

**THE JAVANESE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY  
IN NEW CALEDONIA  
A PRELIMINARY SURVEY**

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**History :**

At the turn of the century, a demand for labourers occurred in the nickel industry and coffee plantations of French New Caledonia, and indented labourers were imported from Asia.<sup>1</sup> An agreement was reached with the Dutch government to supply the territory with labourers from the former Dutch East Indies for 5-year periods, following which they were to be repatriated.<sup>2</sup> Almost all of these labourers came from Java which explains the use of the term *javanais* in New Caledonian French to designate all residents of Indonesian descent.<sup>3</sup> Most of them were agricultural and domestic workers.<sup>4</sup> The first of successive contingents arrived in the capital of New Caledonia, Noumea, in 1901.<sup>5</sup> By 1911, their numbers had climbed to 1200; by 1930, to 7000; and by 1939 to 7735.<sup>6</sup> The numbers of new arrivals fluctuated according to the needs of the plantation and mining interests. During the depression of 1930–33, many of these Indonesians were repatriated.<sup>7</sup> From 1933, the importation of Javanese was resumed, but departures exceeded introductions.<sup>8</sup> It also became common practice for contracts to be renewed. Other labourers became free settlers after they had fulfilled their contract and, by 1939, 810 individuals were in this category.<sup>9</sup> Though the Pacific War brought a temporary halt to the influx, the New Caledonian Javanese population underwent a natural increase of 700 individuals during these years.<sup>10</sup> On July 4 1945, all labourers were freed from their contracts of indenture.<sup>11</sup> Nostalgic Javanese flocked from the countryside to Noumea to await repatriation. The years 1946–48 were characterised by the shipment of large numbers of these people back to their homeland. In some instances, repatriation was delayed to prevent a sudden shortage of labourers.<sup>12</sup> Those who remained behind were later given the opportunity of acquiring French nationality by way of naturalisation.<sup>13</sup> Subsequent to these changes, a labour shortage was again felt, with the result that approximately 500 Indonesians were signed on by the Dutch for 3-year contracts and shipped from Batavia (now Djakarta). This group arrived in Noumea on June 16 1949 aboard the

1. Le Borgne 1962:167, 169.
2. Bourgeau 1955:43.
3. Huetz de Lempis 1954:54.
4. Gr. Brit. Nav. Intell. Div. 1944:450
5. Doumenge 1966:214.
6. Keesing 1946:359.
7. Robson 1946:316.
8. Doumenge 1966:214.
9. Keesing 1946:359.
10. Doumenge 1966: 214.
11. Belshaw 1950: 99. Concerning the year of abolition of the indenture system, different interpretations seem to have existed. See: Cumberland 1958: 168; and, Harris 1966: 110.
12. Belshaw 1954: 23.
13. Malignac 1957: 22.

French vessel "Yangtze".<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, immediately after World War II, Indonesia became involved in the struggle for independence. This struggle was mainly centred on the islands of Java and Sumatra. In 1950, the former Dutch East Indies became the Republic of Indonesia.

On May 15 1951, an Indonesian consulate was established in Noumea for the first time.<sup>15</sup> Between 1951 and 1953, no immigration of Javanese was recorded.<sup>16</sup> But further repatriation occurred and the number of Indonesians in New Caledonia decreased to 6600 in 1952, and then to 2900 in 1956.<sup>17</sup> From 1954 to 1965, the recruitment of Indonesian labourers from Djakarta was resumed at the following rates per annum : 24 (1954), 27 (1955), 72 (1956), 86 (1957), 56 (1958), 14 (1959), 27 (1960), 69 (1961), 24 (1962), 12 (1963), 5 (1964), 1 (1965).<sup>18</sup> The sudden upturn between 1956 and 1958 can be largely attributed to repatriates who decided to return to New Caledonia.<sup>19</sup> In 1965, New Caledonia put a stop to immigration from Indonesia for permanent settlement.<sup>20</sup> Yet, a few individuals still managed to gain entry as the following figures indicate : 0 (1966), 0 (1967), 1 (1968), 15 (1969), and 2 (1970).<sup>21</sup>

The "Analyse des resultats du recensement de la population de Nouvelle-Calédonie", published May 2, 1963, reveals that the number of people in New Caledonia who are ethnically categorised under *indonésiens* numbered 2889 in 1956 and 3563 in 1963, representing an increase during that period of 23.3%.<sup>22</sup> The "Résultats statistiques du recensement général de la population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie" of May 2, 1963, gives data on the contemporary situation. It lists 3563 people as *indonésiens*, of which 2000 had been born in New Caledonia and 1542 in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> This document does not record how many of these *indonésiens* had obtained French citizenship through naturalisation; nor does it record how many Indonesians had been counted as *métis* of franco-indonesian blood under the category heading of *européens et assimilés*.<sup>24</sup> However, Doumenge reports that, at the beginning of 1965, over 3800 Javanese of Indonesian nationality constituted a stable group in New Caledonia, and that approximately 50 naturalised Javanese and their families, together with the descendants of the children of the first contingents of Javanese migrants, then totalled about a thousand people.<sup>25</sup>

A few years ago, New Caledonia discussed with the Indonesian government the possibility of recruiting in Indonesia. Djakarta showed itself to be well-disposed toward the idea. Consequently, between July 1970 and April 1971, about 550 Indonesians were employed in New Caledonia under the sponsorship of the Compagnie Industrielle de Travaux (CITRA), a French agency which has a branch office in Djakarta for recruiting semi-skilled labourers on one-year contracts.<sup>26</sup> These labourers were distributed among several French companies

14. This information was supplied by several members of the group who made the journey, and who presently are residents of Noumea.
15. Information from the Indonesian Consulate in Noumea (further mentioned as Consulate).
16. Consulate.
17. Doumenge 1966: 215.
18. Consulate.
19. Doumenge 1966: 215.
20. Consulate.
21. Consulate.
22. Institut National 1963: 17.
23. Institut National 1963: 48.
24. Institut National 1963: 17.
25. Doumenge 1966: 215
26. Consulate.

which are presently operating in the territory.<sup>27</sup> The latest reports indicate that out of these 550, only 473 remain.<sup>28</sup> Sickness and nostalgia, reportedly caused a group to repatriate before their contracts were fulfilled.

### Socio-linguistic background of the New Caledonian Javanese :

The first generation Javanese immigrants came from all over Central Java, and from areas in East Java where Javanese is spoken. They represent, as such, native speakers of the various Javanese dialects. Their New Caledonian-born children usually remember where their parents originated from, and, as a matter of fact, each of them has a distinct speech which can be related to the dialect of Javanese their parents had spoken. Of these, dialect variations spoken from the Tjomal-Bandjarnegara-Kebumen dialect borderline westwards in Central Java are represented in New Caledonia. In Java popularly referred to as the Banjumas dialect, this group of dialect variations is in linguistics also known as *a*-Javanese on account of its having frequently a phoneme /a/ cognate with the phoneme /ɔ/ of standard Javanese. In New Caledonia, although not in Java, this speech is considered distinct to the extent that its speakers are nicknamed, by the other Javanese, *wong ngapa*, the *ngapa* (What's the matter?)—saying group. *Ngapa* is cognate with *ngopo* in standard Javanese.

In Noumea, the residence and meeting-point of many Javanese, I have ascertained at least one case of dialect levelling. The word *alo*, meaning 'family' or 'relative' in the Kutoardjo-Purworedjo dialect is an established speech term among the Noumean Javanese. Despite their lexical and semantic differences, Javanese dialects show a high degree of mutual intelligibility.

A linguistic aspect of Javanese village society has been transmitted to New Caledonia. In the rural sphere of Java, *Ngoko* is the prevalent speech level used by both addresser and addressee, irrespective of their differences of age, rank and class, which contrasts with the situation in the urban sector, where, particularly among the middle and prominent classes, such distinctions are well-defined in terms of speech levels, i.e. *Kromo* and *Ngoko*. A person who is considered inferior, with regard to these distinctions, should use the *Kromo* form of Javanese in his address to a superior. The latter does not need to do likewise, he customarily would respond in the *Ngoko* form. Accordingly, children should speak in the *Kromo* form to their parents. The *Kromo* form is also utilised to establish non-intimate relations with less acquainted persons. A compromise between *Kromo* and *Ngoko*, the *Madyo* form, or, sometimes referred to as the *Kromo Dusun*, 'village Kromo', is used by villagers who have moved to towns and constitute the main manual labour force in Javanese urban society.<sup>28 a</sup> The New Caledonian Javanese, in general, speak, besides *Ngoko*, such a variant of Javanese.

It can be reconstructed that the first Javanese immigrants, upon arrival in New Caledonia, had to adapt themselves to an unfamiliar social structure in which differences of age, rank, class, and also in New Caledonia, race, are not expressed in speech forms as in Javanese. Furthermore, problems of class distinctions did not arise among them, since all Javanese immigrants started their career equally as contract labourers. Therefore, the social stimuli and checks for propagating *Ngoko-Kromo* distinctions had remained absent in New Caledonia.

27. These companies are : CITRA, S.G.E., S.C.E.T., COIGNET-PACIFIQUE, C.A.M.O.M., Menuiserie DILLENSEGER, Entreprise G. BON, Entreprise G. SALMON, Etablissement CEHAK.
28. Consulate's information of July 1971.
- 28a. Fishman 1968: 288.

My recent experience in New Caledonia was that I could easily speak in the *Kromo*, or eventually in the *Madyo* form, to first generation migrants, however, as soon as I addressed their New Caledonian-born descendants in this form, they readily excused themselves for not knowing it, and our conversation was immediately switched to the *Ngoko* form. At the beginning, this caused a cultural shock to me since direct address in *Ngoko* instantly brings both speakers to a state of equality and close intimacy, a situation which, in Java, would have caused uneasiness for the mere reason that at first encounter, adult speakers should address each other in *Kromo*, or, at least, in *Madyo* to show some politeness. A deviation from the traditional speech etiquette could be interpreted as an insult. The switch from *Kromo*, or *Madyo*, into *Ngoko* could eventually happen at a later stage of becoming increasingly acquainted with one another. For second generation Javanese in New Caledonia, speaking *Ngoko* to unacquainted fellow-Javanese, at first encounter, is similar to their addressing strangers in French, where there is no "polite" form that is exactly equivalent to the Javanese usage of *Kromo*. A further alienation from Javanese has occurred with the third generation who merely indicate that "they could generally follow what has been said in Javanese", but would always respond in French. Their passive knowledge depends upon the degree and frequency of exposure to Javanese speech in their respective milieu.

#### The speech of the New Caledonian Javanese :

Java-born migrants are easily detectable by their flawless command of their respective Javanese dialects. New Caledonian-born Javanese, on the other hand, speak their Javanese with an unmistakable French accent and intonation. Although their sentences are structurally Javanese, lexical interference will persistently occur in cases in which Javanese words become replaced by their French equivalents, such as *si*, 'yes', *non*, 'no', *mais*, 'but', *parce que*, 'because', and interjections such as *eh bien*, 'well', and, *o, la, la !*, 'oh'. French *là* is used to emphasise Javanese words or word units.

Phonic interference in their speech depends largely on whether Javanese or French is the primary language which causes the interference, or secondary language which suffers the interference.<sup>29</sup> My impression is that first generation Javanese speak French with a Javanese accent, while the reverse is the case with second generation Javanese who speak Javanese with a French accent. The question of the nature of phonic interference will be taken up in some detail, when further research has been undertaken.

First generation Javanese migrants have named their children *botjah niaouli*, 'niaouli kids', after the *niaouli* (*Melaleuca leucadendron* L.), a native New Caledonian tree.<sup>30</sup> Another native tree, the *gâiac* (*Guaiacum*) serves as an allusion for third generation New Caledonian-born descendants, irrespective of their race. Between the three generations of Javanese in New Caledonia, a language shift is noticeable. The first generation immigrants, illiterate as most of them were, used pidgin-French — sometimes referred to as *petit nègre* — for inter-racial contacts. At the beginning of this century, a variety of pidgin English, *beach-la-mar*, was still a significant trade speech in New Caledonia.<sup>31</sup> With the strengthening of French administration, this jargon was thrust aside by French.<sup>32</sup> Non-European immigrants in

29. Weinreich 1957: 2.

30. Luke 1962: 143.

31. Churchill 1911.

32. Leenhardt 1946: XIX.

Melanesia, which include the Javanese for New Caledonia, had adopted French as the general language of communication, however, at the pidgin-level.<sup>33</sup> The first generation and quite a few of their *niaouli*-descendants, particularly those who have stayed in *la brousse*, 'the rural areas outside town', still speak this pidgin-French.<sup>34</sup> The French educated Javanese characterise this French jargon as *kasar*, 'unsophisticated', distinguishing it from school-French which is characterised as *alus*, 'refined'. It is remarkable how easily third or even fourth generation Javanese can understand it when conversing with their grandparents, or even their great-grandparents.

The first generation and *niaouli*-Javanese refer to their ancestral homeland Java as *nDjowo*. In Indonesia, the territorial term Indonesia started being used officially since 1942. The New Caledonian Javanese use the term *nDjowo*, 'Java', also with reference to the whole of Indonesia. Parallel herewith, all Indonesians, Javanese and non-Javanese alike — as long as they are not of Chinese, Arab, or Dutch extraction — are called *wong Djowo*, literally 'Javanese'. In the pre-war Dutch East Indies, *wong Londo*, 'Dutch people', was a Javanese generic term for the Dutch and other Europeans. In the absence of Dutch people, this term is in New Caledonia exclusively used for 'French people'. 'France' is termed by the New Caledonian Javanese as *en France*; 'in France' becomes *ing en France*, or, *ngen France*, in which *ing* or *ng* represent the Javanese locative 'in'. Similarly, French *au quai* 'on/at the wharf' has been adapted with the meaning 'wharf', so that 'on/at the wharf' in New Caledonian Javanese becomes *ngauquai*.

A linguistic aspect of Javanese reminiscent of pre-war Indonesia which was also transplanted to New Caledonia is the naming of the *métis* of mixed French and non-European blood as *wong Ambon*, 'Ambonese people', a term originally referring to an ethnic group of Indonesia which had shown a strong affiliation with Dutch culture. People of Arab descent are *wong Arab*, 'Arabs', both in Java and New Caledonia, and Chinese with their descendants are called *tjino*, 'Chinese people', or, *singkek*, 'new-comers from China', which in New Caledonia also include Vietnamese. These two terms were also used in Java before and during the Japanese occupation years 1942-45 as derogatory terms for 'Japanese'. Whether these terms were used also in New Caledonia when there were Japanese in the territory, remains questionable; their descendants are referred to by the Javanese simply as *japonais*. The only information I have obtained was that the pre-war Japanese residents of Noumea were also given the derogatory name of *wong ketjap*, 'the soyasauce vendors'. Similarly, Arabs in New Caledonia are referred to as *wong katjang*, 'the peanut vendors'. The Wallis islanders are the *wong koper*; obviously Wallis, pronounced [βɑ:lɪs] by *Niaouli* Javanese, has been associated with *valise*, 'suitcase' (*koper*). The indigenous Melanesians, *les autochtones*, are *wong ireng*, 'the blacks'; sometimes *wong kalong*, 'the "roussette" (*Pteropus ornatus*) people' is used synonymously.<sup>35</sup> In New Caledonian French, a metropolitan Frenchman is called *un zoreille*.<sup>36</sup> Through analogy this term has become in Javanese *wong kuping*, or, *kuping*, 'ear'. *C'est un kuping*, 'he is (Metropolitan) French'.

'Speaking Javanese' is *omong Djowo*, or *tjoro Djowo*, 'the Javanese fashion'. As in pre-war Indonesia, the *bahasa Indonesia* is still referred to in New Caledonia as *omong*

33. Hollyman 1962: 312.

34. For examples of this pidgin-French spoken by New Caledonian Javanese, see : Burchett 1942:80–82; Hollyman 1964: 64.

35. The "roussette", the New Caledonian edible sea-bat, symbolises the "canaque" society: See : Faivre 1955: 63.

36. O'Reilly 1953: 221.

*Mlayu*, 'Malay speech', or *tjoro Mlayu*, 'the Malay fashion'. With the non-existence of Dutch speech in New Caledonia, *omong Londo*, literally 'the Dutch language' or 'speaking Dutch', or *tjoro Londo*, 'the Dutch fashion', have become terms for 'the French language' or 'speaking French'. The term *français* is used by Javanese only when speaking French.

In the process of assimilation, the New Caledonian Javanese have coined new words, based on Javanese. In familiar French usage, *tantine* is an equivalent for *tante*, 'aunt', and *tonton* is used for *oncle*, 'uncle'. Words which are non-existent in Java have been coined by analogy with these reduplicative or semi-reduplicative forms; we find *wawak* 'parent's older brother', *lilik* 'parent's younger brother', and *yuyut* 'great-grandparent'. Equivalents in standard Javanese would be *siwak*, which may be abbreviated as *wak*, *bapak tjilik*, abbreviated as *pak lik* or merely *lik*, and *mbah buyut*. Addresses for 'you' in Java, such as *mak* or *mbok* 'mother' which stem from the rural sphere, and *mbakyu* or shortened as *yu* 'older sister', *kakang* or shortened as *kang* 'older brother', *nduk* 'little girl' and *nang* 'little boy', used both in the rural and urban spheres, continue to be heard in New Caledonia. The address *ibu* 'mother' or shortened as *bu* 'mom' from the urban sphere has fallen into disuse in New Caledonia since it is homophonous with French *hibou* 'owl'. The current French equivalents (New Caledonian French) are used instead. Similarly, *kakang* 'older brother' or shortened as *kang*, is more and more being replaced by its urban form *mas*. At an outdoor dance festival in Noumea for celebrating New Year's eve of 1971, I often heard people gaily shouting to *niaouli* Javanese: "*Comment ça va, Mas !*" 'How are ye, Pal !'

As the social status of the New Caledonian Javanese has become more elevated — from pre-war contract labourers to the present middle-class citizens of the French territory — French terms such as *un kakane*, formerly used to denote a Javanese male, and *une bayou* for a Javanese woman, are becoming archaic. A *niaouli* woman told me that she felt insulted when a non-Javanese called her *bayou*: "*Moi, je ne suis pas votre bayou*", she snapped back. The term *bayou* has the connotation of *une bonne*, 'a housemaid', and is reminiscent of the early years of indenture when Javanese women were hired for domestic help.

To fellow-Javanese, however, *mbakyu* 'older sister', and *kakang*, 'older brother', are accepted as correct usual forms of address for 'you'.

*Calédonie* 'New Caledonia' has undergone a Javanese metamorphic change into *Kali Doni*, 'the Doni river'. As *kali*, 'river' is a Ngoko word, *Calédonie* occurs in the Kromo form as *Lepen Doni*. *Vallée des Colons*, a residential area in Noumea, occurs among the local Javanese as *mbale kolong*: *mbale* 'house' and *kolong* 'the open space underneath a house on stilts'. *Vallée du Tir*, another residential section of Noumea, occurs as *mbale kitir*, in which *kitir* means 'letter(s)' in Javanese. In compound form these words should be considered Noumean Javanese innovations with no equivalents existing in Java.

The gallicisation of Javanese names is another aspect of assimilation. The Javanese tradition of name-giving i.e. naming each person by a single, personal name, is, to a certain extent retained in New Caledonia where names — commonly born by villagers in Java — are being used, such as *Amat*, *Sariman*, *Toekiman*, for males, and *Midjem*, *Sarijem*, *Ngadikem*, for females. The Napoleonic Legal Code in New Caledonia, which requires all its citizens being registered with their Christian and family names, has been coped with by the Javanese migrants by registering the father's personal name for establishing a family name, while retaining the personal name as one's "Christian" name, e.g. *Saricone Wongsodimedjo*, *Sajem Wongsokarto*, *Roesmin Soeparto*. The pre-war Dutch transcription of the u-sound with *oe* is

still maintained in New Caledonia for personal names. It became customary in New Caledonia to add a French Christian name to the Javanese name, such as *Alain Tiwar*, *Siti Paulette Soeroastro*, *Jacques Nasir Mahfoel*. One could also obtain an additional Christian name through baptism, e.g. *Petrus* or *Pierre Amat*. Naturalisation brings usually an alteration of the Javanese names, such as *Sinah Amatsabari* into *Aimée Savary*, *Sakimin Moeljokario* into *Jacques Moquariaux*, *Soewito Wagijo* into *Sylvain Vaguijot*, *Tambeng Wakidjo* into *André Vaquijot*.

The tropical plants in New Caledonia, some of which were introduced by Europeans,<sup>37</sup> must have struck the Javanese migrants as familiar, since most of them are common fruit-trees in Java. In New Caledonia, fruit-trees are cultivated in and around town, although some, such as the 'rose apple' (*Eugenia jambos*), French : *pomme rose*, Javanese : *djambu mawar*; the 'passion fruit' (*Passiflora* sp.) French : *pomme-liane*, Javanese : *markisah*; are, in all probability grown more in the rural areas. Fruit trees such as the 'mango' (*Mangifera indica*), French : *mangue*, Javanese : *pelem*; 'banana' (*Musa* spp.), French : *banane*, Javanese : *gedang*; and the 'Tahitian apple' (*Spondias dulcis*), French : *pomme cythère*, Javanese : *kedondong* or *dondong*, are a familiar sight in Noumean yards. Both the Javanese and the French names are commonly known to first and second generation New Caledonian Javanese, although the latter already show a preference for using the French names. This is even more so the case with the *gäiac*-Javanese.

In one case, I ascertained dialect levelling in which 'paw-paw' (*Carica papaya*) is known in New Caledonian Javanese as *gandul*, a dialectal term used in the inland districts of Central Java; the standard Javanese term is *kates*. A semantic change has occurred in the case in which 'jackfruit' (*Artocarpus integriflora*) is known among the New Caledonian Javanese as *gori*, a term which is used in Java only to designate 'the jackfruit in its unripe state', utilised in Javanese cooking as a vegetable; the standard Javanese name for 'jackfruit' is *nongko*.

### Bahasa Indonesia in New Caledonia :

For many New Caledonian Javanese, *bahasa Indonesia* 'Indonesian', the national language of Indonesia, is, even today, relatively alien. The majority of the first migrants were mono-linguals and spoke various Javanese dialects as their sole language. Since 1942, Indonesian had been extensively propagated in Java, reaching all levels of society. Before this time, standard Malay, from which Indonesian has evolved and which was used in literature, the press and in political life, was only known to a small literate group. A simplified form of Malay, bazaar Malay, which was greatly mixed with local terminologies and colloquialisms, served as an inter-racial trade vernacular in urban areas.

A Javanese in New Caledonia would in all probability understand Indonesian, if he had arrived in the Territory after World War II. The Indonesian consulate has been organising Indonesian language courses with indifferent results, reportedly due to a lack of public interest. However, Dewey states that many Noumean Javanese listen to radio-broadcasts in Indonesian from Australia.<sup>38</sup> Bellamy<sup>39</sup> records *pigi* 'go', *charan* 'horse', *majangang* 'deer',

37. Barrau 1958: 60, and Massal 1964: 403.

38. Dewey 1964: 19.

39. Bellamy 1936:96.

and *roti* 'bread' from the speech of Javanese migrants in New Caledonia which he comments on as "a tongue with so profuse and confusing a vocabulary". Whatever the comment is, one can deduce that some bazaar Malay words must have been used by the migrants (*pigi*, for example, is a cognate of standard Malay *pergi*). With reference to *charan* which in the current Latin transcription of Javanese<sup>40</sup> would be *djaran*, could it be that this word was uttered by *niaouli* Javanese who were bilingual, and already spoke their Javanese with a French accent? It is also possible that the unvoiced Javanese /j/, was transcribed as English /c/ by Bellamy. 'Deer' and 'bread' occur in the current spelling as *mendjangan* and *roti*, respectively. Nick-naming the Javanese in New Caledonian French as *les makan-du-riz* 'the rice-eaters', up to the present time, is another reference for the use of a Malay word, i.e. *makan* 'eat' instead of Javanese *mangan*.

It can be speculated that some bazaar Malay must have been spoken by the early Indonesian migrants in New Caledonia, as an inter-ethnic *lingua franca* among themselves, a small minority of whom were non-Javanese. Furthermore, as in Java, this jargon was probably also being utilised for their contacts with Europeans, and in New Caledonia with the Dutch consular officials who, jointly with the French, were managing the emigration schemes from 1901–1950.

It is beyond doubt that, to some extent, Malay or Indonesian has become part of the Javanese speech in New Caledonia. I noticed, for example, the constant use of Malay words, such as *tapi* 'but' and *djuga* 'also' by *niaouli* Javanese in Noumea, instead of using Javanese *nanging* and *ugo*. It is of course possible that these words were already part of the speech of the first migrants, some of whom must have spoken bazaar Malay, or they may have been introduced by the post-war immigrants.

In December 1970, I witnessed a commemoration in Noumea of the late Dewi Sartika, a national figure from Bandung, arranged by the Indonesian consulate. The wife of the consul opened the ceremony with a speech in Kromo Javanese, followed by another speech in Indonesian by a *niaouli*-woman. Finally, the consul's wife, again, concluded with a speech in Indonesian. The audience appeared politely attentive, although probably missing much of the Indonesian parts of the speeches.

At present, there is no longer any homogeneity of speech among the newly arrived contract-labourers, many of whom are natives from West Java and Djakarta where Javanese does not represent the local tongue. For communicating with New Caledonian Javanese, knowing French or Javanese is a requirement. Consequently, the newcomers' closest association is with the Indonesian consulate which introduces them to Javanese families in Noumea, but which, at the same time, has to function as interpreter, using bahasa Indonesia as the vehicular language.

### Conclusion :

Since their first arrival to the present time, the Javanese immigrants have constantly suffered from a shortage of women from their own ethnic group, due to the temporary character of the indenture and the recruitment of mainly young males for the work in the territory.<sup>41</sup> A Javanese man who is unable to find a life-partner from his own clan, is likely

40. Javanese has its own script.

41. Huetz de Lemps 1954: 54.



to marry from other ethnic groups. The indications are that many first migrants and niaouli Javanese married within their own group. Some niaouli Javanese have started to marry New Caledonian-born French girls; as a result, French rather than Javanese has become the language in their homes.

The accelerating usage of French should be attributed to the French educational system in which the teaching of French and in French is emphasised.<sup>42</sup> Except in Noumea, public school education was formerly non-compulsory. Many *niaoulis*, particularly those who live in *la brousse* have remained illiterate; the "Analyse des résultats du recensement ...." records that in 1963 among the New Caledonian Javanese 53.9% of the men and 61.1% of the women were illiterate.<sup>43</sup> Several small schools were set up on Asiatic initiative.<sup>44</sup> According to a 45-year old *niaouli* woman, in her youth one of the few literate immigrants had organised classes to teach his fellow-Javanese how to write Javanese in Latin characters. The Javanese immigrants in New Caledonia have transmitted their speech to their descendants, but none of the literary traditions of Java. Their presentation of Javanese drama of which verbal expression represents the essential part, is purely imitative.

Since the end of World War II, the repatriation of thousands of Javanese coincided with an influx of Frenchmen, New Hebrides Melanesians, Wallisians, Tahitians, and other smaller ethnic groups into New Caledonia, and has placed the Javanese community in the position of a minority group. In 1963 it represented only 4% of the total island population.<sup>45</sup> This, together with economic and political factors has prevented the Javanese language from gaining social prestige. Another important factor is the process of language assimilation accelerated by the New Caledonian Javanese themselves who show an increasing tendency to identify themselves with French culture. Javanese speech is likely to be maintained mainly in families where either husband or wife, or both, represent first generation or *niaouli* Javanese, and even then, for urban *niaoulis*, especially in Noumea, French has become increasingly the language of preference, particularly when they have children.

With no new arrivals of Javanese immigrants intended for permanent settlement, one can only speculate that within a generation, Javanese as it is spoken in New Caledonia, will have to be listed as another "dying language" in the Pacific.

42. Capell 1954: 112.

43. Belshaw 1950: 100

44. Institut National 1963: 29.

45. Institut National 1963: 19.

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