

**“Objects, memory and cultural identity in (re)construction”**

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**The importance of intangibility in the cultural affirmation of the Kanaks of New Caledonia**

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**Abstract**

The Kanaks are the austronesian population living in New Caledonia for more than 3.000 years. Colonized in the middle of the XIX th century by France, the indigenous population was marginalized and their culture was to a great extent disclaimed. Since 1970s, Kanaks showed that their culture, far from having disappeared in front of outside influences and transformations, had survived and re-emerged strongly. This survival was made possible mainly by the intangibility character of their cultural heritage. The purpose of this presentation is to show by which means and notably the ritual called “the custom”, Kanak cultural memory could not only survive but also develop for more than a century of colonization, to establish itself as the indigenous cultural reference of a country which is today rich in its cultural diversity.