every means to denigrate Guiart, ridicule him and sully his reputation, but they come close to slandering Guiart and his informants by speaking of '*quasi-indicators*'. In the Batarlilip affair, Guiart worked in public meetings in each village as usual, and then confronted the two parties (Guiart, 1952: 254- 258). But, of course, they pass over all these steps in silence, citing only the episode of the confiscation of 35 guns. They ignore, or want to ignore, that the settlements of women's escapes by the missions and the administration resulted in deaths, followed by serial attacks, until the 1950s in North Malekula (Rallu, 2020, vol. 1: 160-164 and 278-284). The administration was powerless to resolve these escalating conflicts, partly because its assessors gave it false information to protect their relationships. It confined itself to declaring a 'forbidden zone', letting the Melanesians kill each other and turning a blind eye to the settlers who came to sell arms and ammunition. Thus, Trépied and Wittersheim show their profound ignorance of the local situation and the processes of conflict development.

As for Guiart's relations with the colonial administration, although his administrative notes are sometimes debatable (Trépied and Wittersheim, 2019: 278), they are linked to the IFO's vocation to contribute to the development of the colonies, which made it impossible for him, in the 1950s and 1960s, to advocate independence 'at all costs' without risking losing all influence on local politics and the possibility of supporting the Melanesians' demands. The tone of his report for the South Pacific Commission, following a mission with H.E. Maude on cooperatives in the New Hebrides in 1953, is very different:

[...] "*the administering authority has done nothing officially to guide and assist those efforts, other than to enact a Joint Regulation of a predominately restrictive character, and the only help the native has so far received has thus been from a few District Agents or missionaries, who lack the necessary technical knowledge, or from European traders, whose motives have not always been above suspicion.*" (Guiart, 2013).

Nevertheless, Guiart did not succeed in having sanctions taken against Donald Gubbay, as the Condominium administration supported the settlers unconditionally. Guiart, like Resident

Anthonioz, believed that, in the face of an administration complacent with settlers who considered themselves above the law, it was necessary to develop a Melanesian economy that would later lead to independence. To describe his administrative reports as "*expertise in colonisation*" or to call him "*an expert in colonial manoeuvres*" (280-282) is a new way of denigrating him, in contrast to what he did in defence of the Melanesians. Let us reiterate that, by virtue of his duties, he had to propose solutions to an administration responsible for developing a colonial economy in favour of the colonists: the margin was narrow and the means very limited to improve the living conditions of the Melanesians. However, he supported Kanak demands to expand their reserves and their attempts to reclaim customary land, a taboo subject for the Caldoches who saw his mound mapping as a prelude[25] and fought him, and still do, relentlessly for this reason. In Vanuatu, he is still remembered for defending members of the John Frum movement and the Malnatco against the colonial administration, which, faced with opposition movements that it was unable to understand and described as irrational reactions, followed the demands of the settlers and missions, preventively imprisoning the leaders and most active members for fear of an uprising, or for attempted sedition (prevent a disturbance of peace), having found no other reason to imprison the leaders of the Matanvat Native Company, when their activity was purely economic (Rallu, 2020, Vol. 1 : 67).

Guiart considered the colonial administrations incompetent, ridiculous and possibly corrupt and often criticised them for their management of the colonies and their methods of resolving disputes, usually to the detriment of the Melanesians, - adding the missions in adultery cases. He also deplored the lack of training of some missionaries.

They reproach Guiart for his weak place in the development of theories, and for having played no role in the critique of "*structural anthropology from the 1980s onwards*" (Trépied and Wittersheim: 284): this is to forget that he criticised Lévi-Strauss as early as the 1960s and debated with him on the subject of his thesis (Guiart, 1966) and of kinship (Lévi-Strauss and Guiart, 1968). Moreover, Guiart was one of the first to assert the historicity of Melanesian societies, which also use pseudo-chronologism (Guiart, 1992: 241-243). The return of structuralism in France in the 1970s was a scientific and political anachronism, a kind of reaction to decolonisation, precisely at the time when France wanted to keep its confetti of empire (the political analyst did not understand this) – it was also the time when migration to France of former colonized people increased, and a way to justify discrimination, following on colonisation. There was no need to enter into this debate. Structuralism's return was laughed at by many foreign ethnologists and it fell back on its own.

Their final remark that Guiart was not an unconditional supporter of independence only concerns New Caledonia, as he always supported Vanuatu's independence. Thus, before my first mission to Malekula in 1978, he asked me to support his efforts to avoid conflict (Rallu, 2020: 119), following France's foolish plan to keep the 'confetti' of the New Hebrides, which ended in a fiasco, with unfortunate consequences for those who had believed the rhetoric of a

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25 When it appeared that the old yam ridges could be seen on aerial photographs, Caldoches bulldozed them.

touring overseas minister. However, it continues to raise eyebrows in New Caledonia where the claims of the 'decolonisation' of successive governments remains for many a mere social and political promise (Rallu, 2018b).

3.2.- Criticism and debate

At least two[26] of Guiart's reviews of his colleagues' work continued in polemical debates whose arguments are often far from scientific. His criticism of Les Chemins de l'Alliance (Bensa and Rivierre, 1982) is initially ambivalent: a work that is "*in many ways excellent*' but also '*irritating because of a bias that consists in ignoring* [...] *three generations of researchers"* (Guiart, 1984: 91). He criticises the authors for not having quoted him, for having broken with the vocabulary established by Leenhardt and for not having integrated their approaches and results, for example the '*pseudoparental systems*' (94-95). He reproaches the work for a "*normative ethnology bias*" (92), using school concepts that are "*empty of meaning*" because they are far removed from local realities, in contrast to his methodology.

The authors' response is one of false assertions, irony, caricature and a certain condescension for the ancestors, which is out of place in a scientific debate. They reproach Guiart for his "*onomastic mania* [...] *Toponyms, divinities, ancestors and other lizards* [emphasis added] *follow one another in one of those improvisations in free style of which he has the secret...*" (Bensa and Rivierre, 1984: 104). They claim that he "*never breathed a word* [...] *about such essential institutions as 'chief containers' or* [...] *'sacred roads'* " (103) and that he never made an analysis of "*vernacular terms, texts or statements*" (104)[27]. This is partly inaccurate, in the 1970s, Bensa attended his classes episodically and while he may not be aware that Guiart spoke of lizard routes, knowledge of which was still fragmentary, he was not unaware that he had commented on the vernacular notebooks of Bwesou Eurijisi.

They claim that, in contrast to Guiart's exhaustive genealogical records, "*a few genealogies are sufficient to understand that this opposition* [Dui and Bai, two intermarrying moieties] *has not any* [emphasis added] *kind of matrimonial functionality here.*" (103). One may wonder what were the "*few genealogies*" they were given and how they analysed them, as later Leblic (2000) observed the system of Dui and Bai moieties operating at 50 per cent. Monnerie also addressed this question, with a viewpoint that was blurred to the point of insignificance "*The whole of this region thus persists in thinking of itself in a dualist model of its marriages*" (Monnerie, 1999: 296). Reading him, one wonders whether there are still Dui-Bai intermarriages. In fact, he criticises Bensa and Rivierre without contradicting them, avoiding taking a clear position.

They caricature his analyses of relationships "*he has 'traditional authority' over him, or because he has received a fireball from him; or by 'affinity', 'affiliation', 'alliance', 'proximity', 'correspondence', 'attraction', 'assimilation', 'kinship'* " (Bensa and Rivierre: 102), bringing

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26 See also Leblic in JSO 154.

27 Let us note now that Bensa is an ethnologist and Rivierre a linguist and that this review deals mainly with ethnology.

together, in bulk and out of context, terms that the Kanak commonly use to translate their various types of traditional relationships, which the authors therefore do not consider to have the value of scientific concepts, although they represent a much richer vocabulary than the school concepts they oppose (see below). - This is what it means to know a society 'from the inside', to describe it and make it known. It is surprising that Bensa had no personal knowledge of these terms, which would reveal a manipulation: he was told the simple things he needed to know, and hid the rest, so that he would write what they wanted him to write. - In contrast, they advocate "*simple principles: segmentation* [...] *reception* [...] *sharing* [...] *symbolic work in 'myth'* [...] *simple matrimonial alliances*", school concepts that are vague and do not account for the interactions between various relational domains, lacking the complexity and a holistic view of Melanesian social structures and the patterns of decision making that derive from them (see Section 1).

They claim that Guiart challenges the "*classical opposition* […] *between 'forbidden sister and marriageable cross-cousin*" in the Cèmuhî area (103) on the basis of an informal truncated quotation, a well-known way of altering its meaning. Guiart's sentence is "[T]*he sister and daughter of the mother's brother are classified together (waile), the relative free talk with the matrilateral cross-cousin being able to take place only after the realization of the marriage, accepted, with Ego.*" (Lévi-Strauss and Guiart, 1968: 83). Bensa claims that '*waile*' is the personal pronoun '*them, elles*', but the cèmuhî dictionary gives 'wöélé' with three middle tones (Rivierre, 1994: 34), the 'ö' indicating an open 'o' (74). It is impossible to confuse an open 'o' with an 'a' in a middle tone[28]. The term 'waile', according to Guiart's spelling, actually comes from *wéi-lé* (surveiller)[29] which refers to the obligatory distancing with these two people 'classified together' for free speech, which Bensa misleadingly equates with "*designated by the same term*" (103), implying kinship. It is clear from Guiart's sentence (see above) that one is marriageable and not the other, but that prior to marriage they are confused in a free-speech ban, because the latter is a potential wife for several men (see Section 1)[30]. Thus, careful analysis reveals false claims about Guiart's knowledge and work, about Dui-Bai matrimonial relations, the mistranslation of a word and abuses of language or interpretation.

Their final reproach of "*indulging in this quest for details which the Oceanian reader will delight in*" (104) refers to their earlier critique *'in free style'* - which echoes "*a succession of anecdotal details*" (Trépied and Wittersheim, 2019: 259) - and continues their denigration of Guiart, against the background of discordant positions on history and traditional society and its manipulations (see Section 2). In so doing, they show their lack of interest in Kanak readers, who are interested in an honest description of their society and recognition of their traditional

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28 Thus, it seems unlikely that these lines were written in collaboration with Rivierre.

29 The verb wéi-hî: to guard, to watch over (which can also be pronounced wééi-hî or wéii-hî, the two first vowels in the middle tone) is constructed, according to an example: wéi - lépwö - cuö -n (to watch over - the - elders - yours) (Rivierre, 1994: 397), which gives wéi - lé (to watch over - them).

30 This text is taken from an article by Guiart questioning a chapter of Lévi-Strauss' Structures élémentaires de la parenté (see above).

titles and rights, not in theories fabricated to support European intellectual supremacy. Why should European readers ignore these things?

Guiart's (1992) commentary on Listes déclamatoires ('*viva*') (Pillon, 1992) points to analytical errors based on inadequate data: four 'circumstantial' public speeches arranged in such a way as not to offend anyone are an insufficient and inadequate corpus to follow the relationships, itineraries and splits of lineages over several generations. Pillon's answer appears vague and sometimes close to bad faith. How can it be said that Guiart paid little attention to the terroir (Pillon, 1993: 89) when he always located the groups and their movements? Pillon copied Bensa's criticism of *waile*, without any relation to his terrain and without having verified its validity, which became a personal attack or the beginning of a cabal. He himself practices truncated quotation, refuting the coexistence of diachronic and pseudo-diachronic aspects, out of context: what Guiart (1992: 241) calls pseudo-diachronic are the narratives of the type of myths and vivas, and he says that at other levels, (diachronic) history takes over (242); then he opposes it to Lévi-Strauss' postulate of "*the primordial existence of synchronic structures*" (243). In so doing, Pillon refuses to understand that some things function at the diachronic level and others at pseudo-diachronic or pseudo-chronological levels, based on the same facts (*see* above, the order of the three chieftaincies near Matanvat).

Guiart's (2006) review of Histoire d'une chefferie kanak (Bensa and Goromido, 2005) denounces an informant bias, as the work is based on information obtained from particular groups, and therefore partial, biased and often inaccurate, resulting in "*a false scientific work*" (Guiart, 2006: 7). The result is a partnership between the ethnologist and his informants in which the former is manipulated and the latter is used for career purposes (7 and 67).

Guiart criticises Bensa and Pillon for assigning to people places that do not belong to them in clan relations, hierarchies and other traditional functions. This is the usual debate between the claims of former traditional chiefs, administrative chiefs and others seeking to take advantage of the ignorance of the European administration by using various manipulations of myths, history and rights over land that has been disrupted by the confinement of the Kanak population in 'reservations' in 1878 and 1917. Guiart defends what the Kanak told him and what he wrote, which does not mean that he is always right. But the authors' responses are problematic: errors, surprising ignorance, unscientific or dishonest procedures: caricatures, denigrations, truncated quotations, faulty interpretations, etc. The debates are usually not refereed and are closed after the authors' response, leaving them free to do so. Behind these scientifically unorthodox responses are political differences and academic competition. - It should be noted that such debates are rare, if not non-existent, in Vanuatu, as few ethnologists have paid attention to the claims of the assessors, it being common knowledge that most, if not all, did not have the traditional status they claimed (see above).

New Caledonia remains in a colonial situation. The Kanak auxiliaries appointed by the administration in the 19th century bear the titles of 'petit chef' and 'grand chef', equivalent to assessors - also called chiefs in the correspondence of the condominial administration - and the former traditional chiefs are no longer entitled to this title. Bensa deserves credit for

mentioning his informants by co-publishing with Goromido, but many ethnologists take pride in finding something other than what Guiart wrote and contradicting him without giving the circumstances or the origin of their information, which amounts to rewriting history, as 'disinformation' does. It is anyway nearly impossible for anthropologists to contradict 'grands chefs' without losing access to their fieldwork. Thus, through the multimillennial method of 'divide and rule', the system of indirect government through assessors or administrative chiefs achieves its goal, with 'customary institutions', under the government. Caledonian ethnology is more valuable for its analyses of culture, custom and rituals than for its reconstructions of history and ancient (pre-contact) society: hierarchies, relations between clans, roles in networks, etc., whose divergences according to the status and political positions of the informants serve as a springboard for the career ambitions of certain researchers. Thus, ethnology (social anthropology) still support colonisation, as it did with its early theories of a-historical societies, collective unconscious, primitive thought and people of low culture (Rivers, 1914) that Guiart criticized.

Given his pro-independence stance, it is not surprising that Guiart is often not cited or is strongly criticised for his work on New Caledonia. It was, and still is, difficult to work there as an ethnologist, and impossible to claim his name. Many researchers who made the same political choices, or who simply contested certain aberrations in the economic field, received threatening letters and had to abandon their subjects or leave the territory. It was therefore necessary to distance oneself from him and contradict him in order to secure the support of the local political class. However, Leblic, Saussol, among others, managed to make a career while opposing unacceptable practices to keep the Kanak at the bottom of the social scale. But this is not the case with Cugola, co-editor, with Leblic (2018) of La Calédonie a rendez-vous avec l'histoire. After nearly forty years of rebalancing or 'decolonisation', it was still observed, on the eve of the 2018 referendum, that the Kanak people were not being given the opportunity to participate in the process, with a very small minority of Kanak holding a university degree, working in the professions or in senior administration (Rallu, 2018b), which expects them to be 'discrete' – 'disciplined' or 'servile' would be more accurate. Is there no alternative to independence to end the discrimination at the root of the colonial system?

Guiart was not always alone in criticising a work: Monnerie (1999) also criticised Le Rocher d'Até (Bensa and Rivierre, 1995); Kohler also criticised Les Kanak face au développement. La voie étroite (Leblic, 1993); Dubar (2006) notes about La fin de l'exotisme (Bensa, 2006), a work that claimed to be a theoretical breakthrough: "*The work lacks coherence and unity [...] It is sometimes a bit all over the place.*" His critical bibliographies (Guiart, 2015) show that Guiart knew how to recognise the qualities of many works and he has durably supported several of his colleagues: among others Garanger, Saussol, Lindstrom, Vienne, Panoff, etc. One cannot and must not subscribe by a complicit silence to everything that is written with political ulterior motives. This problem now arises even in the hard sciences, as the example of climate shows, to the detriment of the future of the planet and of mankind.

CONCLUSION

Hasty and illusory attempts by ethnology to claim to be a science, based on very partial data, led to functionalism and structuralism, whose formalised aspects, such as kinship structures or the relationship to time and history, are largely inaccurate. Guiart was an early critic of these theories, which now appear as avatars of colonialist, or post-colonialist, scientific thought, with the return of structuralism[31] in the 1970s in France. An undeniable progress appeared with the collection of exhaustive data, necessary to define a kinship system, social or otherwise, and its functioning. Guiart's method of sociological inventories revealed the complexity of interactions at work in Melanesian social systems and in their responses to internal or external conflicts. This qualitative and exhaustive approach is similar to that of multivariate quantitative models and shows that the functioning of traditional and Western societies, and the behaviours within them - with regard to the different rules that govern them - follow mechanisms that are not fundamentally different with, for example, the possibility of playing on different levels, a relative freedom from the norm and an organisation in networks. The collection of quality ethnological data in remote and isolated areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was conditioned by the researcher's adaptation to different societies, cultures and ways of life, except for the first ethnologists from their own culture who brought a more authentic view of their societies.

Tradition, customs and rites have been modified in many respects - or have even disappeared - and social systems have been more or less disrupted by a very patriarchal Christianisation and colonisation. But these societies still retain specificities in their processes of insertion into cultural, social and economic globalisation, where they can bring an original and, one hopes, more humanistic dimension. History and oral tradition have been manipulated in relation to external power and the information that is now given about tradition is, to varying degrees, reinterpretations influenced by various currents of modern thought for ideological or political purposes. As a result, ethnology has shifted its focus to cultural, social, political change, identity, etc., topics that would be more representatively studied by qualitative (or quantitative) sociology, which few ethnologists practice, although it would allow them to see differences in behaviour and opinion according to status, urban or rural setting, religion, education level, etc. It also continues to use kinship diagrams built on Western terminology, which misrepresent the relationships in the Oceanic classificatory kinship system. Lacking a precise method and comprehensive data, and still focusing on a few selected informants, its analyses are not representative and are likely to be inaccurate or biased. But it has also provided, and still provides, important results on traditional societies and their relationship to the world, and it plays a role in the recognition of the rights of peoples. However, the populations originating from the various non-independent territories of the Pacific continue to suffer from the weight of colonisation, which particularly affects Caledonian ethnology, where the situations are the most confused and the criticisms the most virulent.

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31 It should be noted that structuralism has evolved considerably since then, with the work of Fr. Héritier and Ph. Descola.

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