
The Javanese Diaspora in New Caledonia Reflected in Ama Bastien's *Le Rêve Accompli de Bandung à Noumea* and Marc Bouan's *L'Echarpe et le Kriss*

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ABSTRACT

New Caledonia is a French Overseas Territory whose literary works do not take the “center stage” in Francophone literature. In particular, the Javanese diasporic community in this archipelago has received relatively little attention from researchers, with past studies largely focusing on Javanese indentured laborers in Suriname, instead. This research examined the autobiographical novels of two New Caledonian writers, *Le rêve accompli de Bandung à Nouméa* by Ama Bastien and *L'écharpe et le kriss* by Marc Bouan. These writers belong to the second generation of Javanese immigrants, whose parents came to New Caledonia at the beginning of the 20th century under the indentured laborer scheme. The analysis employed diasporic and cultural identity as its theoretical framework, along with Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's comparative cultural studies method. The results explicate the way in which these novels embody the establishment of identity in the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia. They also demonstrate how the contestation of identity and memory is inextricably linked to the problems of the Javanese diasporic communities. These findings should contribute to and encourage the further study of diasporic communities related to Southeast Asian indentured labor.

Keywords: *diaspora, Java, novel, New Caledonia*

INTRODUCTION

Literary works written in French about New Caledonia seem to be at the periphery of Francophone literary studies. Officially, France claimed its control over New Caledonia on 24 September 1853 during the reign of Napoleon III. The establishment of Nouméa as the capital on 25 June 1854 signifies the commencement of French rule. New Caledonia was colonized due to its fertile soil and climate, and became known as “Southern France” (Muljono-Larue, 1996, p. 18). New Caledonia is also referred to as “France at Sea” where it has special autonomy (Maurer, 2006, p. 183).

Research in this area of Javanese diasporic Francophone literature seems to be inadequate. To understand the reasons, one should refer back to the

historical facts when the French government faced various challenges in ruling and exploiting the resources in its colonies. The distance between New Caledonia and France is far. It also faced a shortage of manpower and settlers to exploit natural resources in the mining sector (coal, nickel, tin) and to work in the agricultural sector (coffee plantations). To overcome these problems, the French government in 1864, decided to send 21,630 prisoners from France to be used as forced laborers in New Caledonia (Muljono-Larue, 1996, p. 19). However, this decision did not go as planned because these ex-prisoners preferred to work in the commerce sector rather than work in mines or on plantations.

The Governor-General of New Caledonia took the

initiative to obtain workers from the Dutch East Indies. It presented an opportunity because this colony was suffering from food shortages due to its rapid population growth. The French Ministry of Colonial Affairs issued Letter no. 26 of 24 March 1899 to Governor Guillaïn, who then agreed to seek an agreement concerning the immigration of workers from Java. These workers were a sound choice because they were hard workers and were accustomed to a tropical climate.

The first immigrant group numbering 170 people arrived at New Caledonia on February 16, 1896 on the Saint-Louis ship (Muljono-Larue, 1996, p. 35). Two more groups of Javanese immigrants came to New Caledonia several years later. After completing their contract, they were given the choice by the colonial government to stay and become a part of New Caledonia society or to return to their homeland. Most of these workers chose to stay because they had a decent job and housing. They were afraid of not having this same standard of living if they returned to Java. These immigrants inter-married with Kanaks¹⁾ and other immigrant communities, and so the Javanese diaspora²⁾ was established.

A diaspora is more than a sociocultural-historical occurrence. It is a product of intensely subjective processes drawing upon racial and collective memory, as well as grieving that are not always expressed verbally. The narratives of immigrant descendants are frequently overlooked in studies of diasporic communities, despite the fact that the potential cultural and identity conflicts in their narratives can reveal a great deal about their diasporic condition. Children born in the home country and brought to the host country at a young age are included among the immigrant descendants (Purkayastha, 2005; Thomson & Crul, 2007). For many immigrant descendants, their lives are in a constant state of uncertainty. While they are less discriminated against than their parents, they still struggle with “belonging,” and their identities “float” between family and community (Lee & Kim, 2014, p. 107). As a result of the diasporic community’s absorption into society, they are frequently referred to as the “invisible minority” (Beaman, 2017, p. 75; Ndiaye, 2008, p. 18). The same situation exists within the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia. The second generation of immigrants starts facing an identity crisis. Their identity is formed in the space between a center (French government as the ruler of the colony) and a periphery (Javanese immigrant descendants’ diaspora). This identity issue is the main focus of this research.

Diasporic literature is an expression of this identity issue, serving as a vehicle for immigrant descendants living in diasporic communities to articulate their

diasporic subjectivities (Adams, 2011; Grace, 2007; Ling, 1998; Moslund, 2010; Schacht, 2009; Wong, 1993). In personal and family narratives, immigrant descendants examine their complex sentiments and the dynamics of living across cultures. They employ these narratives with the advantage of being well-versed in host cultural norms and language ability, having been born in or having emigrated to the host country at a young age.

This study examines two novels written by descendants of Javanese in New Caledonia: *Le rêve accompli de Bandung à Nouméa* (2008) by Ama Bastien’s and *L’écharpe et le kriss* (2003) Marc Bouan. Within francophone studies, the novels written by authors of Javanese descent are distinct from the francophone literature from the Maghreb and other French colonies. New Caledonian francophone literature is considered peripheral (Soula, 2014, p. 14) and is frequently overlooked, despite the fact that New Caledonia is a French Overseas Territory. For authors of Javanese ancestry, the decision to use the French language in their works is a contentious matter. Their inherent inclination to write in French stems from their upbringing in New Caledonia. However, French is a double-edged sword for them. On the one hand, they require it in order to communicate with a larger audience, but on the other hand, it precipitates a cultural “catastrophe” for them. As Majumdar emphasizes, this circumstance results in a dual aspect of language: a technical mastery of it’s grammar and acceptance of the language’s culture (Majumdar, 2007, p. 149).

While a considerable body of research on immigrants and French literature particularly, Maghreb immigrants exists, articles exploring francophone literature in New Caledonia are hard to find. Nevertheless, a small number of articles, in this broader body of Francophone literary research, provide a good reference on the immigrant position in French literature. One such study is an article by (Mabanckou & Nicholson-Smith, 2011). This article elucidates the dualism of African francophone writers who write about their life experience as immigrants. They are perceived as supporters of the colonial government as some of these writers depict Africa from the point of view of people who are privileged by France as opposed to portraying Africa from the point of view of indigenous Africans (Mabanckou & Nicholson-Smith, 2011).

Research on the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia is mainly anthropological for example, Jean-Luc Maurer’s research on the history of Javanese society and their life in mining and agricultural areas in New Caledonia (Maurer, 2002, 2006, 2010). Other examples

of anthropological research are the diasporas of world society using New Caledonia as its focus (Clifford, 2001), and New Caledonia's dark history as a French Penal colony (Dutton, 2013; Sanchez, 2018; Merle & Coquet, 2019). Meanwhile, there is a limited number of studies about the Javanese language and literature in New Caledonia. For example, the strategies of Javanese descendants living in New Caledonia to keep Javanese language alive (Subiyantoro, 2014), and studies on the history of New Caledonia literature as a part of francophone literature (Soula, 2014), and the comparison between Javanese descendants and Indo-china descendants stereotypes in New Caledonia literature (Jouve, 2007).

This paper, aside from discussing the novels written by authors of Javanese descent to describe the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia, also makes an original contribution to fill a research gap in the Southeast Asian diasporic formation. This article highlights the emergence of the narrative of Southeast Asian old diasporic³ stories retold by their grandchildren and or great-grandchildren. There have been few stories written about the experience of Asian indentured laborers in its affective dimensions and of these most have been h written by authors of Indian descent. Given the lack of discussion on Asian and Southeast Asian indentured laborers' narrative, this research adds to the narrative of Javanese indentured labor to the discussion of the broader narrative of Asian indentured labor and diasporic communities.

METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on two *roman-mémoire* novels written by second generation Javanese descendants; Ama Bastien's *Le rêve accompli de Bandung à Nouméa* (2008) and Marc Bouan's *L'écharpe et le kriss* (2003). These novels describe the life of the writers' fathers and grandfathers as Javanese immigrants in New Caledonia. What the novels reveal is the fact that the issue of identity is a never-ending discussion. It is obvious that the writers show their strong intention to trace their "roots" and history as Javanese descendants. One interesting feature of these novels is the effort to raise the position of the Javanese society which used to be perceived as "a peripheral community" to be in "the center" and so the Javanese diasporic community also plays a pivotal role in the establishment of New Caledonian society

This research addresses two main research questions: (a) how do the writers portray the diaspora of Javanese society in their novels? and (b) what are the processes shaping the identity of the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia? To answer these questions, this research

applies Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's comparative cultural studies method. This method raises two issues related to what happens with the cultural product and, second, as to how it happens. This method uses a central-peripheral model from postcolonial studies. In addition, this method also elucidates how the process of cultural mediation, assimilation, and alternative space from cultural knowledge can be used to comprehend the interrelationship of the central-peripheral paradigm. The central-peripheral conceptual model is an action and reaction process in which there are central restraints acting against the peripheral areas, which then react negatively by proclaiming their sovereignty (de Zepetnek, 2002).

DISCUSSION

Roman mémoire and the memories of the homeland

The research objects are two *roman mémoire* novels which describe the lives of the writers. These novels are written based on real events and critical moments from each author's life. This genre first began to rise in France during the 17th century when the enlightenment movement was in its ascendancy (Lejeune, 1975; Zanone, 1996; Delon, 2002). This genre presents memories and reflection which are considered important in a person's life. Sometimes, people confuse this genre with autobiography. Both genres reveal the author's personal life; however, autobiography presents events deemed factual by the author. Truth and reality in autobiography are sometimes obscure and ambiguous since this genre uses more narration to create a more dramatic effect. These two genres apply the first-person point of view in narrating the story. However, it is possible to use the second- and third-person point of view to tell the story.

Philippe Lejeune further explains that in autobiography there is a correspondence between the names of the writers, narrators, and/or characters (either in the title or in the story). He also points out that autobiographical novels could have similitudes with autobiography, although they still have distinctive differences. Lejeune emphasizes that an autobiographical novel triggers readers' curiosity on the resemblances between the author and the characters. The writers are free to choose whether they admit the resemblance or leave the readers in a state of curiosity (Lejeune, 1975, p. 25).

The first novel analyzed is Ama Bastien's *Le rêve accompli de Bandung à Nouméa* (2008). She is a Javanese-descendant writer who was born and lived in New Caledonia. This novel tells the history of a family

narrated from the point of view of the author's paternal grandfather, Wiriata Moeljadi. The story starts from his life in Java to his immigration to New Caledonia. Using the third person's point of view, this novel portrays the dynamics in the author's grandfather's family. The difference of opinion concerning the choice of career between the author's father and grandfather as well as a tragic love story leads Wiriata to emigrate to New Caledonia. Upon arriving at New Caledonia, Wiriata must adapt to a new environment. Two critical moments are faced, he must learn French and change his name from Wiriata Moeljadi to Wiriata Djoemadi. The novel ends with the meeting of Laila (Wiriata's daughter) and Samia (Wiriata's mother) in Bandung. This moment "resolves" a long-running, convoluted dispute and ends Wiriata's long search and dream to return to Bandung to live out his remaining days after living in Noumea.

Marc Bouan's novel entitled *L'écharpe et le kriss* (2003) presents a different story. The main character is François Barou, an Indonesian-descendant banker who lives in New Caledonia with his family. He came to New Caledonia with the third group of Indonesian immigrants. Then, he befriends Livége Canelli and Carl Desvilles. Their friendship stems from the fact that they are non-Kanak and immigrant's descendants. François tries to understand and find more information on Javanese spirituality, and Livége, who had a *kriss* (Javanese dagger) when he was a child, helps him. The story does not only revolve around the search for a *kriss* and how François learns about his Javanese identity, but it also elaborates the Javanese sociocultural aspects of the immigrants in New Caledonia. Further, it depicts obstacles they face in adapting to living in New Caledonia. Some obstacles which these immigrants face include the obligation to learn French, changing the family name, and converting to another religion. This novel ends with a letter from Carl to his friends in which he tells about his journey to Jakarta. At the end of this novel there is also the author's reflection on the story of immigrants and their deep longing for their homeland.

These novels have many interesting aspects. First, they depict the life of the Javanese immigrants in New Caledonia who developed the Javanese diaspora. Second, the authors implicitly question their identity since they are Javanese-descendant authors and have a Javanese name, but they write novels in French. Third, the story attempts to reconstruct the family history in their effort to trace their identity.

An attempt to search for self-identity can be associated with collective memory. For example, Bastien and Bouan present two different but similar points of

view about how their grandfather and grandmother coming to New Caledonia. In Bastien's novel, the main character came to Noumea due to a family problem and the need to seek a decent job (Bastien, 2008, p. 14). Meanwhile, Bouan tells a story of his grandfather, as the main character, who came to New Caledonia together with the third group of Javanese immigrants (Bouan, 2003, p. 23). The arrival of these Javanese immigrants serves as a fixed point in time to develop the story in these autobiographical novels. Additionally, it plays an important role to establish the identity of Javanese descendants in New Caledonia.

Stories and memories are continuously reproduced to form one collective memory. Barash and Ricoeur state that collective memories do not simply depict large phenomena. Collective memories also embrace another experience in a narrower scope, for example family experience and history. These memories eventually become collective memories, referencing less complicated memories such as important events which all family members will forever remember (Halbwachs, 1992; Barash, 2006, p. 189; Oulahal, Guerraoui, & Denoux, 2018).

The novels provide no clues as to the time period of the story and the nature of the relationships between the characters and the writers. However, the description of Ata's profession and the reasons for coming to New Caledonia hints that Ata was not one of the mining workers who came to New Caledonia after the issuance of Letter no 26 of 24 March 1899. The Ministry of Colonial Affairs sent this letter to Governor Guillain as the responsible official to establish an agreement on the immigration of Javanese workers. Ata came as a volunteer to work in one of the hospitals in Noumea along with the arrivals of a third-group of Javanese immigrants. He married a local girl and had some children (Bastien, 2008, p. 313).

It can be said that these novels present more family history than the author's life story. Moreover, these novels contain fictional elements that dramatize the plot. Thus, these novels can be classified into an autofiction. Bastien prefers to collect the puzzles on his family history in Nouvelle-Calédonie to dig out the identity conflict as a Javanese-descendant who lives in New Caledonia. It is worth noting that many Javanese living in Nouvelle-Calédonie have no idea why they turn out to live there and the struggle when starting a new life in Nouvelle-Calédonie. In the last one-third part of the novel, the author invites the readers to follow Ata's life when he first came to Nouvelle-Calédonie, his sadness to be apart with his family in Bandung, and his self-adaptation with new society and environment, language barrier, and cultural

disparities. With a simple plot, Bastien presents the reality of Javanese immigrants in Nouvelle-Calédonie from a rarely-exposed aspect.

Thus, it is not an exaggeration to mention that the interesting value of this novel lies in the transformation of the memories on the family history into a written form since these memories were previously told as an oral narrative and passed down from generation to generation. However, these memories do not have a direct correlation with the process of France's colonization of New Caledonia. The obstacle which Bastien vividly portrays in his novel is gaining mastery of the French language. Ata, the main character, must learn the French language after he arrives in Nouvelle-Calédonie. Culture shock is another obstacle which Ata must overcome in Nouvelle-Calédonie. He had to start everything from scratch, and his life in this new place was completely different from what he had in Bandung. In addition, his idea of marrying a local girl did not go as smoothly as he planned (Bastien, 2008, p. 395).

This situation would be different if Ata had been a part of Kanak society or one of the Javanese immigrants who had come to Nouvelle-Calédonie to work as a miner. Ata had belonged to upper middle class society as he had managed a company in Bandung but decided to move to Nouvelle-Calédonie as a volunteer. Given these circumstances, he had come to Nouvelle-Calédonie of his own will. Ata was not subject to French colonial repression as were Nouvelle-Calédonie's people and the Kanak tribe. Ata remained an Indonesian citizen until he died. His children and grandchildren became a part of the society in Nouvelle-Calédonie and a part of French Overseas Territory.

The Dynamic of Identity and the Javanese Diaspora in New Caledonia

A diaspora is closely related to the idea of a "homeland," and has become a much discussed terminology, and is associated with the history of the Jewish people (Sheffer, 2003, p. 9; Cohen, 2008). The diasporic process shows a correlation with a concept of "galut" or exile in Hebrew. Diaspora is understood as the process in which people disperse or migrate from one area to various parts of the world (Ben-Rafael, 2010, p. 1). William Safran explains that diaspora has several characteristics, comprising the dispersal from a homeland to two or more foreign regions, the building of collective myths on homeland, alienation from homeland, a strong desire to return to the homeland, and continuous relationship and contact with the homeland (Safran, 1991, p. 2; Asscher & Shiff,

2020, p. 1; Brah, 2018, p. 236). Robert Cohen adds two additional characteristics; the diaspora contains ethno-national awareness and a decision as to whether the diaspora society is willing to return to their homeland or stay in their new place and become a part of the host society (Cohen, 2008, 2015, p. 353).

The diasporic characteristics of the Javanese community in New Caledonia shows strong attachment to Javanese artifacts and cultural symbols which is completely different from that of other immigrant societies. This is a consequence of the Javanese immigrants' history. They came to New Caledonia as contract workers under an agreement made between the Dutch East Indies government and the French Colonial government. One of the important aspects in the research on the Javanese immigrants and their descendants in New Caledonia is the extent to which they are able to adapt and blend into the new environment (Jouve, 2007, p. 3). At first, the French colonial government questioned these immigrants' suitability as the Javanese people were rumored to be violent and aggressive. This had to be considered by the French colonial government because there had been a workers' uprising in the French colony of Indochina before the arrival of the first group of immigrants in Noumea (Muljono-Larue, 1996, p. 29). However, any apprehension about these Javanese contract workers gradually subsided because they were obedient and hard-working people. Therefore, the French colonial government asked for a second group of Javanese immigrants to be brought to New Caledonia.

The development of a diaspora can be classified into two categories. First, solid diaspora is categorized by the strong myth of a homeland, and second, liquid diaspora which has more flexible and new cultural ties and characterized by the substitution of sacred icons as homeland markers (Cohen, 2006, p. 40, 2008). These two novels present a solid diaspora as they show the continuous efforts to sustain a strong myth of Java as the homeland. In his autobiographical novel, Bastien portrays Wiriata as having a strong desire to return to his homeland although he has a trauma and a fear of returning. He never loses this desire throughout his life in New Caledonia (Bastien, 2008, p. 319). Bouan also narrates a similar story in which François wants to return to Java, and shares his feelings with Carl, his best friend, who does not have any ties with Java (Bouan, 2003, p. 283).

In addition to the plot which conveys strong ties with the homeland, the titles of these novels also reflect how the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia has a close connection with Java. Bastien chooses the term "*le rêve*

accompli” to narrate his “grandfather’s dream” to seek a better life in Noumea and ends his novel with Wiriata returning to Bandung to complete that dream.

“I almost believed that I had in the end forsaken my dream, but when I was there and gazed at the horizon, I felt the agony.” (Bastien, 2008, p. 71)⁴⁾

The quote above implies the strong desire of the main character in Bastien’s novel to return to his homeland after staying in New Caledonia for many years. Bouan, on the other hand, chooses the term “*le kriss*” to describe a strong bond with Java. The following quote signifies a spiritual bond with this Javanese icon.

“The Javanese perceive that a ‘kris’ possesses a magical power and gives its owner a ‘virtue’ or ‘benefit.’ In other words, a ‘kris’ has a supernatural power. Conversely, another force, referred to as ‘magical’ or ‘powerful,’ drives this ‘kris’ to be independent and invincible.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 171)⁵⁾

The example above shows the interrelationship of the strong ethno-social concept between the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia and their homeland. Despite having a successful life in Noumea, these people still nurture a strong desire to return and live in Java despite not having any idea as to what kind of life they would experience in their homeland. This dilemma results in an identity conflict in the diasporic society. They have become a part of the host society, but they do not have roots in that society. As Benedict Anderson explains, they belong to an “imagined community.” It refers to a group in society united by images and myths about something. In other words, this community exists because imagination is what propels them (Anderson, 1991).

The process of identity shaping in the Javanese diasporic community in New Caledonia occurs in many aspects of life, as depicted in Bastien and Bouan’s novels. First, through their efforts to Frenchify names, so that French-speaking society do not find any difficulty in spelling their names.

“In the immigration office, the officers did not ask my name. I even made them believe that I was illiterate. So, I decided to change my name, without removing any letters. I changed it into Djoemadi. I used that name on my immigration card. I thought the officers would not ask about it since they needed many volunteer workers.” (Bastien, 2008, p. 287)⁶⁾

The quotation above is Wiriata’s story about changing his name. As an immigrant, he thought that it was necessary to change his name, so it would be much easier for people to pronounce it. Bouan also presents a similar case in the following quotation.

“In 1959, Pierre finally obtained French naturalization after he had applied a second time. He changed his name from Baru into Barou. He changed his name because the vowel “u” is pronounced “ou” in the Malay language.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 32)⁷⁾

Changing one’s name in contemporary France is a personal choice (Lapierre, 2006), but that is not the case with the Javanese indentured laborers. During the recruitment process, the recruitment agency changed the laborers’ name into a series of registration numbers. After they disembarked at the Port of Noumea, New Caledonia, the immigration officer changes the laborers’ name into something new, usually based on the phonetic interpretation of the name’s sound. The new name invented by the immigration officer became their name on the legal document (Muljono-Larue, 1996).

Besides changing their name, the immigrants and diasporic communities must be socially mobile to survive in a new environment. This social movement does not have correlation with goods or their utility. It is also not associated with what an individual has. It focuses on where the individual comes from, what goals they have, and what position this individual has in society (James, 1963). An upward social mobility is necessary to gain a much better life and to be accepted by the host society. Conversely, a downward social mobility leads to their lives becoming far from being decent. Often social mobility in a new environment is the work and adaptation of work ethics which can be chosen by the immigrants (Bastien, 2008, p. 296; Bouan, 2003, p. 106).

Another way to achieve upward social mobility is through the mastery of language. The island’s status as French Overseas Territory affected its culture and language. The language policy applied in the region must follow the French constitution, as stated in the French constitution article 2. This policy was modified when the ban on teaching regional languages in New Caledonia was lifted in 1992. Still, Javanese remains a second-class language along with the other languages of minority migrants (Vernaudeau, 2015).

Historically, the Javanese people in New Caledonia lacked literacy, including literacy in French. Therefore, the Javanese immigrants who obtained naturalization taught their children French instead of the Javanese

language. However, as represented in both novels, this led to a diminishing of Javanese identity in the second generation.

“Carl mocks François: I understand really well that you talk about yourself, but I never hear you speaking in Javanese! François replied while laughing: your brother and sister speak Javanese, but I don't. My parents want me to focus on learning French.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 252)⁸⁾

The quotation above shows a Javanese family in New Caledonia paying more attention to learning French than Javanese. The parents perceive that learning French provides more access for their children to blend into New Caledonian society. However, the main character in Bouan's autobiographical novel defends the young generation of Javanese descendants who are no longer able to speak Javanese. The situation illustrated above happens in most diaspora communities. As migrants bring their languages across borders, diasporic families and communities frequently disagree on which languages to use and when. Those who wish to preserve their homeland's traditional values and practices and maintain close ties with family and friends also want to preserve their ethnic languages. By contrast, those who embrace their new home's values and ways of life seek to integrate into the local culture and language (Pérez Báez, 2013; Hua & Wei, 2019).

These literary works can also be seen as examples of upward social mobility for immigrant descendants and the Javanese diasporic society in New Caledonia. This enables them to be a part of French society who are able to speak and produce a piece of writing in French.

CONCLUSION

In examining diasporic society, it can be likened to two opposing magnetic forces. On the one hand, it carries people's innate identity as descendants of a particular society. On the other hand, there exists a new identity, one of incorporation into the host society. These two juxtaposed identities are inseparable and define the identity of immigrants' descendants in a diasporic society.

This research analyzed two autobiographical novels written by Javanese-descendant authors who live in New Caledonia. Both of them question the history of the identity of family. They hold French citizenship with all the rights and obligations attached to it, but their ties to their ancestral homeland remain strong. For the immigrant, a home could be synonymous with one's place of origin, to which they want to return at

some point in their life. Certainly, the relationship of the immigrant with their homeland is different from that of subsequent generations, interfered with by the memories of what was left behind, and by the experiences of separation and displacement as one tries to create new social networks and adapt to new economic, political, and cultural realities.

Meanwhile, in a diasporic community, its collective history often leads to the continuous formulation and reproduction of myths, eventually seeming to become a collective truth. The process for immigrant descendants or the diasporic communities in other areas obviously differs from the New Caledonian one, for various historic reasons. This consequently presents an opportunity for further research in the future on a similar topic. Nonetheless, one cannot deny the significance of these two novels in terms of highlighting the richness of Francophone Oceania studies.

Based on the analysis of these works, what can be seen is the process of identity-shaping in the Javanese descendants in New Caledonia. It is what Stuart Hall describes as “a process of becoming” because this process will never be completed and undergoes constant transformation, depending on historical and cultural movements (Hall, 1990, p. 225; 2019, p. 100). This paper shows that individual identity in the Javanese diasporic society is shaped from a collective cultural identity, which is articulated through language, cultural symbols, and customs. This collective culture manifests itself as one “whole” self and is infused into the identity of the individuals. The individual then becomes bound with others in this collective culture by a shared history. Eventually, this cultural identity reflects similar historic experiences and results in the same cultural codes. Thus, it forms the “oneness” of the Javanese diasporic community.

ENDNOTES

- 1) The indigenes of New Caledonia.
- 2) Diaspora is defined as the dispersal of people from their original homeland. This word was first coined to describe the dispersion of the Jewish people to various parts of the world (Cohen, 2015; Tölölyan, 2019; Abebe, 2019).
- 3) The old Asian diaspora refers to those who emigrated as indentured labor after the abolition of slavery in 1830 [by which country?], while the new Asian diaspora refers to those who emigrated for purposes of education and work in the middle of the late twentieth century (Bhautoo-Dewnarain, 2012, p. 35).

- 4) Original text: “Je croyais avoir définitivement oublié mes rêves, mais d’être là, à regarder l’horizon, me rend malade.” (Bastien, 2008, p.71). English translation by the article’s author.
- 5) Original text: “Pour les Javanais, le kriss posséderait une puissance pleine de magie, le “kasiat” ou le “vertu” qui peut assister le propriétaire. Il a des pouvoirs surnaturels. À l’inverse, une autre force dit “ampuh” ou “puissance” rendait les kriss indépendants, incontrôlables.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 287). English translation by the article’s author.
- 6) Original text: “Au bureau de l’émigration, on ne m’a pas demandé mon nom. J’ai même fait croire que je ne savais ni lire ni écrire. Alors, j’ai décidé de changer de nom, et ne changeant les lettres place j’ai trouvé Djoemadi. C’est ce nom qui est inscrit sur ma carte d’immigré. Mais je ne crois pas que l’on me cherchera des histoires pour cela, ils ont trop besoin de travailleurs volontaires.” (Bastien, 2008, p. 287). English translation by the article’s author.
- 7) Original text: “En 1959, Pierre obtient sa naturalisation française à la suite de sa deuxième demande. Il fut ainsi obtenu le nom de BARU, Pierre approuva cette francisation du nom et la retransforma en BAROU car le u se prononce ou en Malais.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 32). English translation by the article’s author.
- 8) Carl se moqua de François: “Je conçois bien que tu parles des tiens mais je ne t’ai jamais entendu parler javanais!” François rit et avoua: “Mon frère et ma sœur aînés parlaient couramment le javanais, moi pas. Mes parents souhaitaient que je puisse consacrer exclusivement à l’apprentissage de la langue française.” (Bouan, 2003, p. 252). English translation by the article’s author.

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