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LA PRATIQUE DE L'ESPACE
EN OCÉANIE
DÉCOUVERTE, APPROPRIATION
ET ÉMERGENCE
DES SYSTÈMES SOCIAUX TRADITIONNELS

*SPATIAL DYNAMICS IN OCEANIA
DISCOVERY, APPROPRIATION
AND THE EMERGENCE
OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES*

ACTES DE LA SÉANCE
DE LA SOCIÉTÉ PRÉHISTORIQUE FRANÇAISE
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Frédérique VALENTIN et Guillaume MOLLE

SÉANCES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ PRÉHISTORIQUE FRANÇAISE

7

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*La pratique de l'espace en Océanie :
découverte, appropriation et émergence des systèmes sociaux traditionnels*
Spatial dynamics in Oceania: Discovery,

Appropriation and the Emergence of Traditional Societies

Actes de la séance de la Société préhistorique française
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Oceania and the Regional Relations Paradigm

Contrasting Regional Networks and beyond

Denis MONNERIE

Abstract: This paper describes and analyzes the regional networks of the north-western Solomons (between c. 1850 and c. 1908) and the Hoot ma Whaap in the far north of Grande Terre (Kanaky/New Caledonia) from fieldwork observations during 1992 to 2012. In order to carry out comparative studies of the goods, ideas and people that circulated, of the ways in which they were circulated and of the local concepts and ideologies which underscored these dynamics, a wide concept of networks had to be assessed. The different modes of regional relations are compared, and the contrast between a patchwork-like network and a (much more) homogenous network are observed. Some of the theoretical issues raised by these descriptions, analyses and comparisons are discussed. One of which is a proposal for a renewed description for the whole of Oceania: the regional relations paradigm, the other is to acknowledge the usefulness and the limitations of our static anthropological tools.

Keywords: comparison, network, regional relations, circulations, dynamic models, Oceania, Solomon Islands, Kanaky/New Caledonia.

De l'Océanie considérée sous l'angle du paradigme des relations régionales : les contrastes entre réseaux régionaux et autres considérations.

Résumé : Ce texte décrit d'une part le réseau de relations régionales des îles Salomon du Nord-Ouest (étudié en anthropologie historique, entre 1850 environ et 1908) et d'autre part celui de l'extrême nord de la Grande Terre de Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie, nommé Hoot ma Whaap (étudié sur le terrain entre 1992 et 2012). À partir d'études comparatives des biens, idées et personnes qui y circulent, des modalités de ces circulations et des concepts et idéologies locaux qui les sous-tendent, il apparaît que derrière la notion très large de réseau existent des modalités de relations régionales diverses. Les différentes modalités de relations comparées permettent de contraster un réseau en patchwork et un réseau (beaucoup plus) homogène. Certains points théoriques soulevés par ces descriptions, analyses et comparaisons sont abordés. Parmi eux figurent la proposition d'une modalité renouvelée de description de l'Océanie dans son ensemble : le paradigme des relations régionales ; et aussi, à propos des outils anthropologiques statiques, la reconnaissance de leur utilité, mais aussi de leurs limitations.

Mots-clés : comparaison, réseau, relations régionales, circulations, modèles dynamiques, Océanie, îles Salomon, Kanaky/Nouvelle-Calédonie.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIES of Mono-Alu and the north-western Solomons, and of Arama and the Hoot ma Whaap region in the far north of Kanaky/New Caledonia, show how deeply people are involved in regional relations dealing both with so called material and immaterial items. The reproduction of both these societies extends beyond the local area and resides, to a large extent, in regional relations. Both situated in Melanesia, these societies display strong preoccupations with ranking humans and non humans from cradle to grave, and beyond. Therefore, these ethnographies, beyond con-

tradicting Marshall Sahlins's (Sahlins, 1963) famously heuristic and now obsolete characterization of the Big Man as the ideal Melanesian political type, have led me to view the tripartite geographical division of Oceania into Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia with a growing disbelief (Monnerie, 1998 and 2011). Paul D'Arcy's 2006 book *The People of the Sea* (D'Arcy, 2006) is a good example amongst many others that challenges the tripartite paradigm of Oceania and that attempts a better understanding of the Pacific as a whole. In this book, Paul D'Arcy favours several new paradigms, among

these the Near Oceania/Remote Oceania archaeological and linguistic distinction—which I shall call the bipartite paradigm. As an anthropologist my doubts about this bipartite paradigm stem from the fact that the societies and regions I study are not strikingly different, although the Solomon Islands belong to Near Oceania and Kanaky/New Caledonia to Remote Oceania. Another possible paradigm for a better understanding of Oceania, which I have long favoured and which is also suggested by Paul D’Arcy, is the regional relations paradigm.⁽¹⁾

The overarching argument of this paper is that I believe that the regional relation paradigm is much more relevant in understanding Oceania as a whole than the tripartite model or the bipartite model. As far as one can tell from the archaeology, geography, history, linguistics and social and cultural anthropology after the Lapita period, this huge continent does not favour homogeneity—certainly not in the social and cultural domain. However, neither does it encourage extreme fragmentation into isolated local societies as our Western notion of ‘insularity’ would suggest. Indeed, this is where the regional relation paradigm intervenes, by aiming to better understand Oceania as a whole made up of parts (regions) wherein local societies systematically maintain numerous relationships (e.g. material, immaterial, peaceful, violent) with their regional neighbours. These latter are often very different and sometimes very distant in location. By comparison with the other paradigms, the regional relation paradigm is more precise and provides a clearer view of what we currently know and understand as regards the often tight, local and regional links in Oceania.

This regional relation paradigm requires the creation or use of models, such as networks. In the far north of contemporary Kanaky/New Caledonia, and in the north-western Solomons, using early (end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century) anthropological sources, network models apply. However, these need to be qualified. From an anthropological perspective, emic anthropology is the principal research aim, though this also needs to be combined with etic concepts (Dumont, 1978 and 1983, p. 187–221) such as network models. Applied to regional systems, network models give us an overview of continuity and help to streamline the (sometimes baffling) ethnographic complexity of local/translocal social and cultural relations. Network models are also very flexible, a feature which enables us to account for the great variety of discontinuities, dynamics and spatial forms which are at work in Oceanian regional relations.

If we just consider Melanesia, ever since Richard Thurnwald, Bronisław Malinowski and Marcel Mauss, exchanges have been at the forefront of anthropological reflexions. More recently Joel Robbins (Robbins, 1994) has suggested that exchange is a pervading value in many Melanesian societies. I consider (see also Chave-Dartoen, this volume) that this crucial importance of exchange can be extended to most of Oceania. Local exchange and translocal exchange, which are conspicuous in local and regional relations in Oceania, are the building blocks of these networks or, more precisely, their dynamic com-

ponents. To describe these types of exchange in more detail, I will use the concept of transfers and circulation (Monnerie, 2012); a circulation being made up of a series of transfers.

THE NORTH-WESTERN SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Mono-Alu people live on a small island south of Bougainville called Alu (or Shortland; fig. 1). For Mono-Alu and the north-western Solomons, my ethnographic research refers to a period from c. 1880 to c. 1909. This was precisely documented by Gerald Camden Wheeler who left us with an outstanding ethnographic documentation, though mainly unpublished. Gerald Wheeler is primarily remembered as a linguist for his excellent description of the Mono-Alu Austronesian (AN) language, and his remarkably advanced presentation of oral traditions (Wheeler, 1926). Many other sources from the same period also provide us with valuable information (for a description of the sources and more detailed analysis of the ethnography, see Monnerie, 1996).

The Mono-Alu people have matrilineal kinship groups involving *fanua* relations between people belonging to the same matrilineal group. Variants of these matrilineal groups extend to several societies in this region (i.e. Mono, Fauro, Buin, Siwai [Siwai], Tiarama), evidence that the *fanua* relations spread beyond the Mono-Alu society. Another characteristic feature of the Mono-Alu society is the distinction between nobles (*lalaafa* for the men, *mamaifa* for the women, with everyone ranked within these gendered categories), commoners (*soi*) and dependents (*toniga*). With the exception of the village chiefs (*lalaafa*) who are always noble men, these distinctions are not readily apparent in everyday life. However, they are spectacularly performed, elaborated and exhibited in ceremonies, especially funerals, and in relations with the ancestors (*nitu*). Running parallel and strongly linked to these rankings, is a system of five different shell valuables (i.e. *kia*, *kasisi*, *perasale*, *mimisi*, *mauai*) with different values expressed by qualifications of the term *olatu*.⁽²⁾ In local Mono-Alu relations, this ranking of people, ancestors and shell valuables is articulated in transfers and circulations, both current and ceremonial. However, they are also mirrored by regional relationships with the societies of other islands in the Bougainville straits (Mono and Fauro), southern Bougainville (Buin, Siwai, Banone and Kieta), and Choiseul (Tiarama and Bambatana), and further afar New Georgia (Roviana; here: fig. 1 and fig. 7). We shall see that they do so differently. The best documented regional relations are between the Mono-Alu and Buin societies in southern Bougainville. Relations with the Siwai society seem to have been similar to those with Buin, only less frequent. The Buin and the Siwai people speak non-Austronesian (NAN) languages. Further on, I shall discuss how my model of relations with Buin (also valid with minor

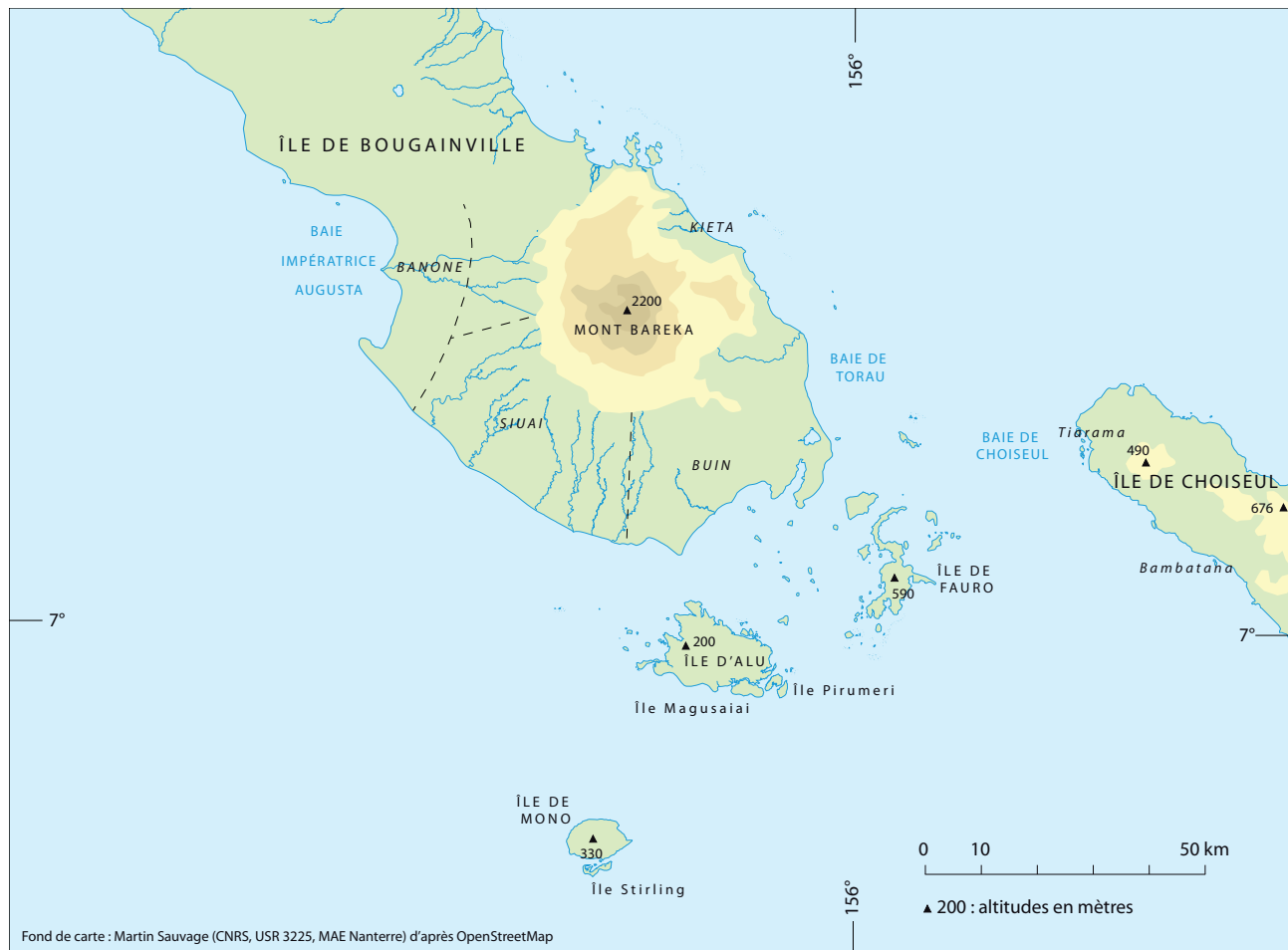


Fig. 1 – The north-western Solomons.

Fig. 1 – Les îles Salomon du Nord-Ouest.

alterations for Siwai) is only one part of a larger network model extending to other regional relations.

My model of relations between Mono-Alu and Buin is grounded on the current and ceremonial relations between four villages; two Mono-Alu villages (X and Y) and two Buin villages (X' and Y'). Villages X and X' and villages Y and Y' maintain regular, almost weekly, relationships. Figure 2 shows the everyday transfers of goods, pigs and dependents brought by the Buin people to the Mono-Alu. In return, the Buin receive shell valuables of two types: *mimisi* and *mauai*, both at the bottom of the Mono-Alu shell valuable scale. *Mimisi* is the lowest shell valuable used amongst the Mono-Alu, it is also widely used in the north-western Solomons. *Mauai* is a simplified form of shell valuable made by the Mono-Alu used only in transfers with the people of southern Bougainville. It is never used amongst the Mono-Alu. However, amongst the Buin, *mimisi* and *mauai* are commonly used: *mimisi* being highly valued and comparatively scarce, *mauai* less so.

Within this context the following were acquired: male/female dependents (*toniga*); various goods including live pigs (*boo*), cooked pork meat, sago cakes (*bia*), taro (*kokong*), canarium nuts (*kai*), arrows (*iliu*), spears (*potulu*), plaited vegetal bracelets (*pago*), several types

of baskets (e.g. *aroaro*, *koko*, *kokonui*, *kisa*), small personal net handbags (*kuisa*), bamboo boxes (*kulukulu*), betel containers (*puai*), decorations worn during dances (*mitamita*, *bisibisi*), and a white earth called *fioi* used for personal decoration. From Buin and Siwai the Mono-Alu also acquired deadly magic preparations (*leako*) which they apparently could not make. In turn, the Mono-Alu people on Mono and Fauro provided canoes to the Siwai and Buin people who do not build them.

Figure 3 shows one sequence of the ceremonial circulations during the first phases of the funerals of Mono-Alu nobles (men, women and children). A living pig was transferred from the Buin village Y' to the Mono-Alu village Y in return for *mimisi* and *mauai*. The pig was then transferred again from the Mono-Alu village Y to the Mono-Alu village X.

Whilst the funerals were in progress, Mono-Alu warriors from the bereaved village attacked a Buin village which is not in current relations with their own (fig. 4). Therefore, in my model, the Mono-Alu village X attacks the Buin village Y' (and vice versa). On their weapons, the warriors bring back the dried blood of their victims. This is called *nitu* and it is used to feed the ancestor of the deceased Mono-Alu noble person, who is also called

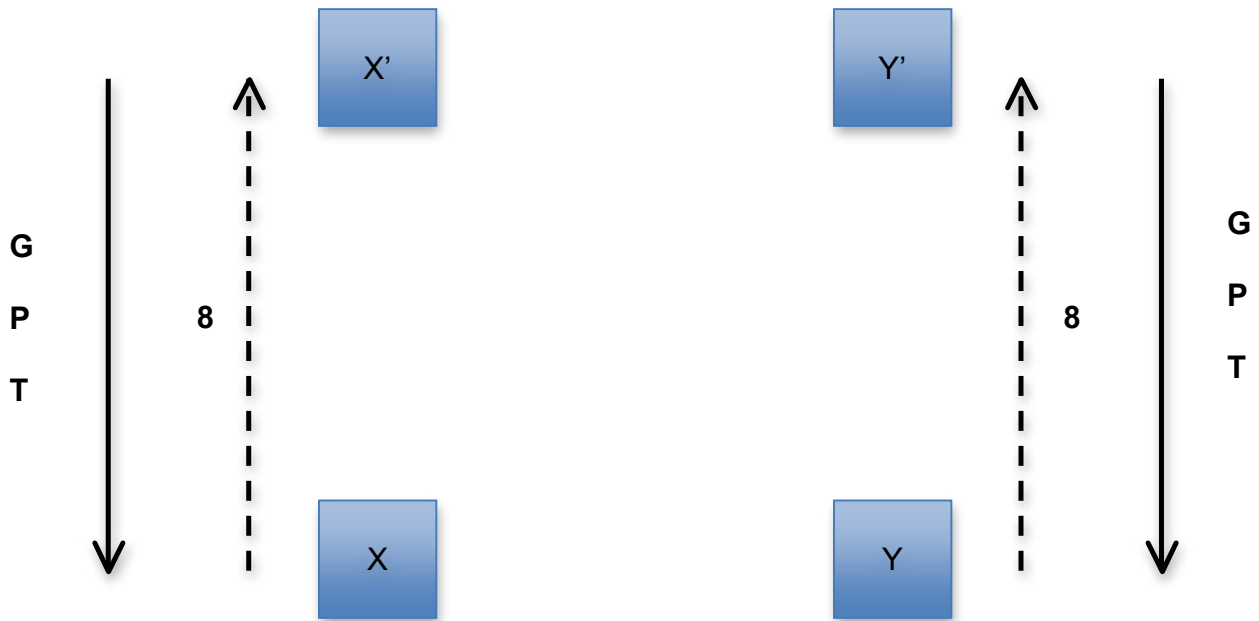


Fig. 2 – G: various goods. P: pigs; T: toniga; 8: mimisi and mauai (sometimes gorau).
Fig. 2 – G : biens divers. P : porcs ; T : toniga ; 8 : mimisi et mauai (parfois gorau).

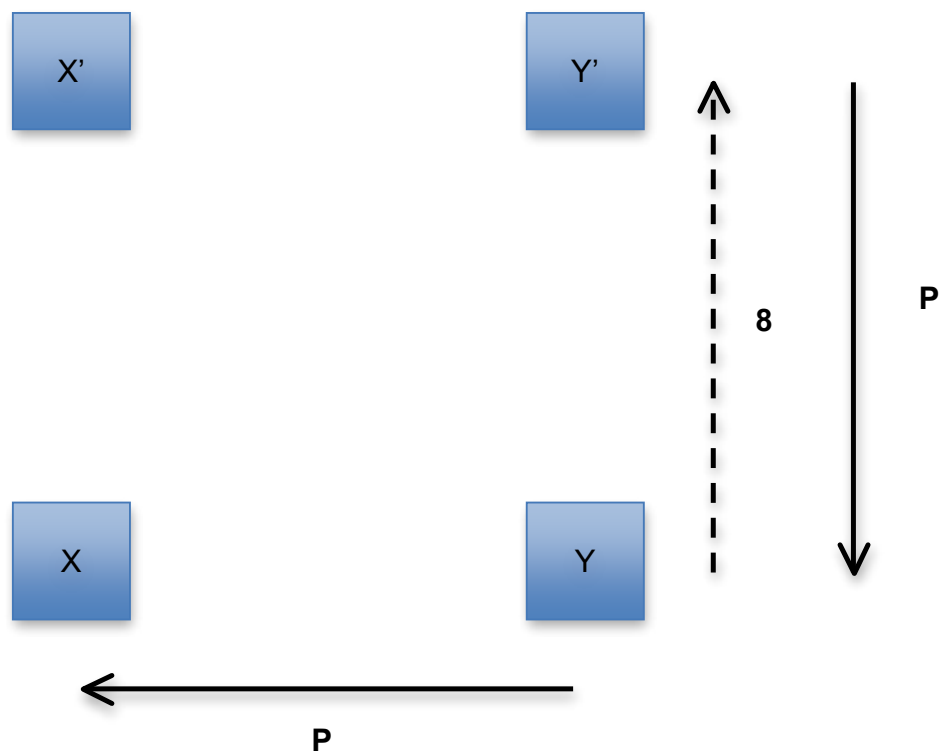


Fig. 3 – P: living pig; 8: mimisi and mauai (sometimes gorau).
Fig. 3 – P : porcs vivants ; 8 : mimisi et mauai (parfois gorau).

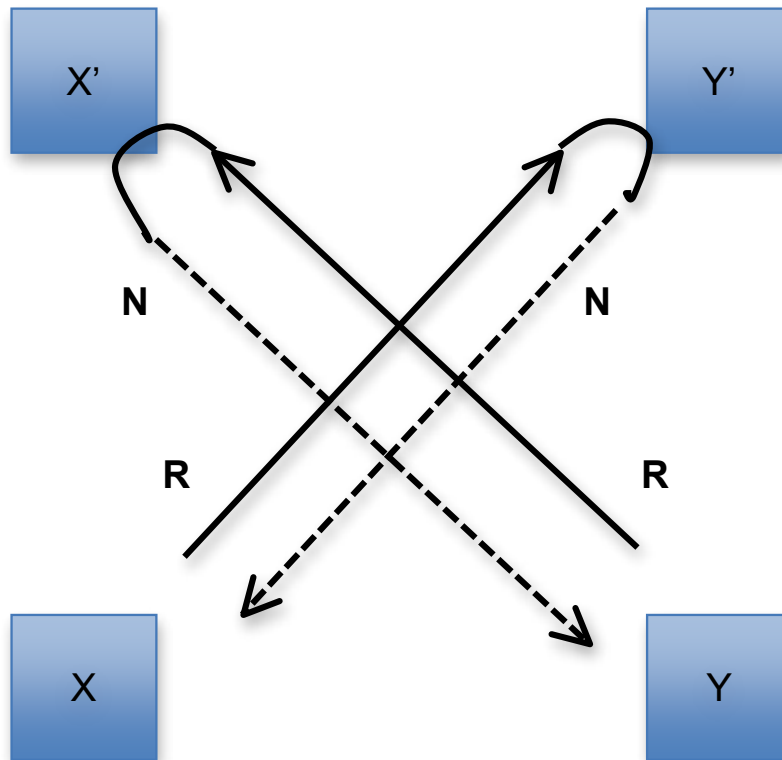


Fig. 4 – R: raid towards Buin (sometimes Siwai); N: *nitu* of the victims brought back after a raid, to Mono-Alu.

Fig. 4 – R : raid vers Buin (parfois Siwai) ; N : apport de *nitu* des victimes à Mono-Alu après un raid.

nitu. If the dead noble was a village chief, such raids are performed repeatedly at each stage of the reconstruction of specific features of the village linked to the new living chief: his new house and canoes, the men's common house. From a Mono-Alu point of view, the *nitu* of these raid victims are subordinated to the Mono-Alu warriors and will feed the *nitu* of the Mono-Alu nobles. The Buin (or Siwai) people never retaliate. Therefore, these violent interactions are always to the detriment of the Buin people. They are also transfers of ancestry.⁽³⁾

In other contexts wars are waged between Mono-Alu nobles and villages (fig. 5). In contrast to the absence of retaliation from the Buin people, here retaliation is very much the rule with reciprocal violent interactions. All five different types of shell valuables, including the highly valued ones, can be transferred between the Mono-Alu villages.

Figure 6 shows the complete network model of these relationships. It displays a parallel between the targets of the violent interactions and the transfers of low valued shell valuables. For example, the Mono-Alu people transfer low valued shell valuables to Buin. In return, the Buin people transfer common goods, living pigs and dependents. They also never retaliate to deadly raids performed on their villages, raids in which the victims' dried blood, their *nitu*, is brought back to the Mono-Alu reinforcing their noble ancestors. This orientation of relations is also evidenced when a Buin boy or girl of high status

(*mumira*; for Siwai: *mumi*), who is exchanged in Mono-Alu for *mimisi* and *mauai*, becomes a dependent at the bottom of the Mono-Alu social rank like a non *mumira* person. Dependents do not become ancestors in Mono-Alu or in their country of origin. This network, therefore, shows the subordination of the Buin people to the Mono-Alu people in all their relations but especially in raids/violent interactions and shell valuables, whose orientations are parallel.

For other regional relations in the north-western Solomons at that period, the ethnography is not as meticulous as that recorded by Gerald Wheeler for the Mono-Alu and Buin/Siwai societies. However, there are clear indications that their relations with other societies are sufficiently different to make this model inapplicable. A map of the regional circulation of shell valuables evidences that the transfers of low valued *mimisi* and *mauai* only concern relations with Buin and Siwai (fig. 7). Therefore, the model previously described is only one patch in a wider patchwork-like model of regional relations.

Apart from the Buin/Siwai society, the best documented relations are with the Tiarama society in the northern part of Choiseul, where there are actual battles with reciprocal violent interactions. No dependents are ever acquired from the Tiarama and their ancestors are very much feared. In the past a Tiarama noble warrior ancestor was transferred to Mono to impart superior warring capacities to the noble warriors of Mono who then

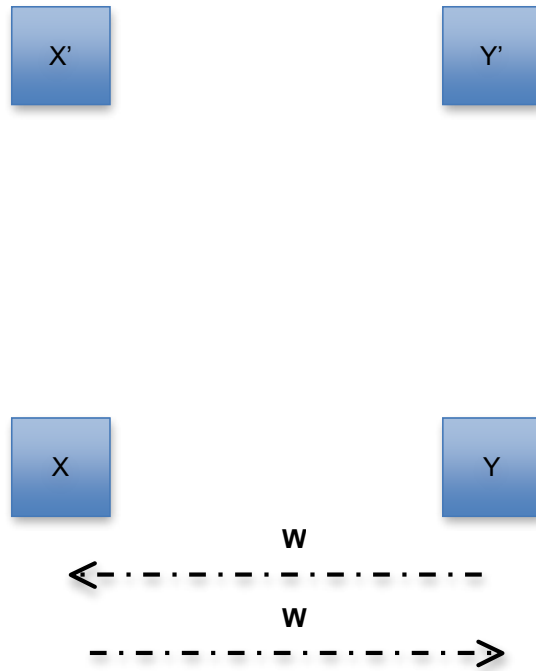


Fig. 5 – W: war between Mono-Alu villages.
 Fig. 5 – W : guerre entre villages Mono-Alu.

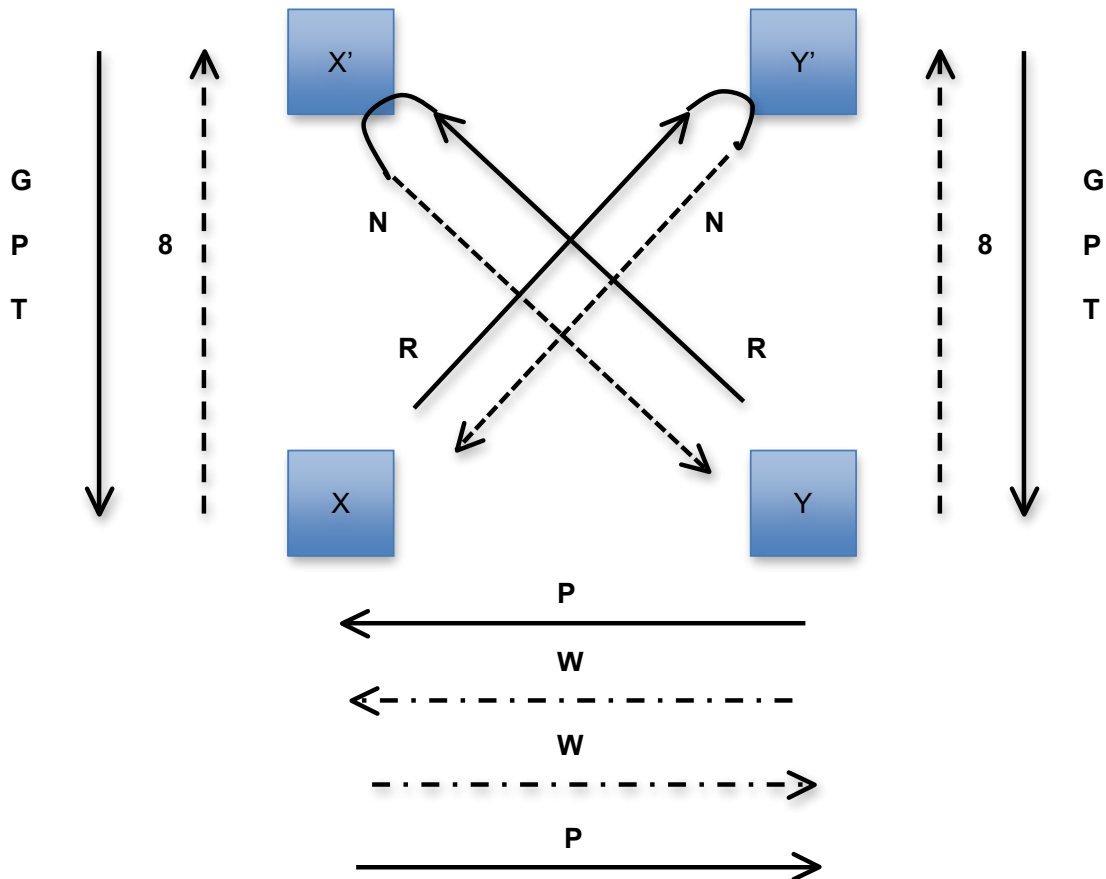


Fig. 6 – G: various goods; P: pigs; T: toniga; 8: mimisi and mauai (sometimes gorau); R: raid towards Buin (sometimes Siwai); N: nitu of the victims brought back after a raid, to Mono-Alu; W: war between Mono-Alu villages.
 Fig. 6 – G : biens divers ; P : porcs ; T : toniga ; 8 : mimisi et mauai (parfois gorau) ; R : raid vers Buin (parfois Siwai) ; N : apport de nitu des victimes à Mono-Alu après un raid ; W : guerre entre villages Mono-Alu.

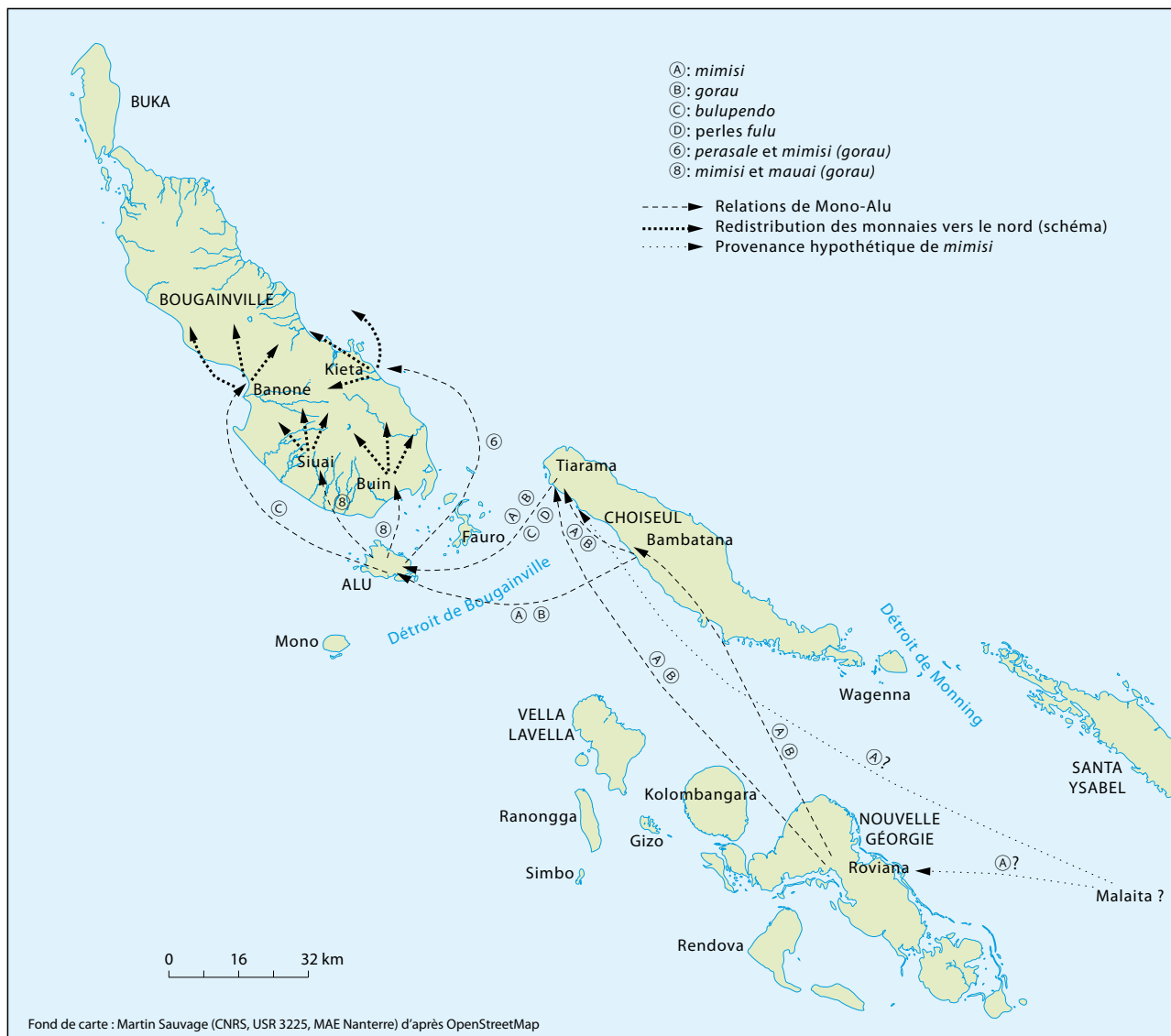


Fig. 7 – Map of the circulations of shell valuables in the north-western Solomons.
Fig. 7 – Carte des circulations des monnaies de coquillages dans les îles Salomon du Nord-Ouest.

managed to conquer Alu early in the early nineteenth century (Monnerie, 1996). Tiarama has a shell valuable called *bulupendo* which the Mono-Alu people consider to be highly valuable (*olatu*) and equivalent to their own highly valued *kasisi*. Tiarama is also a relay in the region-wide circulation of *mimisi*.

With Roviana on New Georgia there are indications that other forms of exchange of goods, shell valuables and violence prevail. With the Banone and Kieta on Bougainville, the relations differ again.

In conclusion, the relationships of the Mono-Alu with the Mono and Fauro, Buin and Siwai, Banone and Kieta, and Tiarama and Roviana all differ. Consequently, the network model which applies to the relationships between the Mono-Alu and the Buin/Siwai does not apply in the form described in figs. 2 to 6 above to these other regional relations. It is only useful as part of a wider, non homogenous network with a measure of continuity provided by the *fanua* relations of the matri-

lineal groups. Against this backdrop of continuity different types of distinctions, orientations and hierarchies are developed. They are especially clear in the types of violent interactions (oriented or reciprocal) and in the circulation of shell valuables of different values.

Between local societies (i.e. Mono-Alu and Buin/Siwai) and sets of local societies, these oriented or reciprocal interactions create ‘boundary effects’ (Monnerie, 1997) which delineate patches in this network. If we include all the societies mentioned, the overall model of the regional relations of Mono-Alu with southern Bougainville and northern Choiseul is made up of different patches forming a wider patchwork-like network.

Another Oceanian regional network, contrasting in several ways with the one just described, is that of Hoot ma Whaap in the far north of Kanaky/New Caledonia which I studied between 1992 and 2012. Its striking feature is not that it is heterogenous (or patchwork-like) but rather that it is homogenous.

HOOT MA WHAAP IN KANAKY/NEW CALEDONIA

Hoot ma Whaap has a long-standing regional network of relations covering the northern part of Grande Terre, which integrates the original local societies of its Kanak inhabitants.⁽⁴⁾ It was observed by Western people soon after they settled, primarily because it had a strong and conspicuous component of violent interactions (Lambert, 1901; Guiart, 1966; Sausso, 1979; Rozier, 1990 and 1997). From among the twelve local societies which constitute Hoot ma Whaap, half are Hoot (universally considered to be the longest established); the other half are Whaap (considered to have settled at a later date). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the tendency for the Hoot and the Whaap, during the violent interactions, was to build mutual alliances and to wage war against each other. These relations were instrumentalized by the French (i.e. the Roman Catholic missionaries and the colonial armed forces) in order to strengthen their control over the country and its people. Unfortunately, the descriptions of these past violent interactions are not detailed and they are far from being as precise and excellent as those we owe to Gerald Wheeler and which I have used in my analysis of the Mono-Alu and Buin/Siwai relations. Moreover, the European witnesses did not provide more detailed observations of all the other types of regional relations, including transfers and circulations, which also existed in the Hoot ma Whaap network at that time.

I have observed the contemporary peaceful forms of these relations and studied their oral history.⁽⁵⁾ I noticed that there are many striking indications of homogeneity in the Hoot ma Whaap region. Firstly, there is homogeneity at the level of local society's configuration. Although ten different Austronesian languages are spoken in the area, the names of the Hoot and Whaap societies (fig. 8) all begin with *Teâ*, a word which implies valuation (it can also be a title, a name or a segment thereof). All these societies have high-ranking dignitaries who are called *teâ* (elder brother) and *mweau* (younger brother), *kaavo* (elder sister) and *hixe* (younger sister). If an enthronement ceremony is performed, a *teâ* becomes a *teâmâ*, ('supreme/collective elder brother') and becomes the high-ranking representative of his Great House. Several dyads used throughout the region express social configurations such as Hoot and Whaap, *teâ* and *mweau*, *kaavo* and *hixe* where the first element is anterior (i.e. arrival or birth) to the second one, and where valuation is closely associated with firstness. This dyadic idiom is combined with several others (verbal and non verbal) often expressing firstness; most prominent among them, the dynamic order of ceremonial precedence (Monnerie, 2001, 2003 and 2005).

I have focused my ethnographic study of these regional relations on the Whaap *Teâ Aaoovaac* Great House,⁽⁶⁾ the local society commonly known as Arama. The Kanak words and concepts I will use are in *nyêlâyu*, the language of Arama, Belep (*Teâ Belep*) and Balade (*Teâ Puma*).

Several myths and other types of narratives allude to the Hoot ma Whaap region and relations. In Arama, one myth (*vajama*) describes the arrival from the sea of the ancestors of the contemporary Whaap inhabitants: before settling, they expelled the former Hoot towards the interior of the land. Another myth describes how this society (then called *Teâ Yhuen*) once received and enthroned a high status stranger to make him their new *teâmâ* by changing his name. This is a classic myth in northern Grande Terre, and it illustrates the fact that the *teâmâ* is himself part of a dyad, in the way in which he and his family relate to the previously established local high-ranking social groups who received him. Another narrative (which is not a myth) recounts the creation of the Hoot ma Whaap regional system of relations during a series of regional meetings predating the arrival of the Europeans.

However, this common regional idiom of social configuration is not only verbal. Many of the Hoot ma Whaap societies represent themselves as a Great House (*mweemwâ*). The figure of the Great House is replicated in ceremonial performance, choreography, and architecture as well as in oratory or social concepts. Its well-known architectural form is that of a conical roofed round house topped by a finial with a single door flanked by two sculptures figuring the guardians of the door. Most important parts of the great house as architecture figure the groups and important dignitaries making up the social configuration.⁽⁷⁾ They can have the same name and are ideally built by these groups in a prescribed order akin to the ceremonial order of precedence (Monnerie, 2010). This architectural form is not a specific Hoot ma Whaap feature; but is constructed all over Kanaky/New Caledonia—including the Loyalty Islands—where always materializing and displaying strong references to the local society.

One aspect of Hoot ma Whaap which contrasts with the north-western Solomons is the homogeneity of translocal relations. Most Great Houses are linked to each other by pathways (*daan*). On these Pathways, Doors (*phwâmwâ*) separate and/or link the great houses; Gates (*phwâ xayot*) separate and/or link their different territories. Thus this particular regional network is conceptualized in local terms by Great Houses linked by Pathways and separated/linked by Doors and Gates (*phwâ*, *phwâ xayot*). This Kanak construction of a homogenous regional world with three main basic components—House, Pathway, Door—is strikingly similar in its form to the Western model known as a Petri network (Parrochia, 1993). These verbal and non-verbal concepts of regional relations prevail throughout Hoot ma Whaap alongside a shared ceremonial idiom.

Nowadays, the circulations involving Hoot ma Whaap are mostly ceremonial. The procedures involved are highly sophisticated. The largest regional ceremony is a highly-valued procedure of arrival and reception called *thiam* (Pidjo, 2003), which brings together delegations of several Great Houses who have been invited by one Great House for a ceremonial, cultural and/or political event. This canonical regional ceremony operates a dyadic structure, a Great House, receiving successively arriving



Fig. 8 – Map of northern New Caledonia: the Hoot ma Whaap region.

Fig. 8 – Carte du Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie : région de Hoot ma Whaap.

delegations from other Great Houses who have ideally followed the ancestral pathways of relations to the inviting Great House.⁽⁸⁾ The guests offer ceremonial goods and food to their hosts. The receiving and arriving delegations form two sides facing each other. Transfers and counter transfers of the same types of goods, synchronized with often beautiful and intense long poetic speeches expressing the relations between the two Great Houses, reinforcing the relations between the two ceremonial sides. This phase of reception and inclusion of the arriving side, by the receiving side, within a provisional ceremonial House (*mwā*) is repeated with the arrival of each successive delegation. When the ceremonial event is over, usually after several days, a phase of separation reverses this process: the deconstitution of the ceremonial House. The guests then return to their original localities. Formerly *thiam* ceremonies were opportunities to ambush an incoming or receiving party, a warlike dimension that is still suggested in several aspects of contemporary ceremonies. If a ceremonial sequence is not performed in an adequate way, ancestral wrath expresses itself.

It is worth mentioning that this regional ceremonial form of *thiam* is similar in its dyadic form and basic prin-

ciples of transfers and circulation to ceremonies of the cycle of life or local relations. There clearly is a regional Kanak ceremonial idiom strengthening social relations of many types, sometimes referred to in Kanak French as '*le système kanak*'. The goods that are transferred and that circulate during these ceremonies are: modern money, traditional Kanak valuables (*monnaies kanak*), lengths of colourful cotton cloth (called *manous* in Kanak French), clothes (women's dresses, men's trousers and shirts), tobacco or cigarettes, matches, occasionally sculptures, and mats, etc. The foodstuffs are: yams, taro, rice, powdered sugar, bananas and plantains, sugar cane, many sorts of commercial foods (e.g. bread, flour, tea, coffee), turtles and dugong (specific for ceremonies involving high-ranking social entities of coastal societies), various types of meat (hunted or domestic animals), and not to forget the globalized frozen chicken. All these goods/foods are imbued with relational meanings and are regionally recognized as ceremonial when put into ceremonial circulation. The fact that they are tangible is central to their role in the construction of relationships. The composite character of relations is displayed by the variety of these ceremonial goods, as well as by the fact

that they are transferred with verbal prestations. (Monnerie, 2005; for details about the ceremonial goods used formerly see Monnerie, 2012).

The ceremonial micro-dynamics of *thiam* is that of the local Great House receiving delegations of other Great Houses and forming a temporary common social configuration. This community is designated as House, a central regional concept for localized groups, as exemplified in the Great House (*mweemwâ*).⁽⁹⁾ A *thiam* is therefore a valued relational event, limited in space and time, replicating concepts central to the mythology and long/short term oral history of the region as a whole. As a matter of fact, the Great Houses of the Hoot were established in the region prior to those of the Whaap and, local societies have been, and still are, involved in various dynamics of arrivals and departures of groups whether mythical, historical, ceremonial or through expulsions. These dynamics of arrivals and departures on different scales delineate fractal forms because they are repeated on various scales of space and time.

These are some of the verbal and non verbal expressions and conceptualizations by the people of this area—emic concepts in an endo-model—in a regional system whose homogeneity involves both its network and its fractal aspects. However, note that the network and fractal vocabulary and models I have used here to describe and analyse this system are static Western epistemological tools—etic concepts and exo-models—, accounting for social and cultural phenomena which are basically dynamic.

BEYOND THE DIFFERENCES AND CONTINUITIES

Beyond their differences, regional relations encompass past and active experiences of being locally anchored, going beyond this anchoring, and, returning to one's local anchoring or reacting to it in various ways. This involves dynamic relations with various forms and degrees of otherness that exist beyond the local, the familiar, the visible or the intimate. These relations are enhanced through the motions of persons and things and between the local and the translocal via pathways; either pragmatically well-trodden or navigated (as in the north-western Solomons) or highly conceptualized elements of social relations (as in the pathways of Hoot ma Whaap). All of these involve complex movements projecting, spreading and returning people, acts, things, meanings and ideas. Arguably, in Oceania, there is no conceptual fracture between relations and substances, such as those stressed by Western philosophy (Monnerie, *in press*). Oceanian social relations apply to all sorts of transferred and circulated things: components of persons, food, tangible substances, and objects—including valuables. Exchange has always been a major focus of research for anthropologists in Melanesia with initial explorations, covering Oceania and Eastern Indonesia

(Monnerie, 2014), now feeding into new studies whose results are eagerly anticipated.

I have put forward the view that Oceania is made up of many interacting regional worlds where actions, words, ideas and different objects circulate and often merge into concepts which can be regionally shared, or still else differently interpreted, valued or prohibited. In other words, objects, which have been at the forefront of archaeological discoveries, play a role in creating, altering and maintaining relations and concepts both within local societies and in their translocal regional relations. This raises questions regarding the value and possible transferability of anthropological models to archaeology. But first of all, what can we learn from the comparison of the two regional networks I have described and analysed here?

The comparison of the north-western Solomon and the Hoot ma Whaap networks show interesting similarities and both have six main features: firstly, they are acephalous; secondly, their poles of circulation are mostly named local societies (villages in the Solomons, Great Houses in Hoot ma Whaap). Thirdly, their outlines are drawn by dynamics of circulation involving people, their actions, the objects, ideas and values they transfer. Fourthly, they involve regionally recognized objects and concepts. Fifthly, ancestors are deeply involved in these regional relations, and sixthly, the anthropological network models we use to describe them are static outlines describing recurring dynamic processes of transfers and circulation in space and time.

However, some of their differences are also well worth underlining. This study suggests the broad uses one can make of network models. Other well-known—and very different—regional relation systems, two examples of which are the Kula of the Massim archipelago, and the Sawei in Micronesia, can be analysed in terms of networks. Returning to the regions I have concentrated on, Hoot ma Whaap stands out in its well defined concepts of (Great) Houses, Doors, Pathways and dynamics of circulation: voluntary or forced, short-term or long-term arrivals or departures. These are parts of a dynamic endo-model of translocal relations which, when viewed through static anthropological exo-models, have network and fractal dimensions. With regard to the homogenous Hoot ma Whaap networks, the available ethnography provides no precise indication as to possible former orientations of violence. Here, the overall differential valuations are predicated on firstness, another form of orientation, which is relative (Monnerie, 2001 and 2003). Firstness is replicated at several levels of social acts and conceptualizations whose cores are, firstly, the elder/younger sibling relations, male and female; secondly, the succession of generations; and thirdly, the locally established *versus* the more recently arrived (or arriving) groups. In the latter which encompasses mythical, long-term or short-term historical and ceremonial space and time, we can clearly see how firstness is closely interwoven with the dynamics of arrivals and departures. This contributes to the region's social and cultural homogeneity, beyond its linguistic

fragmentation. In contrast, the north-western Solomon patchwork is largely an exo-model for repeated, consistently conceptualized (verbally and/or not verbally) acts of transfers and circulation. Here, the orientations of relations stand out, with two striking elements: differently valued shell valuables and different types of violent interactions. These orientations of relations create what I have called ‘boundary effects’ between local societies or sets of local societies.

Such boundary effects, which here delineate the patches of a regional network, can also appear between regions. Therefore, with regard to the homogenous Hoot ma Whaap network, the questions raised by the regional relation paradigm and network model concern relations with neighbouring regions to the south (Dui ma Bai on Grande Terre) and the east (the Loyalty Islands), especially those which concern the intensity of regional links or breaks between them. There are three striking facts about these links, which I will briefly mention: First, the possibility of performing regional (*thiam*) or cycle of life ceremonies between persons and groups from different regions. This is organised (i.e. in marriages and funerals) between Hoot ma Whaap and Lifou in the Loyalty Islands, and raises the strong hypothesis that the ceremonial idiom of Hoot ma Whaap is a regional variant of a wider pan-Kanak ceremonial idiom. Second, parallelisms in the principle of architectural representation of social configuration through the figure of the Great House (Monnerie, 2010). Third, the ceremonial uses of the same circulated objects, i.e. traditional Kanak valuables (*monnaies kanak*; Monnerie, 2012); but note that this can be coupled with differences in the way they are ceremonially handled in different regions of Kanaky/New Caledonia.

Therefore, the regional relation paradigm and network models seem, for the time being, well suited to study regional relations: they involve strong, clearly defined, verbal and non verbal concepts, circulating objects and recurrent links and circulations such as those observed in contemporary Hoot ma Whaap. They also enable the study of the orientations of relations as described for the north-western Solomons. Hypothetically, they should also help us describe and understand weak links (minimal and/or erratic circulations) and/or breaks (absence of circulation) between networks of regional relations or within them. In this way, various sorts of boundary effects can be defined. Finally, they enable analysis both at a given time in history and in the perspective of historical change and/or continuity.

Were the regional relations paradigm to be adopted for the whole of Oceania, the anthropological map would become much more adequate and precise, but also more complex than with the tripartite or bipartite paradigms. It would become comparable in overall complexity and debatability to the maps and schemas that are drawn up for the linguistic families and branches of Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages. However, in some features the maps drawn by anthropologists would differ from those drawn by linguists: Hoot ma Whaap has several different Austronesian languages, and in the

north-western Solomons Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages are spoken. In this case the shapes of association discovered by linguists and anthropologists would be different, and only their complexity would be comparable. Regional relations often overlap language distinctions, and the various long-standing relations and influences between groups using non-Austronesian and Austronesian languages is now firmly established in Oceania and Indonesia.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

This text has developed anthropological approaches, within historical and field anthropology, in the context of a Pacific Archaeology conference. This raises the question of how all this concerns archaeologists? Of course, the fact that I have never practised archaeology puts me in a difficult position here, but a few remarks may be useful. Broadly, the complexity of social and cultural phenomena dealt with by anthropologists makes us, or should make us, very careful when we develop models for them. For instance, even though his approach was one of the many landmarks in the history and developments of social and cultural anthropology, gone is the time when Claude Lévi-Strauss could produce models of marriage dealing only with the reciprocal exchange of women (Lévi-Strauss, 1947). Graph models pose a similar problem: how far can we ‘purify’ the ethnography, leaving aside circulated items which are not deemed relevant to the theory put forward and is it legitimate to do so (Monnerie, 2014)? Anthropologists now grapple with circulations of women, men, components of persons, ideas, objects, and values in order to gain a finer understanding of the place of women, marriages, and the subtle points of exchange in various societies (Weiner, 1976 and 1992). My use of network tools in anthropology may differ from other uses, but the complexity it has underscored resonates with the complexity of social and cultural phenomena. On a less general level, I wish to address three questions. Two of them relate to the way the regional relation and network paradigms can be applied to archaeology when it cannot be complemented by oral history and to archaeology and anthropology when they have access to oral history. The last one deals with Lapita.

First, how would the regional relation and network paradigms work, for instance in the north-western Solomons for periods not documented through oral history? Composite shell valuables are used throughout this region;⁽¹⁰⁾ but to create these valuables the disks (and the broken small shells in *maui*) are connected using strings which are perishable on the long term, whereas only the shell elements will be preserved. In the absence of relevant oral history, this would restrict and orient the interpretations of archaeologists concerning their finds. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from recovering such shell disks may indicate a regional object-related idiom of valuables made up of strung disks with the same or different sizes,

though this means taking into account the known form of the valuables used during historical periods. Recovering such disks may also show that some components of these valuables are more or less frequent depending upon the investigated area. Relations with the original shells and their origin places, localisation and depth of ecosystem,⁽¹¹⁾ will also provide information on the extent of circulations of such objects and of people in this part of Oceania. And of course, the discovery of workshops in which the disks were manufactured will inform on their fabrication. It seems to me that these different insights—that of the archaeologist, the historical anthropologist, and the field anthropologist—on shell valuables are complementary, addressing different horizons of knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural aspects.

Second, how do the regional relation and network paradigms work for periods documented through oral history? My own historical anthropological research in the north-western Solomons is based on some of the earliest modern ethnographic and linguistic fieldwork in Oceania at the turn of the 20th century. Throughout this text, I have stressed the importance of precise and reliable ethnographic and linguistic data, such as that provided by Gerald Wheeler. He wrote for instance, that after cremation the sequence in the funerals of nobles underwent a transformation from the immersion of the charred bone remains, to their inhumation in pots in specific places in Mono-Alu (Monnerie, 1996, p. 34–37, 100–102, and 208–16). Archaeologists who find such bone remains can date them and relate them to traces of funeral pyres. However, if they have no access to oral history, they may be tempted to draw strong conclusions about the actions that took place before internment, for instance, “there were no nobles before this period”. Here, oral history, with its precise descriptions of funeral procedures and their transformations, gives us precious information. Anthropological history and archaeology have different exigencies and, above all, constraints. Their paths may cross, and often do so, when both are dealing with recent phenomena that involve oral history, such as the Roy Mata burial site in Vanuatu (Garanger, 1972 and 1996). Currently, archaeologists and anthropologists are collaborating in order to address the major local and regional reconfigurations resulting from the European-American colonisations in Oceania.

Finally, more speculatively, and more broadly, let me put forward a hypothesis from my own views of Lapita. The earliest Lapita was a forward movement of Austronesian speaking navigators into the Pacific who created the largest regional network ever to exist in Oceania. Some of its dynamics may have been vaguely similar to that of the Micronesian Sawei, but with a long term time span and, one wonders, towards which godhead? From my studies of the archaeological descriptions of the Late Lapita period, I am tempted to hypothesize the fragmentation of this original regional network and its transfers and circulations. The practice of horticulture (Noury and Galipaud, 2011, p. 97; Valentin et al., 2014) coupled with long-term residence seem to be a good candidate for this transformation. With the Late Lapita period being a

time of transformation into a series of adjacent networks whose scope, type and intensity of relations remain to be established. The regional and boundary effect paradigms may help to resolve some of the many questions surrounding these transformations during the Late Lapita configurations.

CONCLUSION: BEYOND STATIC MODELS

How can we appreciate the future of networks as tools to gain a better understanding of Oceania, both locally, regionally and as a whole? In this text, I have put forward networks as my central tool for the regional relation paradigm. Together, networks and the regional relation paradigm present a much more complex view of actual social and cultural relations and their dynamics than the models developed on the basis of the tripartite paradigm such as ‘Big Men’ (Sahlins, 1963) or ‘Great Men’ (Godelier, 1982). They also provide a more relevant view, in that it does not focus merely on the ‘leaders’ of Oceanian societies, but emphasize the interactions between local configurations, something which I hope to have made clear at the crucial level of local and regional interactions. Within their scope, network models account for dynamics, and are a key element of anthropological understanding, in a regional relation paradigm which focuses on transfers and circulations, at local and translocal, or regional, levels.

I have also suggested some of the limitations of the network models, specifically that they are static, a feature shared by several other anthropological tools. This will lead anthropology into epistemological questions dealing with spatio-temporal dynamics of transfers and circulations and eventually, more generally, to a better assessment of the problems we have with the static models we currently use for representing the dynamics of social and cultural phenomena. Network models, however, can accommodate complex ethnographies and, when provided with precisely enough ethnographic data (verbal and non verbal), they give us important feedback about the interweaving of local and regional relations. They also help us delineating neighbouring regions through various forms of contrast. These delineations are not easy to pin down for often contrasts are tinged with elements of continuity and overlapping. Ironically, the same sort of problem occurred here, which I have underlined in my critique of the bipartite paradigm in which the north-western Solomons (Near Oceania) and Kanaky/New Caledonia (Remote Oceania) are separated despite striking similarities in their preoccupation with ranking social and cultural entities⁽¹²⁾. This is also the sort of problems we have always had with the tripartite paradigm of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia at their ‘margins’. They can be explained away through migrations only in a few well documented cases such as Tikopia on the Solomons or Ouvea on the Loyalty Islands. But are these

difficulties finding clear cut delineations between entities been perennial ones in anthropology at large? I believe this tells us as much, or more, about Western scientific ideology than about the anthropological domains we are tackling. In anthropology, ‘fuzzy’ often seems to prevail, such as in boundary effects; again, maybe because we have yet to reach the stage of building adequate dynamic models to deal with social and cultural phenomena.

NOTES

- (1) Thanks to Sophie Chave-Dartoen and the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions on this text.
- (2) Except for *mauai*, the lowest shell valuable and only used by the Mono-Alu people for transfers with Buin and Siwai. Shell valuables are shells worked into small pierced disks and then strung on durable string. Again, with the exceptions of *mauai*, these valuables are composites made up of two, or more, different types of shells, and sometimes other vegetal elements. For more information on this complex system, including full identification and the Latin names of some of the shells used, see Monnerie 1996 and 2002.
- (3) I consider it highly likely that the victims of raids do not become ancestors in Buin. If this hypothesis is right, it means that while the raids increase Mono-Alu noble ancestry, they simultaneously deplete potential Buin ancestry. However this is not explicitly stated in the ethnography. We currently have no information the post mortem treatment of Buin victims or their successful/unsuccessful transformation into socially valued ancestors.
- (4) They have used the name Kanak to refer to themselves since the independence movement in the 1980’s.
- (5) I use this expression to refer to a wide array of narratives relating to the past.
- (6) I use capitals for Kanak concepts of social configurations in their abstract meaning which is, however, always closely linked to a non verbal, concrete/tangible existence, for which I use lower case. Therefore, the great house is a building, but the Great House we can translate as ‘local society’ (Monnerie, 2010).
- (7) For instance, the *teâmâ* is both its finial and its main pillar which is planted in a hole in the ground which is the group having received it.
- (8) When a modern road has been used—which is almost always the case today—the orator of the arriving delegation, in his speeches, is expected to recite the stages of the ancestral Pathway (Monnerie, 2005).
- (9) ‘House’ and ‘canoe’, are widespread concepts for localized groups in Austronesian speaking people throughout Oceania and Indonesia.
- (10) The use of shell rings is also described, one type is used amongst the Mono-Alu, called *gorau*, which sometimes replaces *mimisi* (Monnerie, 1996 ; here : fig. 7). This complicates the regional picture further, as the ethnography is sketchy, except for Simbo/Eddystone, which was described by the great A. M. Hocart in 1908–1909 and analyzed by Cécile Barraud (Barraud, 1972).
- (11) For instance, the red *kasisi* shells that make up a large part of the highly valued *kasisi* valuables and that are only used amongst the Mono-Alu, were acquired at great depths and were generally accompanied by chiefly ceremonies. The first feature can be deduced by archaeology, the second only with the help of oral history (Monnerie, 1996 and 2002).
- (12) In Marshall Sahlins’s classic 1963 model, these are features of the (ideal) ‘Polynesian’ types of political leaders and systems in the tripartite paradigm.

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