

# The place of Vamale (New Caledonia) in a multilingual environment - Attitudes towards it and differences across time and space

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Small-scale Multilingualism  
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## What's on the Menu ?

### Vamale

New Caledonia

Homeland

Migration

### Attitudes today

West & North

Heartland

South

### Conclusion



[tã], a ground oven

## New Caledonia in indigenous languages

Between 27 and 36  
Southern Oceanic  
languages (+ 1  
Polynesian), many  
endangered

5 groups, 2 Oceanic  
sub-families

Loyalty,

**North**, South

340 official tribes

?-15.000 speakers



## Language Comparison

(1) a. Vamale

a bo vaya  
3SG FUT work

'S/he will work'

b. Pije

nya wo vaya

c. Fwâi

ye le vaya

d. Nemi

ye li va(y)a

e. Cèmuhî

hâô yaa wênême

(HAUDRICOURT et OZANNE-RIVIERRE 1982) :251

## Colonial History

1777 first official contact by Cpt. James Cook

1853-1946, classic colonisation by France

Land spoliation, massacres in retaliation to Kanak resistance

*Indigénat, cantonnement*

(04.11.2018, 1st (failed) referendum for independence, 56,7%  
vs 43,3%)

## In Vamale Country

1903 deletion of reservation, sale of land to Ch. Metzdorf



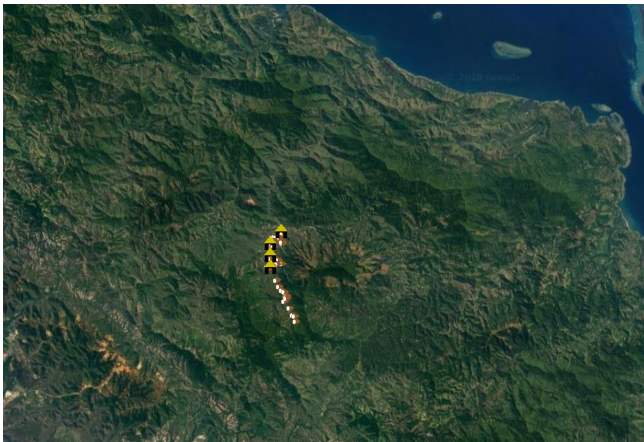
## In Vamale Country

1903 deletion of reservation, sale of land to Ch. Metzdorf  
(GUIART 1970 :266)

1917 last Kanak revolt / Tipije war

Complete annihilation of mountain tribes between Kohnê  
and Tuo (BENSA, MUCKLE et KACUÉ 2015)

# Pamale valley





# Migration

Flight east : Tiendanit, Poyes, We Hava, the east coast

Flight west : western mountain tribes (Témala, Tiéta, Baco, Voh)

Flight south-east : Atéou, Néami, Noéli, Bopope, Pobei, Tiwaka



## Where are we now ? Follow the sacred road

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# The West

Linguistic cohabitation

Mutual intelligibility

Multilingual people

Voh-Koné dialects converge

## The North

Only tribes that still speak it (i.e. Usa Vamale) :

Tiendanite (next to Nemi and Pije)

Pindache (next to Fwâi and Pije), derived from

Tiendanite, fled during the 80's, mother Wathea, father  
Couhia

Accepted as neighbour and cousin, considered difficult but  
pretty

Accepted in Tiendanite as council clan language

Wathea family came from We Hava, was installed by the  
chief because of ancient war alliance

→ Alliances, family ties, related languages, no competition

## The Heartland

Téganpaïk, Tiouandé, Oué Hava + Tipije  
Coexists with host language Pije (and French)  
Dominance (~170 speakers vs 40?)  
Pije resentment

'My mother's language is Vamale but my **real** language is Pije, I am a Pije man' - NK, Vamale-dominant

-> Alliances, family ties, competition



## The South

Cèmuhê-speaking

No Vamale speakers

Resentment ('Vamale is not a real language', 'Téganpaïk people are crazy', 'waste of time')

2016 'grand baston'

Aman of Poyes vs Hippolyte of Touho 1901

Prestige

Cooperation with the French

The brother

Women

only accepted in Poyes

-> historical background

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## Conclusion

Paths are crucial in Kanak culture, justify position.

How do people arrive somewhere ?

Guests are expected to learn local language and to continue practising theirs.

Women's language and clan vs men's language and clan

Rivalry, history, (and mythology) are the reasons, not religion or values imposed by the French.

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Li apuli xamoo Theganepaik, Thexwhaade, We Hava, Pedaa, ma Seejahnit, eholeke i wadan, li vaayangaa, ma li fatiivwe.  
Koin !

## References



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# Questions ?

