

Pathways of *Téâ Kanaké*: translation and identity construction in Kanaky¹/New Caledonia

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How do translations contribute to the construction of social identity? In what ways can translation play a role in the process of nation-building? Tracing the various pathways taken by a Kanak origin story, Téâ Kanaké, from its source in the oral tradition of the Paicî language, to written French, this paper situates translations of elements of Kanak oral tradition in the context of the nation-building project currently underway in Kanaky/New Caledonia, a French territory on the path to decolonisation.

Key words: New Caledonia/Kanaky; translation: Paicî-French; identity construction

Historical context

Since the French annexation of New Caledonia in 1853, the indigenous peoples of this group of islands have felt the negative impact of colonisation. The combined effects of disease, the *Indigénat* or ‘Native Law’ (1887-1946),² and forced removal to reservations from ancestral lands (which are the foundation of their identity and social structures) have had devastating consequences for Kanak societies.

Arising in response to the continuing injustices of the colonial system, the conflict of the mid 1980s, referred to euphemistically as *les Événements* (the Events), saw an atmosphere of violence and near civil war hang over New Caledonia. *Les Événements* were brought to a close with the signing of the Matignon Accords in 1988 by representatives of the two main political blocs—the pro-independence FLNKS³ and the loyalist RPCR⁴—and the French State. Ten years later the Noumea Accord was signed, offering increasing autonomy for the then *Territoire d’Outre Mer* (overseas territory of France) and the possibility of independence to be decided in a referendum some time between 2013 and 2018.

The destructive legacy of colonialism for Kanak societies is recognised in the Preamble of the Noumea Accord, the provisions of which included the establishment of government agencies and programmes responsible for supporting initiatives to valorise Kanak identity, as part of the movement towards a future independent New Caledonia: “...a new process needs to commence, entailing the full recognition of the Kanak identity, as a pre-requisite for rebuilding a social contract between all the communities living in New Caledonia, and entailing shared sovereignty with France, in preparation for full sovereignty”.⁵

Kanak identity

The Kanak identity referred to in the Noumea Accord is a collective identity. *Kanak* is an umbrella term for the distinct and diverse indigenous societies that coexist in New Caledonia. In the mid-nineteenth century the word ‘*kanaka*’ (mean-

ing ‘man’) was borrowed from Hawai’ian by European navigators and used extensively throughout the Pacific to designate indigenous peoples. In New Caledonia, ‘*kanaka*’ became ‘*canaque*’ (conforming to French orthography) and though this term was employed with restraint by navigators, it was later used as a term of derision by colonists (Poédi 1997:117). ‘*Kanak*’, conspicuously not conforming to French orthographic conventions,⁶ was taken up by the wave of Melanesian university students returning from study in France in the years following the general and political uprising of May 1968. They assigned the term a positive connotation as a collective identity for the indigenous peoples defined in relation to other groups in New Caledonia.⁷

Kanak identity, according to the independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, is “born out of the struggle against colonisation, born out of adversity. It is a collective reaction, an organised reality” (Tjibaou 1996:121).⁸ For Gabriel Poédi, educator and scholar, Kanak identity is the product of history, of an anticolonial struggle, and it is also the denial of the history of the indigenous peoples of New Caledonia (Poédi 1997:118). The umbrella term ‘*Kanak*’ has a dual signification, both collapsing a whole group of indigenous societies into one identity (ignoring the cultural diversity existing in New Caledonia before and since French colonisation) and assigning a positive cultural and political dimension in terms of a sense of Kanak unity in the face of French cultural and political hegemony.

In the Noumea Accord, the recognition and valorisation of Kanak identity is seen as a critical step on the path towards a New Caledonian national identity to be created by “rebuilding a social contract” between all communities now resident in the territory. This paper explores the contribution made by translations⁹ of the Kanak origin story, *Téâ Kanaké*, to the ongoing process that is the construction of Kanak identity.

Téâ Kanaké—a (hi)story

The spoken word is of central importance in all Kanak societies. It is the basis of the oral traditions which connect all aspects of spiritual, material and social life and carry the collective memory of the clan and the set of laws by which Kanak live.

The identity of the clan, a group of families or lineages connected to a founding ancestor and a specific place of origin, is inscribed in the landscape by way of the names of places passed through and inhabited by its ancestors. Each clan has specific rights with respect to the different sites that have been passed through and the land has been described as the ‘living archives’ of the clan, defining the roles, responsibilities and identities of its members.

Stories telling of the origins and history of groups are found in the oral traditions of the more than twenty-eight Kanak languages. These stories explain the creation of the world, the appearance of the first people, the origins of clans and the larger groups of clans known as chiefdoms, as well as the history of relationships between ancestors, spirits, totems, clans and specific locations in the landscape. There are as many histories of origins as there are linguistic groups, and different versions exist in areas where people share the same language. The circulation of these histories is restricted, each story ‘belongs’ to a certain group, and an orator must be a member of the group responsible for a story in order to be able to recount it. Kanak custom governs who is able to tell which story from which genre and also which audience is permitted to hear it. Differing versions can be the cause of conflict, since through them the hierarchy of lineages and the network of relationships that underpin Kanak societies are established.

Téâ Kanaké is a history of origin or *jémàà* from the Paicî oral tradition found in the area extending across a mountain range from the north-eastern to the north-western coast of the Grande Terre (the largest island of the New Caledonian group). Different versions of this *jémàà* exist which emphasise to various degrees, depending on the context in which they are being recounted, the following elements; the creation of the world, of plants and animals; the emergence of the first people; the itineraries followed by the ancestors and the consequent establishment of relationships between people and land. Featuring in every version is Téâ Kanaké, ancestor and elder brother of all the clans, “Kanaké is one of the most powerful archetypes of the Melanesian world. He is the ancestor, the first-born. He is the rooftop spear, the central pillar, the sacred place in the great house. He is the source of the life-giving oratory” (Tjibaou 1998:16).

Translation, rewriting, representation

When examining the ways in which translations of *T   Kanak * contribute to the recognition and ongoing construction of Kanak identity, direct comparison between a target text and a single source text is not possible due to the ephemeral nature of the spoken word. In oral tradition there is no fixed, written source ‘text’, and though elements of stories remain constant, new versions are continually being created with each telling. In every version there are variations that depend on the performative and historical context of that telling—why is the story being told, who is telling it, when and where is it being told, who are the audience, how do they react to the story? In order to investigate translations from Kanak oral tradition into written French it is necessary to extend a definition of translation developed in cultural contexts where the written word is firmly established and the notion of translation is associated with a source and target text, to accommodate the spoken dimension of the oral tradition.

Andr  Lefevere’s notion of translation as rewriting, in which translations “refer to books other than themselves and they claim to represent these books. [...] They are not ‘writing’ as the texts they write about are, they are ‘rewriting’” (Lefevere 1992b:138), can be useful for the examination of translation in the New Caledonian context. In this paper, the definition of translation as rewriting is broadened to take account of both written (text, writing and rewriting) and oral (story, telling and retelling) dimensions—as rewriting and retelling can equally be argued to create new versions of an ‘original’ text or story. Lefevere sees translation of an author’s works as a potentially powerful form of rewriting that is “able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin” (Lefevere 1992a:9).

A rewriting is not only able to ‘represent’ an author/orator and/or his (or her) text/story to a target culture, but can also project an image of a source culture. That image may become an important source of information for a target culture with only limited knowledge of, or contact with, a source culture. This is particularly true in a colonial situation in which interaction between dominating and dominated cultures takes place in restricted contexts. In situations of unequal power relations, rewritings, through the construction of knowledge, can also influence the image of the source culture experienced by its own members. The authority of the dominating culture can lead to the representations created in the dominant language being perceived as ‘truth’. This is the case in New Caledonia where French, the language of education and administration, is the medium through which rewritings project images to Kanak of themselves, as well as provide information for non-Kanak about Kanak cultures.

When translation takes place across what is perceived as an oral-written divide, the authority of the written word over the spoken word further reinforces the perception of the written translation as ‘truth’. Thus written records of Kanak oral tradition (including translations) made in the past become important sources of reference and through the authority conferred by their expression in the dominant language and their existence in textual form, these rewritings can influence notions of Kanak identity. This becomes significant in the New Caledonian context where the impact of colonial disruption of Kanak societies, urbanisation, the Kanak cultural renaissance and the assertion of political and land rights, have led to the implementation of projects for the recovery of elements of Kanak culture and history suppressed or hidden in the past.

In *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial theories explained*, Douglas Robinson discusses power differentials and Richard Jaquemond’s hypothesis that: “When a hegemonic culture does translate works produced by the dominated culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric and in need of a small cadre of intellectuals to interpret them” (Robinson 1997:31). According to Robinson, the translation of these “inscrutable texts” by the specialist will typically be either “painfully and pedantically literal and rebarbatively difficult or [. . .] loaded down with a critical apparatus (introduction and annotation) that imposes an academic or specialist interpretation on the reader” and thus “a particular image of the foreign culture” (Robinson 1997:34). In New Caledonia, translations, often those undertaken by anthropologists and linguists, have to different degrees projected images of Kanak oral traditions as difficult and inscrutable. Extensive commentaries and notes, as well as the practice of cutting up and numbering fragments of text, tend to direct the reader towards a particular interpretation and can create perceptions of an enormous (perhaps unbridgeable?) gulf between source and target cultures. Extremely literal rewritings of elements of Kanak oral traditions, lacking contextualisation and typically not presenting the source text or gloss translation, can also create the

impression of an original that is very simple and unsophisticated or even clumsy, and by extension a suggestion that the culture from which it derives shares these qualities.¹⁰

Translation in a colonial context does not necessarily act solely as a channel of colonisation, it also has the potential to be utilised as a channel of decolonisation. According to Edwin Gentzler, translation has the potential to become a tool for resisting colonial discourses, “Translation does not simply offer a window onto some unified exotic Other; it participates in its very construction. The process of staging translation is a process of gathering and creating new information that can be turned to powerful political ends, including resistance, self-determination and rebellion” (Gentzler 2002:216). Performed by a ‘translator’ with a specific strategy influenced by his/her personal poetics and political and socio-cultural perspectives, rewriting involves the creation of a representation, the creation of knowledge about a certain ‘reality’ and this is the source of the power inscribed in translation. Since the 1970s, Kanak have increasingly made use of the power of translation as a channel for decolonisation, creating information about Kanak history in the domain of the written word of the coloniser.

This paper examines various rewritings of *Têâ Kanaké* and traces the pathways taken by this origin story across the written-oral divide, providing a window on the potential contributions of rewritings to the construction of a broader Kanak identity.

Ethnographic rewritings of *Têâ Kanaké*

The first translations of *Têâ Kanaké* to appear in print feature in the anthropologist Jean Guiart’s 688-page ethnography, *Structure de la chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud*, published in 1963. There are two versions of *Têâ Kanaké* in Guiart’s book. The first is from Koné (in the Paicî linguistic area on the west coast of the Grande Terre) and was provided in French by Firmin Dogo Gorouna. In this version, the Grande Terre is flooded and three worms emerge from Nabumé’s tooth when it is touched by the moonlight. The first is named Têâ Kanaké, the second Dui Dauilo and the third Bwae Bealo. Blood from a rock pounded by the sea coagulates to form men and women. The women eat leaves from the trees that grow once the floodwaters recede, committing the original sin. After witnessing incest between his brothers and sister, the eldest brother leaves to establish his people in a valley. Têâ Kanaké journeys to different locations, meeting people who share his origins but are without names. In the moonlight three men emerge, one from each of the fingernails that Gorouna the name-giver has pulled from his right hand. Where each fingernail touches the ground, a different tree grows. The fruits that fall from the trees roll to different locations and men emerge from them. There is a quarrel over women, rocks are named in memory of the fight, one woman is turned to stone. The other woman is offered as a wife, ceremonial money is shared and distributed with names. Money is exchanged at the birth of a child, this is the blessing of the maternal uncles. From this time dates the institution of the witnessing of the marriage union, to certify that the child of a chief is his own.

The second version, from the east coast of the Grande Terre, was recounted in Paicî by Pierre PwêRêpwea, transcribed by Philippe Gorodé and translated into French by Auguste Wabealo and Jean Guiart. In this version, after the sea has receded, the moon pulls out one of its teeth and places it on a stone where after several days it rots and worms appear on it. The worms that fall to the ground are changed into lizards and their children have human faces. Those that fall into the water are changed into eels, they are later transformed into humans in appearance, then again into authentic human beings. Three sons are born to Bumé, first Têâ Kanaké, then Bwae Bealo and Dwi Dauilo, they are the origins of all the clans. Têâ Kanaké travels across the land, establishing people in each of the places that he passes through and giving them names. He then has three sons, falls ill and dies, his work being done. Bwae Bealo and Dwi Dauilo divide an area of the island into two groups, Bay and Dwi, of which each is the chief. The names of the Bay and Dwi clans are then listed.

The two versions appear only in French in the chapter entitled “the Patyi-Tyamuki area” where they are presented as empirical data embedded in Guiart’s lengthy analysis of the area in terms of kinship systems and other anthropological criteria. It could be argued that this presentation of the rewritings confirms Robinson’s hypothesis that translations from dominated to dominant languages are often loaded down with a critical apparatus (introduction and annotation) that imposes a specific interpretation on the reader, in this case that of Guiart’s anthropological analysis of the structure of the kinship systems represented in the stories.

Although the absence of the Paicî-language originals and the presentation of the French versions of *Têâ Kanaké* in Guiart's ethnology form part of a discourse in which Kanak subjects of study are in need of explanation and analysis by a French expert, it can also be argued that these rewritings of *Têâ Kanaké* represent an attempt by the Kanak 'informants' involved in the transcription/translation process to work against the colonial discourse. At the time these rewritings were created in the late 1950s–early 1960s, Kanak culture was virtually invisible to non-Kanak in New Caledonia, and this was one of the few opportunities to see Kanak history, in the form of a story from Paicî oral tradition, recorded and acknowledged. Allowing these versions of *Têâ Kanaké* to be committed to paper enabled the creation of information and through it the staking of a claim to existence, to history and to connections with specific places. This was a significant move in the context of alienation from ancestral lands and these early rewritings of *Têâ Kanaké* can be seen as an example of Kanak agency through translation, in which information from Kanak oral tradition is conferred with a certain authority by virtue of forming part of a written scientific work in the language of the colonising culture.

Mélanésia 2000 (Noumea, September 1975)

In September 1975, groups from all over New Caledonia came together in Noumea for the Mélanésia 2000 festival, a celebration of Kanak art, craft, music, oratory and dance. This was a resurgence of Kanak culture in the public domain and an assertion of Kanak pride. It was also an attempt to communicate with Europeans and other groups present in New Caledonia, as the organisers envisaged another festival after Mélanésia 2000, entitled Calédonia 2000, in which all the groups resident in the territory would be represented - this never came to pass.

The festival featured the three-act play *Kanaké*, a rewriting by Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Georges Dobbelaere of the origin (hi)story. The play turns around the central character Kanaké and includes translations of Kanak oratory into French. The full text of *Kanaké*¹¹ was also published, allowing those unable to attend the festival access to this important event in modern Kanak history.

In the first act, *Le Boenando*, the clans are called together, in Paicî with French translations, and there is dancing, game playing, oratory, and a swift and faultless recitation of his genealogy by Kanaké. The second act, *La Conquête* (the Conquest), recounts various events; the arrival of the French military, religion and commerce, represented by giant marionettes, The Captain, The Missionary and The Merchant; the distribution of mission dresses to Kanak women to cover their nakedness and Kanaké's rescue of Kapo¹² who freezes when she puts on the dress; the Kanak uprising, in which Kanaké is taken prisoner after calling on the invaders to leave; and the arrival of the Merchant who intrigues the Kanak with useless trinkets and introduces alcohol. Kapo appears amongst the drunken soldiers, dressed as a prostitute, and Kanaké, released from prison, rescues her again but, humiliated, she runs away. In the third act, *Le Partage des Ignames* (The Sharing of the Yams), Kanaké addresses the white men, describing to them the damage that they have caused to his people, he also calls upon Kanak to forget their hatred and bitterness and take part with the white men in the *Boenando*, the brotherly exchange of yams, which will hopefully lead to a forgiveness of past wrongs and an opening of a way forward to a future side by side.

Just as in oral tradition, the *jèmââ* record the history of the people, changing to incorporate new events that take place, the rewriting of *Têâ Kanaké* as the play *Kanaké* also integrates new events (the colonial invasion and the *Boenando* of the final act) into the original story. Rewriting the origin story in a manner compatible with Kanak oral tradition is another way of acknowledging the value of the "Kanak way".

Kanaké: Mélanésien de Nouvelle-Calédonie by Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Philippe Missotte (also translated into English),¹³ was published in 1976 following the Mélanésia 2000 festival with the express aim of introducing and explaining the Kanak world to readers. The first chapter is punctuated with extracts of the *Têâ Kanaké* story; in Paicî, collected and transcribed by Marie-Claude Tjibaou and her father M. Doui Wetta and in French, from the version that was translated by Auguste Wabealo and Jean Guiart. The remaining chapters which describe Kanak perspectives and way of life are interspersed with extracts from the play *Kanaké*.

Rewritings of *Têâ Kanaké* in the 1975 play and 1976 book are explicit attempts to project images that recognise and valorise Kanak cultures, and reclaim Kanak pride and identity. The inclusion of a Kanak language in the text (in this case Paicî) alongside the lingua franca of the territory (French) insists upon the equal importance of the Kanak language, and the displays of music, dance, oratory and art at the festival and described in the book demonstrate the richness and diversity of Kanak culture. *Têâ Kanaké*, the first-born, the ancestor, is presented throughout as a metaphor for a united Kanak people of the future¹⁴ and the authors call on Kanak to draw strength from their own culture and stories in order to create this unity.

Pedagogical rewriting

The transcription and translation of Kanak stories for use in educational contexts (and to preserve heritage for future generations) is an ongoing process in New Caledonia. *Têâ Kanaké* is one of the many elements of Kanak oral traditions that have been rewritten for pedagogical purposes. Pierre PwârâPwéaa, whose version of *Têâ Kanaké* featured in Guiart's *Structure de la Chefferie...*, provides an abridged version¹⁵ in the illustrated bilingual Paicî-French edition *Jè pwa jèkutâ: Recueil de textes 1 en langue paicî*. Produced under the auspices of the *Bureau des Langues Vernaculaires*, this book was published in 1984 by the *Centre de Documentation Pédagogique*¹⁶ in Noumea.

The abridged version, entitled *Jêmââ Kě tēpa ijiao* is presented first in Paicî, followed by a numbered, line by line translation into French. The story contains the main points of the version in *Structure de la Chefferie...*, but omits politically significant details such as the names of places visited by the ancestors and the names given to the different clans. The use of an abridged version is likely due to the composition of the intended readership (young people and non-Kanak), and perhaps also due to editorial constraints in this collection of Paicî stories.

The preface to *Jè pwa jèkutâ*, which invites the non-Paicî reader to learn about the 'other' through the French translation, also insists upon the literary and cultural value of the originals: "These texts of great aesthetic value, through the richness of their expression, the quality of their diction, and the diversity of their genres, play a part in providing our children with a glimpse of the wealth of our heritage. The French version that we present to non-speakers constitutes both an expression and an invitation to discover the Other" (Bouchet, Gurrera-Wetta, Siorat-Dijou, 1984:13). Collections such as *Jè pwa jèkutâ* play a role in the promotion and preservation of Kanak languages. Here the rewritings into French are secondary to the Paicî texts, whose aesthetic and cultural value are the focus of the collection. This subversion of the usual relationship between dominant and dominated languages was undertaken by the *Bureau des Langues Vernaculaires* which was charged with the creation of pedagogical documents to be used for teaching Kanak languages in schools.

Literary rewriting

Déwé Gorodé, the *indépendantiste* and vice president of New Caledonia, is also a pre-eminent Kanak writer from the Paicî-speaking region. Her writing engages with themes of relevance to Kanak today, presenting a Kanak world view and "kanakising" the French language. The play *Kĕnâké 2000 ou KNK 2000*, performed in 2000 at the *Festival des Arts Mélanésiens* in Noumea, is Gorodé's rewriting of the story of *Têâ Kanaké* (a version of which had been transcribed by her grandfather, the respected orator Philippe Gorodé, over twenty-five years prior, for translation in Guiart's *Structure de la chefferie...*). On the front cover of this unpublished work (the text of which is available for consultation at the Centre Culturel Tjibaou), is the subtitle "*une adaptation du jêmââ Têâ Kĕnâké*" (an adaptation of the *jêmââ Têâ Kĕnâké*). In this powerful play, Gorodé rewrites elements of the origin story into a modern context, that of the independence movement and the assassination of two of its leaders (an obvious reference to the death of Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwene Yeiwene). Transposing *Têâ Kanaké*, his two brothers, his sister and an ancestor spirit into the setting of contemporary Kanaky/New Caledonia, she rewrites *Têâ Kanaké* as a critique of Kanak society today, invoking *Têâ Kanaké* as a symbol of the Kanak people as they negotiate the issues such as the treatment of women, tensions between Custom and politics, and the struggle for independence.

Poetic rewriting

Téâ Kanaké, i pwi âboro nã caa kärä î-jè wâro kê/l'homme aux cinq vies, ('Téâ Kanaké: the man with five lives') is a contemporary rewriting for children of the *Téâ Kanaké* story by the Kanak author/poet Denis Pourawa, with illustrations by Kanak artist Eric Mouchonnière. This book was sponsored by the ADCK¹⁷ and the Centre Culturel Tjibaou. Pourawa, who grew up in the tribal milieu in the universe of oral tradition, has rewritten the story in an attempt to communicate to young people the beauty and the poetry of that Kanak expression to which they may not have been exposed. He has stated that his wish is to give young Kanak growing up in the city environment some point of reference, some way of connecting to their heritage. He accomplished this in a text that mixes traditional oratory, poetic language and direct appeals to the young reader, and through Eric Mouchonnière's illustrations in which young Kanak see themselves portrayed alongside elements drawn from oral tradition. Pourawa describes the challenge of rewriting *Téâ Kanaké*: "With this myth I found myself face to face with a Word that I had to write. But this Word is sacred, it is so profound that you cannot master all aspects of it. I had to reinterpret a story that has been transmitted from generation to generation. A task which has at once the weight of a burden and of a feather. The weight of a burden as it is a sacred Word that I had to write for young people. The weight of a feather as through this act of creativity, I am paying homage to all of the heritage that has made the Word a noble expression" (Favaro 2003). In his *Téâ Kanaké...*, the text in French is presented on alternate pages to its translation into Paicî by Solange Néaoutyine. The story has passed from Paicî oral tradition into French and has then been rewritten back into its language of origin as a mark of respect.

Conclusions

Rewritings of elements of Kanak oral traditions into French play an important part in the valorisation of Kanak culture, making a place for it alongside expressions of the other cultures that coexist in New Caledonia. The space created by translation for expressions of Kanak culture in the educational system, in literature for children and adults, and at the Centre Culturel Tjibaou is also a resource for those Kanak who, as a result of the colonial history of New Caledonia or of the pressures of modernity, may have lost touch with elements of their cultural heritage.

The Paicî origin story, *Téâ Kanaké*, has taken various paths from oral tradition to written expression in the French language by means of translation, and has transcended its specificity to become a metaphor for the unity of the Kanak people of New Caledonia, a means of explaining and critiquing contemporary Kanak society, and a testimony to the aesthetic and literary value of elements of Kanak oral tradition. The mere presence of Kanak stories in print alongside French translations is significant as an acknowledgement of the existence and legitimacy of Kanak cultural expression. From the first published versions of *Téâ Kanaké* in French (in an ethnographic text in the 1960s) to the most recent bilingual rewriting of the *jémàà* for children, there has been a shift in emphasis on the importance of the original text. More and more often the Kanak language version is included with or integrated into the translation. Increased recognition of the value of the source 'text' has been accompanied by increased Kanak agency in the translation process. As 'native-speaker informants' they continue to provide expert knowledge and material for studies undertaken by non-Kanak in which representations of Kanak languages, oral traditions and cultures are created. Participation in such projects affords Kanak an opportunity, depending on the degree of collaboration, to create new knowledge that may contribute to ideas of Kanak identity.

The past thirty years have seen greater Kanak involvement in the production of knowledge about themselves and the emergence of Kanak translators who are rewriting elements of their own and other traditions, utilising translation as a powerful counter-hegemonic tool. This has contributed to the creation of a collective Kanak identity, an identity which encompasses groups which are linguistically and culturally diverse, yet united by a shared history. "If Kanaké's ancestors came back in the year 2000, they would recognise men by their names. They would recognise their systems of authority, their genealogies, their social structures, the surviving languages, their humour, in a word their way of being in the world, persisting through history" (Tjibaou 1998:24). The various pathways taken by *Téâ Kanaké* from oral to written expression are evidence of the diversity that exists within Kanak identity and illustrate the variety of ways in which translation plays a role in the ongoing creation of Kanak identity, which is part of a larger process of building an inclusive national identity in a potentially independent Kanaky/New Caledonia of the future.

Notes

1. Kanaky: term adopted in the 1980s by the indigenous independence movement to designate the islands of New Caledonia.
2. The code governing the treatment of indigenous peoples throughout the French colonial empire, ostensibly established to protect them from the nastier aspects of colonial society but ultimately used as a tool to control indigenous populations.
3. FLNKS: *Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste*
4. RPCR: *Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République*
5. From Item 4, Preamble, Noumea Accord 1998 (The translation featured on the website of the French Embassy in Australia of “*sur la voie de la pleine souveraineté*” by “in preparation for full sovereignty” rather than the more literal “on the road to full sovereignty” could be argued to be slightly misleading, as the former implies that full sovereignty is *inevitable*, whereas the latter implies that it is *possible*.) http://www.ambafrance-au.org/article.php3?id_article=1058&var_recherche=noumea+accord consulted 26 February, 2006. (Note on French Embassy website: “Please note that this is an informal translation of the “Agreement on New Caledonia” done by the Pacific Community translation services.”)
6. The [k] phoneme is represented by a ‘k’ rather than the ‘c’ or ‘qu’ of French.
7. Although the usage of ‘kanak’ (invariable in number and gender) is becoming standard, the variable forms ‘kanak(s)’ and ‘kanake(s)’ as well as ‘canaque’ continue to be used, and usage continues to be indicative of political sympathy. For a history of the term ‘Kanak’, see Poédi (1997).
8. Author’s translation (note: all translations featuring in this paper are the author’s unless otherwise indicated).
9. Translations of this (hi)story from the oral tradition of the Paicî language into written French.
10. A notable exception amongst anthropological translations of elements of Kanak oral traditions is the case of the missionary-ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt, whose 1932 *Documents neo-calédoniens*, an anthology of A’jië legends, tales, customary orations and songs, was a collaborative undertaking. Kanak transcripteurs transcribed the source texts and these texts were presented in the book along with gloss translations, translations into French (arrived at after lengthy discussions between Leenhardt and the transcripteurs in order to render the texts satisfactorily into French) and concise explanatory notes. The openness of *Documents neo-calédoniens* to reinterpretation and retranslation, its value as a record of Kanak oral tradition as described by Kanak, and the collaborative methods employed in its production make this an important reference work today.
11. *Kanaké* features in the September 1995 edition of the Kanak cultural review *Mwà Vée*, produced by the Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture based at the Centre Culturel Tjibaou.
12. *Kapo* is the traditional name given to the daughter of a chief, and in legend she often dares to act outside the rules of tradition.
13. Tjibaou, J.M. & P. Missotte. 1976. *Kanaké: the Melanesian way*. (Trans. C. Plant, with the collaboration of USP), Papete: Editions du Pacifique.
14. The Centre Culturel Tjibaou was created as part of the Noumea Accord to foster all forms of Kanak culture. The story of *T'éá Kanaké* has also been ‘translated’ into the landscape of the grounds of the centre in its *Chemin Kanak* (Kanak

Pathway). The five stages of life found in the origin story are represented in a series of five gardens. Signs in languages representing each of the eight customary areas of New Caledonia describe plants of symbolic and practical significance.

15. Collected at Câba in 1950.

16. The *Centre de Documentation Pédagogique* is part of the national education network.

17. ADCK: *Agence du Développement de la Culture Kanak* (Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture) established in 1990 to "...promote and preserve the Kanak archaeological and linguistic heritage; ... encourage contemporary modes of expression within the Kanak culture, particularly in the fields of crafts, audiovisual presentations and artistic creativity; ... promote cultural exchanges, particularly within the South Pacific region; and identify and carry out research programmes." <http://www.adck.nc/en> consulted 26 February 2006.

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