

7 *Spatial deixis in Iaaï (Loyalty Islands)*

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1 Introduction

Deictic terms (from the Greek *deiktikos* ‘showing’), which allow the speaker to locate people, objects and events, are no doubt common to all languages. However, the way in which spatial deixis is organised, and the number of oppositions that exist can be extremely variable from one language to another. In some languages, certain sets of deictics may be more fully developed than in others. This is the case in French, which has a two-degree opposition with certain demonstrative pronouns (*celui-ci* ‘this one’ / *celui-là* ‘that one’), but a three-degree opposition in the case of adverbs (*ici* ‘here’ / *là* ‘there’ / *là-bas* ‘over there, yonder’).

According to Anderson and Keenan (1985:308), all demonstrative systems are based on at least two terms, and in this basic type of system it is the relative distance from the speaker (proximal/distal) that counts. The opposition in English between *this* and *that* is an example of this. However, in some languages we find systems that include three degrees (proximal/medial/distal), as in Spanish (*este/ese/aquel*), or even more. In Malagasy, for instance, as many as seven degrees of distancing from the speaker can be found (Domenichini-Ramiaramanana 1976:106).

As well as relative distance from the speaker, some deictic systems also take into account the space occupied by the addressee. Systems of this kind, organised according to the different speakers in a given linguistic situation, usually involve at least three terms (close to the speaker / close to the addressee / far from both). Latin offers a classic example (*hic/iste/illic*), but systems of this kind can also be found in many Polynesian languages. In Tahitian, for example, the three deictic particles *nei*, *na* and *ra* are clearly used with reference to the first, second and third persons (Lazard & Peltzer 1992:210) as are the three particles *ne(i)*, *na* and *la* in Pileni (Næss, this volume).

Finally, some deictic systems (distance-oriented as well as person-oriented systems) may also include other parameters, such as visibility, verticality, topography, mobility or immobility, animate/inanimate, etc. These complex, multioriented systems are common in the Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages of Oceania (cf. Mosel 1982 and Senft, ed. 1997). I have studied some examples myself, in the languages of New Caledonia and

the Loyalty Islands (Ozanne-Rivierre 1997:92–98). Today, I would like to come back in more detail to the organisation of spatial deixis in one of the languages of the Loyalty Islands, the laai language of Uvea.

2 The geographical and linguistic situation of Uvea

As the deictic system of laai is closely related to the natural environment of the island, here are some geographical details to help understand the system.

Uvea is the northernmost of the Loyalty Islands, a dependency of the Territory of New Caledonia. It consists of a coral atoll, sloping from east to west, and containing a lagoon. The main island, made up of two parts linked by a narrow stretch of coral, is prolonged at both ends by a string of islets forming a ring, only two of which are inhabited: Fayava and Muli, the islets nearest the southern tip (see map).

On the island itself, most of the villages are situated on the west coast, known as *Gööny*, which borders on the lagoon. The east coast, known as *Cöu*, consists of a rocky plateau with steep cliffs going straight down to the sea. Apart from the village of Ohnyât in the north, this part of the island is completely uninhabited.

The people of Uvea speak two languages: laai, a Melanesian language spoken by the native population, and Fagauvea, a Polynesian outlier, which has been spoken for several centuries in the northernmost and southernmost regions of the island by the descendents of migrants who came originally from Wallis.

Iaai is an Oceanic language of the New Caledonian group, spoken by some 2500 speakers (and around 1000 speakers living on the Mainland). Iaai, Nengone and Drehu, form the Loyalty subgroup of New Caledonian languages.

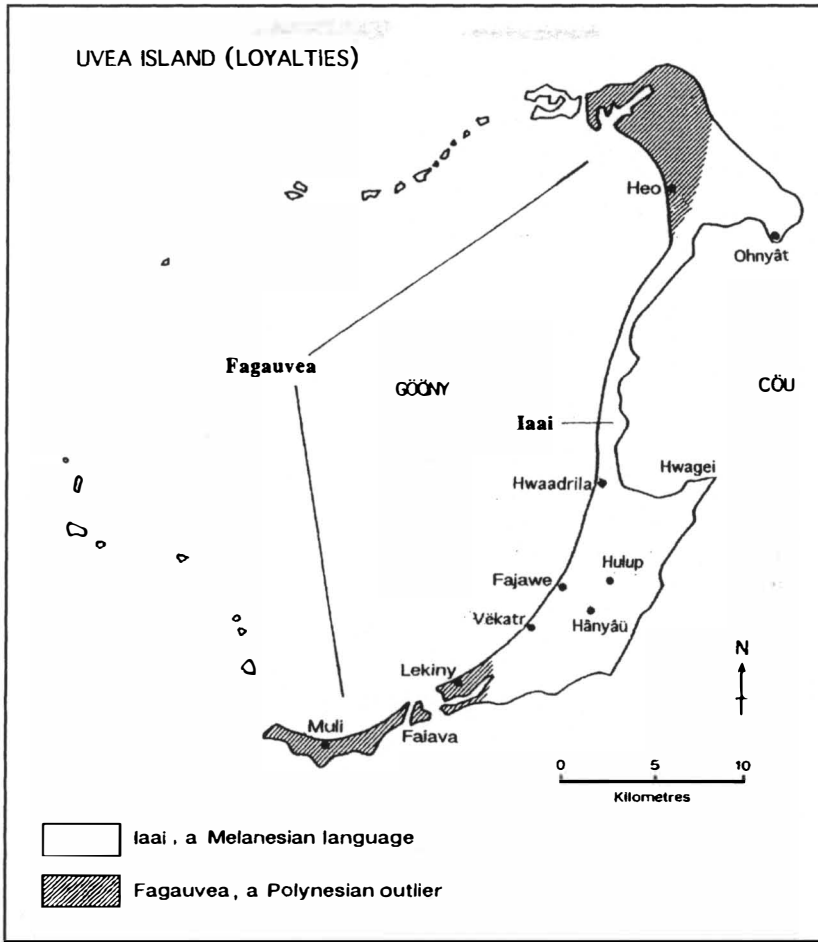
Iaai is central for the reconstruction of the Proto neo-Caledonian consonant system, as it is the only language of that group to have preserved its complex verbal morphology, including reduplication, which helps account for the split of oral and nasal consonants, which is still characteristic of all the languages of the group (Ozanne-Rivierre 1986).

Syntactically, Iaai is an accusative language with VOS unmarked word order. Predicative groups in this language usually contain personal subject markers to indicate the co-referent of the external nominal subject. Temporal-aspect markers are inserted between the subject marker and the predicate (1).

- (1) *Aa umdö kou ee wa-nu Poou.*
 3SG+ACC finish split ART coco Poou
 ‘Poou has finished splitting the coconut shells.’ (for copra)

Arguments and adjuncts may be topicalised by anteposition to the predicative group with a pause (ex. *Poou // aa umdö kou jee wa-nu*), but the topic is mostly marked by the discontinuous morpheme *haba ... me* ‘as for ... then’ (ex. *Haba Poou me aa umdö kou jee wa-nu*).

A more detailed study of Iaai morphology and syntax can be found in the monograph on this language (Ozanne-Rivierre 1976).



3 The system of spatial deictic locatives

The system of deictic locatives is especially rich in Iaai and involves several parameters:

1. Orientation relative to the speech-act participants (near speaker/near addressee/far from both speaker and addressee)
2. Verticality (up/down)
3. The geographical environment (sea/land, west/east)
4. The type of scale (large scale or limited setting)
5. Anaphoric restatement of items previously mentioned
6. A static or dynamic point of view (location/source or goal)

A list of these locatives is presented in Table 1. As we will see later, some of these deictic locatives can also have a temporal value.

Table 1: Deictic locatives in Iaaï

<i>ang</i>	here (near speaker)	DISTANCE AND SPEAKERS
<i>e</i>	there (near addressee)	
<i>lee</i>	far from both speaker and addressee	
<i>jii</i>	down (and towards the sea)	VERTICALITY AND TOPOGRAPHY
<i>jo</i>	down (near speaker)	
<i>dhöö</i>	up (and inland)	
<i>lââ</i>	beside (same level)	
<i>ü</i>	<u>on a large scale (fixed points)</u> sunset, west, west coast (<i>Gööny</i>) <u>in a limited setting (relative points)</u> towards the sea, down below	GEOGRAPHICAL ENVIRONMENT
<i>ïö</i>	<u>on a large scale (fixed points)</u> sunrise, east, east coast (<i>Cöu</i>) <u>in a limited setting (relative points)</u> inland, on high ground	
<i>ling</i>	person, object or place previously mentioned	ANAPHORIC USE

Deictic locatives, in the forms presented in Table 1, can be used as expansions of independent personal forms (2), of the presentative *wale* (3a and 3b) and of the similitive predicate *helâ* 'be like' (4).

- (2) *Tiga örin ang.*
still 3PL **here**
'They are still here'
- (3) a. *Walaang dok a-me laba hmyin.*
PRESENTATIVE+**here** place 3SG-PRESENT stay inside
'Here is the place where he lives'
- b. *Wale jii anyâ-m sigââ!*
PRESENTATIVE **down** CLASS-your tobacco
'Here's your tobacco!' (words of greeting with some present)
- (4) *Helâ thibut ang/e.*
be like always **this/that**
'It is always like this/that'

However, in post-noun or post-verb position, they are always combined with prefixes indicating a location (static use) or a source or goal (dynamic use). These prefixes are as follows:

- Static :
- e-* specific location
 - ehee-* unspecified location
- Dynamic :
- jime-* source (whence)
 - kââ-* goal (whither)

This gives us the following table (Table 2):

Table 2: Prefixed deictic locatives

STATIC		DYNAMIC		
LOCATION		SOURCE (whence)	GOAL (whither)	
specified	unspecified			
<i>e-ang</i> M <i>aang</i>	<i>ehee-ang</i>	–	<i>kââ-ng</i>	near the speaker
<i>e-e</i>	<i>ehee</i>	–	<i>kââ-e</i>	near the addressee
<i>e-lee</i>	<i>ehee-lee</i>	<i>jime-lee</i>	<i>kââ-lee</i>	far from the speakers south or north (wider space)
<i>e-jii</i>	<i>ehee-jii</i>	<i>jime-jii</i>	<i>kââ-jii</i>	down (and towards the sea)
<i>e-jo</i>	<i>ehee-jo</i>	–	<i>kââ-jo</i>	down (near speaker)
<i>e-dhöö</i>	<i>ehee-dhöö</i>	<i>jime-dhöö</i>	<i>kââ-dhöö</i>	up (and inland)
<i>e-lââ</i>	<i>ehee-lââ</i>	<i>jime-lââ</i>	<i>kââ-lââ</i>	beside (same level)
<i>e-ü</i>	<i>ehee-ü</i>	<i>jime-ü</i>	<i>kââ-ü</i>	sunset, west <i>fixed points</i> west coast towards the sea <i>relative points</i> down below
<i>e-iö</i>	<i>ehee-iö</i>	<i>jime-iö</i>	<i>kââ-iö</i>	sunrise, east <i>fixed points</i> east coast inland <i>relative points</i> on high ground
<i>e-ling</i>	<i>ehee-ling</i>	<i>jime-ling</i>	<i>kââ-ling</i>	anaphoric

Furthermore, the deictic system in Iaai also comprises a set of ‘centrifugal’ (away from) and ‘centripetal’ (towards) directional forms, which are more or less equivalent, semantically speaking, to certain deictics used to express the idea of a goal :

Hither, towards the speaker (5): *jeem* (similar to *kââ-ng*)

Hence, away from speaker (6): *jiiö* westward (similar to *kââ-ü*)
deiö eastward (similar to *kââ-iö*)
háâng crosswise (similar to *kââ-lee*)

(5) *He dhö jeem!*
go IMPERATIVE toward
‘Come here!’

(6) *E bwele ju jioo me e bë ünyi ame wâ me bwele ju háâng me e bë dhö ünyi ame wâ ke maan ka bwele deiö me wâ dhö ünya hlu e-ü hon öny.*
‘He looks westward and sees nothing, he looks crosswise and sees nothing, suddenly, he looks eastward and sees a girl down there on the beach.’

(Rivierre et al. 1980:179 [sentence 17])

4 How deictic locatives function

As we saw earlier, these deictics can be used in expansions of independent personal forms (2) of the presentative *wale* (3a and 3b) and of the similitive predicate *helâ* (4). They can also function as determiners to a noun (7) or as adjuncts in noun (8) and verb (9) phrases.

- (7) *Maa-n thidhō: 'E caa soo dok aang.'*
 thought-his then 3SG NEG good place LOC+here
 'He said to himself: "This place is not good".'
- (8) *Bongo-n ioo-iny papaale adreem e-ang laai.*
 story-of arrival-of Europeans formerly LOC-here laai
 'The story of the arrival of white men, a long time ago, here in Uvea.' (text 31, 1)
- (9) *Oge-me laba e-ang Fajawe.*
 1SG-PRESENT stay LOC-here Fajawe
 'I am staying here in Fajawe.'

They are often followed either by a placename (proper noun), as in examples (8) and (9), by an autonomous locative form (10), or by a prepositional noun group (11) whose function is to specify the place that is being talked about:

- (10) *A-me kuku ka tavëët e-dhöö hoot.*
 3SG-PRESENT shout to people LOC-up ashore
 'He shouts to the men on the shore' (text 4, 44)
- (11) *Kamö-hmun e-dhöö hnyi draany ...*
 Father-our(excl.) LOC-up in sky
 'Our Father, who art in Heaven ...' [Lord's Prayer]

I would now like to come back to some of the characteristics of this deictic system, which, as we have seen, is strongly linked to the local geography, and show how certain oppositions can take on different values according to the context in which they are used.

5 Spatial and temporal value of certain deictics

Certain locative deictics, and especially those that are oriented with respect to the distance from the speakers, can also have a temporal value.

Proximate time is associated with the first and second persons (*ang* and *e*). The distant grade (*lee*) marks the distant future. See (12).

- | | | | | |
|------|------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| (12) | <i>ang</i> | near the speaker: | <i>kuli e-ang</i> | 'this dog here' |
| | | immediate time: | <i>Aa thep he ang.</i> | 'He has just left.' |
| | <i>e</i> | near the addressee: | <i>kuli e-e</i> | 'that dog there' (near you) |
| | | | <i>Elââm ju ehe-e!</i> | 'Look around there!' (near you) |
| | | near in time: | <i>Umwe hōō e?</i> | 'What are you doing now?' |
| | <i>lee</i> | far from the speakers: | <i>kuli e-lee</i> | 'that dog over there'
(at a distance) |
| | | distant future: | <i>nyi e-lee</i> | 'in the future'
(lit. tomorrow/far) |

Past time is referred to, by the deictic marker for ‘down’ (*jii*). Compare (13) and (14):

- (13) *Aa ta e-jii hon kânâ.*
 3SG+ACC fall LOC-down on ground
 ‘He has fallen down.’
- (14) a. *hnyi bong e-jii ...*
 in day LOC-down
 ‘the day before ...’
- b. *Haba jii me ogee haa kö u.*
 TOPIC down COOR 1SG+ACC say to you
 ‘I had told you before.’

The locative deictic *jii* ‘down’ also serves to introduce relative clauses in the past (15):

- (15) *Ewa ünvi e-jii aa ixâlâ?*
 where.is thing LOC-down 3SG+ACC hide
 ‘Where is the thing that he has hidden?’

We may notice that, in Iaai, the past is associated with the notion of ‘down’, whereas in Indo-European languages the opposite is true: in ancient Greek, for example, the preverb *an(a)-* marks both the upward direction and the pastness of events (cf. the loan word *anaphora*). But the association of ‘up’ and ‘past’ is also characteristic of some Austronesian languages, such as Taba, spoken in Maluku (Bowden pers. comm.).

Let us now look at the different values, absolute and relative, that certain locative deictics can take on according to the context and the situation in which they are used.

6 Absolute value of the coordinates *ü/iö* in a large-scale geographical context

When used in a large-scale geographical context, the terms *ü* and *iö* clearly refer to the west and to the east, fixed points determined with respect to the rising and setting of the sun.

We thus find, in a text already mentioned (Rivierre et al. 1980), speaking of the sun (16):

- (16) *He sevünö kene ditr thibut e-ü.*
 go sun and penetrate away LOC-west
 ‘The sun goes off to set in the west’ (p.185 [sentence 32])

A few sentences later, the sun says to his grandmother (17):

- (17) *Buba! oge-me he but ka ut jime-iö ...*
 granny 1SG-PRESENT go away for jump SOURCE-east
 ‘Grandmother! I am off to rise in the east ...’ (p.185 [sentence 41])

Similarly, whenever the names of the west coast (*Gööny*) and the east coast (*Cöu*), which also correspond to these fixed points, are mentioned, they are always preceded by the deictics *ü* and *iö* (18a and 18b):

- (18) a. *e-ü Gööny* ‘in Gööny’ *jime-ü Gööny* ‘coming from Gööny’
 b. *e-iö Cöu* ‘in Cöu’ *jime-iö Cöu* ‘coming from Cöu’

The same deictics are also used when referring to particular places, according to which coast they are on.

However, as we shall now see, the same terms *ü* and *iö*, when used in a narrower geographical context, can take on relative values, which partly overlap with the values of the coordinates *jii/dhöö* 'down/up'.

7 Overlapping of the oppositions *jii/dhöö* and *ü/iö*

One of the most off-putting aspects of spatial deixis in Iaaï (for the linguist, that is) is the fact that, from one text to another, some oppositions may overlap. Thus, the pair of coordinates *ü/iö*, which clearly have an absolute value (west/east) on a large geographical scale, can be used with a relative value in a limited setting, to indicate the opposition between the sea and the land, just like the coordinates used for 'up' and 'down' (*jii/dhöö*).

With the locative *hoot* 'on the shore', we could therefore say either *e-dhöö hoot*, as in example (10), or *e-iö hoot*, as in example (19):

- (19) *Ke haba e-iö hoot me ehu ke op ae gaan.*
 and TOPIC LOC-land ashore then there.is ART cave which big
 'And, on the shore, there is a great cavern.' (text 8, 2)

Similarly, in the Iaaï text (included here after), the noun group *hnyi köiö* 'in the sea' is sometimes preceded by the deictic *jii* indicating 'down', and sometimes by the deictic *ü*, which, in this particular context, refers not to a westerly direction, but to the direction of the sea. Compare (20) and (21):

- (20) *Ke haba ke at Hembue ie-n me tiga ehee-jii*
 and TOPIC ART man Hembwe name-his COOR still LOC.unspec-down
hnyi köiö.
 into sea
 'But one man, called Hembue, was still in the sea' (text 4, 36)

- (21) *Haingö-dra thidhö ka at e-ü hnyi köiö.*
 talk-their then to man LOC-sea into sea
 'So they said to the man who was in the sea.' (text 4, 39)

Even more off-putting is the use of the coordinates *ü/iö* to refer to something which is situated below the speaker (22), or above him (23), in exactly the same way as the *jii/dhöö* coordinates:

- (22) *Ehu ke behelök a-me iââü e-ü hnyi sa-ot.*
 there.is ART lizard 3SG-PRESENT crawl LOC-down in grass
 'There is a lizard crawling in the grass.' (text 1, 7)
- (23) *E but ling iö hon iveto e-e.*
 3SG already ANAPH up on stone there
 'It is already there, on that stone.' (text 24, 4)

However, from a semantic point of view, the two sets of oppositions *ü/iö* and *jii/dhöö* in fact only partially overlap. Thus, the pair of coordinates *jii/dhöö* will always be used to refer to anything that is perpendicular to the speaker: hence, in example (11), *e-dhöö hnyi draany* 'up there in the sky' could not be replaced by **e-iö hnyi draany*.

Similarly, the coordinates *ü/iö* are always used to refer to west and east, the points of the compass: thus, the sun rises *jime-iö* ‘from the east’, as in example (17), and not **jime-dhöö* ‘from above’. In the same way, when the sun is at its highest point, overhead, it is said to be *e-dhöö* and not **e-iö*.

8 Conclusion

The semantic overlap that can be observed in the Iaaï deictic system between, on the one hand, *west-sea-down* and, on the other hand, *east-land-up*, is easy to account for when we see how the island of Uvea is oriented, and how it slopes from east to west. It is also easy enough to understand (without being too deterministic about it) why the east coast of Uvea, uninhabited and situated on a higher level, has come to be associated with the notions of ‘height’ and ‘inland’, in opposition to the west coast, which is inhabited and faces the lagoon, over which the sun sets every evening.

The strong links that have been pointed out here between spatial deixis and local geography and ecology, as well as the different values that certain deictics can take on according to the scale that is being considered, are not limited to the Iaaï language only. There are now numerous descriptions of deictic systems based on multiple orientation values, combining ego-, topo- and geo-centric points of reference, not only in Austronesian languages, but also in languages belonging to other families: Papuan and Australian languages, Maya, etc. However, the most interesting point in the case of Iaaï, from a cognitive point of view (and which would no doubt be worth studying in more detail) is how to determine the exact degree of interchangeability between the up/down and east/west coordinates, in various visual contexts.

The data that I have presented here are taken from two surveys carried out in Uvea in 1977 and in 1983, and from a corpus of some fifty texts collected by Jean Guiart in 1948. Some excerpts from one of those texts (text 4) are given in appendix to illustrate the use of spatial deictics in Iaaï.

Appendix: Traditional text

This traditional story narrates how some Iaaï clans prevented the settlement of Lifu people at Hwagei, on the east coast of Uvea, a long time ago. The story was recorded by Jean Guiart in 1948 from Mr Wadawa Hnyigotr and was published in *Contes et légendes d'Ouvéa*, Jacob Wahéo, ed., Nouméa, CTRDP, 1989, pp.35–41.

[The people of Hulup went to fish in Cöu (east coast of Uvea). The fishing trip came to an end, but one man, called Hembue,]

was still in the sea

tiga ehee-jiü hnyi köiö
still LOC.unspec-down in sea

[The tide began to rise, and]

the men on the shore

haba vëët e-dhöö hoot
TOPIC people LOC-up ashore

[saw a shark. So they shouted]

to the one who was in the water:

ka at e-ü hnyi köiö
to man LOC-sea in sea

['Hey! Watch out for that shark!]

There it is and it's coming towards you!'

a wale-e ame he kö-u!'
because PRES-**there** (near addressee) 3SG go toward-you

Now, that shark (ANAPH) was a devil

Haba ling ge aec me ünya hmâ
TOPIC ANAPH about shark COOR it.is devil

[Hembue tried to get back to the land, but he couldn't.]

So he shouted to the others up there:

Ke ame kuku ka vëët e-dhöö
then 3SG shout to people LOC-**up** (=ashore)

'Jump towards me!

'Gâ but öbun jeem!
jump IMPERATIVE 2PL GOAL-**here** (= towards speaker)

[or else the shark is going to bite me!']

So they jumped from up there

ödra gâ thibut jime-dhöö
3PL jump then SOURCE-**up** (= from ashore)

[with spears and sticks. They drove the shark away and brought Hembue ashore. He was unconscious. However hard they tried, they could not bring him round. They carried him to Hwagei]

and put him down there in his home.

m' ödra ip-ut e-iö hnyi hnyaaba-n.
and 3PL put-down LOC-**inland** in residence-his

[They sent for a man from Lifou whose name was Poulio, so that he could cure Hembue, but instead of curing Hembue, Poulio killed him]

because that shark that was there just now in Cöu (east coast)

a haba ling ge aec ehaac e-iö Cöu
because TOPIC ANAPH about shark formerly LOC-**east** Cöu

it was that devil sent by Poulio who wanted to kill Hembue.

me hmâ ling anyi Poulio ame weeny ka kuc Hembue.
COOR devil ANAPH of Poulio 3SG want for kill Hembue

[They sent for]

Menahole, Hembue's eldest brother, from Hounöbiny.

Menahole tuhö Hembue jime-ü Hounöbiny.
Menahole eldest.of Hembue SOURCE-**west** Hounöbiny

[Menahole came to Hwagei and asked Hembue's wife what had happened. And so she told him: 'One day,]

Poulio came here, to both of us

aa oo-but e-ang kö-hmu Poulio
3SG+ACC arrive LOC-here toward-IDU Poulio

[to ask Hembue to give him two fine seashells that he wanted to take back to Lifou to give to his chief. Hembue refused, and he hid his treasures away'.]

[So Menahole had Hembue's body taken to Hânyâü, and went to consult his god, Kong Hulup. He recited the names of several men, but the god said nothing. But when he pronounced the name of Poulio, the god said:]

'That's the man who killed Hembue'

'Wale-ling at aa kuc Hembue:'
PRES-ANAPH man 3SG+ACC kill Hembue

[So Menahole sent for the men from Hânyâü and from Hulup so that they could go and kill the people from Lifou who were in Hwagei. But someone betrayed them and told the people from Lifou, and they fled during the night. At dawn, when the warriors attacked, there was nobody left in Hwagei. The people from Lifou ran away to Ohnyât, and from there they fled back to Lifou.]

And they have never returned, till this day.

K' are caa-wen hmetu oo kene oo-but hnyi bong aang.
and 3PL+ACC never again arrive until arrive in day this

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