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Toward a comparative typology of ‘eating’ in some Oceanic languages¹



This paper aims to explore the diversity for expressing food ingestion in some Oceanic languages (mainly Kanak/New Caledonian and Polynesian languages), and intends to map out the convergences and divergences attested among these languages.

Five main points are addressed: first, a brief historical and environmental survey; secondly, the parameters of the different ‘eat’ verbs among the Kanak languages, in comparison with the differentiation made in other Oceanic languages. In Kanak languages, the lexical field of expressions for ‘eating’ does not relate to a homogeneous or consistent domain: each language has its own food noun categories, depending on physical, nutritive or symbolic (cultural) criteria, and distinguished on the basis of the verb they combine with. Thirdly, a typological perspective will show how Kanak, and more widely, Oceanic languages, are organized according to the aspects of the context incorporated into the meaning expressed in various languages together with the basic action of eating. Fourthly, the case of languages with possessive classifiers reserved for specific kinds of food nouns and their semantic comparison with the different ‘eat’ verbs will be investigated; and finally, some syntactic considerations will show how diverse are the ‘eat’ verbs valency constructions in Oceanic languages.

1. INTRODUCTION. The semantic domain of food, and more precisely of the action of food (and drink) ingestion, has been of ~~an interest to linguists around the world~~ in various ~~linguistics sub-disciplines~~; typology (Newman 2009); syntax (Næss 2011); semantics (Wierzbicka 2009); historical comparison (Lichtenberk 1994). All address the fact that eating and drinking are vital needs and universal activities but are not uniformly categorized and expressed in the world's languages:

When one studies the closest counterparts of the English concept ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ in many different languages, in many different geographical and cultural areas, one discovers that there are really many different ways in which the “bodily intake of substances” can be conceptualized and categorized. The familiar English, and more generally, European division between ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’ is by no means the only one. If we try to interpret the conceptualizations reflected in other languages through the prism of this one, we will be imposing on them an Anglocentric, or Eurocentric, perspective. (Wierzbicka 2009:66).

In Section 2, through a brief historical survey we will first have a look at the etyma that have been reconstructed in Proto Oceanic (Section 2.1) for the eating verbs, as well as the reflexes now found in Oceanic languages (Section 2.2). Then we will briefly present the

¹ We are very grateful to the two anonymous referees for their careful reading and thoughtful comments towards improving our paper. We also would like to thank Ekkehard König for his valuable suggestions.

relevant distinctions in Kanak languages² and describe to what extent they reflect the Proto Oceanic reconstructions (Section 2.3), pointing out which differentiations already existed in Proto Oceanic, and which innovations took place in the new environment, ~~with the available food resources~~ when the Austronesians reached New Caledonia. In Section 3 we will more specifically examine the Kanak languages through a comparative survey of the different ‘eat’ verbs, their restrictions and the contextual features incorporated in them. A more detailed characterization of the relevant subsystems in Kanak languages will then be carried out (Section 4) ~~on the basis of~~ extending the comparative perspective, to (a) other Oceanic languages and (b) to European and other languages ~~focused on in cross-linguistic surveys~~. A brief sketch of cross-linguistic observations in Section 4.1 will be used to ~~throw~~ additional light on the specifics of Kanak languages, which will then be further characterized in their genealogical and areal specifics through a detailed comparison with ~~the~~ other Oceanic languages (Section 4.2). The case of Kanak languages with possessive classifiers reserved for specific kinds of food nouns will be described in Section 5.1, and the semantic features and restrictions of these possessive classifiers will be compared with the ones described earlier for the ‘eat’ verbs (Section 5.2).

In Section 6, we will discuss the morphosyntactic characteristics of the ‘eat’ verbs in Kanak languages, ~~in the light of what is known cross-linguistically~~ (Newman 2009). It will be shown that they do not behave like ordinary transitive verbs (Næss 2011), occurring in different types of constructions and showing selectional restrictions on the patient (Gast and al 2014). Our conclusion (Section 7) will summarize the main findings characterizing the Oceanic ‘world of nutrition and eating’, and more specifically, the New Caledonian data.


We will leave aside many other aspects concerning the fundamental human act of eating: nouns for food, all kinds of verbs expressing the manner of eating, the quantity ingested, or the social behavior. According to Ross (2008:36-37): “People in traditional Oceanic-speaking villages ate one cooked meal a day, usually after the day's work. The meal typically consisted of starchy staples, made more appetising by the addition of coconut milk, leafy vegetables and sometimes some meat or fish”. Food preparation has been well described by Lichtenberk (1994) and his article would be an excellent starting point for further investigations of food preparation in specific Oceanic languages. The drinking domain (understood as ‘the ingestion of liquid nutrient’) will only be mentioned in its relation to the eating domain (Section 4.2) and would deserve a much more detailed investigation on its own.


2. THE VERB ‘EAT’ IN OCEANIC LANGUAGES.

2.1. HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS. The Oceanic subgroup (a subgroup of Eastern Malayo Polynesian, which in turn is a subgroup of Malayo Polynesian, a first-order subgroup of Proto Austronesian) is the largest and now very well defined subgroup of the large Austronesian language family. It includes around 500 languages, spoken along the coasts of Papua New Guinea (PNG), in the nearby and remote Melanesian islands (Bismarck archipelago and Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji), in

². ‘Kanak’ has become the usual and politically correct term to designate the autochthonous inhabitants of New Caledonia and their vernacular languages. More information on these languages can be found on the *Académie des Langues Kanak* website (<http://www.alk.nc>).

Micronesia (except for Chamorro and Palau, both belonging to the Western Malayo-Polynesian subgroup), and in Polynesia, as far as Hawai'i and Rapanui (Pawley and Green 1984; Blust 2009).

Oceanic speech communities vary enormously in their size, from Fijian (with over 300 000 speakers) or Samoan (with more than 250 000 speakers) to an average size of 4 000 speakers in PNG and Solomon Islands, 2 000 in New Caledonia and to about 1 500 in Vanuatu. A number of these languages are moribund, each with fewer than ten speakers according to the last available census. We can roughly distinguish between a Melanesian multilingual archipelago on the one hand, and monolingual Micronesian and Polynesian islands, on the other. It is indeed in Melanesia that we find the highest linguistic densities in the world, as for example in Vanuatu, h more than a hundred languages for 285 359 inhabitants (2018 census)³.

The first settlers in Remote Oceania (Temotu Province in the Solomon, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Polynesia and Micronesia) introduced domesticated plants (banana, taro, sugarcane, yam...) as well as dogs, pigs and chickens. The history of cultivated plants and domesticated animals in Oceania is well documented (Blust 2017). It deserves special mention that neither dogs⁴ nor pigs were originally introduced survived in New Caledonia before the contact with Europeans. The only land mammals existing in New Caledonia were a white rat and a flying fox (fruit bat). Consequently, most of the protein sources available for the Kanak people were birds and fish. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that the Kanak settlers arrived with tubers, fruits and tree crops and practiced horticulture right from the start, as the early Lapita⁵ sites found in Remote Oceania attest (Kirch 2000:109; Pawley 2017:294). Horticulture and fishing activities were the main food resources and the diversity we found in 'eat' verbs, mainly based on these activities, is not surprising.

We will now look at the reconstructed terms for 'eat' found in the main Austronesian subgroups to which the Kanak languages belong.

In Proto Malayo Polynesian (PMP) as well as in Proto Oceanic (POc), a pair of different verb forms are reconstructed for the general meaning 'eat', one intransitive and the other one transitive:

	INTR	TR
PMP	* <i>paŋan</i>	* <i>kaen-i</i>
POc	* <i>paŋan</i>	* <i>kani</i>

PMP **paŋan* 'eat (INTR⁶)' < **paN*⁻⁷ + **kaen* 'eat' while PMP **kaen-i* includes the location undergoer voice suffix *-i (which became the POc transitive suffix *-i) (Ross et al. 2016:224).

³ <https://www.populationdata.net/pays/vanuatu/>

⁴ The first dog, named Rhin, arrived in New Caledonia in 1845 (Haudricourt and Dibie 1987:140).

⁵ The Lapita people moved from South-East Asia three thousand years ago on big canoes to settle in the majority of the previously uninhabited Melanesian and Polynesian islands. The most significant vestige of their settlement remains the finely decorated potteries found in the Bismarck Archipelago, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Wallis-et-Futuna. Lapita is then the word used to refer to a specific type of pottery with elaborated decoration, a cultural complex and, by extension, a migratory movement and period (Noury and Galipaud 2011).

⁶ Not standard abbreviations (those not in *The Leipzig Glossing Rules*) are: AGT, agent marker; DEIC, deictic; N, noun; P_CL, possessive classifier; RESTR, restrictive particle; SPC, specific article; SUF suffixed form.

Some languages still make a distinction between *eat* (TR) and *eat* (INTR), such as Ramoaaina (Meso-Melanesian): *an* (TR) < POC **kani* and *wəŋan* (INTR) < POC **paŋan*; this is also the case in several Southeast Solomonian languages, such as Toqabaqita: *ʔani* (TR) < POC **kani* vs. *fana* (INTR) < POC **paŋan* and some South Vanuatu languages. As we will see, it is also the case in Iaaï, a Kanak language spoken in Ouvéa (Loyalty Islands).

2.2. ‘EAT’ VERBS IN OCEANIC LANGUAGES. In many Oceanic languages, **kani* has replaced **paŋan*, which is only reflected in some languages belonging to the Meso-Melanesian, South-East Solomonian, Temotu and South Vanuatu subgroups, or with a causative meaning (North Central Vanuatu and Polynesian subgroups): East Futunan *fāgai* ‘feed s.o.’.

POC **paŋan* (INTR)/**kani* (TR) probably both meant ‘eat (in general)’ and ‘eat starchy food’, including yams, taro and other root crops, cooking bananas and breadfruit.

As mentioned by Ross (2008:39-41), “In Oceanic languages for which there is detailed information about verbs of eating, there is usually at least one other ‘eat’ verb, with the meaning ‘eat starch and protein food together’. Sometimes there is also a verb meaning ‘eat meat’, ‘eat fish’ or ‘eat protein food’”.

For all the Oceanic languages, Ross (2008:39) lists five possible verb meanings depending on the food ingested:

1. ‘eat starchy food; eat (generic)’ (all languages): POC **kani* and **paŋan*;
2. ‘eat food consisting of starch and additional ingredients (coconut milk, leafy vegetables, fish or meat): POC **tamaji*; reflexes are found in a few languages: Mapos Buang (North New Guinea), Sursurunga (Meso-Melanesian), Arosi (Southeast Solomon), Wayan (Fijian);
3. ‘eat (s.th.) as an addition to starch’: Sursurunga (Meso-Melanesian), Anejoñ and Sye (South Vanuatu), Kosrean (Nuclear Micronesian), Wayan (Fijian) and Polynesian languages;
4. ‘eat fish or meat without starch’, “possibly already lexicalised in POC, as **[q,k]oda(q)*. More usually the reflexes mean ‘eat s.th. raw’ ” (Ross et al. 2016:231);
5. ‘eat greens alone’: Ramoaaina (Meso-Melanesian) and Arosi (Southeast Solomon).

Since Ross et al. (2016:229) only give the New Caledonian reflexes for all the ‘eat’ terms of their sample, our article will investigate if these languages offer similar data. Indeed, most of New Caledonian (NC) languages have a specific verb for each of these categories, but - as we will show - quite a lot of differences will be identified, and we will try to sort out if the lexical distinctions are either inherited or specific to NC languages, and if they are due to local innovations or to language contacts.

2.3. THE NEW CALEDONIAN/KANAK LANGUAGES. New Caledonia comprises 28 Kanak languages plus dialects⁸, greatly differing from each other, and showing a high phonological complexity. All the Kanak languages belong to the New Caledonia linguistic subgroup for which a common ancestor has been reconstructed (Haudricourt 1971, Ozanne-Rivierre 1992), except West Uvean (Fagauvea) which is a Polynesian outlier (see Moyse-Faurie et al. 2012 for a general presentation). The New Caledonia linguistic subgroup divides

⁷ The prefix **paN-* marks the intransitive form of the verb; *-N-* combines with the root-initial consonant to produce a nasal consonant (Ross et al. 2016:224).

⁸ According to the Académie des Langues Kanak (see <https://www.alk.nc/aires-coutumieres>)

into three lower subgroups: **North of the Mainland**, **South of the Mainland** and Loyalty Islands. The linguistic **diversification** is mainly due to sociolinguistic factors: before the arrival of the Europeans, there was no dominant Kanak language. Contact between small neighboring communities, practicing “bilingualism on an equal footing” (the *bilinguisme militaire* described by Haudricourt, 1961:8-9) accentuated the **diachronic enriching tendencies**.

In addition to the indigenous Kanak languages, New Caledonia is home to one **all-scale** creole, Tayo, to French as the dominant and vehicular language, and to dozens of **other** Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic, Japonic and Austronesian languages brought in by **temporary** migrations.

Our study is mainly based on Kanak languages on which we found sufficient reliable data for our topic. It relies on authentic data collected through our own fieldwork, complemented by vocabulary found in the available dictionaries, descriptive grammars and colleagues’ first-hand data (see Table 1 for references and sources for each language).


Table 1: List of Kanak languages and data sources used in this study

Subgroup	Language (from North to South)	Source
New Caledonia > Mainland > North	Nyelâyu	Ozanne-Rivierre 1998
	Nêlêmwa	Bril 2000
	Caac	Hollyman (unpublished), Cauchard 2018
	Hienghène lgs: Jawe, Nemi, Fwâi, Pije	Haudricourt and Ozanne-Rivierre 1982
	Pwapwâ, Pwaamei	Ozanne-Rivierre 2007
	Voh-Koné lgs: Bwatoo Vamale	Rivierre and Ehrhart 2006 Rohleder, J. (pers. com.)
	Cèmuhi	Rivierre 1994
	Paicî	Rivierre 1983
New Caledonia > Mainland > South	Ajië	Lercari, 2002, Poedi, P. (pers.com.)
	Haméa	Moyse-Faurie (own data)
	Xârâcùù	Moyse-Faurie and Néchéro-Jorédié 1989
	Tîrî	Osumi 1995
	Drubéa	Shintani and Païta 1990
	Numèè	Rivierre (unpublished)
New Caledonia > Loyalty Islands	Iaai	Ozanne-Rivierre 1984; Dotte 2013
	Drehu	Sam 2009
	Nengone	Bearune, S. (pers. com.)
Polynesian outlier	Fagauvea	Hollyman 1987

	Nengone	<i>kaka(n)</i> ‘eat (generic; less protein)’
PPn	* <i>kai</i> ‘eat’, ‘food’ ⁹	
Loyalty Isl.	Fagauvea	<i>kai</i> ‘eat’ (INTR) / <i>kaina</i> (TR)

Some of the Mainland languages, however, have a non-related term for ‘eating (in general)’, such as Jawe and Caac *huu*; Vamale *xhwi-aman*; Ajië *ara*; Xârâcùù *da*; Haméa *harra*; Drubéa *kèrè-re*, etc.

3. SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIATION OF VERBS OF EATING IN KANAK LANGUAGES. ~~As we will now show in detail,~~ the POc differentiation, depending on the type of food ingested, is widely attested in the Kanak languages subgroup. In other Oceanic languages as in some Polynesian languages, other specific ways of expressing the eating action do exist, relying mostly on the association with different types of food (see Section 4.2).

3.1. CANONICAL DISTINCTIONS. As we mentioned earlier, the lexical field of expressions for ingesting food does not relate to a homogeneous or consistent domain in Kanak languages. Two main groups are distinguished: ~~on the one hand,~~ the languages of New Caledonia Mainland with one general term plus up to five more specific verbs. ~~On the other~~  ~~nd,~~ the languages of the Loyalty Islands use one common general verb also for eating starchy food and fruits.

For the Mainland languages subgroup, the most common ~~schema~~ is based on four verbs, as illustrated here by Xârâcùù as in example (1). ~~This schema corresponds to a main opposition between~~ one generic term for ‘eating’, ~~plus~~ additional specific verbs, depending on what is eaten: (i) starchy food (including ‘bread’); (ii) protein, flesh (including coconut flesh) and food coming from animals (meat; fish; egg...); (iii) sugarcane and fruits that have to be chewed, or sucked, without being swallowed.

(1). Xârâcùù (Mainland)


<i>da</i>	‘eat’ (general term, also used for some fruits and leafy vegetable)
<i>kê</i>	‘eat starch food’ (yam, taro, sweet potatoes, rice, banana, manioc...)
<i>xwè</i>	‘eat meat, fish, coconut or other fruit “flesh” ’
<i>xwii</i>	‘eat sugarcane, orange and all other fruits that are only sucked’

For the Loyalty Islands languages, the common distinction ~~corresponds to a three verbs schema which complements~~ the generic ‘eat’ verb by differentiating the ingestion of proteins ~~apart from~~ food that has to be chewed (barks¹⁰ or chewing-gum) or gnawed (sugarcane). This is exemplified by the three Loyalty Islands languages Iaaï, Drehu and Nengone in the following examples:

⁹. It is interesting to notice that *kaikai* [kajkaj] is a very common word in the local Caledonian French, meaning ‘to eat; food’ (Pauleau 1995:93). It comes from a reduplicated form of the Polynesian term. Bislama (the national pidgin language of Vanuatu) has a very similar form for ‘food’: *kakae*.

¹⁰. Several kinds of barks or roots were traditionally consume by Kanak people, but are very rarely today: the root of magnania (*Pueraria thunbergiana* Benth., variant of *Pueraria lobata*, a fibrous root) and the bark of bourao (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) are the most commonly known. It seems that they were earlier staples consumed as famine foods (Ross et al. 2008:256) or, on the contrary, as a “chief food” (Haudricourt 1964:97).

(2). **Iaai (Ouvéa island)**

- a*  'eat (generic, TR)'
hwii 'eat (or gnaw) sugarcane'
*hicá*¹¹ 'eat chewable food (barks, chewing-gum...)'

(3). **Drehu (Lifou island)**

- xen* 'eat (generic; anything other than protein)'
öni 'eat protein (meat, fish, egg...)'
atra 'eat (or gnaw) sugarcane'

(4). **Nengone (Maré island)**

- kaka(n)* 'eat (generic; anything other than protein)'
ia 'eat protein (meat, fish, egg, seafood...)'
chapfan 'eat chewable barks (magnania, chewing-gum...)'

In some Kanak languages, there are additional specific verbs for the ingestion of food types other than these canonical ~~schemas~~, as we will see in the following section.

3.2. SEMANTIC DISTINCTIONS. In addition to the generic term, as many as six specific 'eating' verbs are distinguished in Kanak languages, based on the food ingested. The largest set of ~~relevant verbs in these languages~~ is composed of six different lexemes (as in the Hienghène languages: Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi; Pije; Pwapwâ and Pwaamei), whereas the minimal set is made up of three verbs (Loyalty Islands subgroup languages). **Some of these categories are merged in certain languages: for example in Nyelâyu, starch and protein categories are not differentiated by a specific verb, as it is in other languages, but both are related to a common verb *huc*.** The table in the Appendix recaps all the documented forms for each of the twenty-two Kanak languages of the sample. Light grey empty cell means that there is no lexicalized specific form attested to render the action of related food consumption. Instead, it is the generic 'eating' verb that applies.

3.2.1. Generic verb. In all of the ~~investigated languages~~, a generic verb is attested. It can be employed to express the ingestion of any kind of food, when no specification of the latter is given. The generic 'eating' verb works as a large semantically neutral category in cases where the foodstuff does not belong to any specific food category distinguished in the language. It has a complement function rather than a default one: the generic 'eating' verb cannot work as a substitute for any specific 'eating' verb ~~within pragmatically specialized contexts~~¹². For example, in Nengone (Bearune, p.c.), young children who would say **Inu ci kaka guia* (with the general 'eating' verb) would be corrected by older speaker because of the inadequate verb choice: *Inu ci ia guia* 'I am eating meat' (with the specific verb).

Table 3: 'eat (generic)' in Kanak languages

Mainland languages (from North to South)	Loyalty Islands languages
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¹¹. *hoc* is also a synonym verb in Iaai for eating chewable food (Ozanne-Rivierre 1984:53).

¹². This distinction is well explained in relation to general classifier in Zubin & Shimojo (1993).

<i>huu</i>	Nyelâyû; Caac; Jawe	<i>an</i>	Iaai
<i>khuwo</i>	Nêlêmwa	<i>xen</i>	Drehu
<i>hwi-aman</i>	Nemi; Fwâi; Pije	<i>kaka(n)</i>	Nengone
<i>xhwi-aman</i>	Pwapwâ; Pwaamei; Vamale		
<i>vwhaxi-aman</i>	Bwatoo		
<i>wîi-naado</i>	Cêmuhi		
<i>îjá</i>	Paicî		
<i>ara</i>	Ajië		
<i>da</i>	Xârâcùù		
<i>harra</i>	Tîrî, Haméa		
<i>kèrè-re</i>	Drubéa		
<i>kii-rè</i>	Numèè		

As we already mentioned in Table 2, it is in the Loyalty Islands languages that the POc **kani* ‘eating s.th. (general); eating starchy food’ (TR) has been better conserved. Cognates are recognizable in Drehu *xen* with the same meaning and in Iaai *an* exclusively for the transitive form for the generic. In the other languages, the origin of the forms remains quite obscure.

Even if it does not reflect the POc etymon, it is significant to note that *da* ‘eat (generic)’ in Xârâcùù is polysemous and means also ‘to cut; sharp’ (cf. Levinson 2007). This colexification (semantic association, cf. François 2008) is shared with POc “whereby terms for ‘sharp’ (referring to a blade, not a point) are derived from the verb ‘eat’ or ‘chew’”. Reflexes of **paŋan*, often reduplicated, mean ‘sharp’ in a number of Meso-Melanesian and Southeast Solomonic languages, while reflexes of **kani* mean ‘sharp’ in a number of Northwest Solomonic, Micronesian and Polynesian languages. Although this semantic extension of ‘eat’ seems rather an obvious one, it is not among those listed as occurring cross-linguistically by Newman (2009)” (Ross et al. 2016:226). By metonymy, the partial aspect of eating allows the use of *bite* or *cut* for eat (bite > chew > swallow).

3.2.2. Sugarcane. Concerning the specific verbs, the most commonly differentiated food category is ~~the one dedicated to~~ sugarcane (in nineteen of the sample languages), with a relatively consistent lexical form, ranging from *khuri* (Nêlêmwa) to *xhuli* (Pwapwâ) or *hwii* (Tîrî and Iaai). Ross et al. (2016:234) list several terms reconstructed in Proto Oceanic for chewing without swallowing. One of them, POc **qusi-* ‘suck and chew (sugarcane)’ might be the etymon of the NC terms.

Table 4: ‘eat (sugarcane)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)		Loyalty Islands languages
<i>huur</i>	Nyelâyû	<i>hwii</i>	Iaai
<i>khuri</i>	Nêlêmwa	<i>atra</i>	Drehu
<i>huuxuc</i>	Caac		
<i>huli</i>	Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi		
<i>holi</i>	Pije		
<i>xhuli</i>	Pwapwâ		
<i>huti</i>	Pwaamei		
<i>xhuti</i>	Bwatoo; Vamale		
<i>wîi</i>	Paicî		
<i>kwârâ</i>	Ajië		

<i>hwii</i>	Tîrî; Haméa
<i>kùu-re</i>	Drubéa
<i>kuu-rè</i>	Numèè

In Xârâcùù, the cognate term *xwii* is the specific verb for a larger category combining both sugarcane and chewable food. Only Cèmuhî (North Mainland) and Nengone (Loyalty Islands) completely lack this lexico-semantic categorization.

Caac *huuxuc* seems to be a lexicalization of the generic verb *huu* ‘eat’ plus incorporated object *kuc* ‘sugarcane’ to shape a specific verb form dedicated to this category of food.

Ross et al. (2008:390) consider sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) as one of the continuously cultivated plants ~~grown~~ for human consumption in Oceania and note that “the jointed, fibrous stalks contain sucrose, obtained by cutting off a stem and chopping it into convenient lengths which are sucked and chewed as a refreshing snack. When the sugar has been sucked out, the rubbish is spat out.” Semantically, the verb used for ‘eating sugarcane’ more specifically describes an action of food extraction rather than a manner of food ingestion as a whole, chewing being the only way of ingesting sugarcane.

3.2.3. Proteins. Protein sources coming from animals were not present in every simple meal (see Kinaston et al. 2016), but were highly valued. A specific verb for eating proteins, consisting of animal flesh (meat, fish or seafood), ~~onut flesh or hard food~~ is attested in ~~enteen languages of our sample, as for example *hwii* in Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi or also Pije. The origin of these forms remains uncertain.~~


Table 5: ‘eat (proteins)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)		Loyalty Islands languages
<i>wii</i>	Caac	<i>öni</i> ¹³	Drehu
<i>hwii</i>	Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi; Pije	<i>ia</i>	Nengone
<i>xhwii</i>	Pwapwâ; Pwaamei; Bwatoo		
<i>wîi</i>	Cèmuhî		
<i>útí</i>	Paicî		
<i>öi</i>	Ajië		
<i>xwè</i>	Xârâcùù		
<i>ho</i>	Haméa, Tîrî		
<i>kwè-re</i>	Numèè		

Numèè (*kwè-re*) does not include fish in this category, fish being associated to the generic verb. Drubéa – also an Extreme Southern Mainland language – shows a similar *kwè-re* form for a larger semantic category including protein (except fish) and some fruits and greens (see below): *kwè-re wââgòò* ‘eat fruits’ (Shintani and Païta 1990:118). As for Nyelâyu, this is the only language in our sample that shares the use of *huc* for a larger food category including

¹³. In his dictionary, Sam (2009:114-115) notes that *öni* was also allowed to express cases of anthropophagy with an incorporated object *öni atr* ‘eat (protein) human’, similarly to other combinations as *öni ixoe* ‘eat (protein) crab’; *öni i* ‘eat (protein) fish’; *öni mitr* ‘eat (protein) meat’ (*mitr* < Eng. meat); etc.

protein-based foodstuff and any kind of starchy food¹⁴. By contrast, ~~languages such as~~ Iaii ~~that~~ do not have a specific verb for this category of food use instead the generic verb form.

 In some languages, the meaning of the verb is closer to the English verb *bite* and French *mordre*, as in Nyelâyu (see note 12), or in the following example in Ajië (Lercari 2002:251): *Na da ôi ru xiyé na bwârâwê?* ‘Pourquoi le chien ne les mord-il pas?’ [‘Why the dog does not bite them?’]. This colexification case is also worthy of note.

3.2.4. Starchy food. Fifteen languages ~~from~~ our sample have a specific verb dedicated to ‘eating starchy food’ (yam; manioc; taro; sweet potatoes; banana; rice...). As we stated previously (see Table 2), the specific verb for ‘eating starchy food’ is a reflex of the Proto Oceanic ~~term for the generic~~ **kani*(-) in some of the Northern Mainland Kanak languages: *cani* in Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi; Pije and Pwapwâ; *zani* in Pwaamei.

Extreme Southern Mainland languages and Loyalty Islands languages do not distinguish ‘eating starchy food’ as a lexico-semantic category. In Drubéa and Numèè, the generic ‘eat’ verb (respectively, *kèrè-re* and *kii-rè*) is used for both ‘eating starchy food’ and ‘eating fish’. Also Drehu (Lifou, Loyalty Islands) uses its generic term *xen* for ‘eating starchy food’. As previously mentioned, Nyelâyu shows a common undifferentiated semantic category for eating starchy food and proteins with *huc*.

Table 6: ‘eat (starchy food)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)
<i>khuxi</i>	Nêlêmwa
<i>cani</i>	Caac; Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi; Pije; Pwapwâ
<i>zani</i>	Pwaamei
<i>xhajake</i>	Bwato; Vamale
<i>éni</i>	Cèmuhi
<i>kâi</i>	Ajië
<i>kê</i>	Xârâcùù
<i>é</i>	Haméa, Tîrî

Ross et al. (2008:255) specify that “A Proto Oceanic (POc) meal was typically made up of two categories of ingredient: **kanan* ‘staple food, starchy food’ and **tamaji* ‘additional ingredients to accompany starchy food’. The main ingredients of **tamaji* were – or rather are in today’s Oceanic societies – green vegetables, (...) and coconut cream”. ~~This statement makes it quite reasonable to consider that many Kanak languages have retained the lexical form for the generic ‘eat’ verb as etymon for nowadays ‘eating starchy food’ forms.~~ Furthermore, according to Ross et al.’s statement (*ibid.*) ~~that~~ “there is almost never a separate verb meaning ‘eat starchy food’ in Oceanic languages”, Kanak languages are particularly outstanding.

3.2.5. Chewable food. Chewable foods, such as some kind of roots or barks (see note 8), are related to a specific verb in thirteen Kanak languages of the sample. Ten of them are spoken

¹⁴. In addition, *huc* also means ‘bite (for a dog)’ (Ozanne-Rivierre 1998:102).

in North Mainland, where there are quite stable forms: *hwei~hwai* (Jawe~Nemi; Fwâi and Pije); *xhwei~xhwai* (Pwapwâ~Pwaamei); *fwai* (Vamale); *pwèi* (Cèmuhi) or also *pwé* (Paicî); but *maani* in Caac.

Table 7: ‘eat (chewable food)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)		Loyalty Islands languages
<i>maani</i>	Caac	<i>hicâ</i>	Iaai
<i>hwei</i>	Jawe	<i>chaphan</i>	Nengone
<i>hwai</i>	Nemi; Fwâi; Pije		
<i>xhwei</i>	Pwapwâ		
<i>xhwai</i>	Pwaamei		
<i>fwai</i>	Vamale		
<i>pwèi</i>	Cèmuhi		
<i>pwé</i>	Paicî		
<i>kwârâ</i>	Ajië		

~~As in English,~~ these verbs semantically express the action of ‘chewing’ the fibers of roots or barks, but not necessarily ingesting it.

~~Xârâcùù,~~ *xwii* includes both ‘eating sugarcane’ and ‘eating chewable’, allowing a semantically larger category of foodstuffs that are masticated but not fully ingested. Since it does not differentiate a specific restrictive ‘chewable’ category, it does not appear in this Table.

There is no evidence that Kanak forms are directly inherited from POc for which ‘chew (betelnut, sugarcane), bite into’ has been reconstructed in **ɥasu* (INTR), **ɥasi* (TR) (Ross et al. 2016: 233).

3.2.6. Greens. A specific verb is found in twelve languages, all from North Mainland and none of the Loyalty Islands languages, to express the action of eating cooked leaves, greens or some fruits, as ~~for example kûû in Bwatoo or anye in Cèmuhi.~~

Table 8: ‘eat (greens)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)
<i>ûûr</i>	Nyelâyû
<i>kûûra/kûûri</i>	Nêlêmwa
<i>kuuni</i>	Caac; Jawe
<i>kaje</i>	Nemi; Fwâi; Pije
<i>kûûni</i>	Pwapwâ; Pwaamei
<i>kûû</i>	Bwatoo
<i>xaje</i>	Vamale
<i>anye</i>	Cèmuhi



According to Ross (2008:40), “Ramoaaïna (Meso-Melanesian) *odo* and Arosi (Southeast Solomonic) *ɲau-kokona* (lit. chew-smooth) are the only instances found in a survey of Oceanic dictionary sources” having this specific meaning ‘eat greens alone’. In East

un, however, we also found the specific verb *otai* ‘eat certain fruit (grated guava mixed with grated coconut)’ (Moyse-Faurie 1993:307).

One of the favorite green leaves to be cultivated and eaten (still today) is *Abelmoschus manihot* (Ross et al. 2008: 294), known in Caledonian French as *chou kanak* or island cabbage in English. This plant is frequent and appreciated for being very nutritious and highly rich in protein nutrients. Interestingly, we note that in Drubéa (Shintani and Païta 1990:118), the action of eating greens can be expressed by *kwè-re*, the verb associated to proteins (except, fish which belongs to the generic), allowing a larger semantic category.

The origin of these forms found in Kanak languages is uncertain at this stage of the study and of the reconstruction available for Proto New Caledonian. There is no evidence that they are reflexes of POC **tamaji* ‘additional ingredients to accompany starchy food (coconut milk; leafy vegetables and protein food (meat, fish, shellfish))’.

3.2.7. Raw food. In addition to the generic and the specific verbs seen above, three languages (two spoken in the Extreme North, one in the Extreme South) have a specific verb for ‘eat raw food or green/unripe fruits’: *thaxilo* (Nyelâyû); *thaxilolî* (Nêlêmwa) and *kwè-bérii-re* (*bérii* ‘premature (for food)’) (Drubéa).

Table 9: ‘eat (raw food, green fruits proteins)’ in Kanak languages

	Mainland languages (from North to South)
<i>thaxilo</i>	Nyelâyû
<i>thaxilolî</i>	Nêlêmwa
<i>kwè-bérii-re</i>	Drubéa


There is no evidence that these forms are reflexes of the reconstructed POC **[k,q]oda(q)* ‘eat raw (meat, fish, shellfish)’, whereas reflexes are found in Polynesian languages (Ross et al 1998:156-157), as we will see below (Section 4.2).

It is also worth mentioning at this point that the semantic differentiation found in Kanak languages shows many similarities with Aslian languages¹⁵, in the domain of ingestion as well as in the fact of having “very detailed meanings encoded in single words, especially verbs, and in domains presumed to be fundamental to human experience” (Burenhult & Kruspe 2016:3).

Finally, this comprehensive look at the lexical resources for expressing eating events allows the hypothesis that Kanak languages probably did not coin any new category based on the type of food ingested. Indeed, these categories already existed, but sporadically and not all of them in every language (for examples ‘eating greens’ attested in two languages from the POClexicon). As far as the Kanak languages are concerned, the innovation lies in the accumulation of these categories, above all in some of Northern Mainland languages that show a paradigm distinguishing up to seven ‘eating’ verbs. A parallel conclusion can be made

¹⁵. Aslian languages (about 18) are spoken in the mountain ranges of the Malay peninsula, and belong to the Austroasiatic language family.

about possessive classifiers dedicated to foodstuff in Kanak languages, as will be exemplified in Section 5.

 It is still quite difficult to determine with certitude the reason that could explain this accumulation of lexico-semantic distinctions in some Kanak languages, but it seems still permissible to formulate some cultural and environmental hypotheses:

- The absence of mammals led to a lexical diversification of vegetal protein sources;
- There is a huge biodiversity spread among large and diverse exploitable territories between the East and the West coasts of Mainland NC;
- Kanak culture is very keen to both preserve its diversity (as with the maintenance of an “egalitarian multilingualism”) and to promote its micro-local idiosyncrasies;
- Kanak culture is based on exchange between the different groups, favoring contacts, exchange of resources and inter-clan marriages.

4. EXTENDING THE COMPARISON.

4.1. FREQUENT CROSS-LINGUISTIC OBSERVATIONS. It is important to note that we freely make use in this paper of the translation ‘eat’ as a general and global cover term for actions and events that are, after all, quite different from a Kanak languages speaker’s point of view. Actually, ~~there is only the labelled ‘generic eat’ form, found in all the sample languages, that could precisely accept~~ the English translation *to eat / eating* (or the French one *manger*). All the other specific verbs should receive a much more ~~sophisticated~~ and accurate translation. It is in this perspective that we should keep in mind Wierzbicka’s (2009:88) statement asserting that “the conceptual categories ‘eat’ and ‘drink’ do not cut nature at its joints. The conceptualization of such activities depends, to some extent, on what is culturally salient in a particular society”.

Given the basic and essential function of ingesting (solid) food, it is to be expected that the vast majority of languages should have a basic verb denoting that activity, like *eat* in English and *manger* in French. What is surprising, however, is that many languages have several translational equivalents for these simple and basic verbs in English and French, whose selection depends on various contextual parameters (Næss, 2011; Gast et al., 2014). ~~Inter alia, the following contextual parameters have been found to be expressed in various languages together with the basic action of eating:~~


The semantic type denoted by the **subject** (Who eats?):

German *essen* vs. *fressen* (humans vs. animals); English *feed on sth.* (intr.) only used of animals;

European languages have specific ‘eat’ verbs depending on the type of animals, such as French: *brouter* ‘feed on grass (for cows)’, *picorer* ‘peck (for birds)’; Oceanic languages do not make any such distinction and uses the basic *eat* verb for all animals alike.

The semantic type of the **object** (What kind of food is eaten?):

~~There we find, as we have seen, a major distinction in Oceanic languages. This distinction can focus on different characteristics: the form of the foodstuff (round; long...); its nutritive properties (proteins; vegetables...); its consistency (and the related way it can be grabbed,~~


 ~~ved from hand to mouth) or nature (fibrous stalk; raw food; mushy matter...).~~ Rice (2009) gives lot of insightful examples of this type in Athapaskan languages.

The **manner** of eating (How does one eat?):

English. *to wolf down*; *devour*; German *schlingen* ‘to wolf’ / *fressen* ‘to stuff sth down’ vs. *speisen* ‘to eat’;

✚ The **time** of eating (When does one eat?):

French and English *petit-déjeuner* ‘breakfast’, *déjeuner* ‘lunch’, *goûter* ‘eat at afternoon tea’, *dîner* ‘dine’, *souper* ‘sup’;

 - The **place** where one eats:

English *eat out*; French *pique-niquer* ‘eat outdoors’;

The causative perspective:

French *nourrir* ‘to feed s.o.’, *allaiter* ‘to breast-feed’; German *füttern* ‘to feed animals, children, old or sick people’; East Futunan *mama'ia* ‘to feed a child in the process of weaning by pre-chewing the food’; East Uvean *pusiaki* ‘to feed with the hand (child, pig)’.

4.2. MAJOR DISTINCTIONS FOUND IN OCEANIC LANGUAGES. After having identified the contextual parameters that may be expressed by the relevant verbs in various Kanak languages, we will now try to achieve a more illuminating characterization by comparing the relevant lexical subsystems to those found in other Oceanic languages.

As we have seen (in Section 3), as many as six different specific categories are distinguished in Kanak languages, in addition to the generic term, and this is indeed remarkable, and not attested in other Oceanic subgroups. Kanak languages, and Kanak people, thus categorize their surrounding world with their own distinctions, which do not always match the European ones. As already mentioned, two ways of organizing these ‘ingestion’ verbs exist in Kanak languages: the situation in the Loyalty Islands languages is less complex, and more similar to what is reconstructed in Proto Oceanic; while the maximum of differentiation is found in some Northern languages of the Mainland, as Pije illustrates here with a range of six verbs:

(5). Pije (Northern Mainland)

<i>hwi-aman</i>	‘eat’ (general term)
<i>hwii</i>	‘eat protein, flesh, hard food...’
<i>holi</i>	‘eat sugarcane, some fruits’
<i>cani</i>	‘eat starchy food’
<i>kaje</i>	‘eat greens, leaves, fruits’
<i>hwai</i>	‘eat chewable barks, magnania’

This peculiarity of highly detailed semantic granularity appears to be a micro-areal tendency in the Northern region of Mainland New Caledonia, in the ‘eating’ domain as much as in the ‘drinking’ domain, since it is also in these languages that we find distinct verbs for ‘drinking’ (i.e. ‘liquid or juicy food ingestion’) depending on the temperature of the drinkable liquid:

Table 10: ‘drinking something cold’ and ‘drinking something warm’ in North Mainland Kanak languages

Subgroup	Language (from North to South)	‘to drink sth cold’	‘to drink sth warm’
New Caledonia > Mainland > North	Jawe	<i>knuduk</i>	<i>phelo</i>
	Nemi	<i>knuduk</i>	<i>thop, felo</i>
	Fwâi	<i>khûdûk</i>	<i>vhelo</i>

	Pije	<i>khûdûk</i>	<i>vhalo</i>
	Pwapwâ	<i>kûduk</i>	<i>thovi</i>
	Pwaamei	<i>kûduk</i>	<i>thop</i>
	Bwattoo	<i>xudu</i>	<i>traao</i>
	Vamale	<i>undu</i>	<i>fato</i>

All Oceanic languages draw a lexical distinction between eating and drinking activities, thus differing from Papuan languages, such as Kalam, which has only one verb for ‘eat’ and ‘drink’, *ñb-* (Pawley and Bulmer 2011:437). According to Pawley (p.c.), Fijian has a nice dichotomy between foods that you ‘eat’ (*kana* in Bauan, *kani* in Wayan) and foods that you ‘drink’ (*gunu* in Bauan, *som* in Wayan), the latter including various kinds of wet/juicy foods, such as molluscs, sugarcane, juicy fruits, lollies, jelly or soup. We found an exception to this generalization in the honorific East Uvean language (used when you speak to/of the king) with only one verb, *taumafa*, meaning both ‘drink’ and ‘eat’, in contrast to the two different terms in the ordinary language, *inu* ‘drink’ and *kai* ‘eat’. In East Futunan, in which there is no honorific vs. ordinary language distinction, *taumafa* also exists, meaning ‘eat with appetite, gladly drink’, also showing no distinction between ‘drink’ and ‘eat’.

A comparative perspective highlights the fact that in Polynesian languages verbs for ‘eating’ make other kinds of semantic distinctions (‘raw’ vs. ‘cooked food’; ‘eating both starch food and meat/fish’ / ‘eat only one thing at a meal’...). These distinctions are rarely attested in Kanak languages (Nyêlayu *magilo* ‘eat without side dish’, Ozanne-Rivierre 1998:120).

Specific terms such as ‘eat fish, seafood, meat without anything else’ are indeed not frequently found in Kanak languages, whereas they are frequent in Polynesian languages, and are also found in Anejoñ (South Vanuatu), and in Toqabaqita (Malaita, Solomon islands). More frequent is a specific term for ‘eat both starch food + fish/meat’, as it is also the case in Polynesian languages. Caac (Mainland, New Caledonia) shows a specific verb *po cain* for ‘eating a mixture of foods’ (“manger ensemble différentes sortes de nourriture, p. ex., pain et viande”, Hollyman 1999:128).

In Polynesian languages, the general term for ‘eat’ is also used for any kind of food: *kai* (East Futunan, East Uvean, Tongan, etc.), but there are specific verbs for food combinations: eat and drink association: drink while eating; dunk food into water before eating it: East Uvean *omaki* (< PPn **qomaki* ‘eat and drink at the same time’), and Tuvaluan *ppeke* (Besnier 2000:642); food eaten with kava: East Uvean *fono* (< PPn **fono*); East Futunan *mafana* ‘drink the juice of the dish *su* before eating it’.

eat both starch food + fish/meat, eat as accompaniment to protein food, as in the following reflexes of PPn **kina* ‘food eaten with another food as relish: (*kai*)*kina* (East Uvean, West Uvean, East Futunan); Māori: *kīnaki* ‘meat or fish provided to eat with vegetable food, relish’ (Williams 1971:118); East Uvean *kīkī*, Tuvaluan *kiki* (Besnier 2000). This combination is rare in Kanak languages (Cèmuhî *wii*, Haméa *hâwétè*);

eat something raw (fish, meat, shells): East Futunan, East Uvean *'ota*, Tuvaluan *ota* < PPn **'ota* < POc **[q,k]oda(q)*; in East Futunan, the reduplicated form *'ota'ota* means ‘eat human flesh’, along with *fono'i*.

eat only one thing at a meal: starch food or bread without any meat or fish, or vice versa; eat leftovers (non-protein food): East Uvean *hamu/hamuko*, East Futunan *samukō*;

Tuvaluan *samusamu* (Besnier 2000), < PPn **samu* ‘eat one thing only’ (Greenhill and Clark 2011).

This comparative perspective highlights the fact that in Polynesian languages verbs for ‘eating’ are based on other kind of semantic distinctions (‘raw’ vs. ‘cooked food’; ‘eating both starch food and meat/fish’ / ‘eat only one thing at a meal’...) whereas, as we have seen, these distinctions are rarely attested in Kanak languages.

Verbs expressing different manners of eating or quantity of food ingested are attested in Kanak languages, although not as frequently recorded as in other Oceanic languages such as the following Toqabaqita and East Uvean examples:

(5). Toqabaqita, Malaita, Solomon Islands (Lichtenberk 2008a)

<i>dakufia</i> (TR)	‘eat hastily without chewing the food properly; gobble food; drink thirstily’
<i>dudumeme</i> (INTR)	‘eat food, stuffing one's mouth full’
<i>fangabusubusu</i> (INTR)	‘eat greedily; be a glutton (= <i>fokobusubusu</i>)’
<i>fangaliufaqadoqa</i> (INTR)	‘eat too much, overeat’
<i>luulua</i> (INTR), <i>luatania</i> (TR)	‘shove food down one's throat: a rude way of referring to eating’
<i>onoono</i> (INTR)	‘eat food whole, without biting, chewing it’
<i>simia</i> (TR)	‘eat every little bit of meat on a bone; pick on a bone’

(6). East Uvean, Wallis and Futuna (Bataillon 1932)

<i>fa'apuku/ha'apuku</i>	‘to stuff o.s.’
<i>momi</i>	‘swallow without chewing (ripe bananas), or when one has no teeth’
<i>pakalamu</i>	‘eat with noise (like animals)’
<i>'unani</i>	‘enjoy eating’

Some languages have several terms expressing ‘feel like eating specific kind of food’: East Uvean and Tongan *'umisi* ‘crave for fish/seafood’; East Futunan *gā* and Fijian *kusima* ‘crave for fish or meat’ are non-cognate terms. This type of specification is marginally attested in Kanak languages, although we recently found it in Haméa (South of the Mainland) with *treu* ‘crave for meat’.

Register differentiation is not very frequent in Kanak languages, compared to other Oceanic languages. A few verbs, however, are attested for ‘eating (general term)’ in formal discourse, as addressing to a chief or speaking of a chief: Nengone *kodraru*, Jawe, Fwâi, Pije, Vamale *waadap*, Nemi *mooxon*; Pwaamei, Pwapwâ *mawâadap* is noted as archaic.

In Toqabaqita, by contrast, Lichtenberk (2008a) lists several general ‘eat’ verbs, either transitive (TR) or intransitive (INTR), showing various degrees in politeness:

(7). Toqabaqita (Lichtenberk 2008a):

<i>qania</i> (TR)	‘eat (the common, ordinary word)’
<i>fanga</i> (INTR)	‘eat; N food’
<i>faqasobo</i> (INTR)	‘eat’
<i>faqangado</i> (INTR)	‘eat (respect.)’
<i>regea</i> (TR)	‘eat (respect.) (= <i>reereqe</i>)’
<i>masia</i> (TR)	‘eat (vulg.)’
<i>nangasia</i> (TR)	‘eat (casual, jovial)’

<i>onomia</i> (TR)	‘eat (impolite to use to adults)’
<i>loqomia</i> (TR)	‘eat (vulg; used in anger)’
<i>feqetania</i> (TR)	‘eat (vulg.); defecate out; (var. <i>feqatania</i>)’

Toqabaqita also has verbs expressing inappropriate social behavior: *fangaburi* (INTR) ‘without other people's permission or knowledge, help oneself to food left in the house after everybody else has gone’; *damua* (TR) ‘chew, eat; properly used only about animals’.

It is interesting to note that the Polynesian terms for good and bad behavior are based on PPn *kai ‘eat’, as for example in East Futunan along with the Proto Polynesian terms found in Pollex-Online (Greenhill & Clark 2011): *kai'isi* ‘ask s.o. for sth. to eat’ (PPn *kai-siqi ‘beg, cadge’), *kaimalie* and *kai solisoli* (PPn *kai-mālie) ‘be generous’, *kaimeo* ‘reproach s.o.’, *kainao* ‘adulterous’, *kaipō* and *kaiveli* ‘stingy’, *kai'ā* (PPn *kai-haqa) ‘steal’.

Such specific terms are seldom listed in Kanak languages, though they are certainly attested, as it is the case in Haméa (South of the Mainland) with *pâmîrî* ‘nibble’.

5. FOOD POSSESSIVE CLASSIFIERS.

5.1. SEMANTIC DISTINCTIONS. Oceanic languages are well-known for manifesting a wide range of possessive classifiers (Lichtenberk 2009) involved in indirect possessive constructions. Consumable items represents a crucial semantic category as the average set of possessive classifiers among the Oceanic languages consists of a binary distinction between a general class and a consumable class including both food and drink (see for example Manam from Papua New Guinea in Lichtenberk 1985:105). Furthermore, Proto Oceanic has been reconstructed with (at least) a system of three possessive classifiers based on the distinction of general (*na-) / foods (*ka-) / drinks (*m(w)a-) (according to Lichtenberk 2018; Lynch et al. 2002). Following Lichtenberk, the edible-based distinction within the category devoted to alienable relationship goes back to an Oceanic innovation¹⁶ within the Austronesian family.

At least fifteen Kanak languages have a possessive classifier system¹⁷ and all of them retain the kind of food as a distinguishing criterion (see Table 11 below). The categories of food nouns that are distinguished are one generic category and up to seven specific ones. Six correspond to the semantic categories detailed earlier for verbs: sugarcane; protein; starchy food; chewable barks; greens, leaves and some fruits; green or unripe fruits; whereas two languages add a specific class for the possessive expression of ‘fish/shellfish’.

Table 11: Food categories distinguished by possessive classifiers in Kanak languages

	‘food (generic)’	‘sugarcane; juicy food’	‘protein’	‘starchy food’	‘chewable’	‘greens, leaves, fruits’	‘unripe fruits’	‘fish/shellfish’
Nyelâyü		X	X	X	X	X		

¹⁶. “While it is possible that the existence of the alienable–inalienable contrast was due to contact with one or more Papuan languages, the distinctions within the alienable category for food, drink, or alimentary (food–drink), and other, general possession, are not found in the Papuan languages and are clearly a development or developments internal to Austronesian” (Lichtenberk 2013:16).

¹⁷. Kanak languages differ in the ways the category of free nouns encodes the expression of possession. It can be indirect, making necessary the use of a possessive classifier, as in Iaai; mediate, with a possessive relator or preposition, as *i* in Drehu; semi-mediate, with a lengthening of the final vowel, for example in Xârâcùù; or, finally, immediate, as in Caac for both bound nouns and some possessible free nouns.

Nêlêmwa		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Caac			X	X	X			
Jawe; Nemi; Fwâi; Pije		X	X	X	X	X		X
Pwaamei; Pwapwâ		X	X	X	X	X		
Bwattoo		X	X	X	X	X		
Cèmuhî		X	X	X	X	X		
Xârâcùù	X		X	X	X	X		
Tîrî			X	X	X	X		
Drubea	X	X	X	X				X
Iaai	X	X			X			


Interestingly, Iaai (Loyalty Islands), which ~~is the Kanak language with the largest system~~ of possessive classifiers (around 23, see Dotte 2013; 2017), only shows three categories based on a semantic differentiation of the ‘type of food’:

(8). Iaai (Loyalty Islands):

<i>a-n</i>	‘P_CL.FOOD-3SG’	<i>an koko</i>	‘his/her (food) yam’
<i>iie-n</i>	‘P_CL.SUGARCANE-3SG’	<i>ijen aakû</i>	‘his/her (sugarcane) sugarcane’
<i>hice-n</i>	‘P_CL.CHEWABLE-3SG’	<i>hicen waasu</i>	‘his/her (chewing) bark’

Like Iaai, many Micronesian languages have a large paradigm of possessive classifiers, but with only few specifications (in a same language) related to the edible semantic domain. For example, Ponapean has only edible (*kene*) and drinkable (*nime*) possessive classifiers (Rehg and Sohl 1981); Mokilese has edible (*kanah*); drinkable (*nimah*) and chewing (*ngidah*) ones (Song 1997); Kusaiean (*ibid.*) and Trukese (Sugita 1987) have possessive classifiers for food (Kusaiean *na*; Trukese *ana-*), drink (*nihmac* and *wúnúma-* respectively), raw/uncooked food (*osrwac* and *wochaa-*) and chewable (*niyac* and *ngúta-*).

What is noticeable in Kanak languages is that, if ~~the~~ language has a possessive classifiers system (even a reduced one), then the edible domain will be one of its categories. Moreover, it is likely that it has more than three categories of food distinguished by different possessive classifiers. Even if possessive classifiers systems in Kanak languages are not among the largest ones within the Oceanic subgroup (with the exception of Iaai), the semantic granularity related to food is **one of the most sophisticated**.

5.2. COMPARISON BETWEEN POSSESSIVE CLASSIFIERS AND VERBS IN THE ‘EATING’ LEXICAL CATEGORIES. ~~It is a widespread phenomenon cross-linguistically that possessive classifiers are~~  ~~only derived from verbs (Craig 1992:290). Nevertheless, there is not always exact correspondences between the ‘eating’ verb and the ‘food’ possessive classifier in the Kanak languages, even if some matches are relevant.~~

Once again, the languages from the Hienghène region (Fwâi, Nemi, Jawe, Pije in New Caledonian Northern Mainland) are the ones that display the ~~richest~~ range of possessive

classifier dedicated to specific kinds of food. Illustrative examples in Fwâi¹⁸ are provided in (9) below:

(9). Fwâi (Hienghène language, Northern Mainland):

	Food Possessive Classifiers		Corresponding Eating Verbs
a.	<i>ca-</i> ‘P_CL.STARCHES’	<i>cani</i>	‘eat starchy food (yam, taro, banana, rice)’
b.	<i>havie-</i> ‘P_CL.SHELLFISH’		
c.	<i>hue-</i> ‘P_CL.PROTEIN’	<i>hwii</i>	‘eat meat, fish, crustacean, coconut, corn...’
d.	<i>hule-</i> ‘P_CL.SUGARCANE’	<i>huli</i>	‘eat, to suck sugarcane’
e.	<i>hwaa-</i> ‘P_CL.CHEWABLE’	<i>hwai</i>	‘chew barks or magnania’
f.	<i>kuu-</i> ‘P_CL.GREENS’	<i>kaje</i>	‘eat cooked leaves, salad, some fruits’

These examples in Fwâi highlight the clear relation between the eating verbs forms and the possessive classifiers for corresponding semantic domains. Only *kuu-* in (9f.) has a more distant form from the verbal form *kaje* but we can reasonably hypothesize a borrowing process here. Actually, in Jawe, one of Fwâi’s sister languages from the Hienghène region, *kuuni* is the verb for ‘eat greens’ and seems to be obviously the related form to the possessive classifier *kuu-* which is common for all the four languages: Pije, Fwâi, Nemi and Jawe. It is interesting to note that Caac, spoken a few kilometers further to the north of the Mainland East Coast, also has the same verb *kuuni* for the same meaning. On the other hand, Pije, Fwâi and Nemi use the verb *kaje* ‘eating cooked leaves, salad, some fruits’, which is very close in its form to *xaje* in Vamale, one of the Voh-Koné dialects spoken further to the south. Thus, we can assume that the original verb in Pije, Fwâi, Nemi and Jawe was *kuuni* (as it is still attested in Caac), which generates the form *kuu-* for the associate possessive classifier. Later, Pije, Fwâi and Nemi borrowed *xaje* from the southern neighbor Vamale (rephonologized in *kaje*, with a fortition of the initial velar consonant), blurring the correspondence between the verb and the possessive classifier in these three languages, whereas Jawe conserved the original verb-classifier relation.

A second observation on these Fwâi examples concerns (9b.) and (9c.), two distinct possessive classifiers, encoding two semantic categories (‘portion of shellfish’ versus ‘portion of meat or fish’), whereas the verbal form merges these domains with one common form *hwii*. However, whether it is from the loss of the verbal distinction or from the innovation in the possessive classifier paradigm, it is impossible to tell at this stage of the study.

It appears as a clear micro-areal tendency that the semantic field of ‘food’ and ‘drink’ is of a special importance in this zone, maybe more than in others, and that this emphasis plays a significant role as a categorizing criterion in the lexicon but also in the morphosyntax of the local languages.

In other Kanak languages showing possessive classifier dedicated to food categories, the match between verb and classifier is less systematic. Possessive classifiers in Iaai are often derived from corresponding verbs, as it is the case at least for *a-n* ‘P_CL.FOOD-3SG’ < *an* ‘eat (generic, TR)’ and *hice-n* ‘P_CL.CHEWABLE-3SG’ < *hicâ* ‘eat chewable food (barks, chewing-gum...)’. However, there is no clear etymological link between *hwii* ‘eat (or gnaw) sugarcane’ and the possessive classifier for the corresponding category of one’s portion of sugarcane *ie-*

¹⁸. There is also an attested possessive classifier for drinks (cold beverage) *khûdoo-n* clearly derived from the equivalent verb *khûduk~khûdi* ‘to drink water, cold beverage’.

n, which lexical origin remains uncertain. Nevertheless, the interesting thing to note here is that the semantic category is distinguished within both the verbal and the nominal lexical domains in this language.

The case of Nêlêmwa (Northern Mainland; Bril 2002:364-365) is slightly different as *caa-* ‘P_CL.STARCHES’ struggles to pair with any corresponding verb for starchy food consumption. The semantic category does exist in the scope of the possessive classifier system but is missing in the verbal one. Four of the other ‘eating’ verbs attested in Nêlêmwa are etymologically related to corresponding food possessive classifiers¹⁹: *khuri* ‘eat sugarcane’ > *khora-* ‘P_CL.SUGARCANE (portion of sugarcane or of a specific variety of coconut)’; *kûûri* ‘eat greens, leaves, fruits’ > *kûû-* ‘P_CL.GREENS (portion of greens, leaves, fruits)’; *maa* ‘to masticate’²⁰ > *maa-* ‘P_CL. CHEWABLE’; *thaxilolî* ‘eating green or unripe fruits’ > *thaxilo-* ‘P_CL. UNRIPE’. It seems that these semantic categories are thus quite stable and well distinguished for Nêlêmwa people. Finally, *khoo-* ‘P_CL.PROTEIN’ used for the possession of a portion of protein food (meat, fish, turtle, coconut flesh...) is etymologically related to *khuwo* ‘eat (generic)’, whereas there is no specific verb for ‘eating protein food’ in Nêlêmwa. The semantic scope of the generic verb seems to have narrowed until focusing on the specific type of protein / fleshy food in the case of the possessive classifier.

If it true that there is a core semantic match between eating verbs and possessive classifiers devoted to food portions in Kanak languages, a perfect correspondence is almost never found. What is clear, however, the semantic domain of food and eating is a crucial culturally salient domain that is very specifically encoded in the lexicon and the morphosyntax of a large part of the Kanak languages by verbs and by possessive classifiers.

6. MORPHOSYNTACTICAL CONSIDERATION. The preceding discussion of semantic differentiations in ‘eating’ verbs would be incomplete without a look at their morphosyntactic properties, especially their valency, according to what is known cross-linguistically (Newman 2009). In cross-linguistic studies they are frequently described as not to behave like ordinary transitive verbs (Næss 2011), occurring in different types of constructions, in relation to the degree of affectedness, and showing selective restrictions on the Patient (Gast and al 2014).

From a morphosyntactic perspective three different types are found in the lexical inventory of generic ‘eating’ verbs in Oceanic languages:

- 1 a lexical differentiation between intransitive and transitive verbs (Section 6.1);
- 2 a pair of verbs with the transitive form derived from the intransitive one (Section 6.2);
- 3 labile verbs which can be used both intransitively or transitively; or in some cases in oblique constructions (Section 6.3).

Recall that these morphosyntactic variations only involve the generic ‘eat’ verb.

6.1. LEXICAL DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN INTRANSITIVE AND TRANSITIVE VERBS. As already mentioned, it was the case in POc with **paŋan* ‘eat

¹⁹. Nêlêmwa is the second Kanak language in terms of the extension of its classifier system, with a dozen of them (Bril 2002:364–67, 2013).

²⁰. *maa* in the Poum dialect and *hmaa* in the Koumac dialect.

(INTR)’ and **kani* ‘eat (TR)’. The intransitive verb **panan* has few reflexes in Oceanic languages, having often been replaced by reflexes of **kani*, the transitive verb.

The distinction between a transitive and an intransitive generic ‘eating’ verb has been maintained in some languages, such as Toqabaqita, with an intransitive ‘eat’ verb, *fanga*, “which [does] not carry any inflectional morphology”, and which cannot take an object (Lichtenberk 2008b:60), vs. a transitive verb, *qania*.

Toqabaqita (Lichtenberk 2008b:60)

- (10). *Nau ku fanga sui naqa.*
1SG 1SG.NFUT eat COMPL PRF
‘I have finished eating.’

An intransitive ‘eat’ verb is also found in Anejoñ with *hag* [haŋ] ‘eat’ INTR (< POC **panan*), vs. the transitive counterpart *ciñ* [yiñ] ‘eat’ TR (< POC **kani*) (Lynch and Tepahae 2001).

6.2. A PAIR OF VERBS WITH THE TRANSITIVE FORM DERIVED FROM THE INTRANSITIVE ONE. In Boumaa Fijian, according to Dixon (1988:227), there are two forms, *'ana* (intransitive form), *'ani-a* (transitive, ~~A type verb, that is, “the focus is on the person who eats”~~). The intransitive form occurs when the object is incorporated:

- (11)a. *E 'ani-a a uto.*
NPST eat-TR ART breadfruit
‘He is eating the/some breadfruit’.
- b. *E 'ana.uto.*
NPST eat.breadfruit
‘He is eating breadfruit.’

In Samoan, according to Milner (1966:9), there are two forms for the verb ‘eat’: *'ai* and *'aina* that can both occur with two arguments:

- (12). *'Ua 'ai e loi suka.*
PFV eat ERG ant sugar
‘The ants have eaten the sugar.’
- (13). *Na 'aina talo e pua'a.*
PST eat.SUF taro ERG pig
‘The pigs have eaten the taro.’

But when only one argument is expressed, it will refer to the agent (with *'ai*) or to the patient, with *'aina* as in the following example:

- (14). *Sā 'aina le fāsipovi.*
PST eat.SUF SPC piece.of.beef
‘The piece of beef was eaten.’

According to Pawley (p.c.), *'aina*, which Milner glosses ‘perfective’, seems to behave like a typical ergative verb, except that it has the sense of ‘eat up, be eaten up, completely eaten’.

Similarly, some Kanak languages have two forms for the same generic ‘eat’ verb according to the valency or the degree of definiteness of the object: Iai has *han* when occurring by itself (*ame han* ‘he is eating’) or an indefinite object (*ame han koko* ‘he is eating yams’), but *an* when followed by a specific object (*ame an koko* ‘he is eating the/a yam’).

Fagaueva/West Uvean, the Kanak Polynesian Outlier spoken in Ouvéa (Loyalty Islands), which inherited several Samoan features, has kept both forms: an intransitive one, *kai*, and a derived transitive one, *kaina*.

Kai occurs in intransitive construction, either by itself (15), or followed by an incorporated object (16b); while *kaina* occurs in a transitive construction, with a specific object (17) which remain unexpressed (16a):

(15). *I de kai i de pō*
3SG NPST eat.INTR OBL SPC night
'He eats during the night.'

(16)a. *E ā gilā de kaina?* b. *Gilā de kai ufi.*
NPST what 3DU NPST eat.TR 3DU NPST eat.INTR yam
'What are they eating?' 'They are eating yams.' (they are yam eating)

(17). *Goati go ia kaina na dana mangiti na tuna a dona pupa.*
then PFV 3SG eat.TR there his tubers PST cook AGT his grandmother
'Then he ate the tubers his grandmother has cooked.'

6.3. LABILE VERBS WHICH CAN BE USED BOTH INTRANSITIVELY OR TRANSITIVELY. In Wayan (West Fijian), contrasting with Boumaa Fijian, the verb *kani* 'eat' is an actor subject verb, either transitive or intransitive. When followed by certainjectives it means 'have a certain taste', e.g. *kani vinā* (lit. eat good) 'be good tasting, be good eating', with an undergoer subject, e.g. *sā kani vinā na magiti* 'the meal tasted good' (Pawley, p.c.).

Similarly, only one verb for 'eat (in general)' is attested in about half of the Kanak languages. This 'eat' verb can occur with or without an object, without any formal change, as in Xârâcùù:

(18). *Îrî nää sae caa mē rî da.*
1PL.INCL PST.PROG each.time hunt in.order.to 1PL.INCL eat
'We used to hunt each time in order to eat.'

with O overtly expressed:

(19). *È da na xöö-dö amû ngê chêêdê.*
3SG eat PST egg-hen yesterday during evening
'He ate eggs yesterday night.'

The Kanak eating verbs for 'ingestion of specific kinds of food', however, are different: their ability to occur without any object is reduced.

To conclude on the syntactical aspect of the generic 'eat' verbs, both cases are found, depending on the construction. If the construction is intransitive, it is the generic 'eat' verb which is used, pointing out the agent and the eating activity. In transitive constructions, the action is patient-oriented, whether the patient is overtly expressed or not. With non-generic 'eat' verbs, by contrast, the object is obligatorily expressed. In both cases, however, the activity is always patient-oriented.

7. CONCLUSIONS. Our comparative survey shows that the different verbs used to describe the action of eating (even in the more general sense) do not relate to exactly the same type of food in the different Kanak languages. Each language can have its own inventory of eating verbs and an association with food nouns, but specific shared categories clearly stand out, depending on physical, nutritive or symbolic (cultural) criteria. When categories are merged in certain languages, it never happens randomly but follows a pragmatic (way of manipulating the foodstuff) or nutritive property (type of nutrient) consistency. *Xwii* in *Xârâcùù* merges the action of chewing barks or magnania and chewing/gnawing sugarcane: two very close actions, all things considered. In *Nyelâyu*, *huc* merges the ‘eating’ categories for ‘starchy food’ and ‘proteins’, which seems rather an obvious semantic extension as we know protein meal were rare and highly valued whereas starchy food occupy a central cultural and alimentary place in Kanak traditional way of life. Comparably, there is a semantic overlap in *Drubéa* where *kwè-re* is attested both for ‘eating protein’ and ‘eating greens’, evidently because *Abelmoschus manihot*, a leafy vegetable which contains high level of proteins, is “the most salient and commonly consumed green vegetable in Lapita communities” (Ross et al. 2008:294).

Furthermore, this cross-linguistic study ~~allows us to distinguish micro-areal tendencies among the Kanak languages’ strategies to express food ingestion;~~

- the languages of the Loyalty Islands show a three-term opposition: the general term for ‘eating’ (which is also used for ‘eating starchy food’), and two other ‘eating’ terms between one for chewable food (in *Iaai* and *Nengone*); one for sugarcane (in *Iaai* and *Drehu*) and one for protein (in *Drehu* and *Nengone*);
- ~~the Hienghène micro-areal zone~~ (*Jawe*, *Nemi*, *Fwâi*, *Pije* on the East coast, plus *Pwapwâ* and *Pwaamei* on the west coast) ~~has~~ a much larger set of ‘eating’ verbs with six different lexico-semantic categories, that is to say all the mentioned categories excluding ‘eating raw food; green fruits’ (only attested in the far Northern Mainland languages *Nyelâyu* and *Nêlêmwa*, and *Drubéa* in Southern Mainland);
- Southern Mainland languages show therefore a transition between the minimal and the maximal systems, with three (*Numèè*) to five (*Ajié*) categories.

It appears that the **synchasy** of Kanak languages is that they concentrate all the different semantic categories of ‘eating’ verbs available in the Oceanic subgroup. These languages did not innovate in coining new categories or distinctions, but they differentiate themselves in combining or reorganizing this range of verbs. Strikingly, the encoding of each Kanak ‘eat’ verb is very similar to what is found in the Northern Aslian language *Jahai*, spoken by subsistence foragers, showing 4 main distinctions: ‘eat starchy food’, ‘eat leafy greens’, ‘eat ripe-fruit’ and ‘eat animal’ (Burenhult & Kruspe 2016:5), despite the fact that the Aslian remained foragers while the Kanak rapidly combined agricultural resources with forest subsistence.

This large array of semantic granularity found in the verbal lexical domain of Kanak languages is also relevant as far as possessive classifiers systems are concerned in these languages. Indeed, indirect possessive constructions involving edible items also provide information on the noun class with which it is associated through the choice of the possessive classifier. If it is true that Oceanic languages typically have elaborate systems of possessive classifiers, Kanak languages are particularly significant in the use they make of such rich

systems mainly based on the criterion of the nature of food. Food and eating appear to be a central distinctive key in conceptualization and categorization of the surrounding world for Kanak language speakers, either lexically (in the verbal domain) or morphosyntactically (in the possessive classifier domain).

Finally, we turned our attention to morphosyntactical considerations about the Oceanic ‘eating’ verbs. It is cross-linguistically well attested that the verbs for ‘eat’ “are two-participants verbs, but not necessarily transitive verbs” as pointed out by Næss (2011:414), since they often occur without an object. This observation is further supported by the fact that most Oceanic languages only retained one of the two POC verbs for ‘eat (in general)’, which - though semantically transitive - does not follow the prototypical behavior of transitive verbs. have shown that in the Oceanic languages which retained reflexes of both the intransitive and the transitive POC verbs, or which have two different forms for the same verb according to the valency, the situation is even more complex. In any case, however, the transitive verb is always patient-oriented: the patient is optionally expressed with generic ‘eat’ verbs, and obligatorily expressed with non-generic ones. Indeed, in Kanak languages, the main parameter associated with the basic action of eating is what is eaten. The selection of a verb typically depends on the meaning of the object, i. e. on the type of food that is eaten, along with the manner of eating it.

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APPENDIX

Table 12: Comparative lexicon for 'eating' verbs in 22 Kanak languages

Subgroup	Language (from North to South)	Lexical food categories distinguished by 'eating' verbs ²¹	generic	sugarcane	chewable food (barks, magnania, chewing-gum)	starchy food (yam, taro, manioc, banana, bread, rice...)	proteins (meat, fish, seafood, coconut flesh...)	greens, leaves, fruits	raw food, green fruits
No. of languages	22		22	19	13	15	17	12	3
New Caledonia > Mainland > North	Nyelâyu	5	<i>huu</i>	<i>huur</i>		starchy food + protein <i>huc</i>		<i>ûûr</i>	<i>thaxilo</i>
	Nêlêmwa	5	<i>khû-wo, khuxi</i>	<i>khuri</i>		<i>khuxi, baali</i> ²²		<i>kûûra/kûûri</i>	<i>thaxilolî</i>
	Caac	6	<i>huu; whic</i>	<i>huuxuc</i>	<i>maani</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>wii</i>	<i>kuuni</i>	
	Jawe	6	<i>huu</i>	<i>huli</i>	<i>hwei</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kuuni</i>	
	Nemi, Fwâi	6	<i>hwi-aman</i>	<i>huli</i>	<i>hwai</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kaje</i>	
	Pije	6	<i>hwi-aman</i>	<i>holi</i>	<i>hwai</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kaje</i>	
	Pwapwâ	6	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>xhuli</i>	<i>xhwei</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûûni</i>	
	Pwaamei	6	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>huti</i>	<i>xhwai</i>	<i>zani</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûûni</i>	
	Bwattoo	5	<i>vwhaxi-aman</i>	<i>xhuti</i>		<i>xhajake</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûû</i>	
	Vamale	5	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>xhuti</i>	<i>fwai</i>	<i>xhajake</i>		<i>xaje</i>	
	Cèmuhî	5	<i>wîi-naado</i>		<i>pwèi</i>	<i>éni</i>	<i>wîi</i>	<i>anye</i>	
	Paicî	4	<i>îjá</i>	<i>wîi</i>	<i>pwé</i>		<i>útf</i>		
New Caledonia > Mainland > South	Ajië	5	<i>ara</i>	<i>wa'</i>	<i>kwârâ</i>	<i>kâi</i>	<i>öi</i>		
	Xârâcùù	4	<i>da</i>	sugarcane + chewable food <i>xwii</i>		<i>kê</i>	<i>xwè</i>		
	Haméa, Tîrî	4	<i>harra</i>	<i>hwii</i>		<i>é</i>	<i>ho</i>		
	Drubéa	4	<i>kèrè-re</i>	<i>kûu-re</i>			protein + greens <i>kwè-re</i>		<i>kwè-bérii-re</i>
	Numèè	3	<i>kii-rè</i>	<i>kuu-rè</i>			<i>kwè-re</i> (- fish)		
New Caledonia > Loyalty Islands	Iaai	3	<i>an/han</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>hicâ</i>				
	Drehu	3	<i>xen</i>	<i>atra</i>			<i>öni</i>		
	Nengone	3	<i>kaka/kakan</i>		<i>chapfan</i>		<i>ia/ian</i>		

²¹. We only counted categories that are distinguished by specific verbs (or the generic). A verb that merges two categories of otherwise distinguished categories is not counted.

²². *Ba/baali* in Nixumwak (Koumac dialect; Bril 2000:95).

**Toward a comparative typology of ‘eating’
in some Oceanic languages**

EXTRACTED TABLES

Table 1: Comparative lexicon for 'eating' verbs in 22 Kanak languages

Subgroup	Language (from North to South)	Lexical food categories distinguished by 'eating' verbs ¹	generic	sugarcane	chewable food (barks, magnania, chewing-gum)	starches (yam, taro, manioc, banana, bread, rice...)	proteins (meat, fish, seafood, coconut flesh...)	greens, leaves, fruits	raw food, green fruits
No. of languages	22		22	19	13	15	17	12	3
New Caledonia > Mainland > North	Nyelâyu	5	<i>huu</i>	<i>huur</i>		starches + protein <i>huc</i>		<i>ûûr</i>	<i>thaxilo</i>
	Nêlêmwa	5	<i>khu-wo, khuxi</i>	<i>khuri</i>		<i>khuxi, baali</i> ²		<i>kûûra/kûûri</i>	<i>thaxiloli</i>
	Caac	6	<i>huu; whic</i>	<i>huuxuc</i>	<i>maani</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>wii</i>	<i>kuuni</i>	
	Jawe	6	<i>huu</i>	<i>huli</i>	<i>hwei</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kuuni</i>	
	Nemi, Fwâi	6	<i>hwi-aman</i>	<i>huli</i>	<i>hwai</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kaje</i>	
	Pije	6	<i>hwi-aman</i>	<i>holi</i>	<i>hwai</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>kaje</i>	
	Pwapwâ	6	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>xhuli</i>	<i>xhwei</i>	<i>cani</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûûni</i>	
	Pwaamei	6	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>huti</i>	<i>xhwai</i>	<i>zani</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûûni</i>	
	Bwatoo	5	<i>vwhaxi-aman</i>	<i>xhuti</i>		<i>xhajake</i>	<i>xhwii</i>	<i>kûû</i>	
	Vamale	5	<i>xhwi-aman</i>	<i>xhuti</i>	<i>fwai</i>	<i>xhajake</i>		<i>xaje</i>	
	Cêmuhi	5	<i>wîi-naado</i>		<i>pwèi</i>	<i>éni</i>	<i>wîi</i>	<i>anye</i>	
New Caledonia > Mainland > South	Paicî	4	<i>îjá</i>	<i>wîi</i>	<i>pwé</i>		<i>útí</i>		
	Ajiê	5	<i>ara</i>	<i>wa'</i>	<i>kwârâ</i>	<i>kâi</i>	<i>öi</i>		
	Xârâcùù	4	<i>da</i>	sugarcane + chewable food <i>xwii</i>		<i>kê</i>	<i>xwè</i>		
	Haméa, Tîrî	4	<i>harra</i>	<i>hwii</i>		<i>é</i>	<i>ho</i>		
	Drubéa	4	<i>kèrè-re</i>	<i>kûu-re</i>			protein + greens <i>kwè-re</i>		<i>kwè-bérii-re</i>
New Caledonia > Loyalty Islands	Numèè	3	<i>kii-rè</i>	<i>kuu-rè</i>			<i>kwè-re</i> (- fish)		
	Iaai	3	<i>an/han</i>	<i>hwii</i>	<i>hicâ</i>				
	Drehu	3	<i>xen</i>	<i>atra</i>			<i>öni</i>		
	Nengone	3	<i>kaka/kakan</i>		<i>chaphan</i>		<i>ia/ian</i>		

¹. We only counted categories that are distinguished by specific verbs (or the generic). A verb that merges two categories of otherwise distinguished categories is not counted.

². *Ba/baali* in Nixumwak (Koumac dialect; Bril 2000:95).

Map 1. The Kanak languages of New Caledonia (LACITO, 2014)

THE LANGUAGES OF NEW CALEDONIA

