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. Cèmuhê

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 Koohnê 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

Cèmuhî-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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Where are we now? Follow the sacred road
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


Questions?