

Call for papers for a special issue of the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 157 (2023-2): Alban Bensa's engagements in anthropology, linguistics, history and the Kanak cause

Edited by Claude Grin and Adrian Muckle

Alban Bensa who passed away in October 2021 made an important contribution to anthropology in New Caledonia. This CFP aims to assemble contributions for a special issue of the *JSO*.

Alban Bensa (1948-2021), director of Studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), Paris, will remain for all a great specialist on New Caledonia and the Kanak world and, along with many fellow specialists on New Caledonia, a supporter of the independence struggle (Bensa, 1995). In his anthropological reflections and writings, Alban Bensa was a precursor in the advent of a new critical and transdisciplinary anthropology (Bensa, 1996, 2006). Following in the footsteps of those mainly anglophone specialists who had largely combined anthropology and history, he reaffirmed the necessary rehabilitation of historicity in the discipline of anthropology as well as the importance of dialogue with linguistics, notably in the study of oral traditions (Bensa and Rivierre, 1976). By practising, in particular in New Caledonia, an involved and situated research, he devoted especial attention to actors in their context and to their individual strategies (Bensa and Bourdieu, 1985; Bensa and Leblic ed., 2000).

Alban Bensa's first visit to New Caledonia dates from July 1973. This was also his first contact with a territory under colonial domination. This experience was made possible by the linguist and botanist André-Georges Haudricourt and the linguist Jean-Claude Rivierre, with whom he began to learn Paicî, one of the Kanak vernacular languages, within the CNRS team of LACITO, of which he was a member until the end of the 1990s (Leblic, 2020: §123). Back in France, under the guidance of the LACITO linguists, he continued learning Paicî. For more than forty years, this passion for language and his collaboration with Jean-Claude Rivierre allowed him to collect narratives in the language in which they were told – Cèmuhi as well as Paicî —, to transcribe them and to contextualise their metaphorical or memorial strata after long interpretative discussions with speakers of the same languages (see in particular Bensa and Rivierre, 1976, 1982). His ethnographic fieldwork, working as closely as possible with his sources, and with attention to the strategies that make their words and interactions possible, enabled him to grasp Kanak socio-political systems (Bensa, 2005; Bensa, Goromoedo and Muckle, 2015). Alban Bensa always sought to place “at the heart of anthropological knowledge, the ethnographic experience, the path of enquiry, and to pursue a critical, historical and reflexive anthropology” (personal comment, 2014; see also Bensa and Fassin, 2002).

We would like this special issue to take the form of in-depth articles or more personal texts, offering a critical view and exchange between Melanesian and European viewpoints (including those which offer reflections on Alban Bensa's own work and practice). While not wishing to be prescriptive, we would especially welcome contributions addressing the following themes:

- ethnographic engagement;
- the importance of language;
- Kanak history and memory;
- interactions between actors according to the circumstantial logics of action and meaning in the particular context of New Caledonia or elsewhere in Oceania;
- the transformations, imposed or chosen, of social practices.

A bibliography of Alban Bensa's work will accompany the dossier.

BENSA Alban, 1995. *Chroniques kanak. L'ethnologie en marche*, Paris, Peuples autochtones et développement/ survival international France, coll. Ethnies et documents 18-19.

—, 1996. De la micro-histoire vers une anthropologie critique, in Jacques Revel (éd.), *Jeux d'échelle. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil, coll. Hautes études, pp. 37-70.

—, 2005. *Histoire d'une chefferie kanak (1740-1878)*, Paris, Karthala.

—, 2006. *La fin de l'exotisme : essais d'anthropologie critique*, Toulouse, Anacharsis.

BENSA Alban and Pierre BOURDIEU, 1985. Quand les Canaques prennent la parole, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 56 : *L'antisémitisme*, pp. 69-85 (www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1985_num_56_1_2253).

BENSA Alban and Éric FASSIN, 2002. Les sciences sociales face à l'événement, *Terrain* 38, pp. 5-20

BENSA Alban, Yvon Kacué GOROMOEDO and Adrian MUCKLE, 2015, *Les sanglots de l'aigle pêcheur*, Toulouse, Anacharsis

BENSA Alban and Isabelle Leblic (ed.), 2000. *En pays kanak. Ethnologie, linguistique, archéologie, histoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Paris, éd. de la Maison des sciences de l'homme - Mission du patrimoine ethnologique, coll. Ethnologie de la France Cahier 14.

BENSA Alban and Jean-Claude RIVERRE, 1976. De quelques genres littéraires dans la tradition orale paicî (Nouvelle-Calédonie), *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 50, 32, pp. 31-66 (<https://doi.org/10.3406/jso.1976.2732>).

—, 1982. *Les chemins de l'alliance. L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (Région de Touho — aire linguistique cèmuhi)*, Paris, SELAF, coll. Langues et cultures du Pacifique 1, 386 p.

LEBLIC Isabelle, 2020. Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre et Jean-Claude Rivierre, deux linguistes engagés auprès des Kanak et de leurs langues, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 151, pp. 125-158 (<https://doi.org/10.4000/jso.12282>).

Contact

For further details concerning this CFP please contact the scientific editors of this special issue:

- Claude Grin (GSRL-EPHE-PSL), claudе.grin@gmail.com
- Adrian Muckle (History Programme, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), adrian.muckle@vuw.ac.nz

As well as the editors of the *JSO*:

- Isabelle Leblic, isabelle.leblic@cnrs.fr
- Raphaëlle Chossenot, Raphaelle.CHOSSENOT@cnrs.fr

Timetable and Submission Process

- 1 May 2022: send declarations of intent, including a title and abstract (1,000 characters including spaces), to the special issue editors (see above) and the JSO board (Raphaelle.CHOSSNOT@cnrs.fr and isabelle.leblic@cnrs.fr).
- 1 September 2022: submission of the final text (max. 60,000 characters including spaces) to the special issue editors (see above) and the JSO board.
- Instructions for authors are available on the *JSO* site: <https://journals.openedition.org/jso/10756>.
- September-November 2022: review of the texts by the special issue editors and requests for modification if necessary.
- 1 December 2022: JSO's editorial board will send the texts to external reviewers, and to the members of the editorial committee.
- 1 May 2023: JSO's editorial board will send the evaluation, and the reviewed and edited texts to the authors for modification.
- 1 September 2023: Final version of the accepted texts to be sent to the editing committee. Beginning of editing process by the JSO's editorial board.
- Proofs will be sent out between September and October. The editorial board will not accept any corrections, illustrations, or figures submitted from 1 November, 2023 onwards.
- Date of publication: end of November 2023.