

Forms, imaginary and identity : some material culture dynamics. The example of kanak tombstones.

Foreword : I would like to thank the people of Oua Tom and Petit Coulis who were kind enough to welcome me, talk to me and show me several of their ways. I would like to dedicate this paper to Jean-Jacques Poiwi who was one of my “privileged informants”, and is a talented kanak artist, whom I saw beautifully sculpting the past through the present, those difficult times of uncertainty.

The kanak peoples of New Caledonia used to have many different rituals in order to allow their dead ones to join the submarine (or subterranean, depending on the regions) world of the ancestors. What, on the contrary, seemed to be general for all of the island clans was the placing, during the last part of the ritual cycle – which presented all the characteristic of an hertzian secondary burial (HERTZ, 1970)– of the deceased’s skull on an altar, along with those of its predecessors, coupled sometimes with the keeping of the bones. Those two sacred “items” were one of the privileged means by which the livings could honour and gain the support of their ancestors in everyday life. But later on, after the colonisation of the island, the tombs were finally introduced into kanak material culture. Thus was the ritual severely transformed (which is also explainable by the introduction of Christian religions), along with the ways for the dead and the living to communicate. Or were they ? The short fieldwork (3 months) I did during the beginning of the last year in the Tiri linguistic area, mostly into the “tribu” of Oua Tom, with some visits to Petit Coulis and Ouipoin, seems to indicate that, even if the relationships between the ancestors and the livings did change a lot after the general conversion to Christianity, the particular ways to interact with the ancestors that were linked with the skull altars were all transferred upon the newly introduced tomb. These items now take an essential part in kanak life and imaginary. More than that, many stories that were told me indicate that the even more recently introduced (10 years) tombstones are now what one might call an “objet coutumier” (customary/traditional item, in local French). The “coutume” is the system of norms practices and beliefs that the kanak consider having inherited from their ancestors.

Yet, despite of being an item so culturally invested, the tomb is in fact object of little aesthetic personalisation. More, the tombstone is bought at Noumea, a place clearly differentiated with the life in the “tribus”, associated with caldoches and French way of life as opposed to kanak’s generally associated to the “tribus”. It is then implanted at the grave, be it on a lineage cemetery located on the land of the group (which is considered as the norm) or on the communal cemetery. How, then, can an item that is so clearly associated with the world of the settlers (whose graves are indeed exactly alike those of the kanaks, because bought at the same place), and isn’t much materially modified by the Tiri kanaks, gain the status and powers of a traditional item ?

We are not trying here to reflect on the historical insertion of the item to its current place but on how contemporary Tiri kanaks manage to make the item change status from funerary commodity to customary item. To answer this question, we won’t turn ourselves here on commodities theories. They tend to show how an item’s meaning changes through its circulation in several cultural cum social contexts (FOSTER, 2006: 287-94). But here the

problem is not so much that tombs gain a new meaning when changing context, it is that they are the support of a vast cultural imaginary, ritual practices, that is at the core of many of kanak's preoccupation and have a major identity value as a mean to oppose themselves to the settlers and metropolitan way of life. The question, then, is not so much why the tombs are *bought* (as they are bought because they are nowadays cultural norms, as opposed to cremation for example, which was generally spoken ill of by my informants) and then gain a new meaning, but *how* is its meaning *institutionalized*, in order to become accepted by the majority of the group. In other words, we will try to attend to the problem left behind by Kopitoff in his *cultural biography of things*. In this work, he analyses how individuals particularize some items or, on the contrary, give them the status of commodities, according to their cultural context, objectives, values, etc. But he largely leaves behind the problem of institutionalization of the central place given to some items in some cultures. As he says himself : "Singularization [as opposed to the commodity status] by groups within the society poses a special problem. Because it is done by groups, it bears the stamp of collective approval, channels the individual drive for singularization, and takes on the weight of cultural sacredness." (KOPYTOFF, 1986 : 81). But, how is this achieved ? This problem is studied only through one example that is analyzed rather superficially compared to the general quality of the overall article.

To see how this is done in this apparently paradoxical case, I'll first examine the imaginary that is placed upon the tomb, and its role in everyday life. Then, I'll highlight the ways in which these representations and practices might imply some personalization of the item on an aesthetic point of view, as limited as they are. Then I'll show how the tomb is symbolically built during the ritual and how this point might be the key to understand the institutionalisation of its new meaning by the kanaks. Finally, in order to understand what this can tell us about the dynamics of material culture in its links with imaginary, aesthetics and collective identity, I will have a quick look on another way to institutionalise meaning upon an item : the "chaîne opératoire".

I. *The blessing of curses : Ancestry imaginary and the tomb*

As was previously said, the cultural imaginary imposed on the tombs is directly linked with kanak conceptions of ancestry. As the subject was abundantly disserted upon in New-Caledonian anthropology, and there appears to be several local differences, I insist on the fact that what I say here is only based upon my field experience in the Tiri linguistic area. For my informants, the ancestors, generally called "les vieux" (the elders), are invisible beings that constantly play an active role in every day's life. For Tiri people, contrary to many other societies having an ancestral cult , almost any dead becomes an ancestor. They are depicted in two different ways. As having a body and occupying some space as any human being would do, except that they can't be seen ("there might be a spirit sitting next to you."), or in a more omnipresent way ("They are always with me").

They have two major areas of action: they act upon the vegetation, being a generative force for the growing of any plants, and they influence directly the life of their descendants. Like in most societies having an ancestor cult, the Tiri ancestors have a general benevolent tendency toward their descendants, but can also be responsible for powerful curses ("malédiction" in

local French) when the livings do any kind of transgression toward the customary norms or lack of respect toward the ancestors in a more direct way (like not respecting the prescriptions of any ritual).

This implies several ways to interact with the ancestors in order to content them or ask for their help. The first is probably the most important : it is the constant showing of respect to the ancestors. It is done through a series of simple gestures that are made in given circumstances or by the sole desire of an individual to pay his respects at any given moment. The second is the fulfilment of ritual obligations in some circumstances that are defined by the custom. The third is the asking for the help of the ancestors at any given time. The cases that were developed to me all seemed to indicate that the person is supposed to “have a thought for the ancestors”, that can be completed by a respect gesture, that will gain their support for the planned action to follow.

This brings us to the imposition of this cultural imaginary, here only briefly summed up, upon the tomb. Almost every way to interact with the ancestors depicted above finds some application for the tomb as a medium. One can show his respect toward a particular dead person, or the ancestors group as a whole, by attaching “manou”, respectively near the tomb of the person or anywhere in the cemetery, and then saying (out loud or in thought) some words for the dead. The cemetery is also the chosen place to interact with the ancestors on some ritual occasions. This is the case for example of one part of the rites surrounding birth. One is to make a gift and give a little speech, introducing the new-born child to the ancestors and asking them to grant him their protection. One of my informants, mocked by some for his tendency to be a little too much theatrical during ceremonial occasions, told me he even brought his kid in front of the graves to do the proper introduction. Finally, it also seems possible to go see a particular deceased at his grave with propitiatory ends in mind. In my only example, the father was advising his daughter to ask her dead uncle for good results at school.

But there are other practices linked with day-to-day respect to the ancestors that needs to be highlighted. This will allow us to show how the kanak tombs, seem to have obtained the status of “customary items” besides having become central elements of kanak imaginary's expression. First, Tiri cemeteries are areas implying some behavioural restrictions, as a matter of respect toward the ancestors. For example, one is not to have a party (the use of magnetophones and loud music where generally associated with this word) or drink alcohol near it (the vagueness of the locative employed is a reflect of that of my informants when talking about it). It is important to add that these two interdictions are also those followed by the bereaved after the burial. More importantly, to not speak loudly, or generally not make noise is something one must do at night, because at this time of the day the ancestors are more active, and at sacred places (LEENHARDT, 1932 : 366-7). But the more revealing element is not interdictions, but positive prescriptions about the cemetery and the tombs.

At the beginning of my field work, everybody I talked about on the subject of death and funerary rituals eventually mentioned the importance of “cleaning” (“nettoyer”, “mettre bien propre”) the tombs. This means to mow the lawn surrounding it and cleaning the tomb itself. As it seemed “natural” to me (in other words nothing more than an aesthetic cum practical concern) I dedicated only little attention to it. That was until I saw how much those who were a bit lazy about this duty were criticised. I began to see this as something most of the actors considered really important. But the epiphany came when an old man told me about those lazy persons, after having made the usual critics : “One must not be surprised if one’s

children have birth problems or if the family has accidents.” These two unfortunate events are common manifestations of what is called a curse. It doesn’t necessarily affect the person who did wrong to the ancestors, but might affect several members of his lineage. This implies that the curse interpretation is often the result of a succession of unhappy events, more or less dramatic. What does this say about the tomb then ? The curse, as previously said, is a reaction of the ancestors to any kind of disregard of their law, the “coutume”, French word equivalent of the *kastom*. For example, doing anything in the wrong way in the ritual can ensue in a curse. What this means, then, is that the tomb and the practices that rely on it are considered custom. The tomb is a customary item in that any break of the prescriptions linked with it is a disrespect to the ancestors and will be punished. On the other hand, following those prescriptions result in the support of the ancestors in everyday life.

II. *Imposing meaning through form : representations and cemeteries layout*

We are now at the point where we can see that an item that is considered as coming from the metropolitan and settlers world has in the end a similar status as the sacred places supposed to have been linked with a clan through ages and ages : as an item ruled by *kastom* logics, consubstantial with the kanak physical and spiritual world. One could then have expected the tomb to have been personalized, let us say de-westernize, with at least some formal modifications. We will briefly show the few aesthetic personalizations of the tomb and their links with the conception of the item. Two angles will be followed : first we’ll see the particular compositions created with some tombs, then the general composition of the cemetery.

What seems the most important about the tomb, as for a symbol in an hypothetical structural order, is not the tombstone itself but its relation with other tombs. What stroke me in kanak family cemeteries is that most of the tombs are unique in each cemetery. Be it in shape or colour, generally both, few of them don’t have a peculiarity that distinguishes it from others. To me, this can be interpreted as a desire to differentiate each grave so that it is clearly linked with a distinct deceased, as the tombs is now the new medium of relationships with him or her. This interpretation gains weight through the recent introduction of the use of several items that are bought in order to give details about the parental status of the person, and an inscription with his name and date of birth/decease. These are recent addition to the material culture, which seems to have been introduced during the last ten years. They are also bought at Nouméa funerary shops and I always found these items used by the other island’s populations. Only one element, linked with a practice mentioned above, can sometimes affect the tomb’s outlook directly : the binding of “manou”, which is sometimes made directly upon the grave. This item and its uses are, indeed considered distinctly kanak. One good example of this fact is an extract of an interview I had with an informant who told me about the ways gifts you can make whenever you visit deceased people : “You can buy some flowers to put on the tomb, but it is *better* to use manou, it is something more *cultural*. Besides, you have to take care of flowers, whereas you can left manou rot afterwards.”But this quote also seems to indicate that the aesthetic aspect is of little interest, as it is left to rot, the important thing is only the gesture, not the change of look of the tomb.

On the cemetery level, the tombs are generally disposed in lines forming something of a rectangle in most cases. This is not much of particularity as the linear organisation is the one you can observe in communal and Noumea's cemeteries. What is, on the other hand, is the grouping of tombs by lineages groups, their dispersal and finally, their openness. The first point is clearly considered the norm and the desire of some to inhumate a body in communal cemeteries can sometimes result in conflicts. This creates in turn a true particularism in the way these cemeteries mark kanak "tribus". Each lineage owns a little space dedicated to graves that is generally not too far from the habitations of at least one of its members. The cemeteries and their dispersions are then an important part of the global composition of humanized lands and their organisation by the kanaks which opposes the centralisation of the dead organised by the state in town and communal villages. Finally, the cemeteries are all open spaces. I never found any cemetery enclosed by any means⁴, again contrary to communal ones. One can explain these two particularities affecting the overall aesthetic of cemeteries and the land by referring to traditional conceptions of the unity formed by the clan, comprising both living and dead people, and the lands (BENSA, 1997 : 182-3). Even though the focus is now placed upon lineages, the three elements composing its social totality are still conceived in that way.

In the end, we can conclude that the tombs themselves are objects of little physical reappropriation, through means of aesthetic changes, on the contrary, the composition of the tomb is made purely with items coming from the very same source. On the cemetery level, on the other hand, the particular ways in which Tiri kanak regroup their tombs is felt as a strong difference from the "white people" cemeteries, and is fuelled by some key aspects of their socio-cultural particularities. We can then here find a first way by which the particular item is transformed from alien to "local" artefact : by the addition of tombs a new whole, that overcomes each of them is given form, and the provenance of each pieces is less important than the meaning and shape of the whole it creates, which symbolize nothing less than the "holy trinity" of kanak groups as a whole : the earth, the ancestors and the livings.

III. *Building through ritual : the "work" of the maternal lineage and "ritual biography"*

Let us now observe the place the funerary ritual gives to tombs. Again, given the diversity of practises in New Caledonia, as well as the limited number of works on the subject, I will only describe here the case of Tiri linguistic area. It is divided in three different ceremonies : the burial, the "eight day ceremony" and, finally, the "bereavement's ending". Each ceremony is punctuated by several gifts exchanges that follow a constant general pattern. The different clans in presence are divided according to their links with the deceased by following a dyadic basis : the paternal and the maternal groups. Mounds of goods are displayed, a man of the giving group gives a speech following some imposed rules that nonetheless leave room for improvisation, a man from the second group then does the same and the goods are taken by members of each group. In most cases the gifts exchanged are of approximate equal value with the exception of two kinds of gifts. The first consists in a gift that is made in exchange for a ritual service of the maternal group, the counter-gift being the execution of said service. The second is one particular gift made during the eight day ceremony that requires a surplus from the paternal group in order to honour the maternal one. This particular place of the maternal in the ritual can be explained by the role they have played in the creation of the

deceased : the blood of his/her mother as well as the “souffle” (breath) the maternal uncle gave him right after his birth. I will now briefly sum up these three ceremonies, with particular attention given to the place of the tomb for each of them.

The burial is a chain of ceremonies and customary gifts that are dedicated to three major aims : show the support of one’s lineage to the grieving family, bury the dead and prepare the next ritual, theoretically hold eight days later. The first is done by the presence of at least one member of each of the lineages composing the clan of the deceased, as well as their customary gift to the family that will be used later on for the major gift exchange of the eighth day ceremony. Members of clans considered as allies of the patriclan (according to the clan history orally transmitted) can also be present and will be part of the paternal group during the gift exchanges. Members of the lineages of the mother of the deceased are of course to come, and can in the same way be accompanied by people from other lineages of their clan or from allied clans. The second aim of the ritual is achieved by first giving a gift to the maternal that is called “fermer le cercueil” (to shut the casket). After this gift, the maternals are responsible of the body of the deceased, by the right they have on it because of their important part in its creation. This gift, central to our current concern, is the one that begins a series of actions the maternal will have to do in order to progressively build the tomb. They will be able to rearrange the body (wash it again, change his clothes, etc.) and will then close the casket, transport it to the church (if the mass wasn’t hold already), and then to the cemetery. They will place the coffin in the grave, and close it. The ceremony will be closed by a snack during which the maternals will receive a gift in order for them to “finish the job” (“terminer le travail”) concerning the grave. During the following one week period, some symbols, practices and interdictions show that the deceased is still more or less present among the livings.

The eighth day is, nowadays, the ceremony that is the most concerned with eschatological beliefs. The maternals will have to do a series of actions that seems to be intended to make the spirit of the deceased go away, more specifically, as one of my informant said, “to depart to the land of the maternal uncles.” This is made by a certain number of separation rituals that the maternal group has to make, of which the modification of the tomb seems to be the first. This modification is indeed the opening of the ceremony. One or more members of the maternal group go to the grave and will implant a cross, if the deceased was Christian, tamp the earth, and make a clear surrounding for the grave, be it with rocks or wood. They will then attend to the other separation rites and finally receive the honouring gift of the paternal group that will be followed by their less important counter-gift.

One year after the date of death (or sometimes six months, if the family wants to make it quick for any reasons) the last ceremony of the ritual cycle is held : the bereavment’s ending. During the totality of this time, one or several people of the deceased’s lineage are carrying the bereavement, along with the interdictions mentioned previously. This ceremony ends them once and for all after a gift was given to the maternal group. But first, a gift is given in order for them to “complete” the tomb. Generally, the grieving family has collected money during the one year period, through various means, and will pay for the tombstone some time before this last ceremony. But, ritually speaking, the tomb is not yet at its final state, the maternal have to do a last ritual action on the tomb. This is nowadays often made by the fixing of a metallic plaque engraved with the name and birth/decease dates of the departed. If inscriptions are already made on the tombstone itself, a gesture of a different kind is made, which was not explained to me, but what is apparently important is this final act of the maternal group on the grave. If they generally gave little explanations about its reasons, some

of my informants insisted on the necessity of this final ceremony and last gesture of the maternal on the tomb, without it, curses might happen.

This ritual progressive construction, linked with both the becoming of the spirit (at least in the first and second ceremony) and reintegration of the bereaved, implies that there is some concrete process of realisation that lies beyond the final form taken by the item. This process is a purely kanak one, determined by “la coutume”. I made, in my memoir, the hypothesis that the final ritual was a new form of an aggregation ritual of the departed into the community of his ancestors. But, in the end, it is not the essential point. What is, is that the ritual construction of the tomb has the authority of *kastom* : one cannot skip it, otherwise the ancestors will be prone to punish the mortals. The tomb becomes a customary item because it was inserted in the ritual in the first place. If a tomb is simply bought and then implanted, then the curse of the ancestors is sure to follow. Thus, the ritual construction of the item, in local French called “travail” (work), does matter and becomes a major way to give it meaning. The tombstone is not only an item bought at Nouméa, it is the last stage of the tomb ritual construction. By giving the tomb this three stages standardized “ritual biography”, the tombstone is institutionally given a place in the local categories, values and identity : it is an item inscribed in *kastom*, product of the “work” of the maternal, without whom the deceased spirit would still be a problem, and the wrath of the ancestors would make their descendants pay for their lack of respect of the ritual that was inherited from them. The ritual transmits a particular meaning given to the item to all of the actors in presence, which doesn’t mean, of course, that they can’t take a reflexive distance from it. As an institutionalisation of meaning through mobilisation of an important amount of cultural representations and values, ritual appears as one way to impose meaning and give an untransformed alien item a local cultural and identity value.

Sahlins gives us another example, in ancient Fidji, of an introduced item that also was given a place into local cultural conceptions. The muskets were given a place into investiture ritual of successful warrior with whom weapons were exchanged. It apparently imbedded them with the divine power of the warrior (SAHLINS, 2005: 375). Sometimes, it was muskets that were passed through the hero’s hands, in place of the club. Thus, the ritual instituted both the cultural assimilation of the musket to clubs, about which Sahlins gives many details (ibid. : 372-7), but also the inferiority of the first to the former. To quote Clunie, cited in the same article : “It was in bludgeon-dominated ritual that guns came into their own as Fidjian artefacts, carrying out functions never envisioned by their distant designers.” (ibid. : 377). It is not to say that it was in the ritual that this particular association was first made, which was also probably not the case about kanak tombs, only that it was a powerful way to give these local reinterpretations of the item a normative status, giving them a place in local practices and representations that was acknowledged by the community. In this case also, the ritual performance, through the “ritual biography” it imposes on the item, implies a shift in the item properties : the foreign item is imbedded the divine power of the gifted warrior, giving it a new property, and thus, local value.

What does the kanak tomb can learn to us anthropologists in the end ? In my view, it can help us to go beyond Kopytoff’s view of “cultural biography”. This conception is of great interest in studying cultural norms that are used differently according the actors and their relationship to certain items, especially those having a rather unclear place in local categories and values. But the problem is not always that items can skip from the status of commodity and then be

so singularized that they can no longer be sold. Another problem is that some items only do this transfer once. This doesn't mean that they become static, for example, one can imagine that the fidjian muskets grows in power and value as it passes through the hands of more and more heroes. Another example is a more certain one : the *komo* masks which grows in power as it passes through ceremonies (MITCHELL, 2006 : 392). This is not only a problem of how actors give a place to a given item by referring to cultural norms and interpreting them in their own ways, it is also about how an item can be institutionalised to hold such a place. We saw one of the ways to do it that we called "ritual biography", that relies on performance to add new meanings to an item.

We can make the hypothesis that the "chaîne opératoire" is another way of attaining similar institutionalisation, as it is generally transmitted from a generation to another. André Leroi-Gourhan showed how the borrowing of items from another group was, at least in "pre-globalised" times, generally followed by a local formal adaptation of the item. This adaptation can take several forms, from the use of a different material to the add of decorations, sometimes with symbolic connotations (1973: 359-60). The difference here with the two examples previously mentioned is that the item becomes a product of local industry and that its form can then be largely modified. The "chaîne opératoire", as a particular way to act upon the material world has two advantages in the personalisation of an item and the institutionalisation of its meaning. First, by allowing the form to be freely adapted to local "style", which means differentiated from its original source, contrary to bought ready-made items. Secondly, a "chaîne opératoire" is often more than a chain of "pure technical" (if such a thing exists) actions. As several well-known examples show (MALINOWSKI, 1989: 184-205; LEMONNIER, 2004), through magical or other kinds of meaningful acts, qualitative properties can be passed to the item and meaning given to it.

The transformation of form is the major point here, for it creates empirical differentiation with the original item, and thus, its original maker(s). Acting merely on the item as a sign "only" gives it a place in a given system of meaning. Although it might not always be the case, it poses a major problem for Tiri kanaks, which explains the opposite discourses that are made on the tomb by the actors. Some people told me for example, speaking about the tomb : "this is not our culture, nowadays *we just do like the white peoples.*" (my emphasis), "Our ancestors never needed graves. I don't care about tombs, we have our traditional sacred places to summon our ancestors.", "Nowadays we use tombstones because of "modernisation" [as opposed to "la coutume"]." The very same persons are taking great care of said tombstones, are acerb critics of those who don't do the same, and visit some of their lost ones, or the ancestors collective at their cemetery, with the appropriate ceremonial.

These opposite discourses are not so much cultural contradictions as different speeches due to context differences. In the first case, the informants were taking a reflexive posture in talking to what they considered a member of the French people : the ethnology student. They were opposing the tomb as an item coming from this culture, as a product of colonisation and acculturation process, an historical fact sometimes directly reproached to me (it was, after all, my ancestors fault). Note that one of my informants opposed the tombs to the sacred sites that are constantly invoqued in kanak speeches directed to the settlers and metropolitans, as pure customary places. But this opposition no longer makes sense when tomb is considered in practice or when speaking with other kanaks : indeed, we saw that several of the cemetery's characteristic are of the same kind as those of sacred sites. In the reflexive posture, the "objective" characteristics of the tomb are considered. Through its provenance, its mode of acquisition, its form, it is linked to the settlers and metropolitan that it is precisely crucial to

differ with. And why is that ? Because of two reasons : the particularity of kanak cultural identity is one of the key elements justifying the will for independency. Secondly, because many Tiri kanak are afraid that the perceived current changes in their culture will end in acculturation. In the “culture in practice” version, the tomb is considered in local structure’s perspective : as a kanak symbol linked with their own imaginary and practices. It is interesting to note that the relationships with the ancestors are often put forward in the reflexive posture during political speeches (especially those of the “coutumiers”) to oppose caldoche and metropolitan ways. Yet, despite being one of their prime medium nowadays, the tomb was never even mentioned in any of the speeches I could hear.

Any discourse about one’s cultural identity to someone that isn’t included in it is by definition reflexive as it implies a selection of the differences that will make sense, and preferably seem respectable, for the recipient. It is here that items that show a distinct material differentiation with the material culture of the other group are of particular strategic interest : their aesthetic peculiarities is directly perceived by the recipient, without him having to know the meaning that lies behind it. They are something of a showcase of the cultural difference of their producer. More, their cultural meaning, by definition shared by most of the actors of said culture enables it to create a community around it, as opposed to the interpretations of those who lack the cultural keys to interpret it. We can now understand a paradox very similar to the one that is responsible for that study : why the kanak Great House is a constantly mobilized “figure” (MONNERIE, 2005) by the Tiri kanaks, as well as the overall independantist movement, whereas it has no more concrete use in this region, and many others ? I think, one of the many reasons of the current symbolic reflexive use of this artefact is that its whole meaning is known by kanaks only and its form is distinctly different from the caldoche and metropolitan architecture. It does, then, fit both aspects just mentioned. It is on many points the exact opposite of the tomb, which is a contemporary culturally invested item, its form is that of any metropolitan or caldoche tombs, its kanak reinterpretation being little known by the other groups, it can only be perceived as a proof of “acculturation”, if taken out of its context. Ritual biography does not erase materiality of the item, and thus gives the impossibility to use it as a symbol of a cultural difference when one is comparing himself with the imagined item producer (here, as we saw, generally not just a company, but a whole people), from whom one so desperately want to differ in continuing to maintain the heir of one’s ancestors.

+ **BIBLIOGRAPHIE :**

+ BENZA (A.), GOROMIDO (A.), 1997, *Contraintes par corps : ordre politique et violence dans les sociétés kanak d’autrefois*, in « Le corps humain, supplicié, possédé, cannibalisé, M. GODELIER, M. PANOFF (eds.), coll. Ordres sociaux, Editions des archives contemporaines, pp169-94.

+ FOSTER (R.J.), 2006, *Tracking globalization. Commodities and value in Motion*, in “Handbook of material culture”, C. TILLEY, W. KEANE, S. KÜCHLER, M. ROWLANDS, P. SPYER (eds.), Sage publications, London, pp285-302.

+ KOPYTOFF (I.), 1986, *The cultural biography of things : commoditization as process*, in “The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective”, A. APPADURAI (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp64-91.

- + LEENHARDT (M.), 1932, *Documents néo-calédoniens*, coll. Travaux et mémoires de l'institut d'ethnologie, 9, Institut d'ethnologie, Paris.
- + LEMONNIER (P.), 2004, *Mythiques chaînes opératoires*, in *Techniques et culture*, 43-4, pp2-13.
- + LEROI-GOURHAN (A.), 1973, *Milieu et technique*, coll. Sciences d'aujourd'hui, Editions Albin Michel, Paris.
- + MITCHELL (J.P.), 2006, *Performance*, in "Handbook of material culture", C. TILLEY, W. KEANE, S. KÜCHLER, M. ROWLANDS, P. SPYER (eds.), Sage publications, London, pp384-401.
- + MONNERIE (D.), 2005, *La parole de notre maison. Discours et cérémonies kanak aujourd'hui, Nouvelle-Calédonie*, coll. Chemins de l'ethnologie, Maisons des sciences de l'homme, CNRS, Paris.