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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
IN PACIFIC ART

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN PACIFIC ISLAND'S ART

Art is a subject in itself. During the spectacular, but partly misguided entry of French Anthropology in this field, which was the Dakar—Djibouti expedition {1933} fathered by Marcel Griaule, the official scribe of which was André Leiris<sup>1</sup>, the eye-catching motto chosen was to decide bravely that only scientific aspects had been considered and that the pieces brought back had been chosen by following strict ethnographical criteria. Checking, piece after piece, on the total of the more or less one thousand pieces brought back shows today that aesthetic criteria had been the reason of the choice in a good half of the lot. During the same years, Father Patrick O'Reilly<sup>2</sup> brought back for the Musée de l'Homme, singlehanded, with much less fanfare, from Bougainville and Buka, double that amount of pieces, the non aesthetic criteria having been much better respected in his case.

Griaule's and Leiris's mistake was to assume that they could escape from their own culturally inherited set of norms and from their more or less conscious reactions to any artifact available. During my student years, I have been listening to what the members of this very first generation of official French anthropologists had to say. I found they were reacting emotionally all the time as well to situations as to people, or to artifacts, and later carefully erasing these emotions in their published writings, except Leiris, who tended to thrive on the emotions of others and give them such inflated importance that he thus managed to be much less sincere as regards himself than he always claimed to have been in his writings.

The only man capable of talking about all these things in a more detached way, because he knew them in deeper detail, was Maurice Leenhardt, who introduced this writer to the art of Oceania<sup>3</sup>. He had a number of things to say, having worked for years and treasuring the writings of some of the last traditional Kanak sculptors<sup>4</sup>. He knew better than anybody else what were the technique and the social function of each piece and what did mean the symbols being used. He showed how pieces would never be found, except a very few, in the location where they had been made, and that they were playing their part in exchange cycles which he attempted to map. He later got interested in the symbolism of colors, a subject better studied in relation to the Australian aborigines than in Melanesia or Polynesia. His general view was that art productions, be they beautiful, striking or mediocre, were to be considered as being sort of prayers to the ancestors, equally sort of carved and painted messages for the benefit of the invisible universe which led a life parallel to the only world open to humans. Only shades of better and new knowledge can be added to what he published on the matter, and on the corpus of unpublished vernacular texts he left us, to which knowledge we are a very few to have added to. Adolphus Elkin in Sydney University, with the same tolerant intellectual acumen and missionary background, expressed identical judgments on Australian Aboriginal art<sup>5</sup>.

Out of the case of the brilliant red parakeet feathers covering the wicker representations of *Kukailimoku*, the Hawaiian god of war, Polynesia has left us with little idea of how it treated color. The artifacts we have inherited of are devoid of the vivid colors which were put on them when they were displayed in public. Many of them have been kept in sailors' families and carefully beeswaxed for them to be brilliant. This good household habit has translated in the idea that the authentic pieces could only be those neatly polished and devoid of colors. The strong elementary colors loved by Pacific islanders were deemed to be a tradition of secondary interest, unworthy of study. Michel Leiris told me once, and he was indignant, that I should not try to buy for the French State pieces bearing the color designs which were put on them when they were shown in public. These colors could not be authentic. I treated this judgment as a transfer from our own 19th century aesthetic categories and reminded him that the ancient Greeks were in the habit of painting their best marble carvings in vivid colors. He agreed to that historic reminis-

cence, but could not bring upon himself to change his mind. I do agree that I would have a shock in seeing the Venus from Milo painted in red and blue, but for Pacific islands artifacts I did not carry any such hangover. Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was present at the discussion, was happily on my side.

### *Colors*

The symbolism of colors has to be fitted in each case both inside the local and global culture concerned. There are nevertheless somewhat striking general notions offered by pursuing a careful comparison between the better known Pacific islands' cultures. The first one was already in Captain James Cook's logbooks as he bought in the Friendly islands (Tonga islands) red parakeet's feathers by the lot, to exchange them in Tahiti where they were very much sought after.

Red is obtained in the shape of :

- human blood, which Australian aborigines may take from their arm or their penis, and use it to stick white eagle feathers on their body ;

- red ochre, which is for the tribes of northern South Australia the blood of an *emu* ancestor (Arnhem Land bark painters obtain red ochre in heating yellow ochre on the fire) ;

- red flowers of the *erythrina* tree which flowers regularly in the second half of November in New Caledonia and is used there to mark the beginning of the new year. This New Year starts with a food feast offered to the dead, the change of all pandanus mats in the houses and the lighting of a new fire to be carefully nurtured throughout the next year (the North Malekula people start the same rites from the coming of the sea worm *palolo*, also in the second half of November) ;

- red hibiscus flowers which in Melanesia are stuck on the top or the back of their head — sacred to all — by the higher ranking men only, the others putting them over the ears, or being obliged to content themselves with yellow hibiscus flowers in their hair ;

- people of the southern tributaries of the higher Sepik river have recourse to a brilliant red fungus to decorate their shields, which gives them a biologically alive color, wonderful if it is meant to symbolise life and more precisely blood. But is it ?

Bwesou Eurijisi<sup>6</sup>, sculptor of masks by hereditary right, later pastor of the Evangelical Church in New Caledonia and pupil of Maurice Leenhardt, has left us a score of carefully written precious exercise books containing most precise details<sup>7</sup> dealing with his lineage's tradition. He says of the red color put on the eyes and the lips of New Caledonian otherwise wholly blackened masks, this color obtained by taking the red pulp covering the seeds in the fruit of the *Abrus precatorius* tree, that this red pigment is the blood of the god *Gomawe*. From the lengthy text developing this particular point, which I have published<sup>8</sup>, one understands that this does not mean the blood which would flow through the veins of the god, but the blood which would run off without any possible respite from any wound if one had forgotten, after an expedition for crab fishing, to bring to the god's altar, the *ka mwaro*, the cooked red crab which is his special offering.

This symbol could be considered as sufficiently pregnant with meaning and left at that. One problem is that the symbol covered by *Gomawe* deals at the same time with life and with death<sup>9</sup>. *Gomawe* is the chief of the subterranean and submarine land of the dead — where they will dance at night, under his leadership, the same counterclockwise dance the living, men and women at the same time, are performing around a vertical axis marked by the many poles called the «body of the dance». This axis was meant to pass through the ground and organize in the same way, and at the same time, both dances, the one of the living on top, the one of the dead underneath, both called *boria*. This vertical swirling of gods and men is what comes the closest to a global view of the universe in local

Melanesian thinking.

A more sedate image is the one given recently by a younger Kanak pastor, Lawie, on the Nouméa television: in the round traditional hut, the living stay close to the matted flooring ; the thick layer of permanent smoke, staying more or less at a man's height, is where gods and animal symbols live. The heat, and the power coming from this very heat, originates from the fire itself, being the abode of those only who can thrive inside a power which they share and wield to all purposes.

When preparing for war, the wild canes which make the warrior's belt must be heated over the fire so as to gain enough power, both from the fire and from the invisible powers which inhabit the smoky layer. In the period preceding the beginning of the 1917 insurgency in New Caledonia, Maurice Leenhardt visited a village and saw in the chiefly lineage's high roofed round hut the fire burning with the prepared men's belts being «heated» over it. He noted the fact, but did not comment. The people, persuaded that he had understood the meaning of what he saw, put the belts away and desisted from joining the fray.

*Gomawe* is also the master of the life giving power originating in water. One sees him as the bubbles appearing at the bottom of a waterfall, or as the countercurrent which brings flotsam upwards on theargins of the flow. He is attracted by the smell from the sex of any woman with child, who must then be kept indoors as a precaution against this danger. The mask is his image, under the name of *Gomawe* here, *Kavörö* there, *Bwae Dama* elsewhere, *Pijopaac* and *Wimawi* up in the far north<sup>10</sup>. Under the name of *Urupwe*, he is represented by the head carved or made out of vegetable braid which is to be kept by each lineage in its «sacred basket»<sup>11</sup> at the same time as its own strings of shell money to be used for exchanges at the time of births, marriages, and deaths, the representation of the god's face being meant to stay permanently there<sup>12</sup>. The worst catastrophe in times of war is if this sacred basket be taken away by the enemy. Flight as a best indication of valor is justified by the necessity to protect this sacred basket from any mishap.

*Urupwe* is equally said to be represented by the carved heads at the top of the handle of the ceremonial polished disk clubs — which the people call clubs when we call them axes (*hache-ostensoir*).

White color poses a historical problem, as colonial presence has somewhat distorted its earlier symbolic value. White is the symbol of death nearly the world over. Widows and widowers will more or less paint their body white, even covering their heads with a poultice of white ashes. Dancers painted in white always represent an ancestor, someone coming from the realm of the dead.

One should be careful with such symbols. They only play when needed, and in a given situation. An ash poultice can be used to bleach hair. It would then be kept for much less time. Treatment of hair with (white) lime gives a quicker and far deeper bleaching and can be washed in the sea after a few hours only. The normal use of lime in betel chewing, where practised, obtaining a beautiful red spit, can be a symbolic sequence in situations described in myths. It still must be shown to be such in everyday life, although the mixture in the mouth of successive symbols of death and life would allow for a brilliant discourse. Maybe too brilliant.

The green or blue polished stone blades of New Caledonia are described by the same word, *kono*, which means life or alive (in the *merea Ajië* language of the Houailou valley). Green is very much sought after in central and north central Vanuatu. It comes there from South Pentecost, out of a small nickel ore deposit, commercially useless, but giving on the surface a highly valued pigment paid for in tusker pigs. Linen blue, brought in early by white traders, much cheaper to buy, was substituted for this green in Malekula in the course of last century, although allowing for the acquisition of much less prestige.

Black is simply made out of charcoal, often enough obtained from native nuts put on the fire, which means that charcoal, thus mixed naturally with the siccative oil of the nuts, makes for a rather solid coated colour — which is the reason for never putting it on the face too close to the eyes. When Maurice Leenhardt found in 1939 in the cemetery of the only village of the island of Yedyeban (Yenghebane), the face of the mask *Mawaraba Mapi* in a rotten state, and brought it back to Paris for conservation treatment, the remnants of these parts of the face only held

together by their deep coat of this black oily varnish.

The symbolic significance of black has been rarely defined. As a pigment, it is used for best aesthetic effect on male bodies adorned for war, or dances, or both at the same time, part of the exercise in group dancing being done with hand weapons, the gestures being identical to those of the training in close combat. Women prefer daubing red or yellow on the cheeks or the forehead, or practising the language of flowers, which is quite another matter. Black never has in the Pacific islands the evil connotations it can receive in Asia and Europe where it is the normal color taken by the devil, Sheitan or Satan.

The people do not always need to give a symbolic value to black. They love black because they equate it with themselves, calling their own people black in opposition to the white newcomers, although their own tan is closer to lighter shades of chocolate, the lighter coloured people being not the Polynesians as so many people think, but the inhabitants of the eastern shores of the Papuan Gulf, the darker ones being found in Bougainville and Buka only. The inhabitants of Groote Eilandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria have been making good use for their bark paintings of a provision of quality charcoal left in a lot of electric batteries by the U. S. Air Force.

The symbolism of heat allows us also some insight in the symbolism of a black color usually made out of charcoal, that is as a creation of fire. There would be lots of things to say about the Melanesian and Polynesian symbolism of fire, fire which has been obtained from the gods and which in a way represents them in being formerly permanently kept alive in the house, then extinguished on a given day, where the women and children will go and hide in the bush, while the men alone ate the first fruits of the yam crop ; later in the day the women will come back with their offspring, change all the mats in the house for already prepared brand new ones, and a new fire will be rekindled, to be kept alive all the year round. One consequence of Christianisation has been to allow for a greater freedom from the fire, which could now be let to die and be rekindled when needed again without any unhappy consequence. The Christian churches had understood the religious value of any fire being permanently kept alive. This new relation to fire has been accepted and never really broken since, even in times of armed revolt or prophetic movements<sup>13</sup>.

### *Style*

Up to the immediate post-war period, there was no study of any quality on Pacific islands' art. The ground breaking publications were in France the one of Maurice Leenhardt (*Art de l'Océanie*, Editions du Chêne, Paris 1947) and in New York the book by Ralph Linton and Paul S. Wingert (*Arts of the South Seas*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1946).

The way pieces were presented was by style, which was in effect a western conceptual quality added to the local origin of the pieces, when this was known. That Pacific Art suddenly came to the fore was partly a result of the efforts of researchers who had not really been trained in the British tradition of social anthropology. This saddled us with the choice of the concept of style, little being said in that field of the one of culture. Authors having no training in linguistics and thus no easy access to the mythical world of the islands' people, at least in the latter's own words, held to a convenient notion already in existence in academic studies of art the world over. This meant that form became paramount and function less important, the same old assumptions being kept by authors trying to innovate, building up style as if it were an institution with a life of its own inside the native cultures.

Every single author forgot that style<sup>14</sup> is no less and no more than a western concept. None of us has shown any proof that the concept fitted the facts. Style is based on the existence of a series of connected forms which are meant to bear some coherence. But is form in a way other than what art dealers for instance learn through personal experience, so as to be able to judge the value and authenticity of a piece, if and when they do deal in authentic pieces.

The theoretical problem is how forms relate to one another, other than through impressionistic glasses. The fact is that they are tied to one another through the artist's choice. These links have to do with the culture as a whole at least as much as with aesthetic values and with a hypothetical tendency of patterns to interlock with one another<sup>15</sup>. The matrilineal tradition to which each patrilineal artist has access can play havoc with our notion of stylistic coherence, or oblige us to fit it at a higher and more general level, which can render it of no useful analytical advantage.



Talking about style unhappily has shown no real originality of thought. One problem is the clarity of descriptions, which can become so perfectionist that they will be quite boring to read. The most precise ones, such as have been systematically attempted in Basel, are more or useless. The language chosen cannot be translated in any way into computer procedures, having been built from an unexploitable pseudo logical base.

Such a failure has brought all specialists to try and illustrate the greatest possible number of artifacts and for that purpose find as many little known ones as feasible. I have been one of the very first ones to try this tack, and bring into the open artifacts which were tucked away in the grey world of Eastern Europe's institutions. The attempt at building a descriptive language has had to be abandoned. The results were on the one hand illegible. On the other their apparent precision was illusory. Most of the pieces had in one way or another a partial or complete representation of the human body. At the time when the hope was to translate descriptions in computer language, the human shape was found too complex to be manageable. Today shapes are treated as global wholes and translated directly in binary algorithms. No serious scientific study of aesthetic forms has yet benefitted from the more recent computer languages for the treatment of images, which can already evoke a dream world of mobile phantom forms created by man, and which might one day replace the somewhat dreary closed museum worlds.

The conclusion of intellectually perfectly honest work done on collections, ranging them by styles, has forgotten some of the lessons of modern anthropology. Style is presented as a permanent quality of aesthetic situations. Studies in changing styles are so rare as to be non-existent. One can argue that the data is often insufficient, but this is not always the case. Dates of collecting are important. The old German collections found in the former colonial museums of imperial Germany show important stylistic differences with the ones collected by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead in the Sepik area in the thirties (Iatmul, Yuat river and Chambri lake) as well as by the French yacht *La Korrigane* (Tambaram and Kanidimbit on the middle Sepik, Eibom, the lower Yuat and Korewori rivers), and again with the pieces obtained after the last war in the same Sepik valley by Alfred Bühler for the Basel Ethnographic Museum and myself for the Museum of African and Oceanic Art in Paris, from the same areas, plus the Maprik and Washkuk areas, more or less unknown before.

Authors have been carefully defining local stylistic areas along the Sepik river without paying any attention to this diachronic aspect of the situation. What is nevertheless evident is that there is a lot of give and take between style areas, so much that the frontiers of each are blurred and cannot be otherwise, in the same way as linguistic frontiers are equally always unsettled. Limits drawn on maps are a convenience. They are devoid of any scientific meaning.

Reciprocal influences between the art of the Abelam, the Maprik hills, and the one of the Korewori river appear in tens of pieces collected in the recent decades. This means that there is a constant factor at work, which should be documented in the field. The Sepik valley is most interesting in as much as it has furnished us, over the last century, with tens of thousands of pieces showing extraordinary ingenuity and creativity. This creativity is found in putting together aesthetic elements obtained from different sources of inspiration. A pattern being bought elsewhere can be copied strictly, or added to in all sorts of ways.

One is easily confronted with unexplained differences between areas where types seem to change little over the years (Huon Gulf, Tami and Siassi islands, the Admiralty islands, the Massim area) ; areas where there are few artifacts showing aesthetic form but concentration on the decoration of male bodies (Mount Hagen) ; and areas where one can document changes over the last century or more (Arnhem Land, Sepik valley, North Central Vanuatu). In the latter areas I have been brought to pin point an essential factor of this change, which is also the one of cultural change in general. It is linked with the social status of sculptors and painters, who can be both at the same time, and with their capacity to innovate. This capacity goes in each case with the one of buying and selling elements constituting, if put together, our western view of style. What can be in principle sold is what one has the right to represent, either through forms, designs and decorative patterns which have been inherited, patrilineally or matrilineally, or both together, but equally the more simple result of one's inspiration, of personal changes brought to the forms first received, and to any aesthetic aspect bought outside, paid in pigs or in local riches (shell money, bracelets, necklaces, etc).

The artist can then conceptualize new shapes in mixing together elements received from different origins. He

is perfectly free to add his personal touch, and often enough what is understood as a kind of signature, to his own work. In the same way a dance can be bought with or without the supporting music and the words of the chants. A dance called *nalèng* has been linked by A. B. Deacon with the *nalawan* so called secret rites in Seniang, Southwest Bay, Malekula. I have found the same *nalèng* openly being traded between Malekula's east coast and Ambrym, and paid for in pigs.

In areas where each local community specializes in a specific artifact, which it trades all over against other pieces, the mechanics of change of form and of decorative patterns are more difficult to trace (the Marquesas islands; the Admiralty group and especially the smaller islands around Manus ; the Huon Gulf, Siassi islands and Southwest New Britain).

This copyright system is fundamental. It means that no one could borrow a cultural trait without running the risk of a supernatural sanction if he wasn't authorized to do so by the rightful owner, or the owners, of the trait. Strong feelings about cultural proprietary rights have been found to exist in the whole of the Pacific area by already the first batch of social anthropologists working there in the years preceding the war. Some people do steal cultural elements, but they also take their chances. Stories are found of cases and of the revenge which caught up with the guilty parties. In theory a cultural item is stopped in its spatial transmission if the last group or person to hold to it in a given direction refuses to allow for its sale further on. There are few such cases in evidence, except one very notable : the non transmission further east of the iron smelting and iron work techniques introduced, at the end of the Vogelkopf, the western point of West New Guinea, by Arab traders four centuries ago. The knowledge of these techniques should have worked its way along the coasts. It did not. The iron pieces produced did, up to a point. It was a male technology, men rarely marrying afar, and contrary to pottery, there was no road for the transmission of the technique through kinship ties based on marriage.

Pottery, being a female technique, did journey along marriage routes, and from place to place over quite long distances — obsidian flaked tools from Willaumetz peninsula in the Admiralties were found in New Caledonia, and at different places in between. Objects, techniques, concepts, travel afar if there is a will to let them do so. They stop at the first resistance point, which can yield a generation later.

On the other side, we can note the behaviour of groups deciding to become Christians at a certain date. I observed for some years the consequences of the inhabitants of Tomman island at the southwest tip of Malekula putting a date to the moment when they would all join into the local church. They had decided to accept the teachings of the Presbyterian Church based in Southwest Bay, which had been put since the end of the war years in the hands of a Melanesian pastor, born in the Benaaur village with which they had strong traditional ties. They put a date some years ahead, and in the waiting finished all ceremonial business linked to the grade taking hierarchy, *nimangki*, and then sold the proprietary rights evolving from it and the more secret *nalawan* rites to the mountain villages on the north side of Mount Goodenough. The latter people, whose local culture bore formerly little traces of what they were going to do now, started exploiting their new privileges, adding to them their own interpretations, even as regards the technique of building artifacts. Thus one can find in their brand new modelled figures the inclusion of black or blackened clay, when originally on the island of Tomman no amount of clay was present, the paste being strictly made of vegetable elements only. I had visited these Mbotgot people<sup>16</sup> in the interior of the island in 1950, before anybody else did, and can compare what were the material elements of their culture with what they have been promoting later as being their «authentic» tradition.

A rather funny aspect of things is the way these Mbotgot managed, against a hefty sum, to persuade a number of photographers, film-makers and the like, each being at the same time a collector of artifacts for the world market, that they each held the sole privilege to be allowed to photograph, film and buy artifacts. One usually found, a few months later, the same pieces being peddled on the Australian market, and the principal ethnographic museums of the world have finally bought exactly the same pieces from different go-betweens. The last savages of inland Malekula knew the rules of the game of the art market in Pacific art nearly as well as their buyers. They knew how they could talk a white man into buying any far fetched story through making use of the ancient catch word : *secret*.

One origin of this rather sophisticated knowledge of the outside world has been the settling down in South-West Bay, since before the war, of a Tahitian trader<sup>17</sup>, Rô, who started an export of modelled heads, some going through Mr Gabriel Gomichon Desgranges, lawyer planter in Port Vila, who made use of them as special gifts for friends and visitors. The son of this Tahitian man took his father's place and expanded the trade, until such time as there would be no human skeletal material left in deserted former heathen villages and he had to import Japanese bone remains from the battlefields on Guadalcanal. Some females' modelled skulls, which was against the rules, and too small modelled heads and mortuary dummies sold on the world market are not only recent, but complete fakes often making use of Japanese skulls.

In the late nineteenth century, the Tolai coastal people around Blanche Bay got embroiled in a similar kind



of trade with modelled skulls, for which they used this cement-like black vegetable paste, made out of nut meat, also called putty by the authors of the time, which was, from the Solomon to the Admiralty islands, used to caulk the sides of the ocean going canoes. They did also work, for their own cultural purposes, complete modelled skulls which they put on a wooden dummy representing the dead man in a funeral procession. They were approached by the local German trader, who had been advised by the directors of the *Godeffroy Kompani* in Hamburg that there was a market in Germany for any artifact made out of genuine skulls, modelled<sup>18</sup>, carved<sup>19</sup> or painted<sup>20</sup>. So the Tolai of the nearby villages, over the next ten years, took to stealing skulls in their traditional foes' cemeteries, and modelling them before sale to the said German trader — it seems that the part-Samoan trader planter Emma Forsayth never dealt in this type of artifact. The Blanche Bay Tolai changed their traditional technique to making use only of the facial bones to support the modelling so that the result looked like a weird kind of mask and had little to do with the genuine mortuary artifact of their own.

At the end of the decade, the trade stopped through lack of bone remnants which could be conveniently stolen in the area, the villages further up country or down the coast now being too well stocked with fire-arms to allow for easy expeditions. Another clear reason was that resisting the land encroachment by white would be plantation owners supervised by the German official *Neu Guina Kompani* was now preying on everybody's mind.

Thus do we need, before bearing judgement on any artifact, or any series of artifacts, to know the culture in its globality. The capacity of aesthetic innovation allowed for by the copyright system is not the only consequence of the institution. It means innovation is directly linked to social strategies, competitions for status and power, either on the part of the artist himself, as in the lower half of the Sepik valley, where men in competition with each other carry on their body part of the fruits of their innovative capacity, or on the part of the man for whom the carver or the painter works, as in the second funeral ceremonies of New Ireland and New Caledonia.

This possibly means only one thing. Under the condition of having at the tip of one's fingers all the factors playing into the scene — decades of intensive field-work are needed to obtain a simple working knowledge — the methods employed to analyse an aesthetic production could make better reference to the game's theory than to any formalized analytical system solely based on form. A museum worker with little or no training in social anthropology, and little or no experience in field-work, could only burn his fingers badly in such a complex state of things.

The introduction of a given aesthetic element, which can be the fruit of personal inspiration or the result of a very formal and very public act of paying for it in what riches the culture has to offer, is not haphazard. It is not integrated inside a kind of market according to the rules of modern economic liberalism. There is no kind of external force governing the choices. These are perfectly conscious on the part of the actors on the scene. They are quite well understood also by the onlookers born inside the culture. It is part of the internal constant personal rivalries and prestige competitions which make the everyday social life of the people, and without the intimate knowledge of which the mechanics of social, but also of aesthetic, choices, cannot be understood. It needs a man's life, if one comes from the outside, to start to communicate at the level of subtlety needed to deal with such processes with those men and women integrated from birth into the culture, be they only in their teens. As regards the mechanics of his own society, a child of twelve years old may know and understand more than any new born anthropologist. He might equally talk on the subject more freely than any adult person in his village.

The social status of the sculptor painter is important, at least in one respect, the number of pieces he might carve or paint, or both, in the course of his life. There is a world between the middle Sepik carver or the lower Sepik painter working on the spathe of a sago palm tree, who can produce art work of some kind at least once a year, and the Polynesian carver who might be able to boast of producing only one, if any, masterpiece in the course of his life. This might not even be the case. A hard wood carving which is the heirloom of a given lineage in the Cook islands could last more than two centuries. The status of a potential creator of aesthetic forms could just stay in abeyance a generation or more before being translated anew into some reality. The same is true of carvers of Easter Island small human, bird or lizard figures, which, being kept wrapped up in tapa cloth, hidden in baskets, and taken out once a year, could last endlessly. Only through wars and the destruction by fire of the buildings containing the carvings can the rate of renewal be accelerated. Usual precautions would tend to neutralize this possibility.

A potential artist is thus different from a continuous producer of what we call art. The movement of aesthetic ideas, forms and patterns, and the social recognition around him are not of the same quality. With these variations in production goes a more or less rapid rhythm of stylistic change. As a result of these differences, a given style is demonstrated by fewer pieces in Eastern Polynesia, where it would appear to be more stable, than in some parts of Melanesia and New Guinea, where drastic change can happen in little more than the span of a generation. In both cases must we add the existence of a percentage of unknown pieces : the thousands of carvings burnt at Christianisation in Polynesia ; the tens of thousands of pieces nobody Western has ever seen or collected in Melanesia, either because no one was present, or because the dimensions and fragility of the pieces were such that transport was unthinkable, or because the local tradition was to destroy the artifacts immediately after their public showing.

Nevertheless, before attempting to go further, we need some survey work so as to place pieces exactly where they should be, when they do not journey too easily in too extensive a way. There is necessity for a survey work of the type of the useful job made by Deborah Waite<sup>21</sup> for the Solomon islands, where we were so often at a loss to pin point such and such artifact. At least she has gone into the field to try and collect what information is available in a general way. Not going deep enough anywhere, she cannot tackle the problem of meaning. It should be done in an area where one can work as much on the basis of modern anthropology, that is classical social anthropology plus the analysis of a corpus of vernacular texts, and on the one of the information accumulated by Reverend Codrington in the middle of last century and Ivens or Fox in the twenties, which would help in the introduction of at least a partial vision of local cultural dynamics. Sydney Moko Mead has done just this in Star Harbour, San Cristobal, with good results and the sensitiveness one could imagine a Maori scholar would bring in the field.

Maori art shows us happily how extraordinary changes have come into effect over the last thousand years. The style of the small pieces found archeologically (ear and necklace pendants of whale tooth ivory or argilite), and of the few ancient wood carvings discovered in the deep mud of swamps (the Kaitaia lintel, Auckland Museum ; the *Uenuku* carving of the Te Awamutu Museum ; the bird shaped bowl from Ongare point, Auckland Museum ; the crescent carving from Temuka, Canterbury Museum) refers us to what was rather more linear and angular than the contemporary art, which style is in many ways characteristic from a wide area extending from Central Polynesia to the Austral Islands before the branching out of later Eastern Polynesian cultures. Pre-contact carvings such as the mortuary bone boxes<sup>22</sup> carved in the figure of a man present some of the same characteristics, through an opposition between a smooth non decorated surface and heavily ornated areas with low relief variants of the curvilinear style which is considered as specific of pre-Cook New Zealand — but what about the curvilinear style of the stone groove work in New Caledonian petroglyphs, of the sand paintings of Central Australia, and of the canoe prows in the Trobriands Islands ?

The total decoration of available space, which is the specific stylistic aspect of the Maori carvings produced after contact, could be explained. One factor is generally considered to be the new technical possibilities brought to the carvers by their early acquisition of iron tools — although the coefficient of hardness of *pounamu* stone, i.e. nephrite chisels and adze blades, is said to be close to the one of steel, which would be the only such instance in the Pacific Islands. With iron blades, Maori sculptors could carve straight away without being obliged to have recourse first to a slow guided burning of the green wood as elsewhere in the region. A factor might well be that the former patterns carved on the shoulders and the chest of older carvings had a precise meaning. Covering the rest of the human body figured with patterns extended to the whole surface area would inhibit unwelcome European curiosity. This view would tend to confirm David R. Simmons findings on the symbolic language of chest patterns on the bone boxes.

### *Meaning and function*<sup>23</sup>

If there had not been wars between Maori tribes, and fortresses, *pa*, being built on artificial islands on man made lakes, where carvings could be stored at night in the mud if the enemy was too close for their security, we

would have little proof of stylistic changes in Maori carving over the last thousand years. The number of old Polynesian carvings burnt on the instructions of the *London Missionary Society* teachers in the Austral islands, in the Cooks and in Samoa, by the Catholic catechists in Mangareva, have created a situation where we do not have enough artifacts alive, so to speak, to attempt a convincing in depth analysis. The situation is the same as regards Easter island, where the production we know of covers only the two last centuries. The only location in Polynesia where we benefit from important information as to the symbolic value of decorative patterns — linked either to local social groups or to a symbolic representation of the world above — and of who is meant to be the human shape in a single figure or a figure meshed with others in a more complex representation system, is New Zealand. Of this we satisfy ourselves, the rest being irretrievably lost.

The *Uenuku* carving of the Te Awamutu Museum is the best example<sup>24</sup>. It was retrieved in Lake Ngaroto, where it had been kept at first in the artificial island standing in the middle of it. In what is one of the best documented books on Maori art<sup>25</sup>, David Simmons writes the following :

«*Uenuku* or *Uenukutuwhatu*, a post which is the dwelling place of Uenuku, the tribal god of the Tainui people. *Uenuku* is a god who cares for the space between the heaven and the earth ; his visible form is the rainbow. *Uenuku* married *Hinepukohurangi*, the mist maid, and the two are often seen together. *Uenuku* is also a great god in Polynesia and is said to have come with the ancestral canoe in Kawhia<sup>26</sup>. Some time later the person who was the physical embodiment of the *mana* left the area and settled in South Taranaki. About eighteen generations ago, a marriage was arranged between Turongo of Waikato and a descendant who had the *mana*, Ruaputahanga of Ngati Ruanui. Ruaputahanga journeyed to Kawhia but was tricked into marriage with Whatihua, the brother of Turongo. The first son was named *Uenukutuwhatu* which has the ancient meaning of «Uenuku standing as a lord», or, literally, «like a stone set up on the land». He was the physical embodiment of the *mana* and became deified at death. It was probably at this time that the large post was made to house the spirits of *Uenuku* and *Uenukutuwhatu*. Turongo went searching for another wife and found Mahinarangi of Ngati Kahungunu. Their first son was Raukawa from whom most of the Tainui tribes trace their descent.

*Uenuku* was kept on an artificial island in Lake Ngaroto. The waters around it represented the *waiora*, the living waters of *Te Kore*. The post symbolises the supreme life force and the keeping of knowledge. The four spikes of the head are the three realms of *Te Kore*, *Te Po*, *Te Ao Marama*, plus *Te Ngunga*, the place where the baskets of knowledge were stored at the entrance to *Rarohenga*. *Te Ngunga* is also symbolized by the space inside the curve. *Uenukutuwhatu* is specifically associated with the knowledge of *tohunga* and thus with learning and thus with the teaching of that knowledge. The five chevrons on the breast represent the five paramount *hapu* descended from the Tainui line (Te Riria). Date possible around AD 1500. Height 267 cm.»

The art pieces from Oceania for which as much information is available are rare. If we had more of this, our views about Pacific art might change. I can offer a smaller similar piece of learning for a little known stone carving from Lifou, in the Loyalty islands<sup>27</sup>:

«The Wahminy line of Hnanemuaetra and Mucawëng, Wetr district, Lifou, claims as *haze* (god) *Ithidra Luop*, the physical shape of which is the local kingfisher (*Halcyon sanctus canacorum*). His function is to kill, at a place called *Hua* (tomb), inside a circle made of rocks, those who are in the habit of casting evil spells.

One day, children speak to the god with disrespect and want to kill him when he was in Luop (kingfisher meat is a delicacy). He exchanges strong words with them and goes to Xöla, on another rock where he waits for Wahminy and his men to come and fetch him. As nobody comes, he goes further to Qatèthi, at the south-east point of the Lösi district, seat of one of the oldest chiefly lineages in the area, Hnaweo. From there he goes to the other large island of Maré, floating on the water with the help of two calabashes in one version, of an empty coconut in another. Two Si Xacace women are his hosts at his arrival in Maré. He will transfer his powers to them, which will make of the Si Xacace a lineage considered with awe for their brand new powers<sup>28</sup>. This justifies a strong link between the two lineages in both islands, Wahminy in Lifou and Si Xacace in Maré. Wahminy claims to own a magical club, *jia*, named *Makalu*, the prowess at war of which is linked to *Ithidra Luop*. It is said that the New Caledonian insurgents in 1878 sent word to Lifou for the *jia* to be sent to them, so as to ensure their victory on the French troops (in the same way, Alphonse Dianou, the chief of the warriors killed in the cave in north Ouvéa in 1988, claimed to own a magical (i.e. sacred, *kap*) club ensuring victory)».

One of the colonial governors of New Caledonia, Bouge, who was in the habit of collecting artifacts and documents in each of his overseas postings, bequeathed to the Museum and Library in Chartres, his home town, three stone carvings, two made out of a very fine grain limestone or tuff, the third carved out of a broken piece of a stalactite. He published the pieces in a little known paper<sup>29</sup>, one of the stone carvings having been explained to him on the spot as representing *Ithidra Luop*, of which he did not try to learn anything, and being labelled at the same time : used for witchcraft ; both indications being explained by the myth given above. *Ithidra Luop* is represented as a female figure squatting over a human, or a bird's head.

These two sets of artifacts — there are four stone carvings from Lifou, one in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and three in Chartres<sup>30</sup>; in the same way there were more than one image of *Uenuku*<sup>31</sup> — are enough to pose now the problem of what is meant by images and representations. These latter are convenient words, which unhappily do not translate any precise situation nor any well defined concept. *Uenuku* is the more interesting piece in that matter. At the level of where we would place the nose if we thought this was the representation of a human figure, is found a more or less oval shaped hole. It is explained that this hole is where *Uenuku* stands when he is called upon. This means that the carving is not the embodiment of the god. He comes and, so to speak, sits on it when he is called for. We have here the key to our problem. Nobody claims that the image of *Uenuku* is the representation of *Uenuku*'s human body, or to that matter *Uenukutuwhatu*'s. The post called *Uenuku* is just a carving with a long history, for which reason it carries the highest quality of *mana*. I saw in Te Awamutu Museum, after hours, a Maori woman standing in front of the carving and chanting *mezzo voce*. The god was invisible but present then, expanding from this hole on the side into as much volume as he wished.

Such carvings are not images or representations, but a physical base from which to call upon the deity to be present, sitting or standing on the artifact, or better surrounding it with its presence.

If *Uenuku* is so striking in form that no one would miss its meaning, it does not bear any pattern, any mark specific of a single lineage or *ha'apu*. It is *the* physical embodiment not of the god but of the global concept grouping all Maori lineages claiming descent from the crew of the Tainui canoe. Ancestor figures in the meeting houses show each something which put them in a special category, their own, and make them distinguishable from others. One knows then there is one representation of so and so, who as an ancestor fits in this and not that genealogy, and is the original and eponym figure of these and not those people. Such ancestor figures are mostly 19th century carvings.

The Lifou figures are very much in the same category as *Uenuku*. Each except one is a woman, but this is not apparent at first sight for everyone. They all come from the same area, northwest of the Wetr district. It is not known if there are others on the island, but there is up to now no indication that there might be. The closest location for other small limestone carvings is the small Polynesian speaking island of Futuna in southern Vanuatu. Two Lifou examples other than *Ithidra Luop* are meant to be the «images» — we get consistently into the same difficulty from the lack of the right word in our western vocabulary — of the *lue jajiny*, two sisters, always unnamed, who are the protecting deities of the *ten adro*, the oldest group of inhabitants in the present Christian villages of Siloam (the older name is Muj), that is the Luete Fenehmu (their *lue jajiny* live in the Hunemusia cave, where they sing to warn of an imminent death in the lineage) and the Luete Trepe (their own *lue jajiny* live in Fedrelë, where no one can work in the gardens after sundown because of them). The Hunemusia cave contains a reddish volcanic soil which is the tip of the underwater volcanic base of the island. Yams can only be planted there after a death in the lineage, which is a specific, but logical translation of the symbolic principle that all soil in which yams are grown is the end result of the decaying flesh and bones of the ancestors, endlessly piled upon one another in underground caves, one to each lineage. The Hunemusia cave does not actually serve that purpose.

Karl Eric Larsson<sup>32</sup> has shown, in his *Fijian Studies*, how Fijian priests would use anything out of the ordinary as a physical support for the divine presence they would call upon to enter it, laying it at first gently inside the coir representation of a Fijian *mbure kalou*, a sacred raised rectangular house with high sloping roofs, in which, behind a tapa curtain, the priest would chant and talk to his god. The implements of such a ritual were stones having certain qualities (a piece broken off from a stalactite), even European artifacts, such as a watch mechanism, but Fijian priests preferred, if they could obtain one, the production of small whale tooth ivory carvings made in Lifuka, Ha'apai, Tonga. Later Lifuka production of carvings was of wood, essentially exported to Fiji, where all things Tongan carry a high prestige, women included who are much sought after in marriage. In this case, it is evident that the carvings cannot be the image of any specific deity. They are named and interpreted in each case as fitting to the local ritual and myths, being only there as a physical means of being certain of the godly presence. This way of going on with his role has the practical advantage for the priest that he knows in what direction to face, so as not to act in a disrespectful manner to the deity because he would not know where it was in the house if he called upon him to enter the house out of a way of directing him to a precise spot in space. The priest must sit and face the god



so as to be able to adress him after having put a touch of sacred coconut oil, taken from a carved bowl, on his forehead and on his breast.

An accessory point is that all manipulations of carvings of small volume by any priest anywhere in the Pacific, in authentic ritual situations, bear a specific aspect which has been little noted in specialized literature. The carvings are never meant to be used in a standing position. If held in cupped hands, they are so in a lying position. If put in a specific position during a ritual, they are put there horizontally too, or in a slanting position. When left unused in waiting, they are left in the same lying position. The standing position is a western cultural trait carried over from the ancient Greeks and others. Thus any carving having a pedestal allowing it to be held on its own in a standing position is the result of European influence, or because it has been made expressly for sale to white men. The very nice Solomon islands' carvings with pedestals have been specifically carved under the supervision of the first European traders settled in the central and western part of the group, thus made to order for the benefit of a small but demanding specialized market.

### *The world of New Caledonian carvings*

We can now look at the specific case of the New Caledonian carvings. They come in great and small pieces. Interpretations have been often based on the question and answer technique, which is the worst possible fashion of eliciting useful information. In the field of vernacular concepts, there is no way a question can be put to a Melanesian which does not contain the elements of an answer, which he will kindly give so as to be free from the questioner's insistence. The better he knows the western language, French or English, the easier it will be for him to act for the protection of his culture from more or less ignorant white men, in giving them back the very concepts they have brought with them before hand. The result is that all sorts of queer or false assumptions come up regularly, which must be countered. The best method is a question of common sense. Information about artifacts must come spontaneously, and in most cases it should be, to be taken seriously, written in the vernacular.

Any specialized researcher knows, or should know, that interrupting an informant is the worst thing to do. We have the privilege, as regards the cultures of New Caledonia proper and of the Loyalty islands, of Melanesian writers bringing to Maurice Leenhardt, and later to myself, whole exercise books covered in a highly legible handwriting, in the vernacular, about what they wanted to say, written at leisure, in their thatched roofed houses, by the light of a kerosene lamp. We thus benefit from thousands of pages talking about all, the oral tradition, the colonial history as well as the life history of the writer himself. These texts have been carefully translated word for word. Some of them Maurice Leenhardt or I have had translated from a vernacular language to another, which means that the choice of words by the translator can be of great importance for the interpretation of words of dubious signification in the original text. We have other exercise-books written in the vernacular on the right hand page, the left hand one bearing the translation and very precise notes by Maurice Leenhardt, writing half a century ago in the presence of the Melanesian author. Some of this literature has been published, most is still awaiting to be made available to the public.

This is *the* scientific base. Reading these vernacular texts, one finds important descriptions of techniques or explanations about the function of a particular artifact, at a specific location and for the use of a specific lineage. No information obtained in French today, without the necessary methodological precautions, can be opposed to the very rich data written carefully, out of the influence of any western concept, around 1908 and even earlier for the benefit of Maurice Leenhardt, in the fifties for the texts I collected, a good part of which had been written before the war years for Maurice Leenhardt who hadn't had the opportunity to collect them in person. Should be added since vernacular texts of the same quality, collected by linguists, Jean-Claude Rivierre, Jacqueline de la Fontinelle and Alban Bensa, equally the texts published today by Melanesian authors, some of whom have had the benefit of a linguistic training in Paris. There is an enormous work to be done so as to prepare all this literature for translation and publication.

A well known problem about translation work is about the choice of western equivalents for vernacular concepts. The stark reality is that there are no good equivalents, although there maybe more or less convenient ones. The only perfect one is the vernacular word, which is not always exactly practical to use. There long has been a

consensus that words like *tapu* (*kap* in Ouvéa, *hmitrötr* in Lifou, *arii* in the Houailou valley, etc.) and *mana* (*men* in Lifou) are better kept in their vernacular form, the underlying concept being too complex to fit any European substitute.

The same principle goes with what we have been, since the last century, obliged to call *god* for the lack of another word. The early missionaries found themselves in the same quandary and held to different options for the translation of the Bible in the vernacular. The very learned doctor Codrington spoke the Mota language in the Banks islands; his information dates from the middle of last century, when he got his pupils to write in this particular vernacular language, which was the medium for the teaching in the Anglican college in Mota, all that they knew or could learn from their kin about their own island culture. On such a basis, Codrington was brought to make the distinction between two sets of deities, those who had been human, that is the dead taking over divine status, which encompasses the dead from all generations, and those deities who had never been humans. The distinction is valid all over the Pacific, although many authors did not understand this, some recent ones having systematically not read Codrington, neither for that matter other classical authors such as Maurice Leenhardt. It is easier to give the feeling one is making discoveries, if one forgets about one's predecessors. Margaret Mead was in the habit of advising her students not to read anything before going into the field, so as to keep a clear mind for themselves. She forgot about all the western presuppositions which would clog their mind in any case.

The difference from place to place is that the dead and the gods can be found under the same name, or the distinction can be marked by two different words, with or without a more general vernacular heading for that chapter. The Houailou valley *ba* covers both categories, as does further north the *due*. Ouvéa people speak of *kong*, where the Lifou employ the word *haze* and the Maré *kaze*. The words *yarmiis* (Tanna), *nasumwaur* (Efate to Epi), *temar* (Ambrym), *temes* (Malekula), *tamate* (Banks Islands) are those met in Vanuatu, where they cover also both categories.

A new fashion in writing about the Pacific is to forget about gods in the Pacific and speak about fairies and genies, the one being a very old Celtic concept and the other a word imported from the Arabic. This manner which is amongst others the one of some French linguists has the obvious inconvenience of bringing people to think that only Polynesians have gods, Polynesian specialists, and Polynesian writers for that matter, stoutly keeping to the use of gods for the description of the mythical beings peopling their myths. The advantage of going on using the word *god* is that in this case the differences with the usage in Christian theology is well established, there being no possible confusion. When we use the word, we refer to its vernacular equivalent each time it isn't inconvenient, too many vernacular words making the reading difficult even for specialist researchers.

The so very popular recourse to the use of the word «spirit» in the English missionary or lay literature, tends to blur the issue, because of the enormous amount of novels of all sorts of writings dealing with spirits in the western world. This very word carries such a heavy cultural content that it does not help in the least to clarify the matter.

Raymond Firth has used the word *god* in dealing with Tikopia's oral tradition, and this has been quite satisfying<sup>33</sup>. There is no necessity to complicate further the matter in choosing another word so as to be able to claim originality of thought. The empirical and theoretical dangers of using a different vocabulary for Melanesia and for Polynesia is such that it must be exposed for what it is, an intellectual fallacy.

### *The carvings of the round house*

This being said, we can come to our New Caledonian carvings. Kanak carvers were few and far between. In the north of the island there are two mountain locations, Temelin and Sinaal, overhanging the Diahot valley in the Pêbwa area. Their inhabitants have long been the sole sculptors of all the known carvings in the area.

Like all such artifacts in the Pacific, these have been at first termed idols, by laymen as well as by missionaries. It was believed by all, on the basis of the image of the golden calf in the Ancient Testament, that if the Pacific islanders violated Moses' ban on representing the human figure, it could only be for religious reasons and that any standing image of a man was the representation of a local god and fitted in a religious ritual. Western research has had the greatest difficulty to escape from this interpretation, which seems until now to be unconsciously coloring



so many descriptions.

Another difficulty stems from the complexity of Melanesian symbolic systems. We have interpreted for two centuries Polynesian divine genealogies in the terms of the categories established for ancient Greek and Roman mythology, gods, demi-gods, heroes, etc. Melanesian systems do not fit at all into such generalisations, genealogies being usually too shallow (from three to six or eight generations at most, except in a few spots such as Little Malaita in the Solomon Islands) to induce the enthusiasm of specialists.

One thing which must be said of New Caledonian carvings is that they never fit into any ritual sequence where offerings would be brought to a mythical being. Real offerings boast of a maybe special New Caledonian feature : they are made of a flower and vegetable bouquet, the specific composition of which has in each case a different symbolic meaning, and which is fastened<sup>34</sup> on the upper half of a long wooden pole made of iron wood. This wood is never used for carving. The pole is planted in the ground at a place, the *ka mwaro*, somewhere on the side of the lineage's principal round house, where old and maybe rotting carvings can be found, having been put there so as to be protected by the strong taboo on the spot. Selling artifacts belonging to another person has been a kind of sport around the middle of last century.

This being said, there is no particular reason to consider the carvings as the images of any mythical person, either god or dead ancestor. This rule is valid for standing carvings being part of the architectural decoration of the large round house. They never represent anybody in particular. They are made for a purpose, that is the funerary commemoration feast organized some years after the death of a chief or of the lineage head, when things will have had time to be organized in such a way that there will be enough food available for the hundreds or often enough the thousands of people who will want to attend and will have been invited.

In between, the deceased's body will have been treated in different ways according to local tradition : left in the former lineage round house, which will slowly rot and fall upon his beheaded corpse, the more so if the central post is first taken down (Koné, Houailou) — the skull is always taken away, when it can fall of its own, and is put in a special open air repository where the lineage's priest will go and pray to the dead — or put in a tomb, in a side hole, so that nobody can come and put a spear through the corpse (Houailou, but this may be a recent evolution) ; buried in a foetal but upright position, with the head sticking out so that it can be easily taken out when feasible (Voh) ; taken up in the mountain, in an open place, the lying body surrounded by upright stones according to an oval design (Dubea) ; put in a cave, laid over the last corpse (South and Central Lifou, North Ouvéa) ; fastened with strong bush vines in foetal position and put upright in a cave (Fwatenawe valley, Temala), or in an old canoe hull and slung in an overhanging cave in a cliff (South Ouvéa, Northwest Lifou, Maré), etc. Each variant characterises more a set of interlocked lineages<sup>35</sup> than a territorial or language area.

Boulay, who has no training nor understanding whatsoever for the field, has published unconfirmed information<sup>36</sup> that the chief's dead body is slung close to the top of the round house. His contradictory statement says that the same body will be transported to its last abode (a banian tree, a cleft in the rocks) placing near him the sacred basket containing the shell money. This last indication cannot be, because the sacred basket is to be transmitted from first-born son to first-born son in each generation, and not only through the lengths of shell money which will be exchanged, but through the so called «head», carved or braided<sup>37</sup>, meant to be the one of all shell money lengths contained, is one of the principal parts of the lineage's identity. Without it the lineage has no alternative but to look for another one so as to be absorbed inside it. There are few cultural rules obeyed in general all over New Caledonia, but this is one. This sacred basket may have been brought for the ritual and taken back.

The fate of the body is another matter. Differences are between groups of interrelated lineages, either dispersed or spacially coherent. Dessicating the dead body over a fire could be one possibility. It has been first reported in detail by A. B. Deacon from south and southwest Malekula in Vanuatu. It is certainly unconfirmed for the whole *Paaici* language area, but could be eventually true here or there.

Another factor of the ambiguity of this information is that the *Paaici* language area has greatly expanded since the French took over, covering locations formerly given to speaking other languages such as *Cèmuhi*, *Aekè*, *Hmwaekè*, *Pamale*, etc. The rule by which every cultural trait is locally owned and must be documented as such suffers no exception. For the present we have no vernacular text describing such funerary ritual, which maybe sim-

ply an inference from an poetic expression. The only source given by Boulay deals with Belep and is unconfirmed in the very complete unpublished set of traditional vernacular texts collected on Belep by Father M.-J. Dubois. Leenhardt, who worked consistently for twenty years and more in the *Paaici* area, was never told such a thing. He published in 1932, at the end of his : *Documents néo-calédoniens*, a last text, «La mort du chef», describing the funerary rituals in the higher reaches of the Koné area, where they speak all at once the *Paaici*, *Pamale* and *Cèmuhi* languages, and where the dead corpse is taken to a cleft in the rocks. The more recent Melanesian author Waya Gorode, father of the well known Kanak poetess Déwey Gorodey, describes the death ritual in an unpublished manuscript : *Mon Ecole du Silence* ; he adds to Leenhardt's description for the *Paaici* area the detail that the well cleaned skull will be put higher up on the rock on a wooden tray made out of an old *jovo*, that is an old door jamb. We know, from the numerous written texts in the language, how the poetic expression of the *Paaici* people can be as varied as imaginative and ambiguous. If read by an untrained researcher, errors can be easily made easily.

In the same way, there is a general principle governing the making of carvings which fits them into an exchange system, which explains that they cannot be representing, in our sense of the word, the dead person. Carvings are rarely found where they have been made. During the funerary ritual, at a given time, the mother's side, which will group more than a third of the people coming to the feast, have the privilege of destroying the houses of their dead kinsman, cutting down his fruit trees, devastating his gardens, spoiling the carvings with strokes of their adzes and later of their imported steel axes, and taking away anything which fits their fancy, even double canoes fitted for the high seas and in any case whole sets of heavy carvings, which they will triumphantly take away and fasten to their own round houses, the new set being thus easily dispersed between different houses in differing locations. The dead man's paternal kin will then take oldish carvings obtained in similar circumstance so as to replace in the brand new round house those which have been taken away, either in a far away location or a few miles away, according to the spatial distance encompassing the dead man's father's and mother's marriage. This means that the carvings cannot have been made to be eventually part of a ritual describing precisely the social identity of the deceased, as this identity will not be possibly kept in place more than a few days, or a few weeks.

This does not preclude ritual speeches addressed to the dead saying that his image has been carved. Figures of speech in symbolic discourses and fact are two different things, or better two different set of facts. Finial carvings or door jambs, which are the principal pieces carved on such an occasion, never carry any detail, any pattern, which could link them to the very person of the deceased.

The door jambs bring in a specific point in this discussion. They are always two, one on the right and one on the left of the door. Which one would be *the* representation of the dead chief ?

Maurice Leenhardt acquired an interesting couple of door jambs, which belonged to the dead warrior chief in the Tipije valley during the 1917 insurgency, Kafeat Cidopwaan ma Juat. These were clearly, as Leenhardt explained on the day he entrusted those pieces to me, the representation of a couple, the difference being in the chevron pattern which was found carved in relief on the left side of the head for one, on the right side for the other. These chevrons are the representation of the comb, carried in an upright position for the man, in a horizontal one for the woman, the axis of the chevron pattern being either vertical or horizontal according to the piece. One finds such dual representation of a couple all over the place, the chevron design of the comb being often unfinished and only a surface in relief being found from which the chevron can be carved later. Unfinished carvings are a constant fixture of Pacific art. The symbolic value and function of an artifact is the same, be it finished or not.

If there was in a door jamb a representation of the deceased, who would be then the female image ? The one of his widow ? This does not make any sense. Devoid of indications of rank or other individual statuses, the carvings can only be linked to a collective meaning, the community at large of the dead, in other words the ancestors. Which was Maurice Leenhardt's final judgement. The carvings in the round house represent the community of the dead, male and female, who are at the same time integrating into their ranks the newly deceased and are asked to bestow their blessing upon all their descendants.

As Maurice Leenhardt believed, carvings can be understood as a form of collective prayer. There is much to say about the sociology of blessing and curse in the Melanesian society. It gives the explanation of quite a num-

ber of behaviours which would be mysterious without this reference. Modern island society does not carve anymore in the same circumstances, but it still wields blessings and curses to the same effect. This situation is often confused by European observers, particularly today in New Guinea, who easily fall into the recourse to explanations by witchcraft. It is quite a different institution and never clearly explained by modern islanders using western words.

A well known pattern covers the lower part of the door carvings, star shaped in the north of New Caledonia, in the shape of a lozange in Ponérihouen — Tchamba, or of a square in Poindimié—Cape Bayes areas. According to Maurice Leenhardt, this pattern is meant to represent the ribs of a dead man, which is logical, carvings being made on the advent of death in the community, the ancestors being collectively, and logically, represented in the oral tradition by dead corpses coming to life at night and falling back to the ground in their skeletal form at the very first rays of daylight.

There are exceptions. Maurice Leenhardt sent me in the spring of 1948 to collect in Goa, Ponérihouen, a number of carved posts and carved jambs of a round house of the Meêdü chiefly lineage. The people explained that the concentric ovals which were found on the lower part of an interesting door jamb having kept all its colors, black, red and white, did not represent the ribs this time, but water flowing, water belonging to the god *Gomawe*, who is the patron of the Naacuwe lineage, but at the same time the god who reigned on the submarine and underground abode of the dead.

A text published<sup>38</sup> in 1932 by Maurice Leenhardt, «Les deux soeurs de Moaxa», explains at the turn of a page that the conch shells placed along the long and fine wooden point, on each side, getting smaller as they go up, which finishes the finial carving, represents water from a waterfall (one of the god *Gomawe*'s many abode is in the bubbles at the bottom of a waterfall), and that the smallest conch shell, at the top, contains the vegetable parcel, the total elements of which are at the same time the physical embodiment of the blessing coming from the lineages symbolic belonging (the so called *totem* in the literature : animal, plant, or weather element, called *rhékamo*, the power of which stems from the power of the community of the dead ancestors linked to this particular lineage). An identical smaller parcel was kept also in a small basket suspended from each person's neck and was thought of as a kind of vegetable language translating the lineage's collective identity and ensuring in this way the blessing of the ancestors<sup>39</sup>.

The need for such a collective cultural expression, through carvings, vegetable offerings or protective parcels, is linked to the fundamental fact that land is owned through the name given at birth, that there is then no collective ownership of land, as has been thought and said, but territorial indications that a certain lineage — a lineage is in a way a collection of names for which there should be, but never is in a complete fashion, a man, a woman, or a child available so as to embody each name through a living individual. The lineage owns the list of names, each bearer of a name controlling part of the land tenure considered only in a general way as the lineage's territory. The ritual locations belong in a way to the group as a whole, but are looked after by the very person having received at birth the name carrying with it this responsibility.

So there is a necessity of reasserting in some way the global existence of the lineage. The monumental architecture of the round house is there for this very reason, as well as the monumental carvings going with it. They do not represent the individual dead person, but the collectivity of the dead, men and women, which justifies the often found clear representation of the couple. This ideological background of the carvings explains how the maternal lineage representatives at the funerary commemoration feast can take the carvings away and fasten them anew to the functional door jambs or the top of their own round houses. The fact that one jamb carving is a woman means that their ancestors too are represented by the carvings they took away. This is one aspect of a society which is much more bilineal than has been said. It always functions in a constant situation of give and take between the maternal and the paternal kin.

North New Caledonia can lack this representation of the couple through the door jambs, for the good reason it claims another one which does not warrant any effort of interpretation. It is made of two carvings in the round, one on the left of the door, when one looks at the round house, which is the standing image of a man in penis wrapper, one on the right side, which is the standing image of a woman in characteristic petticoat<sup>40</sup>. The function of this couple is not mysterious if one refers to what has just been said. The local lineage is made of the successive couples having settled and sired descendants on a given site, the raised round house representing at the same time the

lineage and the chiefly line into which social control is vested.

A recent interpretation wants to see the dead corpse and the door carvings as parallel symbols<sup>41</sup>. The tree used for the carvings would be a tree fallen through storm and rotten inside, which would explain the curved aspect shown by many of these pieces. This dead tree would have been taken away from the forest to be the image of the dead man — which we have seen is not — and the dead corpse is brought back to the forest as a kind of compensation — which it isn't either, dead corpses being put in dry and never in humid places, never in the forest even if not far from it, always into a rock structure in the open, maybe surrounded by forest — there are many needle shaped such limestone formations sticking out from the top of hills all over the place, curiously placed in a general ESE—WSW line. One never finds any traditional Kanak cemetery into the forest. On the edges, yes.

There is a double problem in this interpretation. It is true that fallen trees can be used for carving purposes, the more so if they have been found closer to the sea by people not having direct contact, nor easy relations, with those who own the primeval forest. But this is not the rule, although it certainly has been made easier by the recourse to iron tools. Maurice Leenhardt was told by carvers that they were careful to work on the green wood of the houp tree, the one specifically taken for carvings, because once dried it became too hard to work with a stone blade. This detail falls in line with the technique of felling the trees by fire, which can only succeed on green trees, driving carefully a slow combustion, with neither flame nor smoke, of the wood at the stump and cleaning as needed the burnt wood with an adze<sup>42</sup>. This technical process takes about two weeks according to my observation of one instance on North Ambrym, Vanuatu, in August 1949.

These two informations are coherent with one another. Eventually the specialists could choose a trunk only partly rotten at the top, where they would carve out the future door jambs, and keep the rest of the untouched part of the trunk for the central post. One must not overlook that the problem of building a new round house is first and foremost the one of the central post, then only of the smaller posts all round, carved or not, of the door jambs, of the finial carving and of a number of smaller ones. It is easier to get all those from the same tree than to seek a dead tree for the door jambs and a better one for the rest. But then the introduction of iron and steel tools, at the beginning of last century, was bound to change some time worn habits.

The workings of the details of the carving should be looked at carefully. The carvings made with iron adze blades, obtained from trading ships in the early part of the last century, show the planes defining the general structure of the carving cutting each other at acute angles. In having recourse to fire and stone tools, such volumes are of a much larger dimension — iron blades can accommodate smaller details — and planes can only cut each other at obtuse angles. Looking at the details with magnifying glasses, one can see the sharp cutting of the wood fibers when iron adze blades have been used, and when the fibers having been only broken, but not really cut, by the adze's stone blade. Traces of work with fire so as to delineate the larger volumes can be also seen on old pieces having completely lost their colors. This would mean that such carvings could be nearly two centuries old. Most carvings in our possession bear traces of work with iron blades.

The *deuilleurs*, or *avi*, they can be one or more according to the status of the deceased, are the men who take over the responsibility of looking after the dead corpse of their father, or their classificatory father's, for the time at the end of which the head can come detached from the body on its own. To say that they are those who will bring back the dead houp tree from the forest where they will put to lay the dead corpse is too well imagined to be true. A corpse never goes to the forest, because it must benefit from a symbolically «dry» environment if it is not to be buried.

Since Captain James Cook left in Balade a couple of pigs bought by him in Port Sandwich, Malekula, the growing population of wild pigs, and later also of wild dogs, has become of such importance that the Kanak have been obliged, either to bury their dead or to sling them on horizontal branches, preferably of banyan trees. They have done so by putting them first in a kind of filet of bush vines, or in a wooden case if they had one available, or in the special coffins made of carved door jambs, cut or sawn to the dimensions of a folded corpse fastened in foetal position. These coffins are rather rare<sup>43</sup>.

The work of the mourners is to go and deposit the dead person's skull on a flat stone, or on a kind of woo-



den tray made of a former carving in hard wood, at the open air skull repository where the lineage priest will come and pray over it. These repositories are in rocks or little visited quarters, close to the forest if need be, but never in it, never close to running water. In the Kanak symbolic system, the forest is a receptacle of the global powers of life, and must not be mixed with anything dealing with death.

In the case in point, the mourners would be physically unable to lift even a partially rotten trunk in the forest. In any case they could never go there before having had the *tapu* removed from themselves by having first their hair and beard cut and having bathed in the sea or in the river. Lifting a heavy trunk and bringing it where it can be worked upon means a great concourse of people to carry the trunk, which means also provisions of food to feed them. This cannot be done before at least two years after the death — one year to prepare the gardens and have enough tubers to sow the second year so as to obtain the bountiful crop necessary to feed all the workers needed for the preparations and then to feed the visitors coming for the feast. This work is put into the hands of specialists, who are under no obligation to be the mourners, and usually belong to an older generation. Thus the image proposed is nice, but has no reality. No vernacular text has ever expressed such things, although most will give, at times in great detail, descriptions of mourning periods and the organisation of the commemoration feast.

Something must be said of the finial carving. It is the physical embodiment of a concept which is in a way analysed at the door between its two components, man and woman. The finial carving carries in its highest conch shell the vegetable definition of the lineage, a lineage which does not exist in a vacuum — so many authors write as if it was so — but as the result of the coming together not of two lineages, but of many outside lineages which have bestowed their daughters here so as to carry children who will be their nephews and nieces, which means they, the representatives of the maternal lines, will come and give them life by blowing in their ears immediately after birth, before participating in the meeting where the new born's name will be discussed and chosen.

Commemorations being each time that of a man and of his dual origin, patrilineal and matrilineal, the finial carving represents this duality, embodying the invisible vertical line going through both the visible and the invisible worlds, and which the dead follow to visit their descendants, which will go along in the reverse way each time one of their number dies. This embodiment of the lineage in its links with the invisible realm of the gods and the dead, which is the one of the finial carving, is found also in its support, the central post, which is taken away if the lineage decides to move from one place to another, the chief being alive and party to the decision — no Pacific islands' chief takes a decision alone. If the chief dies, the central post will be left on the spot, its function being parallel to the one of the first-born son of the senior line. It will stay there to rot by its base and fall down on the corpse, or will be taken down immediately as a symbol. Symbolic ceremonial speeches will claim that the central post had fallen when the chief died. So the central post is one day the lineage and another one the dead chief himself representing the lineage. Poetic language operates at different levels, saying things which are organically coherent — the lineage / the central post / the chief — but logically incoherent to a western mind for whom the symbolism of the central post translates in either the one or the other<sup>44</sup>.

This principle has exceptions. One is from the sculptors whim, who can think of putting up a very special carving, and for instance what M. Leenhardt claimed he had never seen, the representation of a human body in its entirety. I collected one from Kereduru, Canala, which did not bear the usual stylistic simplification of form of the finials of the area, with their expanded inferior lobe of the ears, and their parallel fingers treated as a specific pattern attached to the side of the face. This piece, eroded through the action of the rain and the sun, has been deposited by me in the Nouméa Museum. There is another one in the Musée de l'Homme, which has kept intact its colors and has the appearance of coming from the southern half of the island. Both pieces are old ones. This last complete human figure in the round could be a physical reference to the god *Apubwakwè* in Canala, or *Virego* in the Thio, Borende and Dumbea language areas, who repeats in the south of New Caledonia the same theme of *Gomawe's* link with water by walking around by gigantic steps, each one leaving behind a new spring, badly needed in a rather barren mineral rich environment. There is one indication that this is such, but it must await confirmation.

The finial carving carrying only a human face is often bifrons. Maurice Leenhardt says that this characteristic feature of having two faces, one in the front, one in the back, belongs to the east coast of New Caledonia. This represents the two lines presiding upon the funeral rites, the paternal and the maternal line. The face at the front is

the «image» of the paternal line, linked to prestige behaviour and discourse. The one at the back of the carving, is the one of the maternal line, looking in the direction of the site of ritual actions dealing with the outerworld.

This might also be linked with the layout of the different parts of the inhabited area. The now classical and symmetrical model with three parallel alleys, a wide central one for the spectacular dances and ceremoniess, smaller ones at the side for the quiet dealings with the maternal line (only one would be needed, but the symbolism is thus more complete, two thinner matrilineal alleys enclosing the larger patrilineal one). This blue-print is in doubt as being valid for the whole island. The question mark stems from the fact that this spatial vision is dispersed all over the place and cannot be placed in a given area, linguistic or cultural. There is neither proof that it is the oldest human landscaping tradition nor that it is the only one possible. It is found neither in the Loyalty islands, even among lineages claiming to have come from New Caledonia proper, nor in the Isle of Pines. In the older inhabited mountain sites, other plans can be seen, often linked to what the immediate neighbouring physical environment allows for. In the Poum district Nenema islands, Maurice Leenhardt collected a tradition linking certain masks with another spatial organization, built around a more or less oval dancing and ceremonial square surrounded by houses, this tradition being given as being the older one.

Excerpts from the written work by Bwesou Eurijisi, in *merea Ajië*, the Houailou language, help to explain the link between the architecture of the round house and the invisible world. They are somewhat dispersed between texts claiming wider meaning and other manuscript exercise books with a more precise and local content, all written in precise long hand, starting around 1908 and finishing around 1920.

Bwesou Eurijisi *circa* 1908, cahier n° 2, p. 1-2 : translation by Raymond Leenhardt<sup>45</sup>, checked by J. Guiart :

<i>Eba vireno i rhöa are ma ki rha na dexe wemoa</i>	On raconte que lorsque ce clan ancien entreprend
<i>na moaro a mbase ma, na vi tovea ma rhö ro</i>	<i>They say that when this ancient lineage starts to</i>
<i>ka moaro xei, ae to para moa xere na ekuru roi,</i>	de bâtir la maison, l'appartenance apparaît à son
<i>we eba to poere ro ni we ma na na boe uuru</i>	<i>build the house, its symbolic belonging appears</i>
<i>ke boei kö ro kemoru E bori ere rhe Wexumè.</i>	autel, au bas de la maison, on dit à propos d'elle,
<i>Na wi barë na rh'p i moaro xei, Kaunimoa ro</i>	<i>at its altar, at the bottom of the house, it is said</i>
<i>Gonde, na vi rhaxa vesi moaro xe moa rha ke,</i>	que dans les maisons au moment où l'on se couche
<i>ro boewa, ndu e moaro kamixei Neouwe ro</i>	<i>about it that in the houses, when one prepares to</i>
<i>Koua, mi rhei, rou na ma rari, ka toi rhöa we</i>	on entend à l'intérieur
<i>na to poromoa i ka vu, ma kase pou kei kavu,</i>	<i>go to sleep, one hears inside a noise as if water</i>
<i>mase ne ro wemoa i moaroa a, we ari na porpomoa</i>	un gargouillis comme celui d'une marmite en train
<i>boe wesi, na ki rhede poanuri ma pou ke xiö,</i>	<i>was boiling in a pot</i>
<i>ro ka moa ro, ne wi to i kamo ka rhöa, Ae na</i>	de bouillir sur le feu, on dit, c'est l'appartenance des
<i>ki toi kamo na bori wa pei ro de kamo koesé</i>	<i>they will then say, this is the symbolic belonging</i>
<i>rau a oro go ae, na waso barö ro beea kamo,</i>	Wexumè. Il y a aussi l'appartenance des
<i>pei re na ma na rhe a me na do sane au, cere bori</i>	<i>of the Wexumè. There is also the symbol of the</i>
<i>ade to xara de mi ne na ka vou, ae nya ne sakoai,</i>	Kaunemwa de Gondé, qui suivent la lignée des
	<i>Kaunemwa in (the village of) Gondé, which</i>
	Manarhë à Boewa, qui vient de Neouwa à Kua, car
	<i>followed the Manarhë lineage in Boewa, which</i>
	cette appartenance est le serpent, qui reste dans les
	<i>comes from Neawa in {the valley of} Kua, their</i>
	perches, qui reste en bas de la maison du maître et
	<i>symbol is the snake, which stays down from the</i>
	interdit les perches de la maison du maître, loi de
	<i>house of its master, ; the law of this house : it is</i>
	cette maison là : il est interdit d'aller sur le bas-
	<i>forbidden either to go on the sides of the house or</i>
	côté de la maison et de l'allée, ni d'en faire le tour
	<i>its alleys or to walk around it up to the staff at the</i>
	par la perche de l'autel, de peur que l'appartenance
	<i>altar, because the symbolic belonging will come</i>
	ne vienne résider dans ces hommes et leur donner
	<i>inside the men and give them a sickness of the</i>



*me e bomu wanii, ma eara.*

maladie de la tête, des genoux, maladie que  
head, of the knees too, this illness being provoked  
provoque cette appartenance là, car lui est vraiment  
by this symbol, which is rather nasty, its master  
mauvais, le maître garde les herbes pour soigner,  
keeps the herbs to nurse, the offering for the  
l'offrande pour les soins est le produit de la pêche  
nursing is to bring grilled sea food  
grillé.

*Ae moaro Neburu we rhöe simui, ba ere ndexa ka  
a ka uru mariiri, na to we rhë ae Boearee, we rhö  
re na mere, na we na wesi cere ka ne ge cèki a  
wese ro dovo, na bori do ara sane au, na wi barö  
na rhö moaro xe Cibëi sari, ro Gode, rhö e na  
merhëö, arii na poro ma i pa kau, na ki toi kamo,  
na bori pei si au ma vi küxèè, cere toxara nde wine,  
Ae na wi barö na rhö moaro xe Boere ma Waxè,  
ro Goenrü, we rhö re na boarawe, okare boarawe  
we base ma na na me see para boarawe wanii. .  
Ae ba ere see ere, do boarawe, na sari au ma suri,  
ae na re taree, we okare boarawe re re rhö moaro a,  
na wi na bori ka au e ne, arii na poromoa xere, pei  
ae wai rhö a, me na boa na poro goa kalo xei.,  
E bori ere ka peoi boarawe xe boere ma waxè, rhöi  
barö na merhëë, e bori ere merhëë xe wakè, cere  
meari para rhü re, re, na cerepoa seri, cere wa  
torhu ö, ae pa ne uwe, we de rhö re na uwe, cere  
wa torhu na ki tuo ro meo ma xere, na da wi na  
devine.*

The Neburu lineage's symbol is the *simui*, which  
is the same as the *mariiri*, (snake) which lives in  
water. In Boreare the symbol is the sultan fowl, it  
has a path which moves them (all such birds) to  
create famine in the fields, they will then eat really  
badly. There is a symbol for the Cibëi Sari, in  
Gondé, it is the lizard, the lower side of the house  
of the masters is taboo, if a man goes there, he  
will get burned by the bite of the lizard, they have  
the cure. The symbol of the lineages of Boere and  
Waxè, at Goenrü, is the mouse, the one of before  
a, when all the new animals had not come yet. One  
always said : the true mice, they were always  
small, but not exactly true as some of them were  
white, the lower side of the house was sacred, the  
sickness sent by the symbol is to lose one's hair,  
they say a man has been shaven by the symbol of  
the Boere and Waxè. Their symbol is too the lizard ;  
one says the lizard of the Waxè. They love their  
symbols and look after them well when they find them,  
but if they see the fern, which is their  
symbol too, they must be careful when they climb on their houses,  
as they do not have the cure.

*Na wi barö na rhö pa Moeneo, we sairu, maso ne,  
poromoa, ko ase vi poanuri, ae na ki na pei  
na bori cû ma uru suri, ma da kuru cere to xara  
ndewine, na do tovea na pei rhö a na na pei moa  
na, karo kamo, we rhö na sairu,. . .*

The people of Moneo have as a symbol the  
octopus which rolls on itself on the lower side of  
their house. One must not go around. When it  
gives a disease, it itches like mycosis, one cannot  
evade it, they keep the cure, this is a real sickness,  
it stays a long time in the body of a man, as it is from the octopus symbol. . .

Bwesou Eurijisi circa 1908, cahier n° 2, p. 12-13 :

« . . The symbols which have no altars nor wardens, for all those things which crawl and fly, plants and trees, have no wardens. Everything begins in the lower sides of the houses of the masters (*of a symbol*) and this for all of them. If one of them dies, this will go on in all generations, one and one, the taboo, the house and the globality with the altar, there are the masters, the taboo because of the lizard man which is the symbol. It is the same for the snake<sup>46</sup> and all other symbols . . . the taboo about dancing around the lower side of the house of the master of the symbol, when there is a dance, if not the lizard, or the eel or another symbol will send a sickness to that man. They do not always have the cure (*going with the sickness*) for going around the lower side of the house. They will go and see who has (*the cure*). If they meet the symbol around the house of its masters, those who live in the house will talk to them : «Go far away from here, you might meet a man.» They talk thus to the lizard, the gecko, the caterpillar, the worm, these are the things they do when they meet them in their domain and around their own house, but if they meet them in the bush, elsewhere, they do not talk thus, thinking it is without importance. . . »

Bwesou Eurijisi circa 1908, cahier n° 2, p. 16-17 :

« . . The habit of symbols in some other places is to stay near the mats on which they sleep inside their houses. If they see a man entering in the absence of the master of the house, he finds them, is afraid and runs away, but if the master comes in he will talk to them quietly and get them to withdraw, so that other men can enter the house. This is the fashion for the symbols lizard, gecko, water snake. The houses of the men who are masters of such symbols are in bad shape, as they are full of holes by them inside the house, the inside of the house is full of holes and bumps when one goes and sleeps inside.

One important aspect of this text, too long to be given here in its entirety, is that there are lineages which boast that they own a *rhöe*, or *rhökamo*, as it is also called, and others which don't, but do have a specific relation with a bird such as the fishing eagle, *kiö*, although this one cannot be called a *rhökamo* — the interested parties might not agree on this vernacular theoretical point if they think it is important in the mind of the European researcher. In the same way, there are lineages which own a strong taboo protecting the lower side of their house, on the outside, where the altar is and all around the house except in front of the door. There are lineages which boast similar *rhökamo*, but don't have such a taboo, which only plays around the lineage owner's houses which are listed by the Melanesian author as such. Bwesou Eurijisi, who is part of one of the lineages boasting the ownership of a *rhöe*, is a patient man who is not afraid of endless repetitions. He says what there is to be known. What he does not say cannot be inferred as existing nevertheless for reasons of outward logical coherence. This would be imagining things.

Bwesou Eurijisi, cahier n° 4, translation by Maurice Leenhardt

They come in the evening, running, carrying spears and shouting *Cowi, cowi, cowi, cowi !*, with them the men called *avi* (who carry great cylindric hats and are the image of the dead), they throw their spears and sling stones against the *moaro* (the high roofed conical ceremonial round house), a plant being a war symbol has been attached to one of the conch shells fastened to the long point which finishes the finial carving, it is there to be hit, and if so this means that one of the men of the host lineage will die. They come back and split between two groups on the ceremonial alley where they are going to dance, one near the *moaro* for the oldest, the fathers and grandfathers (*classificatory*), at the other end the young circumcised. One of the men who leads them climbs the yam ladder and starts to talk, after the modulated cry, *rhia*, which marks the beginning of a formal speech, he tells out the names of the ancestors of those present around him.

The circumcised youths advance in a group, practising the war step, the *avi* act in identical fashion, throwing away their hats and leaving their hair to fall down, the time they go back from where they all came, the speech is finished. The old men answer in giving the same list of the circumcised's ancestor's names. The latter are their children, belonging to the same *moaro*, (thus) the two speeches are thus the same.

The *viseno* (the man who gives the preliminary harangue and this preliminary speech itself) climbs the yam ladder, calls out for the *rhia* and goes on, acting as if he was running, moving from left to right, stopping, starting again. The *viseno* speaks through the noise of the *rhia* and of the men stamping on the ground. The *rhia* stops when the *viseno* calls out five times : *ni ka ika ikei ke ika*, and stands down. The chief then mounts the yam ladder and speaks :

«Öi ! I speak and bless and go up, the wasp alights on the *bwi* tree and the spider falls from the top of the house of the grandsons of Kace and Sesawi, Pwayeri and Kaunemoa, Kairi Homayè and Jivuino, Koèpiemèmi and Jenò, Susa and Mèdeo, Nane and Kosa Toroina, The head of Neowau and Pwasese, Kartighè and Sari Kandè and Mwaimoru. I speak and bless the *karoti* staff and the *bwi* tree for the lying and disappearance of a part of my elder brothers and of my fathers in succession. I throw today (ending the speech seen as a spear)»

(The *bwi* tree is a symbol of war ; the *karoti* is a carved staff which is a mark of mourning).

Once the dead corpse has been put in a tree, they plant the *karoti* to which *awa*, tapa cloth streamers, are attached. For four days after the death they (the *avi*) visit the deceased, then plant at the beginning of the road a *wesara* staff (which taboos the entrance to the path going where the dead corpse is lying), they fasten to it *awa*, a bunch of *bawè* leaves, symbol of the tie with the past, and *jao* leaves also (which are put twenty days after the death on the deceased house as a taboo against anybody entering). This *wesara* closes the path going to the deceased. When the time of the commemoration feast will have come, they take out this wood, they will brake the wooden bed (on which the corpse is), take the skull, leave the bones or put them aside, take away the skull and the wooden staffs, that is why the chief speaks of these wood pieces brought back to him.

After death, there are two food feasts, one, *bwèni*, on the fifth day, and on the twentieth, *bwèjasere*, when the spirit (*ko*) of the dead man is sent away to the bush.

On the twentieth day, on the broken house's raised mound (broken after death), so as to taboo its access, an *avi* fastens to a staff planted there a bouquet of *jao* leaves. The widow, his brother or the mother's brother, plant also there a yam, or some other food plant according to season. Then only can they be allowed to work again in the gardens. The mound is then deserted, forbidden to all. Only the deceased's mother's brother can come close.

The *sona*, ceremonial penis sheath, is not put on during a commemoration ceremony ending the mourning period. In each food feast, there is the share of each *moaro* (the lineage). The *kamai*, the young circumcised, takes out his ornaments and the first *sona* attached at the back (there is a coarser one left underneath to hold his penis) and puts the lot on a mat close to the *bwè*, the food heap of his mother's brother (*kanya*). If there are many *kamai*, they each do the same and go respectively to their own mother's brother's heap. A man of their lineage offers then these things ceremonially to the *kanya*. . .

. . . The *kanya* take the presents, they had some ready on a mat, but of a smaller value. The *pamara kamai* (collective name covering all the sister's sons just circumcised) go back to eat with the *avi*. They cannot eat yet from the common oven, *buruse*, they stay at the *ha moaro* (the altar at the back of the lineage's ceremonial round house) with the *avi*.

When comes the time of apportioning, *virhei*, the food on the heaps, *bwè*, the ceremony being the one of the end of mourning, the *kamai* and *avi* follow the *kanya* and answer their formal speeches by shouting *Ei!* The sharing out of the food finished, the *avi* go and stand

near the deceased *kanyis's bwê*, who bring grass to cover their food heap until the next day. One of these *kanya*, or a mother's father (of the deceased), cuts a lock of hair from an *avi* and puts it on the heap.

After that, all is *mama*, that is much less taboo. The *avi* has his hair cut by any man available and goes back to the *ka moaro* without his hat, keeping his function until the fifth day. On that day, he goes and bathes with the *kamai* at day break. In the water the *avi* takes off from the *kamai* the leaf of *rhö* which had been fastened to the penis. They come out (*of the water*) and the *avi* puts the penis of the *kamai* on banana leaves containing water heated by hot stones, so as to cleanse it with herbs and help it to become less swollen. Himself rubs his own body with the same herbs so as to purify every part of his body having touched the dead corpse. Thus is his taboo lifted. . .

Then the *avi* goes back with everybody, the taboos on him are lifted, as if with the *kanya*, it was forbidden to pass his back. If someone had to do it, he would shout : *Torua!* The *avi* would get up or better crouch on the ground, as if to make himself scarce, if it is for his younger brothers or sisters and his *boru*, his nephews *pamara*. The *panya*, the father's sister, cannot eat close to her *nemui's*, her nephew's *avi*. The older relations of deceased put on the *avi* the taboos of their dead brother, they cannot eat close to him, nor touch food coming from the *avi*. . . The *avi* benefits from the deceased taboos because he has touched this dead brother. . . All the taboos of the deceased when he was alive are transferred on the person of the *avi* who touches the dead corpse. . .

It is the *avi's* duty to wash the dead, wash him again, wash him with the *meamoru* leaves, to pour the *baru* mushroom's powder so as to blacken his face, so (*much*) that he cries in the same way as the makers of rain, and to cover him with *nerepu* leaves ; if he died in a time of rain, they will put white feathers on his head and wound around his loins dry banana leaves, because it is light for a light weather, the *avi* putting on the same.

They take the dead corpse in the bush and cover him with a mat. If there is haste because of a danger or another reason, the *avi* will make a hole in the mat just over the mouth, take a local bambou shoot, of which he breaks through the knots with a hard piece of wood and from one end pours water on the face of the corpse so as to accelerate putrefaction. He does this mornings and evenings. On the fifth day, the head will be cut (*in Neweo and Canala, not in the rest of the Houailou valley*). . .

The *avi* participates in the taboos of the deceased, he eats the food which is put aside as an offering to the dead, the part given to be put at the dead man's altar, and all bring some food as a such offering for fear of the dead man's wrath. . . When in the morning, it is still dark, the *kavu* share out the food for the day's feast, they put aside a share which is brought to the *moaro*, the *avi* come and eat it. If there is no altar, the *avi* makes one. He plants a staff at the foot of a coconut tree on the side of the *bweweye*, the ceremonial alley, he thus marks not a *ka moaro*, a lineage's altar, but a *ka ara ê poaero*, a place to eat prayer offerings (*cooked in an earthen pot, the prayer being spoken over the steam*). From then on, even the *kavu* will not come close, and if a coconut falls on the ground it will be left there. In other ceremonies, *avi* of the same lineage will go on coming there, in the spot consecrated by the first *avi*. . .

The *avi* is *na ara jaahi* during the first twenty days after the death, and the first five days of the commemoration feast, which means that he cannot touch food (*with his hands*), he uses a stick, *mè do*, cut from the rib of the coconut frond. If the *avi* are two, or three, or more, they can split between two groups, one which will touch food and serve the others. If the *avi* is alone, a father, or a man of such authority, will be the one to put his food on the stick. . .

Who can be an *avi* ? It cannot be an ordinary man, *kamosari*, but a father (*real or classificatory*), a younger brother, a grand-father, no elder brother nor anybody on the mother's side. It must be someone of the same lineage. If it is a chief (*who has died*), many men will be chosen to be *avi*. In the case of the death of a mother, of the elder brother's wives, of the daughter's of a chief or of a man of some importance there will be *avi* too. For the mother, it will be her son or grandson, for the elder brother's wives, it would be their husband's younger brothers. If a father dies when there is already an *avi* for the mother, this same *avi* will take over, one *avi* for both. For the chief's daughter, a younger brother or a grand-father will be *avi*.

*Mwa avi*, the *avi's* hat. The *avi* has no wife. If he was going to be married, the woman will have to wait until the end of the *avi* (*period*). He cannot commit adultery, nor sleep in any of the small houses, where women and children live, nor even enter any one of them. He only sleeps in the *moaro*. For the twenty days of mourning, he fastens to his penis sheath *rhö* leaves, comes out only on the fifth day, the *mèbwèni*, and is not seen in between, taking off leaves one by one from the tenth to the twentieth day. He rubs his face from ear to ear with powdered charcoal of the bancoul nut, not higher because the oil of the nut would hurt the eyes. The widow does the same, but only on her hair. He starts again with the *rhö* leaves for the commemoration ceremony, but then only until the *mèbwèni*. . . All the men who sanctify themselves through a period of respecting chastity put on *rhö* leaves.

Nevertheless the *avi* goes to war and does all the jobs men do. He will be the first to work in the yam gardens and will be helped by others. In exchange, he will help them also.

Nothing in this text justifies the parallel comparison between the dead corpse and the wood of a partly rotten inside houp tree which would be the equivalent of the dead corpse.

This document, up to now unpublished, is the most detailed expression of the role of the mourners, *avi*, from whose hair and beard will later be taken the hairs which will adorn the mask. They appear clearly here dealing with two sides of the same Melanesian reality. They look at the same time after the dead corpse, *bao*, and after the young circumcised, *kamai*. They represent the deceased and are said to be his image — which brings some relativity to any statement according to which the carvings are also the image of the same dead person. The concept of image seems to be here at the least ambiguous. The explanation as regards the *avi* is that having touched the dead corpse, they are considered, as long as their job is unfinished, as a substitute for the deceased. The fact that they touch also

the circumcised and particularly the penis of the latter qualifies in an important way the taboo dealing with death incurred by everyone except the mourners.

The logic of this situation is to be inferred from the total information available. It took me a long time to understand that in the Houailou valley, there were two unnamed non exogamic ceremonial moieties, which shared all mythical beings, but organized and justified them in strikingly different fashion<sup>47</sup>. Cultural differentiations can go down to the level of a lineage only, in a given valley, but are usually not so much territorial as belonging each to a specific set of interlocked lineages (not, or little, related by marriage). The consequence is that if the Kanak author says that some lineages do this, it cannot be construed as a consequence that all do it. The relation between each lineage and its animal, plant or atmospheric symbol, if it can boast of one — a few have three or four at the same time — must be different in some fashion from one instance to another. This is the rule of the game.

Which means that if young Kanak discovering Bwesou's papers claim today that they do not always recognize their tradition as they know it, this is just the habitual situation of people caught in age long prestige competitions between opposite lineages, but who have learnt to use new tactic after one century of Christianization. Their protest, which most have not cared for the present to put down in writing, is a testimony of the surviving mechanics of the culture. No one agrees easily with the next man. Any utterance fits in the competition and each actor is a master of the complex strategies which are still governing the behaviour of even the most modern looking Kanak politician.

### *The mask*

The only artifact which is regularly claimed to represent a given deity is the New Caledonian mask. It comes in two variants, one which carries a coat made of a fishing net, with parcels of black feathers caught in each knot ; one the coat of which is made of strips of bark of a tree growing on river banks. M. Leenhardt says that he never saw the second one, but had heard about its existence. The first one sports a beard and a wide and high headgear, both made of body hair cut from the men whose function is to stay with the corpse in his closed round house — they will make a hole in the side of the wall so as to come and go — until the time when the head comes off easily by itself. They let their hair and beard grow unchecked during this time. It will be cut at the end of the period and they will go and bathe in the river or the sea for the taboo which was on them to be lifted. A trouble is that the poetic image expressed is that the mask carries the hair and beard of the deceased chief, the reality being that the hair is the one of the mourners, but that succeeding chiefs will see their name carried over the same mask, more hair being interwoven each time in the same headgear.

The second mask bears only a light headdress made of coconut fibrous material. Both boast a well carved human head, blackened except for some white and red in the eyes and the mouth.

We have learnt earlier that the red on the lips and the eyes of the mask is the blood the god *Gomawe* spills if he has reason to be cross. A résumé is given by Bwesou Eurijisi, who should know, he was by right of descent a carver of masks before becoming Christian, and there were very few of them around :

Bwesou Eurijisi *circa* 1908, cahier n°1, p. 23-24

... There is in Néavin, their name is Wexumè, the symbol of which is Gomawe, a spirit (*ko*) which likes to take different shapes, his first shape when he appears in the house of the masters and the people and the masters to jump, he appears like a mask of feathers (*purumiriri*), his mouth is red and (*for the rest*) he is black, when he is in the water, he takes on the shape of an eel ; when there is a flood, he pulls people to make them drown. On the ground, he acts in a bad way towards women who are close to the birth of a child. Or he goes and visits the masters for curing with herbs. If a man dies among them he will appear as *rhôa*, this spirit. The sickness which he sends deals in blood and is very dangerous, so they think this man has been the victim of all the Wexumè. The mountain where this *rhôe* resides is Mèarii at Kabwiri. There, this symbol (*rhôe*) is god {*baou*} at the same time, it is both, *rhôe* and *baou*, and with him a companion, the *kwiri*, which takes strongly to a man, stays in the larynx, climbs up on the chin and the shoulders of a man. They have the cure, the plant *pèma*, which the masters keep and some of their mother's brothers too, when it enters a man, they say it is the symbol *kwiri*, the symbol of the Wexumè.

The reference to the *kwiri* is particularly interesting. The *kwiri* is a fruit tree, *Semecarpus atra*, the sap of which has a caustic effect. The fruit is difficult to eat, the fruit's skin having the same effect. This fruit is systema-



## SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE OF THE MASK

*Symbols dealing with Life*

The net, inasmuch as it catches food, i.e. fishes

The feathers of the large forest pigeon, notou, which represents the power of life in the forest (dead must never cross a forest nor running water).

The hair of the beard and the headdress of the mask, inasmuch as it is what goes on to grow after death.

The blood painted on the lips, inasmuch as it may maybe be considered as the blood of life.

The soft wood of the face of the mask.

The coat and the headdress of the other type of mask (*Wimawi*), both made of soft vegetable material.

*Symbols dealing with Death*

The net, inasmuch as it catches human beings symbolised by fishes, who die in the net. The net is the one thrown by *Gomawe*, who catches the dead who thus fall within his realm.

The knots, which always are a mark of death : shell money is mounted for this purpose without any knots, and must be presented on a new mat, in parallel strands never crossing each other. The ceremonial disk shaped axe is mounted too without any knot in its fabric.

The hair of the beard and headdress of a mask, inasmuch as it is linked with death and death ritual.

The blood painted on the lips, inasmuch as it is the blood that *Gomawe* will spill as a punishment for the breaking of his taboo.

The thick black paint on the wood, obtained in burning bancoul nuts in the fire.

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tically said to represent the female sex, and the day of the ritual first eating of the *kwiri* by young men is also the one giving them access to heterosexual relations, at least in the Koné area. Putting *Gomawe* and the *kwiri* in direct relation is true to the logic of each symbol. It indicates also that the *kwiri* tradition of sexual and ritual symbolism is part of the Wexumè and allied lineages own tradition, which is confirmed by the information obtained on the ritual role of the *kwiri* in the Koné area<sup>48</sup>, where the Wabealo lineage claims to share the origin of the Wexumè. In the Houailou valley, the master of (priest dealing with) the yam, *kavu mëu*, fastens leaves of *kwiri* to the staff planted in the miniature yam field where he will do, before everybody else, but in the course of a single day, all the technical gestures of the yam cultivation<sup>49</sup>.

Bwesou Eurijisi, cahier n° 3, translation by Maurice Leenhardt, p. 11-13 :

At death, the corpse was put to lay down (*before*), is trussed up in a tree (*now*<sup>50</sup>), the men go at sundown close to the corpse. The smell of the corpse (*baa*) appears. The wind blows with violence, everything bends down in the mountain (*the ko, the spirit of the dead blows into a gale*). The *ko* comes, either in the shape of a bird, a lizard, a rat. They jump on it, holding an *awa* ready as it resists, cover it, take it to the river where they jump, take out the covering, it is changed into a stone, which will be from then on the *panyao* stone. . .

When a chief or another great man dies, they make a danse imitating the one of the gods, they danse the *boria*. and paint their faces white and black. . . Five or six days after the death , the remarkable stone will be found, this is the stone which has danced the *boria*, the spirit, *ko*, has left it there, being himself in it.

The symbolism of the mask links the mourners' hair to the *panyao* stones, action on one side, endlessly repeated, complete stillness on the other. This easily follows strict structural oppositions. The wood of the face is soft, and the mask unable to last for generations. The wood of which the carvings of the round house are made, does not rot easily, but these carvings do not remain where they were set on the first day. These oppositions are organized according to two poles, which can be resumed as dealing with life or death , and can be summarized in the scheme shown here.

The wider vision of the Kanak universe is the one of both swirling dances, the one done over the earth by the living humans, the other underneath by the dead who are their ancestors. The dance in the underground and sub-

marine realm is presided upon by *Gomawe*, under one of his numerous assumed names. The dance of the living is looked upon by the mask, which substitutes for *Gomawe*, under this or any of his other assumed names : *Kavörö*, *Bwaè Dama*, *Gorome*, *Goromô*, *Goropu*, *Gotemyê*, *Dadayo*, *Mwolëumyê*, *Due meyna*, *Teê Pijopaac*, *Wimawi*, etc.<sup>51</sup>.

The mask is the god come among the living. He should appear at least at the end of the five day period of the funerary commemoration feast. Coming suddenly in the daylight is the indication that there is no food left and that it is time for everybody to go home : no food means potential death, whence the appearance of the mask.

The symbolic system constructed by the different elements constituting the mask is found in the same way through the fundamental ambiguity of the deity the mask represents, that is *Gomawe*, called by many *due meyna*, great god, for fear of speaking aloud his true name, which would never have been uttered in public before.

*Gomawe* represents death because he is the Lord of the subterranean abode where the dead must go. He presides upon their dancing during the day, throwing to each other wild oranges and eating non edible food, canes instead of sugar cane, faeces or wild unedible roots instead of cooked yams, etc. In the day the dead take on a human appearance. At night, their bones scatter around until daybreak, when they come together and the dead can rise again. This description carries many variants from place to place. Other beings are linked to the realm of the dead: one, *Hwayhway*, who is the warden of the door ; and a bird, *Dangginy*, who is the messenger to the living of *Teê Pijopaac*, *Gomawe*'s almost sole name up north.

But *Gomawe* is also the one god who controls the water. He sends it to the living so that they can survive. He is seen in the counter current carrying flotsam in time of flood. He is linked with life under its most direct form. He has a special liking for the sex of women with child, which is considered dangerous because of his ambiguity. One of the forms under which he is known boasts of a collapsible sex which he sends afar, seeking women close to having babies, and then retracts. Doors must be closed at night for this very reason.

The first time I heard of *Gomawe* in the field was in the Tchamba valley, in April 1948. The people to which Maurice Leenhardt had sent me, with a letter in his handwriting, took me first upstream on horse back some distance from their village. We sat on the top of a large slab of stone, which had linear marks and cupulae engraved. The old deacon of the local church, Isaia PwaRi, who was the highest ranking man in the village, took out from the bag he was carrying a piece of shell money, laid it carefully on the slab near what purported to be the mark of the god's foot. Then he started singing softly a very old chant directed towards *Gomawe*. All the ambiguity of the situation appeared at one stroke : Christians of three generations talking to an ancient god, the giver of life and death. Pre European tradition appeared there also in all its permanence and adaptability. Maurice Leenhardt was thrilled. I was too and followed for many years the traditional routes branching out from every location where *Gomawe* was held in reverence. Little by little, from one good Christian and priest of *Gomawe* to another, I found out they were near to cover the whole country, although leaving at each turn blind spots where other gods would be those to be prayed to and would receive offerings.

Everywhere, the mask was linked to this identical god and to water. It was said he came out of it, climbing on the beach or the riverside before walking amongst men, which fitted his role as the representation of the Lord of the underground and submarine abode of the dead. The dead all go there, after following special roads which never cross the humid forest and skirt the smallest running water. They jump at last in the water in more than one place, at different points overhanging the sea, the taboo quality of which the white men have systematically ignored : the Oro Bay in the north of the isle of Pines ; the *Roche Percée* Point at Bourail ; the Népoui point between Poya and Pouembout ; the Pindaye Point off the coast of Poembout ; the Paagoumène Point in Koumac ; Nevaa island in the Bay of Poum ; Bwalabwio island in the mouth of the Diahot river ; the Wayèm point immediately north of Hienghène, etc. There are few inland entrances to the subterranean realm, such as at Mount Souma (*merea Ajië*), or Caumyê (Paaici language), overhanging the Houailou and the Poya valleys (the door is at Kodu, at the bottom of the mountain, between two rivers, which is why the settler's house established there since the second half of the 19th century was the very first to be burned down in December 1984).

The informants with whom I could deal on this subject were of the older generation, all having been pupils of Maurice Leenhardt, who had taught them to read and write in their own language and that all that belonged to



their ancient past was not to be despised or suppressed, but a treasure to be kept as being the measure of their cultural identity. These people of high rank had been reared at the same time by their own society and by the old missionary they were deeply attached to, as being the wardens of their culture. They told me where to go and how to proceed, arranged for me to have guides and horses, and constantly added information as a supplement to all what I managed to obtain from others. What they told me little by little has added considerably to what Maurice Leenhardt had had the leisure and intelligence to collect on his own, with his missionary colleagues frowning on such an unchristian initiative.

I found out later that the web of relationships woven between the priests of the cult of *Gomawe* was the base of a partially successful attempt to colonize first the lower rungs of the colonial system, as well into the church as into the administration, then later to take over a good part of the elected jobs as they came into being from a progressively liberalized political system. I even saw one of the men of the younger generation in Ouvéa, writing down one of the «big» names belonging to that web (Trongajo) in his electoral propaganda, in the same way as a century earlier, an Ouvéa Evangelist coming to the lower Houailou valley used one of these «big» names that formally no one could utter (Nemwano), to gain access to the chief Meja Nejë of Neweo and obtain his conversion to the Christian LMS Congregationalist Church<sup>52</sup> with all his people.

### *Modelled art pieces from SouthWest Bay, Vanuatu*

Arthur Bernard Deacon<sup>53</sup> has shown, for the Senieng cultural area of Southwest Malekula, the importance of the link with the underground and submarine land of the dead, entered from the end of the Bluff close to the Presbyterian mission station in South West Bay, and of the visits privileged mortals claimed to have done to this land, bringing back messages from the dead to the living.

Working on this theme after Maurice Leenhardt, I collected a wealth of stories of the same vein in New Caledonia<sup>54</sup> and on the island of Tanna<sup>55</sup>, South Vanuatu. In New Caledonia proper, they were presented as traditional myths, without any time sequence in which they could fit. On Tanna, going and coming back from the realm of the dead was described as a daily occurrence. It could happen any time, and so and so had made it not so long ago. There were spots in the land claiming to be the entrance to the land of the dead, added to the more classical terrestrial roots of the banian tree, as opposed to the aerial roots, and the shootsof cordyline which could be taken out and put back behind. Men and women from everywhere claimed to have visited the dead and to have come back with messages on their part. This claim was also linked to the daily intake of kava and to the prayers to the dead every man would offer at sundown. Before going sound asleep, many would have visions and talk to one or the other of their dead kinsmen. Others would claim to have consorted with an unknown and new god, and to have a second wife, or husband, and even a parallel family, in the world underneath, where people lived quite like they would on the surface, except that their powers on, and their control of, nature, were much superior than ordinary mortals' attempts to the same.

Another type of representation found in a part, a very small one, of *Ni-Vanuatu* art poses the same problems as in New Caledonia or elsewhere : what is an image, of what is it the image of, and what is it not ? The answer is not quite the same.

The southern part of the island of Malekula has produced a series of well known artifacts, of a style said to make use of «over modelling» (*surmodelage* in French<sup>56</sup>). Relief is either exclusively obtained by using a vegetable paste to model all traits which must be put in three dimensions, often used to correct or add to, when the carving, made of stone, or from a tree-fern stump (having recourse to the former adzes equipped with stone or clam shell blades<sup>57</sup>) was so difficult that it had to be supplemented. The physical base on which the modelling work is done is either made of dry coconuts, of smaller nuts, of pieces of light wood criss-crossed, fastened or stuck together, or of wooden poles partly carved, carved tree-fern stumps or single upright stones, more or less large grained coral for the bigger ones or volcanic tuff for the smaller.

The ingredients making the paste have been noted in the field by Arthur Bernard Deacon in 1924 and later

described by the editor of his notes, Camilla Wedgwood, as being entirely of vegetable origin, through scraping a vine and mixing the wood's sawdust with the vine's latex, adding if necessary the pulp of papaw or mango fruits to make the paste easier to work with. I checked in 1947, at the microscope, pieces belonging to the Musée de l'Homme and saw that effectively our collection of modelled pieces, dating from before 1900 and later from 1934 and 1937 (respectively the Aubert de la Rue and the yacht *Korrigane* collections) had all been built by using a strictly vegetable paste. This has some importance as pieces from the Mbotgot area put on the market in recent years do contain a mixture of vegetable elements and of a dark, or artificially darkened, clay.

All the information on the art of the Seniang cultural area, coastal and inland of the southern half of Southwest Bay is known from the data collected by Arthur Bernard Deacon. I have had, in the fall of 1950, the privilege to check on the presentation made of this data by the admirable Camilla Wedgwood, at which time Deacon's principal informant and guide, Amarantus, was still alive and ready to answer questions on the basis of the book published. The only difference found of any importance was that the *nalawan* ceremonies, the so called secret rituals, or secret societies of so many authors, were not organized according to a hierarchy parallel to the grade taking hierarchy, *nimangki*, but were taken in any order at will, the only problem being the price paid in pigs in each instance.

On this score, there is no other so-called secret society than the opportunistic grouping, at a certain period, of those men who have decided to pay to be initiated, not in any theological secrets, but in the techniques of making the *nalawan* artifacts, which is the only thing carefully hidden about these pieces. This will to keep the technique secret is linked to the fact that this privilege is bought, at a heavy price, and will later be sold again to someone else. The initiate can be a sole candidate in each case. The artifact can be a mask, a headdress, the latter being something covering the head and not the eyes, but also, as are found way up to New Guinea proper and New Britain or New Ireland, wide structures (3 to 6 meters in diameter) made of light materials on which is painted a specific design, or other types of contraptions carried on the shoulders if too heavy to be held on the head.

Maurice Leenhardt and other authors' idea that the wearer of a mask is anonymous for the onlookers and is taken away by the emotions of representing the mythical figure of which he is carrying the image is too romantic to be true. Even carrying an ample mantle falling to the ground, made of banana leaves, like the wearers of the *rom*, or similar masks in Ambrym, Southeast Malekula, and the Banks Islands, the feet of the dancers and their imprint on the soil is enough for even the children to know who is there under this disguise. Among the Seniang, those who have the privilege of carrying a headdress have, at any occasion where there is a dance, a period where everything else stops and they have the opportunity of dancing alone or in a group, each showing off what *nalawan* object belongs to him. This period lasts a little less than half an hour, a number of these headdresses, modelled on a tree fern hollowed out base, being too heavy to be carried on the head for a long time. That is what the bearers say.

We know modelled pieces from the whole south coast of Malekula and not only from Southwest Bay, Tomman island and Milip point. The difference tends to be that, in the west, the preferred base for modelling over is tree fern, as towards the southeast of the island, that is Port Sandwich and the Maskelyne islands, the basis for modelling large pieces is more easily straightforward soft wood. The *rambaramb*, the funerary dummies carrying the modelled face of the deceased, built upon the latter's own skull, have wooden legs in the east and in the west legs made of rolls of banana leaf as a base for the modelling job.

The modelled artifacts representing a mythical figure are relatively few : masks, headdresses, and the sitting dummy of the *temes nevinbiir* series.

Heavy true masks from the Southwest Bay area are rare<sup>58</sup>. They cover the top half of the body. They are built over a piece of a large hollow trunk of tree fern, upon which a wide human head is modelled according to the dimensions of the body carrying it. Deacon figures a drawing of a still rarer mask where the whole body comes out in high relief. As far as we know, this mask represents in all cases *Temes malau*, the bush turkey or megapode, who is said to be also the husband of the mythical ogress *Nevinbumba'au*.

Headdresses are numerous. We know some from different dates : end of last century (the Lewis collection in the Chicago Museum, the pieces of the Oxford Museum of Ethnology and Archeology obtained by the Presbyterian resident missionary in Southwest Bay McAfee), beginning of this century (the Speiser collection in Basel and the old pieces which survived between the two world wars at the Museum of Oceanic and African Art<sup>59</sup>, MNAAO),

between both world wars (the yacht *La Korrigane*'s collection<sup>60</sup> and the pieces brought back by me to the MNAAO) and post war pieces the quality of which quickly deteriorated. One easy criteria of age is the absence of linen blue (nearly covering a piece published by André Malraux and collected by the former French Resident Commissioner Pierre Anthonioz, now in the MNAAO), introduced by the Europeans and the presence or not of green pigment from South Pentecost and red ochre from Epi instead of the usual trade powdered colors. The oldest collection after that one brought back by Captain James Cook and later the French explorer Dumont d'Urville, the John Geddie collection in the Halifax Museum, Ontario, Canada, doesn't contain any modelled artifact. These became known in England through Captain Goodenough's collection, and on the continent much later in the day, with the short French military occupation of Port Sandwich and the collecting done by the agents of the *Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides* under instructions from John Higginson, who wanted the pieces to be able to make politically motivated gifts to people in high place in Paris.

All headdresses bear one or more, often four, faces of *Nevinbumba'au*, with maybe a half pig's tusk jutting out of its cheek and joining back the face close to the ears. If and when there is a modelled figure in a sitting posture over the head, it is the representation of *Temes Malau*, *Nevinbumba'au*'s husband. I brought back from Southwest Bay, thanks to the missionary in charge's kindness, a headdress which was being kept in the mission house, having a small human face jutting out on the side, said by Amarantus to be *Nevinbumba'au*'s son, *Sasdaliep*.

A good half of headdresses are of the lighter kind, built from a cone obtained by splitting a bamboo tube, keeping its top knot untouched and weaving bamboo splinters cross wise ; the head, or heads, are modelled upon this base. They are the same ones as before, *Nevinbumba'au* at the bottom, *Temes Malau* over her ; at least as regards pieces from Southwest Bay, as we know nothing much from pieces from the south and southeast of the island — there are few informations around dealing with artifacts linked to the grade taking hierarchy in the east.

For instance, a mask built on a conical base, but carrying on one side only a light mask of the *rom* series, the rest being devoid of any modelling, this mask being covered with a spiralling rope of bourao fiber by which are attached to the structure a number of curved pig's tusks<sup>61</sup>. The presence of the *rom* mask indicates that this piece is from the southeast of the island ; the number of pig's tusks of value attached to the conical part of the headdress could well indicate the number of tusker pigs killed by the bearer during the different rituals he bought his way into; or maybe only the ones of the *naluan* series. Which would mean that in this case, another factor of individual prestige would be added to the artifact, individual prestige which is in any case the very first reason for acquiring the right to carry such a headdress. The presence of green pigment indicates that this is really not a recent piece..

What is the problem suggested by such images ? They look quite straightforward : the ogress, her husband and her son. Well, they aren't quite. The more important mythical being, *Ambat*, the «cultural hero», the god who gave man most of which is useful and good and always thwarted all the attempts by his four brothers to kill him and take for themselves his fair skinned wife *Lindada*, who also thwarted *Nevinbumba'au*'s actions to put his brothers in her larder and eat them one by one, is never represented in any way, carved or modelled. Neither are his brothers nor is his wife. Why not ?

The solution, inasmuch as one is needed, can be looked for, by reference to a long field experience, in the patient registering of who owns what. This work was done with quite some precision by Deacon in the field. This means knowing which is the local lineage which owns *Nevinbumba'au*, which one owns *Temes Malau*. *Sasdaliep* is mentioned in Deacons's data as *Ambat Malondr*'s son, *Ambat Malondr* being the other name of *Temas Malau*. We are told there are three *nembrmbrkon*, sacred groves, sacred each to a different lineage, one, *Nemep*, being the abode of *Nevinbumba'au*, the other ones, *Reimbi* and *Looru*, of *netew malau*, the megapode. The ogress and the megapode (bush turkey) are brought offerings every year at the time of the yam first fruits ritual and prayed to so as to obtain from her, or them, a bountiful crop. In the same way, in other *nembrmbrkon*, offerings and prayers are given to the other mythical symbols belonging to every lineage, that is :

— the stone of famine, *nevet namar*, over which to prevent such a disaster the rite is made so as to obtain its contrary, that is that the bellies be full, *ninetu imbuni* ;

— *naambe*, the locust, to which offerings and prayers are directed so as to protect the crops from its attacks or deflect them towards the enemy's crops ;

— *nivinrasin*, the sow, for all sows to carry a numerous descendance ;

— the bird *nimbile*, linked to success at war;

- *ningalat*, the nettle-tree ;
- *nilambriit*, the rat, which can desist from eating his people's crops and attack the ones of other lineages, but raids the district each time there is a death in the Iumloor lineage ;
- *nivinar*, the dove, which is prayed to at Iumoran, on Tomman island, at which *nembrmbrkon* stands the stone called the penis of Ambat, the only physical indication of the god's eventual presence there ;
- *Temes Malau* is at the same time *Nevinbumba'au*'s husband and an old man with a beard who lives under a stone on the small island of Nour Tumboi (Ten Stick Island<sup>62</sup>), off the village of Benaaur at the southern tip of Southwest Bay. Deacon tells how *Temes Malau* is buried in Tomman Island, having eaten the fruits of a tree belonging to a Mewun man, who killed him with the stroke of an arrow and later was killed and eaten for his deed.

*Nevinbumba'au* is classified as a *temes*, that is she is in the category grouping at the same time gods who have been human, and gods who have always been around. Deacon's contention that she was considered as the ancestress of the Nemep lineage is probably born from the usual persuasion at the time that there were such things as totemic ancestors. In the *temes nevinbiir* ritual, whereby small modelled heads appear as if they were dancing behind a fence, *Nevinbumba'au* is said to be the mother of *Mansip*'s two wives, *Mansip* being represented as a full scale dummy sitting in front of the fence. *Sasndaliep*, her son is named there too, the whirring of the bullroarer being her voice singing her child to sleep. She is said to have been the first person to have introduced a *nimangki* fire, for the first level of the grade taking hierarchy. This means that the role of «cultural hero» is shared between *Ambat* and herself, which shows she is not exactly the negative figure she has been cast to be. She kindled a big fire no man but her husband had the right to approach. She would eat other men who would try to do the same. This explains how her role as an ogress becomes the one of the potential sanction given for a fault, and not the one of eating people at random until there is no one left, the latter being a usual theme in Southern Vanuatu and Northern New Caledonia. Later, she admitted other men to this fire against payment in pigs, thus starting to turn the first wheel of the local mechanisms dealing with social control through *nimangki*.

When *Nevinbumba'au* caught the five *Ambat* brothers with the intention of eating them although she was their grandmother by marriage, she was living at Rambambaap, near Milip point, south of Seniang. They got out of the pit they had fallen into through following the root of a banyan tree which brought them back to Iumoran. Another time she managed to steal for a short time on Tomman *Ambat*'s special four handled food pounder, but he managed to recover it. This one of the instances where a female god is shown as a trickster.

John Layard, who was on Southwest Bay for a short two weeks stay, collected a myth about *Nevinbumba'au* showing her as a dark skinned woman with long ears<sup>63</sup> — she is shown in this instance as in opposition to the beautiful *Ambat*'s clear skinned wife *Lindada*. *Nevinbumba'au* covered with good earth the stone in which had been turned the giant clam shell killed by an owl acting under orders from *Ambat*, who himself killed the giant clam in another version<sup>64</sup> of the myth, this being the origin of Tomman island. Both deities would then be at times in conflict, at others acting either in a complementary way towards each other. or as the result of their particular prestige competition.

The ogress being the introducer of good agricultural soil — inventor of the grade taking hierarchy as well as a character in the *nevinbiir* rites and being represented in the *nalawan* headdresses — this is pursuant with the logic of her other local function as protector of the crops in her own *nembrmbrkon*.

*Ambat*, with a clear skin and a narrow nose<sup>65</sup>, is said to be the introducer of the dog, which disappeared locally to be then reintroduced by the first man-of-war skirting round the island. *Ambat* introduced also the custom of strangling widows, inventing too for himself the *rambaramb*, the funerary dummy with its modelled skull.

*Ambat* and his brothers' clear skin color has no link with whatever migration one would like to imagine. The white skin is a privilege of the dead and the gods all round the Pacific, except in those specific cases where the symbolism is reversed such as in the case of *Nevinbumba'au*. High ranking persons needing to have their power, function and *mana* justified by their symbolic assimilation both to the gods and to the dead of the lineage often claim to be of lighter color or to have a lighter color ancestor. This explains the ancient, pre-Cook, so often practised wish in the islands of having children of a lighter color, thus seeking potentially easily marriageable girls by a white progenitor.

The situation as we know it is that *Ambat*, not represented by anything but the stone at Iumoran which is meant to be his penis, and *Nevinbumba'au*, who is represented by any number of faces at the bottom part of the



headdresses, are equally at the heart of the mythical cycle, sharing as much a positive as well as a potentially negative role towards humans. They both are each at the same time a local deity revered in a specific *nembrmbrkon*, and linked there to the first fruits ritual. This situation can be found all over Vanuatu, but also all over the Pacific. Very few mythical beings being shown as having a general function in a constructed and coherent system of myths are not at the same time a local god revered at a specific place by a specific lineage. It was the situation even in Polynesia (cf. the so called family *marae* in Tahiti, so little studied), where this fundamental factor has been forgotten in favour of mind satisfying great mythological constructions by a caste of priests. Too much information has been lost because of such assumptions.

We know next to nothing of what were the parallel representations in Southeast Malekula. A recent paper<sup>66</sup> claiming to bring new data is a mixture of naïve comparative analysis, as was the fashion half a century ago, and of a few useful details, such as the placing of the drawing in the sand giving entrance to the abode of the dead all round south and east Malekula just over the human face of new *rom* type masks in Lamman, on the south coast of Port Sandwich Bay. Does this mean that the mask represents *Temes Savsap*, or *Lesevsep*, the mythical being one meets along the beach, who scrambles half of the drawing he was making so as to ask the new deceased to complete it ? Kids are taught this specific design at an early age without being told immediately what it is about. We do not have the answer. Maybe there is none. Although being carried by men, the mask are *temes* themselves and they can thus show the pattern belonging to the entrance to the world of *temes*.

Comparison is not the way to obtain the answer, because of the extreme variations in detail of the symbolic systems from place to place. One cannot infer that more or less the same item, in form and in color, has the same meaning at a few miles distance. Constant changes are the rules because frontiers between Pacific islanders are always as much cultural as politic. Changing one or more details in the ideological background around a type of artifacts is the way to distinguish oneself from the next door neighbours<sup>67</sup>. At a wider level, Pacific cultures have built wider systems so as to put together people living more or less close to one another, at a symbolic level, since everybody more or less produces and eats the same things. This means that the whole culture must be studied from place to place, that enquiries can never be levelled solely at a single aspect of a culture, and that scientifically useful comparisons must be made between global cultural wholes, and not item by item.

To give a short example, the lozenge design, which in north central Vanuatu translates the representation of a human face drawn inside two tusk carrying pig lower jaws, must be checked for its meaning in each instance. In Lifou, Loyalty islands, it is called *muku* and is said to represent the female sex (cf. Lenormand, Maurice, *Dictionnaire Drehu—Français*, Le Rocher-à-la-Voile, Nouméa 1996).

### *What's not to be done ?*

A clear example of what should not be written about artifacts is given by Christian Kaufmann's commentary on the tree fern carving of a woman from the Banks Islands belonging to the Basel Museum of Ethnography<sup>68</sup>. The background of the piece is given on the information obtained by Felix Speiser who visited the group in 1913. Speiser talked English to native people who, being Anglicans, had been taught in the language of Mota and not in English. In fact he could not really communicate. Much of the necessary information was already available in Reverend Codrington's classical study : *The Melanesians, their Anthropology and Folk-Lore*. Codrington's information dated to the middle of the 19th century and had been obtained in the vernacular, and quite a lot of it in writing. It is first class information. But Codrington not being a citizen of the good town of Basel, what he had to say is just ignored. He had stated that all carvings are linked to the grade taking hierarchy, known by the name of *sukwe* in the Banks islands.

Kaufmann imagines that the carving, or representing a woman, cannot be linked to men's ritual, could have been carved on the order of a woman and cannot be the object of a cult because it represents a woman . This is repeating the old fallacy of carvings as idols. No carving is, as such, the object of a cult. Kaufmann's value judgement is forgetting that other female carvings have been found elsewhere in Vanuatu as monuments of a specific grade, as well on Malekula as on Ambrym, west and north ; and that women do have their own rituals, for instance on Malekula or Ambrym, which do not comprise any such carved monument but other types of artifacts (spe-



cial headdresses made of pandanus and colored in red and yellow). Anything dealing with the *sukwe*, in the Banks Islands, or *nimanggi*, elsewhere, has nothing to do with any cult whatsoever, being directly linked to social control and prestige competitions.

Another wrong assumption is that the female carving showing arms lifted, represents a woman dancing. Women do not lift their arms in the air when they dance, at least not here ; they do so elsewhere, for instance in the *siva* Samoan dance. In the same way, to link the representation of a woman to the local existence of a matrilineal tradition is very a old fashioned suggestion. It cannot be this. Women's bodies are translated into images because there are women around. It is as simple as that. The other female representations in Vanuatu are in theoretically patrilineal areas, i. e. Malo, Malekula and Ambrym.

As regards the Banks, the so called matrilineal tradition is ambiguous. Matriliney is represented by a system of exogamous moieties found all over the Banks islands, Maewo, North Raga, and West Aoba, where it has been first satisfactorily described by W. H. Rivers. Local lineages boast a patrilineal descent and a territorial definition. There is no female image known from the more coherent matrilineal area grouping Efate and the islands around it.

### *The Sépik valley*

Other areas present other challenges. One of the most productive regions in art pieces is the Sepik valley. The pre 1914 German literature has brought to our attention the esthetic value of the local production. But it will need the British anthropologist Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead's third husband, to give us at last a more precise idea of function and meaning in Sepik art. On the one hand he published the most detailed analysis up to now of classical Sepik pieces in the illustrations at the end of his monograph about the Iatmul people of the Middle Sepik river: *Naven*. On the other hand he described, under this very title, a series of rituals dealing with the celebration during a man's life of every spectacular action and later of the social reintegration of transgressors by obligation, that is by the men who had to go and murder someone next door if they wanted to have access to women and benefit from their procreative capacities. Somebody else's death against the capacity of bearing one life was the apparent rule. But the murderer had to be purified from the consequences of his act and later celebrated by his maternal kin, his classificatory mother's brothers and the women in his lineage, the rites reintegrating him into the local society being based on spectacular forms of theatrical travesticism on the part of both men and women.

This was at the time very new, and even Margaret Mead's writings never dared to go as far in the manipulation of inverted sexual symbolism. She always wanted to stay proper. The biological training that was Bateson's first scientific approach, before he came over to anthropology, is probably responsible for his capacity of dominating the cultural presuppositions his upbringing had given him. But the way he treated the subject matter did not make for easy reading even in the post Victorian era, much before the expansion of psycho-analysis became such a fad that no intellectual or academic dared to stand up to it.

A parallel tradition of working in the Sepik valley came out of the Basel Ethnography Museum and University, following on the steps of Felix Speiser, to whom we owe the very first excellent ethnographic films about life in the lower Sepik valley. A number of Swiss researchers have been working in the middle Sepik valley, accumulating information and publishing learned papers giving good value for their town's financial support.

An unwarranted side aspect of this activity have been recent attacks against British academics specialized in the same cultural areas, both against Anthony Forge, now deceased, former assistant to Sir Raymond Firth at the *London School of Economics*, and against Gregory Bateson. These attacks have surfaced in a well produced and recent art book partially written by Christian Kaufmann, curator of Pacific Ethnology at the Museum of Ethnography in Basel<sup>69</sup>. They are characterised by being just attacks, with no content whatsoever. They have no justification, at least not in scientific terms, and the author does not propose the slightest analysis to take the place of the one published by both authors. He just creates a void, as regards knowledge about the Iatmul on one side and the Maprik on the other, saying that his judgment will be justified as time goes by.

The explanation can be twofold. Kaufmann wrote the book too hurriedly, which is evident in the great number of bibliographical items systematically ignored — Kaufmann has an unhappy way of not citing the authors he

does not like or that his friends at the time do not like. His training is in history of art<sup>70</sup> much more than in anthropology and he has not yet mastered both the field and analytical methods put together by social anthropology during the 150 years of its checkered history<sup>71</sup>.

One must evidently look for a hidden factor. There is no scientific reason for disbelieving Bateson in particular. He did say that he had found a very fluid situation, by which the different Iatmul people tended not to follow their own rules and to often act as they wished. So being in contradiction with him half a century later is no real problem. Rituals change in their formal aspects over time, and the symbolic organizational principles on which the *naven* inverted symbolic systems are built can accommodate many variants.

One of the most intelligent papers published in this Basel Sepik synthesis is the one by Birgitta Hauser-Schäublin : *Not for collection : Ephemereal Art*, where the author describes hitherto unknown forms of art which will be destroyed immediately after having been shown to initiates : digging a waterhole on which surface foam is created ; the patterns created with colored leaves and flowers just float on the foam which keeps them in place. Such fragility in a work of art is difficult to find elsewhere, except in Zen Buddhism. Examples of ephemereal forms of art are everywhere in the area, little documented and more often ignored. Bateson has been one of the rare authors to show such cases<sup>73</sup> in the same area, but no, he is not cited. As the Swiss author may claim rightly, the paintings on the house *tambaram* facades have no particular religious significance, but the leaf and flower picture shown to the novices and immediately after destroyed has one. She does not say which. The late Anthony Forge had shown that it was the very act of painting which had a religious significance, not so much the end product, which is a more sophisticated way of putting all things dealing with Abelam art<sup>74</sup>.

The description by Mainhardt Schuster of the two level *tambaran* house is the best analysis available, and there is nothing which would need to be changed in this paper. Here too, the symbolic language as a global phenomenon is lightly touched upon. No use is made of Bateson's material and, although he is cited in the bibliographical list, he might as well never have existed.

The synthesis offered by Christian Kaufmann about the progress of our knowledge of the Sepik valley does not do justice either to Bateson or to Mead, whose information about the pieces she brought back to the *American Museum of Natural History* in New York is nevertheless carefully crafted. Kaufmann proceeds to offer a prudent picture of styles in the Sepik, building it from Alfred Speiser and from Alfred Bühler. The small bibliographies dealing with each stylistic area cite Van den Broek d'Obrenan for the middle Sepik, but not Bateson's ground breaking paper<sup>75</sup> in *Oceania*. This is evidently a voluntary omission. One could add that styles are viewed here as institutions with little capacity to change. There is no attempt to demonstrate a diachronic type of analysis.

The few pages on meaning, added by the same author, contain little new information, except on the Ewa he studied personally. The concept of heating up pieces to give them «power» before making ritual use of them could have made reference to other parts of Melanesia and to the well known concept of *mana*. Such a process has been described by Maurice Leenhardt for New Caledonia, Deacon and Layard and other authors including myself for the Vanuatu.

The idea of attributing souls to artifacts and animals is neither new nor scientifically justified. It means at the same time building from the nineteenth century idea of classifying «primitive» people as «animists» and extending to Melanesia a concept taken from the religious studies in Southeast Asia with its systems of multiple souls. No proof is given that this concept applies here in the Sepik valley. Bateson did give us vernacular texts to justify his points. There is not even a hint here that this could be done.

The plates illustrating this book are perfect. But very few of the captions approximate the precision of the illustrations<sup>76</sup> of Bateson's one book on the Sepik. Some of them are written in this classical and monotonous museum language whereby a long and involved sentence does not manage to carry even an atom of new knowledge. For instance as regards the decoration of carved and painted war shields, why do papers by Douglas Newton<sup>77</sup>, long curator of Oceanic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, give precise information which is not found here ? Hints about the existence of the inverted sexual symbolic system found by Bateson are given only once, as regards bridal caps, but his name is not cited ; neither is it for the ceremonial chair, or the sacred flutes in pairs, of which he said most of what there is to know, as if when it really matters only Swiss authors had any *droit de cité*. The text about the chair is nevertheless quite a good one, as are those on the different types of masks.

Curiously, in all this catalogue of 191 items, Bateson is only cited for a single skull remodelled in clay<sup>78</sup>. The only real sexual symbol, that is the first opening of a woman's vagina by a fish, is taken from Wirz, whose information must usually be carefully checked upon, but whose long association with the Basel Museum precludes any criticism.

The care with which all captions going with the plates evade the problem Bateson's description left us with — the only one following his text is innocuous from this standpoint — gives the impression of seeking to be protected from an outside danger. In an old partly Protestant and mainly Catholic city, playing with sexual symbols could be frowned upon by those very persons who decide who gets the money and for what. It reminds us of the trustees of the *Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum*, descendants of Protestant missionaries gone into business and banking, terminating their association with Frank Stimson in the thirties because he insisted on publishing Tuamotuan creation texts with a strong erotic tinge. The result would then be this naïve attack by Kaufmann on Bateson, whose analysis he is not allowed to use, attack which lacks any justification for such an unexpected behaviour in Academia.

It is a pity that Gregory Bateson's description of the Iatmul culture thus remains difficult to match, although the method to do the task should have seemed obvious : to collect spontaneous texts in the vernacular languages — but not attempting to obtain texts written in answer to the specific questions of a western researcher — so as to record the different contexts in which appear the vernacular concepts identified by Gregory Bateson.

The extraordinary imagination with which the Iatmul play with their sexual symbols, in a way which goes at times against the usual tenets of social anthropology — classical social anthropologists tends to describe often rather drab societies applying ageless rules and repeating endlessly formalized social roles — has an interesting parallel in the Marind-Anim of West New Guinea, studied by Wirz, and restudied in the field, for much longer time, by Father Verschueren and Jan van Baal<sup>79</sup>, who are constantly obliged to correct Wirz's statements, but, having done it systematically, present at the same time the best possible collection of data on this highly sexed culture and society. In his recent art book, Christian Kaufman uses solely Wirz's material<sup>80</sup> and writes as if van Baal and Verschueren had never existed. The aesthetic content of the artifacts made by the Marind-Anim, most of them being as spectacular as non transportable, has been appreciated for quite a long time. Their sexual content is so high that authors often back down from tackling such involved systems of erotic symbols. The bigger advantage of Wirz's two books is in his attempt to publish color plates giving indications of the glamorous side of a material culture so little represented in museum collections because of the impermanent nature<sup>81</sup> of such large pieces as the *gari*, the symbolic representation of sky and sun in the *mayo* ritual. The disadvantage in a way of Jan van Baal's epoch making contribution is that there is so much data that a resumé is well nigh out of the question. Why is that two men in a lost area of West New Guinea have managed to do what tens of others, in this consistently visited Sepik valley, never managed yet to put together ? Out of Gregory Bateson, of course.

A partial answer is to be found in the variability of cultures along the Sepik river. They do change considerably from place to place, in material life, according to their establishment on the river banks or in the nearby hills — the river people are sago gatherers, the hill people are agriculturalists and grow taro, yam or sweet potato. Their art varies a lot, although the physical objects supporting this art are very much alike all round, with a few exceptions. Their symbolic systems appear to use the same basic vocabulary, each time inside a different complex structure, where the sexual content may or may not be spectacularly manipulated. In the same way, these people may or may not practise head hunting as a necessary access to the female half of society. But the vigorous view of sexual life by women themselves, as related by Gregory Bateson in a better established picture than the one offered by Margaret Mead for the Mundugumor — if the Mundugumor exist as such — has parallels all over the Pacific islands, where strong willed women can either be in the majority or restricted to the number of first-born girls of high rank.

Men from everywhere explain that the initiative in sex relations resides with the girl. Men do not cringe from being attractive, they try to be at their best each time it is needed, but from being provocative, as they know too well the possible cost of an unprepared plunge into a sexual affair. They do not relish putting their life or their pigs at stake, the latter if they have to pay a heavy fine to the present husband or the one to be of their fair lady. Sexual symbols in the oral literature are exceedingly numerous, when and where no censorship has applied to vernacular

texts in full or in translation. Many myths offered are basically the story of a sex relation between the figures described in the story, analysing the symbols in their culturally defined component parts and building from them sophisticated and meaningful symbolic and iconic structures. An annoying problem created at times by some modern specialists of New Guinea is that often enough they have not read what has been published from elsewhere and that they tend to think they have discovered what can have been described some hundred miles further east half a generation ago.

### *Stone carvings*

In a wide area of the literature about the Pacific islands, a frequent trend has been to introduce a component of mystery each time it seemed feasible. The rather low view of the native people which prevailed for a time after the first world war tended to bring white observers to think that any sophisticated cultural trait could only have been brought in by a foreign migration. Some authors have imagined Aïnous settling into New Caledonia, others Spanish castaways in the Tuamotu islands. One should note that the real French castaways on Vanikoro did not leave any evidence of any kind of cultural imprint. On the contrary, the very early and constant depopulation of the island could have been brought in by gonorrhoea caught by the local women from Lapérouse's sailors. I am probably striking here what will be considered as being a despicable blow to a national symbol.

Mysteries in the Pacific islands are easy to explain. My experience is that if you put two hundred islanders in front of the problem of transporting a heavy load from one place to another, a stone monolith for instance, they have the techniques and do it without the help of any European adviser. They came into the Pacific already mastering these techniques, and make use of them each time they need them. They know how to build great fires on a large stone slab, then chuck cold water on the heated surface so as to make it break up, and go on endlessly, either to obtain stone flakes to be worked upon, hammered and ground in shape, or to cut an opening so as to let the water flow through for the benefit of irrigated taro systems further downstream. They can build a magnificently well built and sturdy dam so as to catch part of a river's water flow for the same purpose or a magnificently thought out suspension bridge over roaring waters underneath.

One of the so called mysteries is made of the wide existence of stone carvings. These come up a bit everywhere, as well in Melanesia, where they are less known by the outside world, as in Polynesia. Their dimensions are linked to the physical characteristics of the stone material available. Easter Island appears to have been given to two types of stone carvings, one smaller than a man's height, little known although one was shown for a long time in the staircase of the *Museum of Mankind* in London, made of basalt, which material is so hard to work on that making from it a gigantic statue would be out of question ; and the much better known enormous carvings, made out of volcanic tuff, easier to work on, but fragile, and which can only accept details in the round if their dimensions are such that they will not break at the first opportunity.

A more serious mystery is made of the very beautiful carvings one can find in the Melanesian arc of islands and in New Guinea, and which have been rarely found in state of the art archeological excavations, but usually on the contrary by chance excavations started for other purposes. Few are dated, many because they have been kept alive, so to speak, by the local ethnography until the white man came in and took them away.

The very first heard of were the double conical polished stone artifacts showing a central gorge caught between two parallel raised ridges which Father Lambert found in Kanak lineages on the Isle of Pines and published in his 1900 book. Similar usually broken pieces have been found all over New Caledonia in yam gardens or by European settlers. We have noted earlier the four stone carvings from the Weir district in Lifou.

Vanuatu has long kept a tradition of stone-carving<sup>82</sup>. In the south, only Futuna has given us human figures carved in coral<sup>83</sup>. Bernard Hebert rediscovered, after Somerville, a set of standing stones on the island of Mau<sup>84</sup> (Emau), carved with deeply engraved human faces. I located later these stones as being on the site of the former dancing square of Siwo. The principal one is called *Atumwadila* : no precise tradition is available about it. But a number of other non carved standing stones are important in the local tradition<sup>85</sup>. Deacon found some stone carvings incorporated in the grade taking hierarchy, and I found some equally so in the Maskelyne islands, on



Hulivöo<sup>86</sup>. There were some all along the east coast of Malekula, and I brought one back from the Tènmuru interior village on the first level of the Big Nambas plateau<sup>87</sup>.

A beautiful one was brought to me by Mweleun Kon of Mèlür, Metamli, in September 1949 in North Ambrym. He had found it hidden in a hollow tree by its owner Urel Mweleun, who accused it of making his children sick. Urel Mweleun had heard it walking at night in his house where he kept it. He refused to take it back and agreed to my buying it for £ A. 4. 00. It is a treasured piece in the *Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens* in Paris<sup>88</sup>.

This stone came at the start from the former village of Entar, North Ambrym. Urel Mweleun says that this stone has the capacity of burying itself into the ground — which may mean it was originally found there. It is not to be painted, as others such stones locally, but washed with coconut oil, then fastened to a house post in the direction into which the owner goes to trade in pigs, so as to ensure he gets the best value for his trade, the flat shape of the head being coherent with that orientational function. The quality of the carving warrants the name given to it of *wiiu ne bu*, god of the pigs. Other smaller stones having an identical function are treated differently. Either they are carried in the belt of the owner going to trade in pigs, or it is done with a smaller stone usually kept close to them, but this smaller stone is neither carved nor painted, but carried in their stead ; or a bit of powdered tuff is scraped from the side of the carved stone, powder with which the owner rubs over his chest<sup>89</sup>.

John Manu, of Linbul North Ambrym, gave the following song linked to the concept of *wiiu ne bu*, as opposed to the more ordinary *miyü ne bu*, which are not related to a designated mythical being :

«Lèng nang ule, lèng nang ulongo ae ee èè horo bibir mamto mwe lèn nang ulongo ae maola nè lèng sibwe sibwea horo bibir èè horo bibir mamto mwe lèn nang ulongo ae lèng nang ule, lèng nang ulongo ae ee èè horo bibir mamto mwe lèn nang ulongo ae lèng nan ulongo ae ee èè lèng nang ule, mawela nè, lèng nang ulonge	<i>Lèng nang ule, lèng nang ule,</i> the branch of the <i>bibir</i> tree is broken, to navigate under a strong wind on the branch of the <i>bibir</i> tree, on the branch of a <i>bibir</i> tree, <i>lèng nang ule</i> , <i>lèng nang ule, lèng nang ule</i> , on the branch of a <i>bibir</i> tree, <i>lèng nang ule</i> , to navigate under the wind , <i>lèng nang ule</i> .
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The story is the one of *Lèng nang ule*, who came from Pentecost Island — which means this carving is not claimed as having been made on Ambrym.

*Leng nang ule* lived there in a hollow tree, eating the pigs which roamed around. A man had lost his pig and did not find it anywhere. He comes to the tree and sees the bones of his pig. He talks to *Lèng nang ule* : «Aren't you afraid of the cold ? » — «Oh, no, it is hot inside my house.» — «Aren't you afraid of the rain ? » — «My house is a good one. I never sleep so well than as it rains outside.» — «Aren't you afraid of lizards ? » — «Lizards are my food.» — «Aren't you afraid of snakes ? » — «I also eat them on occasions.» — «Aren't you afraid of the wind ? » — «Oh, yes, I am afraid of the wind. If it blows and my house falls down, where will I go ? » The man comes back home and starts on the ritual for making wind. Rain falls heavily, then a strong wind blows. Half of the tree falls down. *Leng nang ule* is frightened. The other half of the tree falls into the sea. *Lèng nang ule* climbs upon it and starts singing the chant given above. The wind pushes him onto Ambrym, at Fonmur. From there he goes to Fanla, where he is a carved stone with two faces» (cf. Huffman 2 000).

Some equally interesting stones have been brought back to the Musée de l'Homme<sup>90</sup> in Paris by the Swiss-French geologist Aubert de la Rue, from south Pentecost and northeast Malekula. The first ones would be equally pig stones, but lack documentation. The second lot is meant to be used either for love magic, or to provoke rainfall when needed : for that latter purpose they would have been ritually washed into one of the waterholes left in the reef at low tide.

There is little to say of value about stone carvings in the Solomon islands. A number of carvings of isolated heads have been reported. Free standing stone images carved in coarse grained coral exist in the Polynesian speaking islands on the margin of the archipelago. No good information is available on their meaning, at least such as would allow some criticism of the source to come to bear upon the known facts. A sitting image from Choiseul is in the Basel Museum<sup>91</sup> (Abb. 426 : the mention *kult figur* is not very helpful here).

The stone figures of the Iniet society in the Gazelle Peninsula, collected at the end of the last century, are



much more interesting, partly inasmuch as the better ones<sup>92</sup>, those carved in a fine grain tuff and not coarse coral, have strong stylistic relations with the clay heads and figures which are beginning to be found in Lapita sites in the same area. The Iniet society is a quite lively institution which, as far as I could ascertain during a short stay, working happily with the late Charles Julius, then Government Anthropologist, seems to have served as the structure supporting unofficially the different forms of active or passive resistance to the German, Australian or Japanese successive domination on the very dynamic, politically and economically powerful and sophisticated Tolai group of New Britain.

The human head found in Gulf Huon area<sup>93</sup> ; the squatting so called zoomorph figure<sup>94</sup> from the *National Gallery*, Canberra, found deep in the soil at Yambu, Enga province, Papua New Guinea, are really mysterious inasmuch as they are prehistoric, have not left any descendance, except in stylistic details here and there, and were not found in an archeological digging and hence cannot be dated. Most of them appear to be pounders. Some time we will know more about them<sup>95</sup>. Another case in point is better documented.

The disk-shaped axe of New Caledonia {hache-ostensoir, *gi o kono* : club in the color of life, that is green or blue}. is one of the best known artifacts characterising this Melanesian art and culture, so well known that all sorts of bizarre things have been said about it, trying to give it a function linked to the cannibalism which was thought to have been prevalent by all European writers — eradicating it was the justification of bringing in «civilisation».

The way the artifact is built precludes using it for giving violent blows. Like the ceremonial adze from New Zealand, *toki pou tangata*, and ceremonial adzes or axes all around Melanesia, its use is ceremonial and ritual. It is not only exchanged for chiefly marriages, but has a ritual use, as far as we know at least in the central Houailou valley of New Caledonia proper. The chief, when he speaks standing over the bodies of the swirling dancers, man and women together, has one in his hand and strikes in the air with it as he speaks. We possess a vernacular text explaining its ritual use linked to the making of rain, here only striking. . . in the water the reflected image of the rising sun. This is thus a conceptual artifact, built as a system of carefully interrelated coherent symbols and not as a tool.

Bwesou Eurijisi, cahier n° 8, translation by Maurice Leenhardt, p. 6-9

The rain makers get up every morning before daybreak so as to go and find the daylight in the water, in the forests, in the mountains, near the sea, in the lakes or the ponds of the forest, or in some rivers. They go near stones laid down in the water, or ponds or water-holes, to insert parcels or they will plant staffs girdled with convulvulus. The stones that the ancestors called stone for rain, stone for wind, stone for thunder, stone for clouds, have been seen in dreams, or their existence revealed by a bird, or eventually an eel which disappeared inside and seemed to have been absorbed by the stone.

Forbidden to eat before they have come to where they go to make rain. They walk half bent over in the mountain where they go and fasten the convulvulus (*marching as if in war so as not to be seen from the other summits*). They act in the same way for the rain stone, the thunder stone, in the marshes, the gullies and the rivers. They act so as to prevent the god of rain from escaping, he who is in the stone, in the water or in the mountain, and that the daylight they are seeking to take away could not be got by them. For each parcel they have prepared a length of shell money which they have put inside. Each parcel has a shell money wrapped in convulvulus, in leaves of *dovo*, *pororo* and *diro*.

The rain master who sacrifices walks at their head when they go in their search of daylight, he is the one who directs them.

He carries in front of them the «club of daylight» (*the accompanying drawing by Bwesou Eurijisi shows clearly that this is the disk shaped polished greenstone axe*<sup>96</sup>), and has on the head a helmet made of a piece of netting holding feathers which have been rendered black by being kept in the houses a long time over the fire. He has wrapped the club with convulvulus and carries some more as a bandolier. They get to the spot where they will put down the parcels and put them one after the other in holes made in the rock or dug in the ground. The master of the daylight talks, he says :

«Shell money for you, all of our fathers, all of our grandfathers, you who are living into this water and into this mountain, that you would put your feet onto these parcels and that you would urinate on the taro leaves and bring the joy further to the coconut and araucaria leaves and the leaves of the *koema* (planted in front of the moaro) and the *juë*».

All those who search for the daylight answer by the modulated shriek *rhia* ! take back the parcels, dive with them into the water and insert them into the underwater rock holes where their ancestors have always put them, in the rain stone, the thunder stone, the mist stone, then the master of the daylight hits the water with his *gi o kono*, his club of the color of life, the men with him beat the water<sup>97</sup>, throw it around with their hands, kneed it so as to surprise it, and it rains. In the mountains, the forests, the higher mountains, they only pray.

When they have finished bathing, the thunder and the clouds fall on them, this is so when the daylight to be found has been (*taken*) in their power, but {as} sometimes they do not have the strength, they are so happy when they receive the rain.

They come back and the leader of their march fastens certain herbs and leaves to lift the taboo of the clouds, so that they can go

and eat, they and those who stayed at home and haven't eaten either; they will eat now they will learn that the others have come back from making rain.

When the rain and the flood are there, they dance in the rain until they get to the country of the man who gave the first taro to ask for that rain. They throw in his courtyard, or where his people are staying, sugar canes with their leaves on and their complete shoots, whole taros with their leaves, all inside their houses.

And the men of the country bless the rain makers and heap food for them, bananas, sugar canes, taros, coconuts, but no yams, which are forbidden (*here*).

The *gi o kono*, of which we know hundreds of examples in museums and private collections, are all very similar, using identical materials, mostly linked to the correlated ideas of humidity and life. The green (from île Ouen) or blue stone (often from Gonde, in the middle of the Houailou valley), disk is made as thin as possible around the edges, so that light can penetrate through at this level : the orator, waving the «club in the color of life», «hurls» his speech at the end of the day, when the light rays are slanting and illuminate the edges of the disk.

The hafting is a complex affair. The handle is in hard wood, which is a masculine symbol, and is made by the men, as are about nearly all the elements constituting the whole piece. It is covered with *awa*, tapa of the finest quality, white, made by women to be used by the men (they have recourse to the same *awa* for their ceremonial penis sheath), beaten from the inner bark of the mulberry tree. This handle is fixed usually, but not always, at its lower end through a hole to a half empty coconut shell, inside which are put small shells. The whole, covered with the *awa*, is securely tied with a cord made of the braid taken from the lower part of the body of a female flying fox, mixed at all levels with vegetable fibers which gives it strength. This is called «poil de roussette», flying fox fur. It has a strong symbolic content.

The flying fox, when sleeping with its wings furled and its head downwards, is said to be the image of the female sex. This cord is made by men, and adorns all ceremonial pieces of the scant local costumes, short skirts and greenstone necklaces for the women, penis sheaths for the men and dazzling white shells worn by them just over the calf of the leg or on the arm, as well as their clubs, spears and slings.

The female sex is *the* symbol of life in Melanesian symbolic systems, but anything dealing with water or the sea too, as well as anything done by women, as the *awa* and the sea shells (women fish for shell) fall into place, as well as the coconut considered as one of the plants characterised as being humid, coconuts being one of the important supports of life through their use as food or drink. Each local symbolic structure proposes a different arrangement around this theme, some strikingly forceful, some full of carefully shrouded hints everybody understands, smiling or roaring with laughter according to circumstance.

A situation somewhat similar to the one of the *kula* ring has been built between New Caledonia and the Loyalty islands, New Zealand being too far away to play any role in the local interisland exchange routes, which geography obliges thus to turn back north upon themselves after having got as far as the Isle of Pines. Maurice Leenhardt has described what he called the «green and white cycle», the existence of which I checked in the field, the greenstone necklaces and ceremonial disk shaped hafted axes going counterclockwise, from Ouen island at the southwestern tip of New Caledonia where the circular blades were worked and polished or the beads made one by one with a bow drill known and used in the whole of the Pacific, to the Isle of Pines where the mounting work was done with flying fox fur braid. From then on the artifacts were exchanged at the marriages of first-born sons or daughters, going from the Isle of Pines to Maré, then to Lifou, Ouvéa, and then on to the north of New Caledonia, in the Touho, Hienghène, Pouébo and Balade areas. In a clockwise fashion shell money and shell armlets were made on the west coast of New Caledonia, traded to the east coast, then went on to each of the Loyalty islands. The ones made in the Voh area followed downstream the Tiwaka valley and from there went to Ouvéa, Lifou, Maré and then back again to the Isle of Pines.

Unhappily all this is only a theoretical view of things. One can trace *gi o kono*, disk-shaped greenstone hafted axes, called club by the people because it is ceremonially used as such and never to cut anything, because chiefly marriages happen only in each case once a generation. But shell money being used for all the other marriages, all the time, and in quite a number of other instances, it journeys along all the routes followed by such marriages. These routes go by the hundreds, going back and forth all the time, from New Caledonia to one or the other of the Loyalty Islands and back, and all around New Caledonia without any obligation of going through the outlying

islands.

There are other locations than Ouen island for making *gi o kono*, such as the Gondé area of the upper Houailou valley, where the stone is blue instead of green, from where the artifact could well move on clockwise instead of counterclockwise, according to real marriage strategies. Each part of each island outside New Caledonia had its related lineages on the east coast of New Caledonia, even going to the trouble of establishing a small colony of its own people, so as not only to trade in valuables, but also to obtain the necessary kaori pine tree trunks so as to build the ocean going double hulled sailing canoes they needed for going back and forth. Marriages between island chiefly lines and New Caledonian ones added a social link to this economic reality. The green and white cycle is thus a model proposed so as to help in the understanding of an infinitely more complex state of things. As always, Melanesian theoreticians are found to be at least the equals of the ones hailing from our academic world of teaching and research.

Jean Guiart

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leiris, A., 1939.

<sup>2</sup> O'Reilly, Patrick, 1951

<sup>3</sup> Leenhardt, M., 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Leenhardt, M., 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Elkin, A. P., 1930, *cf.* also : Elkin, A. P. & Berndt, R., 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Leenhardt, R., 1976.

<sup>7</sup> These exercise books have been deposited with the French Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence. A complete photostatic copy is in the Department of Oceanic Languages, Institut National des Langues Orientales Vivantes, Paris. I have another copy, and so has the curator of the museum in Nouméa, who belongs to a lineage close to the one of the author. A copy has been given to Kanak self styled researchers, who have slomly edited the content of these exercise books. They are now available in book form, with a French translation, but no explanatory notes.

<sup>8</sup> Guiart, J., 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Leenhardt, M., 1930 ; and : Guiart, 1994. Both these sources present the information contained in the texts written by pastor Bwesou Eurijisi.

<sup>10</sup> Guiart, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> *Nekare ka arii* : although *nekare* indicates a plaited basket made out of pandanus leaves, in this case there is no basket as such, but this very head plus the shell money lengths rolled up in many lengths of fine pandanus mats, the outer thicknesses being made of older mats. Urupwe's head is not shown out of the lineage. A little used fine mat, hung over the fire for some time so as to give it a kind of golden varnish, will be called for so as to present the lengths of fine shell beads in careful parallel strands, so that they do not cross each other which would mean death for one of the lineage's members.

<sup>12</sup> This explanation was first given to me in April 1948, in the village of L'Embouchure, Ponérihouen, east coast of New Caledonia, by Emile Dwi Grotêdo ma Naacuwè, the mother's brother of Waya Gorode, the now deceased Kanak writer, and father of the poetess Dewey Gorode.

<sup>13</sup> Respect of the rest on Sunday is another acquired early and permanent fixture of life in the islands.

<sup>14</sup> For the best documented studies based on the research of stylistic categories, *cf.* Bodrogi, Tibor, 1961 (based on the very extensive field notes of Lajos Biro) ; Kooijman, Simon, 1959 & 1962 ; Van Baren, Th. P., 1968.

<sup>15</sup> Which could be a conceptual proposition in the framework of Wundt's *Gestalt Psychoologie*.

<sup>16</sup> Müller, Kal, 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Van den Broek d'Obrenan, Charles, 1939, p. 83 ss.

<sup>18</sup> South Malekula, middle Sepik valley, northwest New Britain.

<sup>19</sup> Marquesas Islands, western shores of the Papuan Gulf.

<sup>20</sup> Arnhem Land.

<sup>21</sup> Waite, Deborah B., 1969, 1979 & 1983.

<sup>22</sup> Fox, Aileen, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> For studies integrating the results of field work with aesthetic analysis, *cf.* Leenhardt, Maurice, 1937 ; Kupka, Karel, 1962 ; Gerbrands,

Adrian, 1967 ; Davenport, William H., 1968 ; Newton, Douglas, 1971 ; Kupka, Karel, 1972 ; Forge, Anthony, 1973 ; Mead, Sidney, 1973 ; Dark, Philip C., 1974 ; Kooijman, S., 1984 ; Greub, Suzanne, edited by, 1985 ; Simmons, D. R., *Ta Moko, The Art of Maori Tattoo*, Reemethuen, Auckland 1986 ; Schneebaum, Tobias, 1990..

<sup>24</sup> For the best color illustration of *Uenuku*, cf. Brake, Brian ; McNeish, James & Simmons, David, *Art of the Pacific*, Oxford University Press, London & Auckland 1979, pl. 103.

<sup>25</sup> The first study locating with the necessary precision each local style and its different components. Preceding authors brought important, although partial, information, and have been lacking the capacity to put together all available information and collate it with knowledgeable Maori scholars. Cf. Simmons, David R., *Whakairo, Maori Tribal Art*, Oxford University Press, Auckland 1985.

<sup>26</sup> Buck, Peter H., *The Coming of the Maori*, Government Printer, Wellington 1950.

<sup>27</sup> Guiart, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> For the version of the myth on the island of Maré : Dubois, M.-J., 1975, p. 259 ss.

<sup>29</sup> Bouge, L., 1914.

<sup>30</sup> The whole lot nearly seems to be in France : one is the *haze* (god) Ithidra Luop, one is the *haze* Sisiwanyano, ancestor of the Hnadrohau lineage from Muj, Wetr (cf. for the myth of Sisiwanyano : Guiart, 1992, p. 341) ; the other two are the two groups cited *infra* of *lue jai-ny*.

<sup>31</sup> From different locations linked to the Tainui canoe people. Cf. Simmons, D. R., 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Larsson, K. E., 1960.

<sup>33</sup> Firth, R., 1961.

<sup>34</sup> In a vernacular text published by M. Leenhardt, 1932, we find the case of the grandfather who, dissatisfied with the way his headstrong daughter went to marry afar, fastens loosely the bunch of leaves meant to ensure the ancestor's blessing for the birth of his grandson, and places it upside down, so as to provoke the swift death of the child. I published the story (*Structure de la chefferie*, 1993, *op. cit.*) of chief Gondou's mother's father, who, frightened as well as many others by the actions of the French army burning down villages and destroying the crops in their search of this well known warrior, went to the pole where the «bouquet» of Godou was fastened since his birth, unfastened it and put the elements in the fire so as to ensure his grandson's death and protect the country from a worse fate.

<sup>35</sup> John B. Stair, 1897, cited by Janet Davidson, 1975, describes a drying process for the conservation of the outward appearance of a corpse, by using hot stones in the emptied belly and applications of clay, the process being called : made into a sun dried god, *o le fa'a atua aalaina* ; this process belonging specifically to the Mata'afa lineage.

<sup>36</sup> Boulay, R., 1990, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> Leenhardt, 1930, pl. XXXII & XXXIII.

<sup>38</sup> Leenhardt, 1932.

<sup>39</sup> Which is why all Kanak soldiers in the first world war in France carried such a parcel in a small flat basket at the neck, which ensured that they could talk to and have the vision of their ancestors on the battlefield.

<sup>40</sup> Guiart, J., 1957.

<sup>41</sup> Boulay, 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis Friday, 1944, has described the way a canoe could be hollowed out with fire.

<sup>43</sup> There is one in the Nouméa Museum, one in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and one in a provincial museum.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. for artificially applying western logic to a Melanesian situation : Boulay, 1990, p. 103 ss.

<sup>45</sup> Raymond Leenhardt is Maurice Leenhardt's only son ; he was reared in the Houailou valley and spoke perfectly its language, which he taught for many years at the *Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes* (now *Institut*) in Paris.

<sup>46</sup> This is a mythical snake, called *simui* in the Houailou valley and further south, and *mariiri* further north : there are no fresh water snakes in New Caledonia..

<sup>47</sup> Guiart, 1992, the first chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. on the *kwiri* (*kiiri*) : Leenhardt, 1930, p. 199 ss ; 1932, p. 165, & Guiart, 1992, p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> One of the primary functions of chief, *orokau* {= big child, senior brother in a chiefly line}, who does not pray — prayers are the privilege of the *kavu* — is to use one of his yam fields, to initiate each of these gestures one et a time, with his *kamosari* {small men = junior brothers, real and classificatory} coming to help him, the first time five days after the fastening of the *kwiri* by the *kavu*. This is done only in one field and has no economic consequences, but organizes the calendar of agricultural work throughout the year. There is no tribute as such, as so many authors, even recent, have thought.

<sup>50</sup> Since Captain James Cook introduced a couple of pigs bought by him in Port Sandwich, Malekula, Vanuatu, the Kanak people were obliged to put their dead in trees so as to protect them from the onslaught of wild boars and later wild dogs.

<sup>51</sup> Guiart, 1987 {new edition} ; and : Kasarhèrou, Emmanuel, 1993.

<sup>52</sup> Leenhardt, M., 1953.

<sup>53</sup> Deacon, 1934.



- <sup>54</sup> Cf. for the journey to the land of the dead : Guiart, 1957 and 1987 ; Leenhardt, M, 1954 & 1945 ; and : Bensa, A. & Rivierre, J.-C., 1982, p. 461 ss.
- <sup>55</sup> Guiart, 1956
- <sup>56</sup> Guiart, J., 1949 ; and : Peltier, Philippe, 1979, ms. This last author did not have access to the British collections, except those in the British Museum, or to the American collections. He only saw the French collections and the Swiss ones in Basel.
- <sup>57</sup> The clam shell blades cannot cut the fibres of the wood, at most it can only break them, which means having recourse to green wood and organizing a slow burning of the wood, the adze blade being used to scrape away the burnt wood.
- <sup>58</sup> The better known masks are : the one of the collection in the MNAAO (Guiart, J., 1965, pl. 82, & 1963, pl. 227), the one of the Speiser collection in the Basel Museum of Ethnography (Guiart, 1965., pl. 226, & Schmitz, Carl A. 1967, pl. 46); the one of the Paul Eluard collection (Poncetton, F. & Portier, A., 1930 , pl. IX) ; the one figured p. 428 of Deacon's *Malekula*, 1934, has never been found since ; the one photographed in Milip by Van den Broek d'Obrenan, 1939, is in the Musée de l'Homme..
- <sup>59</sup> For the MNAAO pieces in colored plates, cf. Guiart, 1965., which is a very rare book.
- <sup>60</sup> Van den Broek d'Obrenan, 1939, p. 83 ss. We possess the cards completed in the field for each artifact by the late Comtesse de Ganay, who was on the expedition and whose husband was the ship's captain .
- <sup>61</sup> Ex Marc Girardin collection, Musée du Petit Palais, deposited in the Musée de l'Homme, cf. p. 188-189 : Guiart , J., 1986.
- <sup>62</sup> From the ten tobacco sticks said to have been paid by Captain Goodenough to buy the island for the Queen.
- <sup>63</sup> Pulling down her ears at night so as to lay on one and cover her body with the other, according to Deacon. This precise mythical theme of the extended ears at night is found as well on Tanna and further south in the north of New Caledonia. The contradictions between Deacon's data and the one of Layard, as seen by Camilla Wedgwood, Deacon's editor, is not really significant. It is a quite usual occurrence that different field workers, meeting different people, obtain different versions of a myth. The equation of Ambat Malondr with Temes Malau was obtained by me from Amarantus in December 1950.
- <sup>64</sup> We do not know precisely to whom these different versions belong. This was not a question asked for in 1924.
- <sup>65</sup> Narrow noses are one of the possible nose shapes from New Guinea to Polynesia, they do exist and cannot indicate a specific migration. My wife's father and one of my sisters-in-law from Lifou have a narrow nose, as well as the members of a lineage in Teouta, Ouvéa, the latter claiming to have come from Samoa. The frequently narrow noses in Papua would evidently have nothing to do with Polynesia, at least directly.
- <sup>66</sup> Boulay, R., 1992. The description of the *luan* as the place where the oral tradition is given is mistaken. It is a European view of things, maybe handed back so as to get rid of a question. Oral tradition is owned in each of its parts by a given lineage and is learned about in that context. The three month seclusion is to learn the technique of the building of each item, hats, masks or quite a number of other artifacts, some small, some of large dimensions, some never seen by us yet. The learning process is slow, as each successive part of it is the pretext for a payment in pigs. This seclusion is quite relative, men going and coming, eating and sleeping in the men's house if they have a fancy to it, the principal taboo being a sexual one for the duration. But a seller can add what taboos he might wish so as to gain greater prestige for the item he sells.
- <sup>67</sup> At Bwenekhay, two day's walk from Port Sandwich, a complex 14 levels grade taking hierarchy was the rule in 1950 for a village boasting then only 11 inhabitants, cf. Guiart, J., 1963.
- <sup>68</sup> Kaufmann, Christian, 1993, p. 221 & 222.
- <sup>69</sup> Kaufmann, 1993.
- <sup>70</sup> His father and mother are both art historians.
- <sup>71</sup> Guiart, J., 1996.
- <sup>72</sup> Greub, Suzanne, edited by, 1985.
- <sup>73</sup> Bateson, 1936, pl. XXVIII A.
- <sup>74</sup> Forge, 1973.
- <sup>75</sup> Bateson was certainly wrong at the time not to refer to the old German authors, and not to Speiser, whose papers may not have been available then in Sydney. But the information given by him is infinitely better than the one obtained by Speiser, and even later than the one by Bühler. Cf. Bateson, G., 1932.
- <sup>76</sup> Bateson, 1936. pl. XVIII B, XIX A & B, XX A & B, XXI A & B, XXII, XXIV A, XXVII.
- <sup>77</sup> Newton, D., 1975, not cited by the Swiss authors.
- <sup>78</sup> Bateson, 1936, pl. XXV.
- <sup>79</sup> Van Baal, 1966.
- <sup>80</sup> Wirz, P., 1922—1925.
- <sup>81</sup> Wirz, 1922-25. Teil IV, Tafel 30, *Gari*. Jan van Baal has 20 pages on this artifact, discussing the myth, all different authors having something to say and every single photograph taken at earlier dates for the information they contained. Wirz's illustrations should be republished with captions taken from Van Baal's work.
- <sup>82</sup> Defrance, Véronique, 1987.

- <sup>83</sup> Kaufmann, 1993, pl. 107 & 122 (Australian Museum, Sydney : one squatting figure ; two human figures squatting back to back).
- <sup>84</sup> Somerville, Henry Boyd, 1894, & Hébert, Bernard, 1965
- <sup>85</sup> Guiart, J., & *alii*, 1973, p. 356 ss.
- <sup>86</sup> Watt Legatt, R. T., 1906.
- <sup>87</sup> Guiart, 1965, pl. 62 : much eroded, made of coarse coral, this stone had been left in the rain forest ; it was said to have belonged to a former population called *kenken*, who would have been exterminated by putting fire to the wild cane fields where they had sought refuge (height : 85 cm). The return of the stone is said to be a wish of the present Tènmara people.
- <sup>88</sup> Guiart, 1965, pl. 54 ; 1963 (2), pl. 206, & : «Océanien», *Kunst des Naturvölker*, op. cit., pl. 198 (height : 35,5 cm ; width : 15,8 cm).
- <sup>89</sup> Guiart, 1965, pl. 52 : *müyü ne bu* stone carving, bought in December 1963 from Isaac Robert Mage, Linbul, North Ambrym. Rubbed for each ritual use with a mixture of coconut oil and red ochre before the scraping (height : 9 cm).
- <sup>90</sup> Coll. numbered 34-186 in the Department of Oceania. Cf. Guiart, 1949.
- <sup>91</sup> Kaufmann, 1993, pl. 106.
- <sup>92</sup> Köln Museum n° 7620 ; Kaufmann, 1993, pl 170 ; Meier, J., 1911 ; & : Koch, Gerd, 1982.
- <sup>93</sup> Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (cf. Kaufmann, 1993, fig 842).
- <sup>94</sup> Kaufmann, 1993, pl. 105.
- <sup>95</sup> Cf. for an exhaustive illustrated list of carved stone implements in : Newton, Douglas, 1979.
- <sup>96</sup> Cf. for this very drawing published by Maurice Leenhardt, 1930, p. 124.
- <sup>97</sup> He strikes in the water the image of the daylight as it begins to appear.

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