This paper examines indigenous Mekeo (PNG) understandings of auafangai ‘totemic emblems’ in both historical and contemporary settings as instances of ritual viewed as ‘intellectual property’, following Harrison (1991). Mekeo auafangai clan emblems were originally portrayed by CG Seligmann in his classic, The Melanesians of British New Guinea (1910). Relying on recent theoretical advances in the understanding of Melanesian notions of ‘property’, ‘personhood’ and ‘agency’, it is argued that the transactional dynamics involving auafangai in the contexts of magic and sorcery practice, chiefly performance, gift exchange, ceremonial display and feasting, and so on, of the past are being carried forward into contemporary settings involving the seemingly secular commoditisation of many spheres of village life, on the one hand, and the adoption of charismatic Catholic ritual activities on the other. This analysis highlights possibly new insights into specifically Melanesian forms of ‘totemic’ identity; contributes to the development of a new general theory of ‘totemism’ for Oceania; and, with reference to potential Papua New Guinean legislation on matters concerning ‘intellectual property’, reveals seemingly profound differences between Mekeo and canonical Western notions of person, agency, property and ownership.