Conclusions drawn in previous chapters make it necessary to elaborate further on a number of points. The first one is that, should envelopes be over-invested in the Grassfields, this specific, *psychological* over-investment accounts in no way for their role in the *political* hierarchy of that society by means of a technology of envelopes. At a theoretical level, we may assume that the psychological over-investment of envelopes will basically generate a vocabulary used especially in the description of specific social patterns of connecting vessels. Yet, should one start from a given set of words, one would be able to write more than one text, even texts that lead to contradictory conclusions. The text which precisely describes the pot-king holds two specific premises: the first one is “the king and his subjects operate as envelopes”. The second one is “the pot-king holds ancestral substances. He stores them and dispenses them among his subjects”. The two premises differ logically from one another.

There is another version, based on the same vocabulary, which would be grounded on the following two statements: “all subjects operate as envelopes”, and “all subjects are the receptacles of substances coming directly from the dead elders, and they swap them among the group”. One might imagine an egalitarian political organisation based on the logic of the connecting vessels within which substances would be circulated on a horizontal basis, from one subject to another. Slight variations would exist according to different circumstances or different persons but there pertains no assumption of a set and permanent hierarchy of statuses. We therefore have two separate lines of argument: do envelopes actually have a significant *psychological* importance? And to what extent do they participate in creating a *political* hierarchy among the subjects? Previous chapters shed some light on the first set of arguments, allowing us to now turn to the second.

Séverin Abega (1987, 1995, 2002) who has authored several anthropological studies on the Beti (especially the Manguissa) in Cameroon, made me realise that the ethnographic data I provided on the treatment of the skin, containers and ancestral substances in the Grassfields
could also apply to a large part of the Beti population. The Beti live in a forest region in Cameroon and can be held as the epitome of an egalitarian society (that is, between free men) as Abega, P. Laburthe-Tolra (1981, 1988) and others describe it. As far as the connecting vessels are concerned, the main difference between the two societies originates in the hierarchy of the Grassfields society. Starting from the same vocabulary describing ordinary behaviours, the two societies have achieved two very dissimilar technologies of power: the one (Beti) has the substances circulated horizontally among the male subjects who have benefited from ‘So’, the initiation of almost all young males, which has been explained by P. Laburthe-Tolra (1988). The second society (Grassfields) has the ancestral substances circulated vertically, from top to bottom, with no notion of equality between the notables whose titles have been bestowed upon them after the demise of their father, himself a notable, on the one hand, and women and non-initiated cadets (since initiation does not exist in the Grassfields) on the other hand.

We then conclude that no convincing explanation of a technology of power as a whole is to be found in a psychological configuration of the subjects. By establishing that psychological and bodily envelopes are over-invested in Mankon, we gain a better understanding of the specificities in the criteria of identification which are instrumental in the technologies of empowerment in Mankon society. On the other hand, considering the fact that the whole range of repertoires of identification is to be traced in both societies (hierarchical Grassfields and egalitarian Beti), the discrepancies which typify them, as far as social organisation is concerned, could not be ascribed to psychological determinants.

Therefore, in the Grassfields monarchies, the containers are politically as well as psychologically invested and, more importantly, they constitute the basic instruments of the production and maintenance of a social and political hierarchy. When deciding to write, prior to anything else, three chapters dealing respectively with the shaping of the subjects, and their identifications to their skin and to their house, I am aware that I could be suspected of psychological determinism. Yet I chose to take this risk, my aim being to better resist potential misconceptions and therefore articulate my answers in more convincing terms.

To sum up, the rationale of my argument is this: the praxeology of containers and substances can be assessed as a sensori-motor culture of which all subjects living in the Grassfields partake and which is fully mastered by them all (to a great extent it is shared by the Beti and numerous societies in Western Africa). This repertoire is made of all