PUTTING KANAK TO WORK: KANAK AND THE COLONIAL LABOR SYSTEM IN NEW CALEDONIA

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Examining the different categories of "native labor" established in New Caledonia, from the 1870s to the 1940s, this article assesses the extent to which Kanak labor was mobilized en masse for colonial development. It outlines the shift from a perception of Kanak labor as of little value (1880s–1910s) to an awareness of its potential and the need to effectively harness it for colonial interests (1920s–1940s). The mobilization of Kanak labor steadily increased in the 1920s and 1930s and reached an unprecedented level during World War II. This overview and assessment provides a corrective to the colonial discourse of Kanak as lazy or reluctant laborers and its postcolonial equivalent, the idea that Kanak did not contribute to colonial development. It also challenges the perception that only Loyalty Islanders provided labor and analyses of the interwar decades that have focused almost exclusively on the development-oriented initiatives of *la nouvelle politique indigène*.

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In her 1999 study *The People Trade: Pacific Island Laborers and New Caledonia, 1865–1930*, the definitive history of immigrant "Pacific Island" laborers in New Caledonia, the late Dorothy Shineberg recorded her hope "that this work will soon be followed by a study of indigenous Melanesian workers

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in New Caledonia, whom the administration was eventually to succeed in coercing into the labor force, for their story remains to be written."[1] Since then, more has been written about the experiences of the various categories of immigrant laborers brought to New Caledonia from Asia and elsewhere in Oceania, but New Caledonia's internal labor system remains only partially examined.[2] It also has been overlooked in characterizations of the interwar period that emphasize the positive achievements of this era.[3] This article provides the foundations for the kind of history that Shineberg envisaged by examining the different categories of labor created by the colonial administration and assessing the extent to which Kanak labor was mobilized for colonial development.

The following overview of the principal labor mechanisms outlines the colony's growing interest in and demand for Kanak labour. The seven decades at the center of this study saw a shift from a perception of Kanak labor as ineffective and of little value (1880s–1910s) to an awareness of its potential value and the need to harness it more effectively to assist colonization (1920s–1940s). The principal data available are summarized in Table 1 along with estimates for the number of Kanak mobilized as "equivalent full-time laborers" (EFLs).[4] The table shows that the mobilization of Kanak labor increased markedly from the time of World War I, was maintained in the 1920s and 1930s, and reached an unprecedented level during World War II. An understanding of how demand for Kanak labor intensified can be gauged from a survey of the principal direct measures used by the administration to mobilize Kanak labor for itself, for settlers, and for colonial industry more generally.[5]

The Mobilization of "Native" Labor, 1871–1946

During the early decades of French rule (from 1853), Kanak were employed in various ways, including most notoriously as rural police for the penitentiary. It was not until the 1870s and 1880s that the first mechanisms for the mass recruitment and regulation of Kanak labor were established and not until the end of the interwar period that they achieved their objective. The three principal mechanisms were requisitions, indenture, and *les prestations* (labor taxes).[6] Over a period of five to seven decades, each developed from arbitrary attempts to cajole or coerce Kanak into labor with uneven geographical reach to widespread and systematic schemes that directly affected every Kanak man and many women and children besides.

Requisitioned Labor

The earliest and also the most notorious of all the mechanisms for obtaining Kanak labor was the 1871 regulation allowing laborers to be requisitioned for

public services. Introduced to address the difficulties involved in recruiting labor for public services and invoking the civilizing benefits of bringing Kanak "closer to us without the use of coercive measures," the regulation stated that chiefs could be "requested" to provide labor for designated "public services" and set the rates at which requisitioned workers were to be paid.[7] Requisitions had been used before 1871 (when they were referred to as *corvées*), but the 1871 regulation sought to stem abuses that had created tensions.[8] In the following decades, the principal employers of requisitioned labor would include the Post and Telegraph Service and the Topographical Service, and under a 1914 amendment, Kanak could for a time be requisitioned for the French section of the New Hebrides militia.[9]

Like most of the other measures described here, the requisitions were subject to constant critique—especially for their arbitrary and indefinite nature.[10] Particular communities—especially those closest to Nouméa—could find themselves under requisition again and again. Circulars to officials periodically sought to curb abuses, such as the use of requisitions as punishments and the requisitioning of men who were not fit to work,[11] but it was not until 1931–1932—following the International Labour Organization (ILO) Abolition of Forced Labour Convention in 1930 and the French decree of August 21, 1930, organizing *travail public obligatoire* (compulsory public labor) in the colonies—that notable reforms were made. Revised regulations limited the period of the requisition to twelve months and to men ages eighteen to twenty-two. After this time, however, requisitions were used more systematically to ensure that no eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds were omitted.[12]

There are few records of the numbers of people requisitioned in any single year and none that indicate the duration of requisitions. The estimates used in Table 1 (showing 200 laborers under requisition annually in the period up to 1921 and 275 in the following period) draw primarily on Leenhardt's 1918 estimate that the administration needed only about 200 men and a report by the Service des Affaires Indigènes (SAI) from 1930 reckoning that 1 percent of the entire Kanak population (i.e., 270–280 men) was being requisitioned in any given year.[13] The few annual figures located fall in the range of 91 and 400.[14] Tellingly, colonial inspector Georges Gayet found in 1929 that requisitions were a greater burden than *les prestations*,[15] which mobilized the equivalent of about 221 laborers on average (or in the range of 135–275). Some localized records indicate that the burden could have been greater, however; a report for the Poum circonscription shows that in 1939, twenty men had been requisitioned (the equivalent of 8 percent of all adult men in the circonscription). The requisition of a similar percentage across the entire colony would have mobilized approximately 800 men.[16]As shall be seen, the regime intensified markedly during World War II.

Indenture

Between the 1880s and 1930s, various forms of indenture (*le régime de l'engagement*) regulated the ways in which Kanak laborers could "voluntarily" be recruited for private enterprises and public services. The first provisions for the indenture of Kanak were set out in 1882 following the suspension of recruitment from the New Hebrides.[17] In the hope that Kanak could replace imported labor, the 1882 regulation extended to them the 1874 regulations governing Asian (Indian and Chinese), African, and Oceanian laborers from non-French territories as well as Asian, African, and other workers "of non-European race" from elsewhere in the French Empire.[18]

Remaining in place until 1929, the 1882 indenture system's provisions reflected and further inscribed the emerging distinctions between laborers from the Grande terre and Loyalty islands. It applied most rigorously to Loyalty Islanders, to whom it afforded greater protection, and remuneration in return for longer contracts, whereas inhabitants of the Grande terre were subject to a more laissez-faire approach that may be read as accommodating both settler interests and Kanak resistance: the provisions governing the maximum duration of contracts (five years) and the salaries payable for different categories of work were deemed "special to the natives of the Loyaltys," while "the natives from the colony proper" (the Grande terre and other islands) were allowed to agree to shorter contracts and different salary conditions.[19] In theory, the 1882 regulations and associated measures (such as restrictions on movement outside of reserves or districts) forbade Kanak from contracting their labor without entering the indenture regime. In practice, only Loyalty Islanders were fully subject to the regulation, and few efforts were made to inspect arrangements on the Grande terre. In 1911, the administration reported that it had never been able to strictly control this measure, which was applied less and less to "Calédoniens" in the interior but still applied strictly for "Loyaltiens."[20] Notwithstanding efforts in 1912–1913 to remind the public that Kanak could not freely contract their labor, the effect was to leave much of the labor provided by Kanak to settlers on the Grande terre unregulated and therefore unquantified in the administrative archive and statistics. As a result, Loyalty Islanders benefited from a greater archival visibility that was compounded by the administrative division, which until 1928 placed indentured Kanak labor under the Service de l'Immigration and unindentured Kanak labor under the SAI.

Also escaping much of the oversight and protection of the indenture regulations in certain periods was the recruitment as domestic laborers of Kanak women. Evidence of a significant decline in the female population in

the 1911 prompted a 1912 regulation forbidding Kanak women from leaving their *tribus* and ending all current labor contracts. Women could still be employed, but they could not be indentured, and they were expected to "reintegrate" their *tribu* if summoned by a parent, husband, or chief.[21] In 1913, following an outcry from settlers deprived of domestic labor, the measure was modified to allow women employed on contracts to remain in Nouméa—on the grounds that it was pointless to force "uprooted women" to return to their *tribus*—and to allow that women could be granted "free residence" in exceptional circumstances.[22] Women certainly continued to be employed, but it appears that an effect of the 1912–1913 regulations was to deregulate and thus render less visible in the administrative archive much of the labor provided by women, both those from the interior and those from the Loyalty Islands.

Some of the norms that were established for the recruitment of women are revealed in a 1943 investigation into complaints that the administration's representative on Maré had attempted to recruit the wives of Kanak soldiers to work in Nouméa. A newly appointed Resident (a gendarme) had received requests for about ten female laborers and had asked local chiefs to assist with their recruitment. The investigation noted, however, that the chiefs had not been obliged to meet this request. The Resident was instructed that in future, he should not get involved in the recruitment of laborers for private parties, who ought to be making their own arrangements directly with the chiefs. The chiefs were warned that the wives of soldiers should not be recruited unless the women themselves had given their consent.[23] The report indicates the considerable power that remained with chiefs to organize the recruitment of women as well as the willingness of the administration to allow private arrangements to be made between the employers of women and their chiefs.[24]

While there are some gaps in the statistics compiled for this study (notably 1930–1934 and 1938–1942), the numbers of Kanak under indenture were significant. Statistics for the period 1884–1912 indicate an annual average of 824 Kanak under indenture (or in the range of 495–1,243). Of particular note is the recourse to Kanak labor during World War I, when, as shown in Table 1, the combined number of indentured laborers and volunteer soldiers alone reached 1,704 in 1916 (and 2,138 in 1917). In the 1920s, more than 1,800 Kanak were indentured in certain years (1921 and 1925). In terms of the overall number of EFLs, the increased contribution was clearly maintained in the postwar period. In the figures identified for ten of the twenty-one years from 1925 to 1945, the average number of indentured laborers was 1,300, the equivalent of as many as 25 percent of the men fit to work (though some women were certainly included in these figures).[25]

That Loyalty Islanders in particular were sought out for their labor is evident both in the way that indenture was organized and in the results obtained. No details of the proportion of Loyaltiens to Calédoniens recruited are available after 1921, but for earlier years in which a break down is available, Loyaltiens made up 63 percent of indentured laborers on average (or in the range of 37–79 percent). Although representing only about 42 percent of the total Kanak population, Loyalty Islanders certainly figured disproportionately in the indentured labor force, but Kanak from the Grande terre were by no means unrepresented, and, as indicated above, there is ample evidence that the labor they provided was unregulated and therefore underreported.

Harvest Labor

The most hidden of all the labor mobilization mechanisms were the various forms of short-term indenture that existed to provide labor for plantation harvests. The earliest form that this labor recruitment took was the annual recruitment of children for the harvest of coffee and other crops. Records from the early 1900s indicate that about 130 Loyalty Island children were being recruited in this way each year.[26] Initially, the only regulations that existed were those of 1882, which stipulated that for those who had attained their majority, an indenture contract could not be for less than six months (implying that the minimum did not apply to minors); that children (up to fifteen years of age) could not be recruited without the consent of their chief; and that children could not be paid more than 12fr50 a month for agricultural or domestic work. Minimum ages do not appear to have been stipulated, and it is likely that practices were similar to those observed by Shineberg in the recruitment of New Hebridean children.[27]

In 1917, in the face of growing criticism from Loyalty Islander parents and growing demand from settlers, the system of recruiting harvest labor was put on a firmer basis by a regulation for "the employment of native labour for coffee harvests, etc." This provided that "Loyalty islanders or New Caledonians can each year, as far as practicable, be placed at the disposal of settlers in the interior so as to be assigned exclusively to the harvest of coffee, cotton or any other similar culture as well as the harvest of niaouli leaves." Salaries were fixed at 12 francs per month and the maximum period of indenture at four months. The 1917 regulation did not specifically refer to the recruitment of children, but, as noted above, the 1882 indenture regulations (which were included in its preamble) simply required the consent of a chief.[28] The aim of the 1917 regulation was to lessen dependency on Loyalty Islander children and to mobilize more workers from the Grande terre. Facilitated by the Syndicat Agricole and Chambre d'Agriculture, the annual requests for laborers

made by planters to the SAI became unofficial quotas that the SAI's *syndics* (agents)—members of the Gendarmerie coloniale—across the Grande terre and Islands were enjoined to fill. Prior to 1920, most of this labor was obtained from Loyalty Islander children, but by the end of the decade, the annual requests for harvest labor were largely being filled on the Grande terre.[29] In the absence of any official records, however, it is difficult to know to what extent children from either the Loyalty Islands or the Grande terre were mobilized for harvest labor in the period after 1920.

Les Prestations

In the mid- to late 1920s, the demand for all Kanak labor stepped up further. In 1924, the requisitions and the various forms of contracted labor were complemented on the Grande terre by *les prestations*—an annual labor tax—that required most adult men to provide a fixed number of days of labor each year. As with the indenture system, significant differences initially existed between the Loyalty Islands and the Grande terre. The system existed in a very limited form in the Loyalty Islands from 1893 and the Ile des Pins from 1915, where the labor provided was generally put to the maintenance of roads and schools.[30] On the Grande terre, calls by settlers for the introduction of *prestations* had been long resisted on the grounds that Kanak were already providing labor and that it might provoke resistance,[31] but in 1924, a separate regime was introduced for the Grande terre, and from 1929, a single and expanded system applied across all of New Caledonia.[32] The former required twelve days of labor from each adult male with some exceptions, while the system operating from 1929 on had a graduated scale of fifteen days for single men or those without children, twelve days for married men with one to three children, and eight days for married men with four or five children. Their labor was to be restricted to "public works" or, at the governor's discretion, works of "general" but not "private" interest. On the Grande terre, most of the labor was allocated to settler municipalities for road maintenance (work for which some chiefs previously had been contracting the paid services of their subjects), though it could also be directed toward improvements within the reserves (as had been the intent of the earlier regimes on the Loyalty Islands and Ile des Pins).[33]

The 1929 *prestation* system gave some Kanak the option (deemed a privilege) of buying out their *prestations* for a set number of francs per day (*le rachat*). Set annually by the administration, *le rachat* was notionally the equivalent to the wage for a single day's labor. All indentured laborers were required to buy off their *prestations* to minimize interference with their labor contracts. For an unmarried man, between 1933 and 1939, when

le rachat was set at five francs, the annual cost of buying out one's *prestations* (75 francs) was significantly greater than that involved in paying the more notorious head tax (30 francs).[34]

An idea of how the prestations were distributed is provided in an SAI report for 1934 showing that 81,213 days were worked as follows: 41,027 for Municipal Commissions, 37,566 for Travaux Publics on road works, and 2,620 for the Post and Telegraph Service. In the Loyalty Islands and Ile des Pins, all *les prestations* came under the second category, but on the Grande terre, the majority were allocated to the Municipal Commissions. The sum allocated to the Municipalities and the Post and Telegraph Service to oversee *les prestations*, 54,254 francs, was a little less than the amount collected as *le rachat*, 55,055 francs.[35]

Reports from the circonscription level also give some idea of the labor obtained from *les prestations*. In 1937, men in the Kaala-Gomen circonscription were called on to provide 1,586 days of labor on projects that included the repair and maintenance of existing roads, wharves, telegraph lines, and the Gendarmerie; the building of an airstrip and new roads; and making covers for tools.[36] The records of the Koné municipality for 1940 show that it was allocated 2,482 days of labor from 185 *prestataires* (the equivalent of eight full-time workers).[37] Measured in terms of equivalent full-time laborers, *les prestations* annually provided the colony as a whole with about 221 laborers on average.[38]

Labor for Colonization and Public Works

Further intensifying the interwar pressure on Kanak labor were new forms of short-term indenture. In April 1925, shortly after *les prestations* came into effect on the Grande terre, a circular issued to the *syndics* by Governor Guyon on "native labor for colonization" foreshadowed the increased pressure that would henceforth be brought to bear on Kanak. The supply of labor was, Guyon explained, a matter of the greatest importance, and as it was no longer possible for the colony to rely on imported labor, the "autochthonous native population" would have to play its part. Guyon enjoined *syndics* to "convince" Kanak that this was in their own best interests. In carrying out this task, *syndics* were to pay special attention to salaries and conditions, but Guyon referred to no specific regulations other than "the normal rates" established for categories of labor or services.[39] *Syndics*, though, were required to regularly report on the willingness of Kanak to meet calls for labor.

In 1929, a form of short-term indenture was introduced in a drive to provide labor to the Service des Travaux Publics for Guyon's public works schemes. The May 1929 regulation on the employment of native laborers

for public works provided a new device for putting Kanak to work. Under its principal article,

> Adult natives of the male sex, who are fit to work, are called on to carry out works on the worksites of the Public Works Service.
>
> Requests for labour are to be addressed by the Head of the Public Works Service to the Head of the Service of Native Affairs who will submit them to the Governor and then transmit them to the Agents of Native Affairs to be executed with the assistance of the Great Chiefs in the *tribus* and with regard to local requirements both those of colonisation and those of the native collectivities.

The regulations limited the duration of work to three consecutive months in any one year "so as not to distance natives from their *tribu* or family for too great a period."[40] As colonial inspector Gayet noted, this was a limited form of indenture rather than *travail public obligatoire* (compulsory public labor), but such distinctions were not, he observed, so clear in practice, as the recruitment was carried out by gendarmes and chiefs "whose authority is very much respected in the bush."[41] The monthly reports provided by gendarmes who acted as *syndics* for the SAI show that chiefs who were called on to supply such laborers had limited margins for maneuver; when chiefs failed to comply, a *syndic* could secure compliance by threatening to designate the laborers himself and to report the chief to the authorities in Nouméa.[42] The following comment by a *syndic* on the refusal of men at Nékliai to obey the orders of a chief who had designated them was by no means atypical: "I was therefore obliged to make myself feared and to make a request for a punishment against two natives from the tribu of Nékliaï."[43]

The period 1925–1929 marked a turning point in awareness of the potential value to the colony of Kanak labor—as illustrated in the findings of the 1929 colonial inspection. Inspector Gayet concluded that the exploitation of Kanak labor was at saturation point: "There is therefore no longer any excess native labour in New Caledonia. The numbers requisitioned and under indenture are at a maximum level which it would be desirable to lower," he wrote, so that families could be reconstituted and so that *tribus* had the freedom to develop their own lands.[44] The administration had required Kanak to develop their own coffee plantations, but when it came to harvest time, it was not prepared to let up on its commitment to provide settlers with cheap seasonal labour. By Gayet's estimate, only seven *tribus*, each with more than 300 residents on the Grande terre (mainly in the north and east) and the Loyalty

Islands, were capable of providing an appreciable number of seasonal workers for settlers.[45]

Gayet intended his report as a warning to the administration to relax the pressure on Kanak, but he himself observed that recourse to Kanak labor was growing *despite* the expansion of immigration.[46] Moreover, his report certainly was not interpreted as a warning by the local administration, on whom it was dawning that Kanak were a resource of as-yet-unrealized potential. In reply to Gayet, the acting governor, Arboussier, acknowledged that "all matters relating to native policy had long been very neglected in this colony" due to its status as "a country of settlement for the white race." "We didn't realise until very late," he continued, "perhaps too late, that the natives represented, from an economic point of view, an interesting element."[47] Arboussier hoped that better results (and more labor) might be obtained from a more efficient service, which was effected by definitively separating the SAI from the Immigration Service. From October 1929, the SAI alone became responsible for supervising all workers of "*race océanienne*"—"New Caledonians, Loyalty Islanders, New Hebrideans and Wallisians." In the subsequent overhaul of the 1882 indenture regulations, the distinctions made between the Loyalty Islands and the Grande terre disappeared.[48]

By the 1930s, the mobilization of Kanak labor had been firmly established among the key functions of the SAI. In 1937, the SAI reported that "native labour is the only sort in New Caledonia that does not entail a significant increase in the costs of production; it alone has the capacity to create a favourable balance sheet for the territory's economy." Its aim, therefore, was "to obtain the complete replacement of recruitment by the spontaneous offer of labour."[49] By this time, the labor provided under the 1917 and 1929 regulations was being referred to as "*aide à la colonisation*" (assistance for colonization) and measured annually in terms of the total number of days worked. The extent of this has been obscured by catchall terms such as "forced labor" and understandable confusion with the requisitions and *les prestations*; the "*aide*" provided was remunerated (unlike *les prestations*) and was officially unforced (unlike the requisitions, though in practice, it may have been indistinguishable). Providing the equivalent of 530 full-time laborers annually (see Table 1),[50] it was also much more extensive than the *prestation* system.

Notwithstanding the increasingly systematic recourse to labor from the Grande terre, the indentured labor provided by Loyalty Islanders remained more clearly in the official eye. There was growing concern that the social and economic impacts of mass indenture weighed disproportionately on Loyalty Islanders. This issue had been identified as a concern as early as 1918 (when it was noted that they had made up more than 75 percent of indentured laborers that year) and raised again during the 1929 inspection, which found

that 27 percent of the adult male population of Lifou alone was working offshore.[51] Eventually, in 1936, more restrictive indenture regulations were introduced for the Loyalty Islands to encourage "repopulation" and to address the problems presented for "everyday life" by the overrecruitment of young or married men. The new regulations limited recruitment to no more than one-third of any *tribu*, but the administration reserved the right to authorize exceptions to meet labor shortfalls on the mainland. Married men could not be indentured unless able to provide for their dependents, and one-third of their salary would be retained for their family. Women could not be indentured until their thirtieth year and then only if they did not have any children.[52]

The War Years: "The Hardening" of the Colonial Labor System

If recourse to Kanak labor had intensified and become more systematic since the 1920s, it also had become less arbitrary, and in the 1930s, some modest reforms and restrictions had been introduced. However, with the outbreak of war in 1939, most of these reforms went out the window, and by 1945, the mobilization of Kanak labor had reached new heights. Historian Ismet Kurtovitch has described a "hardening, without any precedent in the history of the country," of the labor regimes.[53] This was evident in all aspects of labor mobilization but especially in the use of requisitioned labor.

In a measure anticipated by military authorities since the 1920s,[54] a regulation introduced in December 1939 removed all earlier exemptions relating to labor requisitions, stating,

> For the duration of the war, the native Oceanians, non-French citizens living in New Caledonia and its dependencies, are required to defer to the orders given to them by the agents of native affairs for the purposes of carrying out works of *public*, *strategic*, *national or colonial interest*.[55]

The use of requisitioned labor was no longer formally restricted to "public services"; it could now also be used for works of "public interest" (including work on coastal shipping, the loading of nickel ore, and the harvesting of coprah and coffee).[56] As Kurtovitch has explained, these measures were not endorsed by the central government in Paris, and the local administration was forced to abrogate them in June 1940 (shortly before France's surrender to Germany). However, in February 1941, after New Caledonia rallied to the Free French movement, the Sautot administration signed the abrogated measures back into effect. This too ought to have been approved by central government, but approval was never solicited.[57] Further adjustments

hardened and widened the regime (most notably by allowing women and children to be requisitioned as harvest labor), and despite complaints from the Catholic mission, the measures remained in place until *travail public obligatoire* was abolished in 1946.[58]

Under the wartime regulations, requisition was again openly used as a punishment and a means of removing "troublemakers." Minor offenders could be requisitioned until they had earned enough to be sent back to their districts.[59] In more serious cases, as in 1943, when three men from Ponerihouen were suspected of secretly plotting for the American takeover of New Caledonia, the offenders could be requisitioned for a full year.[60]

One area of the labor regime that was slightly reformed during the war was the indenture regulations. In 1943, the regulations that had been in place since 1929 were replaced.[61] Although the basic provisions remained the same, the new regulations contained some modest improvements, including more detailed provisions regarding workplace accidents, a provision that minors had to have parental consent (rather than the consent of a chief), a reduction of the "bonus" paid to chiefs from 10 to 5 percent (and payable only during the first year rather than the first two years), and the removal of the bonuses paid to police for the capture of laborers in breach of their contracts. It also set the maximum number of hours that could be worked each day at nine and included provisions for paid maternity leave for women (ten days before giving birth and twenty afterward).[62] It is possible that such reforms were a factor in helping to maintain recruitment levels during the war.

Further increasing the wartime pressure on Kanak labor, however, was the enlistment of Kanak in the Free French army and the demands of the Allied (mainly US) forces based in New Caledonia from 1942. By the end of 1942, 1,137 Kanak men had enlisted as volunteers in the armed forces.[63] Fewer than one hundred of these men saw service overseas (about sixty-eight in the army); the majority remained in barracks in New Caledonia, where they were put to laboring duties. The extent of this laboring contribution is thus disguised by their status as military personnel; rather than being distanced from the labor regime,[64] they were in fact under the thumb of a more intense system. In addition, in December 1942, French and US authorities agreed that Kanak labor for the Allied forces would be recruited through the SAI and employed on terms similar to those operating before the war. Five hundred men were to be employed at docks on three-month rotations under French overseers. Another 150 were to be made available as guides (though as many as 250 were initially recruited before being reduced to 170) and as many as 200 more for other duties. Many more were reportedly employed on the US bases without authorization. By August 1943, authorities were concerned that there were insufficient workers available for the harvests, and

later in 1943, they urged that the Allied forces make workers available for roadworks.[65]

The numbers of Kanak mobilized as laborers during the war years largely speak for themselves, though they were also talked up by the administration. In November 1943, the administration reported that out of 5,340 "Natives fit for work," 1,186 had enlisted as volunteers in the army and navy, about 1,000 were employed by private enterprises, 500 were employed by public services, and at least 1,142 were employed by the US Army (not including those who had been recruited unofficially). Only 1,512 able-bodied men remained in the *tribus*.[66] At about the same time, statistics showing that 11 percent of the population of Canala, Kouaoua and Nakéty (or 21 percent of that region's adult male population) were volunteers or permanently mobilized as indentured or requisitioned laborers prompted the Catholic missionary Luneau to observe that the same level of mobilization in the United States would raise more than 15.6 million men.[67] Still higher figures were reported in 1944 and 1945. For the head of the SAI, writing at the end of 1945, "These figures require no commentary. They show the extraordinary effort that the natives have made for the war. (Let's not forget either that 1,000 of them were mobilised, from a total of 5,000 fit to work.)" The only wonder, he reported, was "that the native has been so malleable—and this is truly extraordinary in the literal sense of the word."[68]

Counting the Laborers

How many laborers did Kanak provide? The preceding overview on its own points to the increased demands placed on Kanak from the 1920s on as the mechanisms for labor recruitment multiplied and became more systematic. As the arbitrary aspects of the system were attenuated, its reach widened. Although this article has only begun to trace the official/unofficial or public/private contours of labour, it reveals the mass mobilization of Kanak labor for colonial projects and interests, especially during the interwar era.

Charting the extent to which Kanak labor was *formally* mobilized has been a considerable challenge due to significant gaps in the archives. It must be remembered that the figures provided here are only the surviving archival tip of the iceberg. The discussion above has identified several official blind spots concerning the more casual employment of Kanak on the Grande terre, the unregulated recruitment of women as domestic servants, and the use of children for harvest labor. Furthermore (and again with the exception of the Loyalty Islands), very little information remains from the level of the *tribus*, and it is difficult to examine the degree to which particular communities were prevailed on for labor across the period.

What the emerging picture shows is that Kanak were mobilized as laborers far more extensively than colonial officials usually dared admit and more than some contemporary representations of colonial labor might allow. The figures compiled for this study suggest that through requisitions, the indenture regime, *les prestations*, and *l'aide à la colonisation*, the colony annually mobilized an average of 2,579 Kanak in the period 1925–1945. Relative to the 7,000 to 10,000 immigrant workers under indenture during the 1920s, this may seem modest, but, as shown in the Table 2, it was the equivalent of about 25 percent of all adult Kanak men and 45 percent of those "fit to work." In the principal war years (1942–1945) and taking into account the volunteers in the armed forces, these figures rose to around 37 and 68 percent, respectively.

These figures tend to confirm Kurtovitch's estimate that prior to 1939, about 25 percent of Kanak men were working outside of the reserves.[69] They also show that during the war years, the administration managed to at least maintain at prewar levels the number of laborers mobilized while also enlisting one-fifth of all able-bodied men in the armed forces. Regardless of whether Kanak were willing to work on colonial terms—and bearing in mind that the figures presented here must be read as minimums that do not account for unregulated forms of labor for settlers (including much of the labor of women and children), for military service in the 1920s and 1930s, for mandatory penal work, or for labor within the reserves—there were not enough Kanak workers to meet colonial demand.

Indeed, this was the conclusion that the Catholic mission came to in 1943–1944 in a series of complaints about the impact of excessive labor mobilization on *tribus* and families, and it was one that the colonial inspectorate also reached following the war.[70] Called in 1946 to report on a development program for New Caledonia, the colonial inspector Emmanuel Tupinier identified the supply of labor as the critical challenge facing the colony. New Caledonia, he reported, had never been able to meet its labor needs: "From about 30,000 natives we can scarcely count on more than 4,500 adult men fit to provide a sustained effort." However, to maintain production within the reserves,

> it is not possible to count on more than 1,800 to 2,000 natives who may be recruited on salaries in the public services as well as in the agricultural and mining sector.

In fact this number has been largely surpassed in recent years through the use of requisitions. These requisitions, which may have been justified in part by the wartime situation and especially by the presence of the American

troops, were used in an abusive fashion, notably for the supply of labour to the European settlers.[71]

To this, it must be added that the figure of 1,800 to 2,000 had been not only exceeded in the war years but also regularly exceeded in the two decades before the war.

Further Evaluations

The labor provided by Kanak prior to 1946 has been remembered and forgotten in two distinct ways. On the one hand, it has been collectively remembered by Kanak as "forced labor." On the other hand, the extent of the Kanak contribution to colonial development has been understated in contemporary political discourses that privilege the contributions made by immigrant workers and free or penal settlers. A good example is the preamble to the 1998 Nouméa Accord, which explains that "the Territory's new communities participated in mining and agricultural activity, often under difficult circumstances, and, with the help of the State [also participated] in the shaping of New Caledonia. Their determination and inventiveness made it possible to use resources and lay a foundation for development." On the other hand, Kanak "were relegated to the geographical, economic and political fringes of their own country, which, in a proud people not without warrior traditions, could not but cause revolts."[72] As important as it is for recognizing Kanak identity, the preamble reinscribes some long-standing colonial tropes by reducing Kanak history under colonial rule to a series of violent outbursts that occurred while settlers and immigrants got on with the development of the colony.

Indeed, characterizations of Kanak labor in the interwar era are still beholden to persistent colonial commonplaces of the sort captured in a 1943 US Army report: "The natives, being comfortable landowners, will not work in the mines, etc. and the French have been compelled to import large numbers of Pacific islanders and Asiatic laborers for the mines and plantations, and even as house servants."[73] The more recent historiography of the interwar era has generally emphasized the positive achievements of the so-called new native policy (*la nouvelle politique indigène*)—the term associated with Albert Sarraut's post–World War I call for a more humane colonial policy and greater colonial development—in the 1930s. In 1979, geographer Alain Saussol characterized the period 1925–1946 as one of "renewal" or even a "peaceful revolution" associated with slow rise in the population and the efforts made to develop coffee plantations in the reserves.[74] A later study of this era and discussions of the colonial period in the Kanak cultural review *Mwà Véé* have emphasized the efforts of Governor Guyon between 1925 and 1932; the head of the SAI, Meunier, between 1931 and 1934; and the

particular achievements made in the development of coffee plantations in the reserves.[75]

As this article has shown, however, Kanak were extensively mobilized as laborers (whether voluntarily or through coercion) from the 1920s on. The fundamental problem for colonial authorities was not that Kanak would not work or were not suited to the kinds of labor required (though these were sometimes cited as issues); it was first and foremost that they were not available in sufficient numbers. The development-oriented initiatives of *la nouvelle politique indigène* had an important counterpart: the mass mobilization of Kanak labor outside of the reserves. Some of the more arbitrary aspects of the colonial regime did diminish in the interwar period, but at the same time, the colonial regime became more intensive and systematic in calling on Kanak labor.

The distinctions between the formal categories examined in this article—indenture, requisitions, labor taxes, and short-term contracts—certainly were not always respected and were not necessarily meaningful to the laborers themselves. In all cases, considerable power lay with chiefs and *syndics* to compel men to work, and it is understandable that the collective Kanak memory of this era as that of "forced labor" elides the official distinctions. However, an appreciation of the official categories is essential for any attempt to evaluate the extent of labor mobilization and in turn for any attempt to evaluate the experience. Most important, they throw into relief the various blind spots in the colonial administration's regulation of Kanak labor and in its archives. This in turn helps explain why Kanak labor has not been much studied as well as why it has been unevenly represented in public discourse.

In charting the development of the various categories of labor and their regulation, this article helps to explain the greater visibility of Loyalty Islander laborers in the colonial archive (and in popular representations of colonial labor) and the relative invisibility of workers from the Grande terre. Not only have the contributions made by Kanak in general been overlooked or downplayed, but the contributions of Kanak from the Grande terre in particular have been understated.

Appendix: Notes on Tables 1 and 2

Table 1 estimates the number of Kanak mobilized as laborers using the notion of an equivalent full-time laborer (EFL). Where the original data have been recorded in terms of days of labor, the number of EFLs has been calculated on the number of days labor expected from a laborer indentured for a full year: approximately 305 (i.e., 365 days less Sundays and public holidays). The estimates used in years where no data have been obtained are based on the

TABLE 1. **Equivalent full-time laborers (EFLs), 1897–1945.**

Year	Requisitions	Indenture	Prestations		*"Aide a la colonisation"*		Allies and Public Services, 1943–1945		Army, 1916–1917, 1942–1945	Total EFLs
			Days	EFL	Days	EFL	Days	EFL		
1897	*200*	*635*			*50,000*	*164*				999
1901	*200*	1,243			*50,000*	*164*				1,607
1906	*200*	757			*80,000*	*262*				1,219
1911	*200*	719			*100,000*	*328*				1,247
1916	*200*	988			*100,000*	*328*			716	2,232
1917	*200*	1,001			*100,000*	*328*			1,137	2,666
1921	*200*	1,837			*100,000*	*328*				2,365
1925	*275*	1,863			*161,546*	*530*				2,668
1926	*275*	1,356	41,268	135	*161,546*	*530*				2,296
1927	*275*	1,282	42,036	138	*161,546*	*530*				2,224
1928	*275*	958	42,288	139	*161,546*	*530*				1,901
1929	*275*	1,573	83,200	273	*161,546*	*530*				2,650
1930	*275*	*1,300*	83,955	275	*161,546*	*530*				2,380
1931	*275*	*1,300*	80,351	263	*161,546*	*530*				2,368

TABLE 1. **CONTINUED.**

Year	Requisitions	Indenture	Prestations		*"Aide a la colonisation"*		Allies and Public Services, 1943–1945		Army, 1916–1917, 1942–1945	Total EFLs
			Days	EFL	Days	EFL	Days	EFL		
1932	*275*	*1,300*	80,632	264	*161,546*	*530*				2,369
1933	*275*	*1,300*	79,181	260	*161,546*	*530*				2,364
1934	*275*	*1,300*	81,070	266	*161,546*	*530*				2,370
1935	*275*	1,359	79,892	262	183,748	602				2,498
1936	*275*	1,095	72,946	239	155,113	509				2,118
1937	*275*	1,095	75,417	247	*161,546*	*530*				2,147
1938		*1,300*	78,764	258	261,380	857				2,415
1939	*275*	*1,300*	80,176	263	160,054	525				2,363
1940	*275*	*1,300*	70,411	231	147,436	483				2,289
1941	*275*	*1,300*	66,869	219	189,092	620				2,414
1942	*275*	*1,300*	56,182	184	174,636	573			1,300	3,632
1943		1,250	53,111	174	117,608	386	141,153	463	1,157	3,430
1944		*1,300*	54,166	178	122,043	400	215,705	707	*1,078*	3,663
1945		1,168	48,775	160	145,410	477	240,630	789	1,000	3,594

Figures in italics are estimates.

TABLE 2. **Equivalent full-time laborers (EFLs) as a percentage of the population, 1897–1945.**

Year	Kanak Population	Adult Women	Adult Men	Men "Fit to Work"	EFLs (Table 1)	EFLs as % of Kanak Population	EFLs as % of Men	EFLs as % of Men "fit to Work"
1897	30,304	8,862 (29%)	10,350 (34%)	*5,693*	999	3	10	18
1901	29,158		*9,914*	*5,453*	1,607	6	16	18
1906	28,597	7,861 (27%)	9,957 (35%)	*5,476*	1,219	4	12	29
1911	28,075	7,987 (28%)	10,133 (36%)	*5,573*	1,247	4	12	22
1916	28,868		*10,104*	*5,557*	2,232	8	22	22
1917	28,922		*10,123*	*5,567*	2,666	9	26	40
1921	27,100	8,604 (32%)	9,385 (35%)	*5,162*	2,365	9	25	52
1925	27,337		*9,295*	*5,112*	2,668	10	29	52
1926	27,470	8,779 (32%)	9,034 (33%)	*4,969*	2,296	8	25	46
1927	27,616		*9,389*	*5,164*	2,224	8	24	43
1928	27,776		*9,444*	*5,194*	1,901	7	20	37
1929	27,774		*9,443*	*5,194*	2,650	10	28	51
1930	27,987		*9,516*	*5,234*	2,380	9	25	45
1931	27,896	9,530 (34%)	9,511 (34%)	*5,231*	2,368	8	25	45
1932	27,966		*9,508*	*5,230*	2,369	8	25	45

TABLE 2. **CONTINUED.**

Year	Kanak Population	Adult Women	Adult Men	Men "Fit to Work"	EFLs (Table 1)	EFLs as % of Kanak Population	EFLs as % of Men	EFLs as % of Men "fit to Work"
1933	28,063		*9,541*	*5,248*	2,364	8	25	45
1934	28,272		*9,330*	*5,131*	2,370	8	25	46
1935	28,404		*9,089*	*4,999*	2,498	9	27	50
1936	28,760	8,976 (31%)	9,299 (32%)	*5,114*	2,118	7	23	41
1937	29,048	9,167 (32%)	9,649 (33%)	*5,307*	2,147	7	22	40
1938	28,986		*9,565*	*5,261*	2,415	8	25	46
1939	29,368	9,069 (31%)	9,086 (31%)	*4,997*	2,363	8	26	47
1940	29,467		*9,135*	*5,024*	2,289	8	25	46
1941	29,920		*9,574*	*5,266*	2,414	8	25	46
1942	30,194	9,221 (31%)	9,586 (32%)	5,125	3,632	12	38	71
1943	30,432	9,352 (31%)	9,713 (32%)	5,340	3,430	11	35	64
1944	30,489		*9,756*	*5,366*	3,663	12	38	68
1945	30,515		*9,765*	5,390	3,594	12	37	67

Figures in italics are estimates.

averages of the known figures in the period 1925–1945 (and lower estimates have been suggested for the pre-1925 period).

The forms of labor documented in the statistics obtained are generally biased toward the labor provided by adult men. The few statistics relating to children have not been included, though some of their labor (and that of women) will have been captured under "*aide à la colonisation*." Some of the indenture figures will also include women, though breakdowns by gender are generally not available. Only men were subject to *les prestations*, and until 1941–1945, only men were subject to the requisitions.

In the more detailed statistics available for 1943–1945 ("Allies and Public Services, 1943–45"), the work for Allied forces accounted for 60 to 73 percent of the days worked, with others recorded as allocated to public works, the Post and Telegraph Service, the Topographical Service, and the municipalities. I have assumed that this includes all of the labor that might be counted as requisitions. The SAI itself estimated in 1945 that 1,000 to 1,100 of 2,571 laborers employed in 1945 had been requisitioned.[76]

Space does not permit a listing of all the sources used to compile Table 1. The principal sources used are as follows: for *prestations*, the proceedings of the Conseil général and the annual taxation lists published in the *Journal officiel*, and, for "*aide à la colonisation*," the annual reports of the SAI from 1935 to 1945 (held mostly in the Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie). Figures on indenture come from a more diverse range of secondary and primary sources, including annual reports of the SAI and Service de l'Immigration, the Conseil général, census data, and reports by the colonial inspectorate.

In Table 2, the total number of EFLs is shown as a percentage of the total Kanak population as well as of the adult male population (men age 16 and over) and the number of men fit to work (estimated at 55 percent of the adult male population). As noted above, however, some of the data (notably for indentured labor) do include women, and therefore the comparison with the male workforce should be treated as indicative rather than absolute. The estimate that only 55 percent of adult men were fit to work is derived from figures dating from 1942, 1943, and 1945. Supporting evidence for generalizing this estimate can be found in Leenhardt's 1918 estimate that only about 52 percent of the adult male population of Monéo was fit to work; detailed statistics for Kouaoua, Canala, and Nakety from around 1942 that show that men ages 16 to 60 made up 55.9 percent of the adult male population; and records from Koné in 1939, where the 185 *prestataires* identified for 1940 represented 55.7 percent of the region's adult male population (using 1937 figures).[77] However, higher estimates for the percentage of men fit to work can be found; for instance, a 1929 report on Lifou indicated that 87 percent of the island's adult men were fit to work.[78]

Censuses were conducted on a quinquennial basis, and the SAI often provided interim figures showing annual movements in the population. The principal sources used include census figures (reported variously in the *Journal officiel* and the local press), SAI reports, and an article by Pierre Métais.[79]

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NOTES

1. Dorothy Shineberg, *The people trade: Pacific Island laborers and New Caledonia, 1865–1930* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 10.

2. Aspects of Kanak labor recruitment are examined in Sonia Grochain, Les Kanak et le travail en Province Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Thèse de doctorat en sciences sociales (Paris: EHESS/ENS, 2007), 108–43; Ismet Kurtovitch De la réglementation du travail obligatoire pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, *Études Mélanésiennes* 29 (1995): 37–55, and *La vie politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie: 1940–1953* (Lille: Atelier national de reproduction de thèses, 2000); Frédéric Angleviel, De l'engagement comme "esclavage volontaire": Le cas des Océaniens, Kanaks et Asiatiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853–1963), *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* (hereinafter *JSO*) 110, no. 1 (2000): 65–81; and Donna Winslow, Workers in Colonial New Caledonia to 1945, in *Labour in the South Pacific*, ed. Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie, and Doug Munro (Townsville: James Cook Univ. of Northern Queensland, 1990), 108–21.

3. See the final section of this article.

4. The notion of an EFL is an artificial one used here to help estimate the proportion of the Kanak population mobilized for colonial work. A detailed note on the table and the assumptions underlying the estimates is provided at the end of this article.

5. To focus on the extent of labor mobilization, this article sets aside associated questions about labor conditions and the degree of coercion involved in recruitment.

6. Indirect measures to encourage Kanak participation in the labor system, such as head taxes (1899–1945), war taxes (1941–1945), and fines imposed under the *indigénat*, are to be examined in a larger project. Three other forms of labor mobilization used in New Caledonia but not examined here were the mandatory penal work carried out by prisoners, military service (from 1920), and compulsory cultivation in the reserves. A discussion of how these operated in French West Africa is provided in Babacar Fall, *Le travail forcé en Afrique occidentale française (1900–1945)* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).

7. Arrêté no. 130, May 6, 1871 (recrutement des travailleurs indigènes pour les services publics), *Bulletin officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (hereinafter *BONC*), May 1871, 213–15.

8. Joël Dauphiné, *Chronologie foncière et agricole de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1853–1903* (Paris: Harmattan, 1987), 17, 42, and 55.

9. Arrêté no. 357, March 16, 1914, 97W17, Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (hereinafter ANC).

10. Criticisms were regularly documented by the colonial inspectorate. Another notable critic was Maurice Leenhardt, La Réquisition des indigènes en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1918), 12J4, ANC.

11. For example, Repiquet to syndics, delegates, etc., no. 1143, September 16, 1918, CONTR 828, Centre des Archives d'Outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence (hereinafter CAOM); Gouverneur to Min. des Colonies, no. 682AI, Nouméa, December 15, 1930 (Réponse à une lettre de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme), 107W, VII 3, ANC.

12. Arrêté no. 220, February 25, 1931, *Journal officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (hereinafter *JONC*) 3591 (March 7, 1931); Arrêté no. 694, June 15, 1932, *JONC* 3665 (1932). Although the ILO convention came into effect in 1932, France would not ratify it until 1937–1938. The practice of recruiting only eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds appears to have begun in the mid-1920s.

13. Leenhardt, La Réquisition des indigènes en Nouvelle-Calédonie; SAI, Rapport no. 151 (travail public obligatoire), February 12, 1931, Conseil privé, February 25, 1931, 44W, ANC.

14. In 1918, the colonial inspector Jean Pégourier found that 404 people had been requisitioned, but the SAI insisted that the actual figure was only 378; see Pégourier, Rapport no. 106 (SAI), May 1, 1919, CONTR 828, CAOM. As Leenhardt's 1918 report made clear, however, official statistics included only those requisitioned to work in Nouméa, and requisitions made in the interior were not reported. An SAI report for 1936, gives the lowest figure encountered: 91 Kanak requisitioned; see SAI, Rapport du 27 janv. 1937, 97W43, ANC.

15. Gayet, Rapport no. 33 (Vérification de M. le Commandant Harelle), June 29, 1929, AFFPOL 746, CAOM.

16. René Patoche (Syndic des Affaires Indigènes), Rapport no. 28/AI, Poum, September 20, 1939, 107W #720, ANC.

17. Compare Shineberg, *The people trade*, 50–51.

18. Arrêté no. 192, August 8, 1882 (organisant l'engagement des travailleurs indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie), *BONC*, August 1882, 340–49. Denouncing its illegality (on the grounds that it breached the Civil Code), Leenhardt provided an extensive critique of the 1882 régime and its coercive practices in Un texte inédit: "Notes sur le régime de l'engagement des indigènes en Nouvelle-Calédonie, mars 1914," *JSO* 58–59 (1978): 9–18.

19. In 1902, both Calédoniens and Loyaltiens were being indentured on contracts of a year or more, while other "*Calédoniens des tribus*" were "working temporarily without

contracts." Aubry Lecomte (chef SAI), Note relative aux salaires des Indigènes calédoniens et loyaltiens, October 10, 1902, 12J62, ANC.

20. Situation Générale de la Colonie pendant l'année 1911, AFFPOL 271, CAOM.

21. Arrêté no. 160, February 12, 1912 (interdisant aux femmes et aux filles indigènes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et Dépendances de quitter leur tribu), *JONC* 2632 (February 15, 1912).

22. Arrêté no. 102/4 bis, October 17, 1913 (modifiant celui du 12 fév. 1912 relatif au rengagement des femmes et filles indigènes), *JONC* 2684 (January 3 and 10, 1914).

23. Robert (Inspecteur des Affaires Indigènes), Rapport no. 1046 AI (sur des griefs formulés par les Grands chefs indigènes de Maré), May 7, 1943, 98W89, ANC.

24. For further discussion of labor mobility and gender, see Adrian Muckle, "Natives," "immigrants" and "*libérés*": The colonial regulation of mobility in New Caledonia, *Law Text Culture* 15 (2011): 135–61, and Dorothée Dussy, *Nouméa, ville Océanienne? S'approprier la ville* (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 110–14.

25. In most extant statistics, no gender breakdown is provided, but one exception indicates that women continued to be recorded as indentured labourers after 1912: in 1936, women made up 252 (23 percent) of the 1,095 *engagés* reported by the SAI (SAI report for January 27, 1937, 97W43, ANC). Another potential measure of the numbers of women working—though not necessarily indentured—can be obtained from the quinquennial census figures for Kanak living outside their *tribus*, for example, 217 women in 1901, 108 in 1911, and 312 in 1921. I have not been able to obtain data for after 1921.

26. This is the average for 1909–1911 and 1916. The census figures for the number of children outside of their *tribus* in 1901, 1911, and 1921 were 95, 41, and 140, respectively.

27. See articles 8 and 23, respectively, of the 1882 regulations: Arrêté no. 192, August 8, 1882, and *BONC*, August 1882, 340–49; cf. Shineberg, *The people trade*, 116–18. Shineberg noted, "The legal indenture of unaccompanied children was a phenomenon peculiar to the New Caledonian segment of the labor trade." From 1865 to 1882, unaccompanied children as young as six years were recruited from the New Hebrides and from the age of ten thereafter. Leenhardt reported that the children "recruited" were ages 11–13 years. Leenhardt, Un texte inédit, 14.

28. Arrêté no. 11 bis, January 4, 1917 (réglant l'emploi de la main d'oeuvre indigène pour la cueillette du café), *JONC* 2832 (January 13, 1917); cf. article 8 of Arrêté no. 192, August 8, 1882, and *BONC*, August 1882, 340–49.

29. Harelle, the head of the SAI, noted in 1929 that since 1919, "Loyaltiens" had been recruited for the coffee harvest only in 1927 and 1929. Gayet, Rapport no. 34 (Vérification de M. Tivollier, Résident à Lifou), April 23, 1929, CONTR 828, CAOM.

30. Arrêté no. 862, September 8, 1893 (réglementant les diverses corvées auxquelles peuvent être assujétis les indigènes des Loyalty), *JONC* 1768 (September 16, 1893); Arrêté no. 323, April 16, 1915 (relatif à l'entretien des routes et sentiers de l'Ile des Pins); *JONC* 2741 (April 24, 1915).

31. Conseil Général, November 23, 1918, CONTR 828, CAOM.

32. Arrêté no. 999, December 6, 1922 (réglementant les prestations des indigènes); AFF POL 741, CAOM; Arrêté no. 1198, October 27, 1928 (promulguant le décret du 15 mai 1928, sur le régime des prestations); *JONC* 3466 (November 10, 1928). The 1922 regulations came into effect in 1924. The 1928 regulations came into effect in 1929.

33. *Prestations* were not remunerated, but expenses for overseers, equipment, and, under the 1928 regulation, rations (if provisions could not be transported from the *tribu* to the work site) were provided.

34. In 1933–1939, the rate set for *le rachat*, five francs per day, was equivalent to the minimum salary for indentured laborers (150 francs per month).

35. SAI, Prestations Indigènes—Année 1934, December 11, 1934, 98W81, ANC. The total given in this report shows that prestation labor exceeded the 81,070 days estimated in the annual listing of expected contributions (*le rôle général des prestations*) on which the figures used in the table are based. The colony's final accounts (*Comptes définitifs*) for 1934 show that *le rachat* eventually amounted to 57,595 francs.

36. SAI, Circonscription de Kaala-Gomen, Prestations effectuées . . . , July 5, 1937, 97W8, ANC.

37. [Municipalité de Koné], Plan de Campagne—Prestations indigènes, November 30, 1939, E-DC9 2D1, ANC. This figure suggests that those deemed "fit to work" were providing 13.4 days of labor on average.

38. Average for 1926–1946 inclusive.

39. Circulaire (du 10 avril 1925) au sujet de la main d'oeuvre indigène pour la colonisation, *JONC* 3270 (April 11, 1925).

40. Arrêté no. 473, May 11, 1929 (conditions d'emploi de la main d'oeuvre indigène sur les chantiers des Travaux Publics), *JONC* 3494 (May 15, 1929).

41. Gayet, Rapport no. 33 (Vérification de M. le Commandant Harelle), June 29, 1929, AFF POL 746, CAOM.

42. For example, Poste de Muéo/Poya, Rapport mensuel au Cdt du Détachement, No. 5/2 bis, May 31, 1935, 98E47, Archives de la Gendarmerie, Vincennes.

43. Poste de Muéo/Poya, June 1936, 5–6, 98E48, Archives de la Gendarmerie.

44. Gayet, Rapport no. 33 (Vérification de M. le Commandant Harelle), June 29, 1929, AFF POL 746, CAOM.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Réponse faite par le Gouverneur H. D'Arboussier en trois pages, June 13, 1929, 97W11, ANC. Arboussier was the acting governor in Guyon's absence.

48. Arrêté no. 1046, October 4, 1929 (conditions d'emploi de la main d'œuvre indigène de race océanienne); *JONC* 3517 (October 19, 1929). This involved several small improvements of benefit to Kanak, including minimum and maximum contracts of six months and two years, respectively (whereas the maximum had been five years).

49. SAI, Rapport du 27 janv. 1937, 97W43, ANC.

50. Average based on SAI figures provided for 1935–1936 and 1938–1945 inclusive.

51. Gayet, Rapport no. 34 (Vérification de M. Tivollier, Résident à Lifou), April 23, 1929, CONTR 828, CAOM.

52. It also limited contracts to two years' duration for men ages twenty (the minimum age) and thirty years and required that they be in good health. Beyond this age, however, there was no limit to the length of the contract. Réglementation de l'engagement des indigènes, Conseil privé, November 7, 1936, 44W, ANC; Arrêté no. 1192, November 7, 1936 (réglementant l'engagement des indigènes des Iles Loyauté); *JONC* 3807 (November 15, 1936).

53. See Kurtovitch, *La vie politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 26 (and, for more detail, 17–59). See also Elizabeth Brown, Les Mélanésiens et "Le temps des Américains": L'impact de la présence alliée sur les Mélanésiens de la Nouvelle-Calédonie pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, BA (Hons) diss. (French), Massey Univ., Palmerston North, 1995.

54. Projet de décret sur le régime de l'indigénat, Conseil privé, December 29, 1922, 44W, ANC.

55. Emphasis added. Arrêté no. 1297, December 1, 1939; *JONC*, December 11, 1939.

56. Décision no. 57, January 17, 1940, cited in Recueil de la réglementation particulière appliquée à la population mélanésienne en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853–1949), 37W, ANC; Arrêté no. 377, April 15, 1940 (infractions spéciales); *JONC* 3940 (April 22, 1940).

57. Kurtovitch, *La vie politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 28–32.

58. Recueil de la réglementation, 37W, ANC. Arrêté no. 545, June 8, 1940, replaced no. 377 and removed the references to "travaux d'intérêt public." See also Arrêté no. 196, February 15, 1941 (travaux d'intérêt public à effectuer par les indigènes océaniens), and *JONC*, February 24, 1941. The measure concerning the requisition of women and children was adopted on February 22, 1941.

59. Arrêté no. 978, September 12, 1941 (au sujet des indigènes en situation irrégulière au chef lieu); *JONC*, September 22, 1941, 409.

60. Guigen (Adjutant), Rapport sur les agissements des indigènes des tribus de Goa-Goyetta et Tchamba en 1942 & 1943, Ponérihouen, August 13, 1945, 97W, ANC. For examples of complaints about wartime requisitions, see Kurtovitch, *La vie politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 31–40.

61. Arrêté no. 162, February 11, 1943 (conditions d'emploi de la main d'oeuvre indigène de race océanienne); *JONC* 4077 (February 22, 1943).

62. Ibid.

63. A note in the Catholic mission archives cites SAI statistics dated September 9, 1942, according to which the 1,137 volunteers represented 22 percent of 5,125 "hommes valides." "Note sur les charges fiscales et réquisitions excessives imposées aux indigènes de la Ncie," Archives de l'Archévêché de Nouméa (hereinafter AAN), 131.5.

64. Compare Brown, Les Mélanésiens et "Le temps des Américains," 30.

65. Stephen Henningham, "The French Administration, the local population and the American presence in New Caledonia, 1943–44," *JSO* 98, no. 1 (1994): 27–29.

66. Laigret, Discours prononcé à l'ouverture de la session du Conseil d'Administration le 20 nov. 1943, *JONC* 4117 (November 29, 1943); cf. Etat faisant connaître la répartition de la main d'oeuvre indigène, November 12, 1943, 98W123, ANC. The figures provided in the latter differ slightly.

67. Luneau to Bresson, Région Canala–Kouaoua–Nakety: Population indigène—Emploi de la main d'oeuvre au 30 juillet [1942], AAN 131.5.

68. Rapport du Chef du SAI sur le fonctionnement du Service pendant l'année 1945, November 23, 1945, IJ16, ANC.

69. Kurtovitch, New Caledonia: The consequences of the Second World War, 36.

70. Some of these are documented in Kurtovitch, *La vie politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (e.g., 34–38, 49–50, and 54 n. 101). More generally, see the Catholic mission's exchanges with the administration in AAN 131.5.

71. Tupinier to Min de la France d'Outre-Mer, no. 21, August 23, 1946, CONTR 834, CAOM.

72. Nouméa Accord, 1998.

73. South Pacific Force New Caledonia Administrative History, NRS II-430, Microfilm, Naval Yards, Washington, D.C.

74. Alain Saussol, *L'Héritage: Essai sur le problème foncier mélanésien en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris: Musée de l'Homme, 1979), 331–64.

75. Jean-Marie Lambert, *La Nouvelle Politique Indigène en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Le Capitaine Meunier et ses gendarmes 1918–1954* (Paris: Harmattan, 1999); Les kanak à l'heure de la "nouvelle politique indigène," *Mwà Véé: Revue culturelle kanak*, no. 57,August–September 2007,4–6. In the former (66–67), Lambert accepts the colonial-era argument that requisitions provided "a necessary labour force." In the latter, Sylvette Boubin-Boyer (5) characterizes this era as finally providing Kanak with protection from the *indigénat*: "in relation to the *indigénat* regime the natives were finally protected." I would contend that far from protecting Kanak, the *indigénat* underpinned their mass mobilization.

76. Boyer, Rapport no. 22 (Le problème de la main d'oeuvre), August 6, 1946, CONTR 834, CAOM.

77. Leenhardt, La Réquisition en Nouvelle-Calédonie; Luneau to Bresson, Région Canala–Kouaoua–Nakety, 131.5; [Municipalité de Koné], Plan de Campagne—Prestations indigènes, November 30, 1939, E-DC9 2D1, ANC.

78. Gayet, Rapport no. 34 (Vérification de M. Tivollier, Résident à Lifou), April 23, 1929, CONTR 828 CAOM.

79. Pierre Métais, Démographie des Néo-Calédoniens, *JSO* 9 (1953): 99–128.